

CITY OF LETTERS
THE MAKING OF LITERARY LIFE IN BERLIN

By

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ABSTRACT

Since the rise of the cultural bourgeoisie in the 19th century, German national imagination has been predicated on a picture of the life of the mind, an identity frequently expressed through the epithet ‘Land of Thinkers and Poets.’ In thousands of neighborhood bookshops, literary cafés and salons throughout the city, intimate and local networks intersect wider reading publics constituted between strangers. Today, Berlin has become a site where the political controversies over memories of the Holocaust are publicly engaged through art, and rapid transformations in the cultural landscape resulting from the fall of the Berlin Wall are still to be fully absorbed. More recently, the life of books has also become an important space in which the politics of difference in era of the Eurozone and migration crises is negotiated. The dissertation therefore tries to suggest some of the ways volatile processes that define urban life are refracted through artistic practices, and argues the regions of aesthetics, politics and ethics are neither reducible to one another, nor bound strictly apart in everyday life.

My work explores how artistic and philosophical concepts like the sublime and the fantastic are embedded in everyday life, transforming possibilities for political and ethical action in contemporary Europe. Through my ethnography, I explore the daily labors of literary culture - among specialists and ordinary people, from reading and writing, to creating art and debating philosophy - at a time when questions around the aesthetics and politics of representation have reemerged as central to confronting ethical tensions. To this end, I have been interested in the ways artistic forms of life allow city dwellers to remake

the world around them, affording new ways to confront catastrophic pasts, inhabit fragile presents, and imagine better futures.

These forms of labor, I suggest, both engender and are produced by urban ecologies, offering a critical vantage on enduring structures of economic, racial, and expressive inequality. The literary, I argue, is not limited to the pages between the bindings of a book, but rather suffuses space, from the concrete and trees of city streets to the organization of social life. My fieldwork follows multiple and emergent forms of engagement across interlocking scenes in the city, and corresponding to the characters who move through these scenes, for example the salon director, the exile, the urban poet, the critic and the translator. In this way, I trace how the literary emerges through concrete practices that marry the durable structures of the law and the market to the effervescence of literary encounters.

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For my grandparents,

*who survived the worst horrors humankind has wrought upon
itself, that I might live to explore a measure of the breadth of its
capacity for beauty and wisdom*

Elias Brandel, taught me diligence
Vittorio Orvieto, lent me wit
Dina Kornreich, encouraged love
Ruth Löwensohn, showed me courage

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INTRODUCTION	
Berlin, Anthropology and Literary Forms of Life	1
Anthropology and Literature.....	6
Capital of Thinkers and Poets.....	10
CHAPTER ONE	
The Flaneur: In the Footsteps of Memory	29
How to Talk about a Street.....	40
The Making of a Walk in Words.....	43
Art, Voice, and Memory.....	60
CHAPTER TWO	
The Exile: An Unknown Writer and the Politics of Voice	74
Aesthetics of Exile and the Politics of Literature.....	84
The Melodrama of the Unknown Writer.....	99
At the Penumbra.....	114
CHAPTER THREE	
The Bookseller: Markets, Villages and Literary Value	117
Regulating the Book Trade.....	125
The Two Faces of a Bookshop.....	132
The Social Lives of the Artwork.....	146
CHAPTER FOUR	
The Poet: The Sounds of Words and the Intimacy of Fleeting Moments	165
Live Literature in Berlin: From <i>Spracharbeit</i> to the Literary Media.....	172
The Intimacy of Voice: Scenes from a Literary Workshop.....	180
Orality, Endurance, Fantasy.....	190
CONCLUSION	
Ordinary Aesthetics	205
The Mundane and the Fantastic.....	211
The Beautiful and the Good.....	214
BIBLIOGRAPHY	221
CURRICULUM VITAE	238

INTRODUCTION

Berlin, Anthropology and the Literary Life

Wer ist ein Dichter? Der, dessen Leben symbolisch ist. In mir lebt der Glaube, daß ich nur von mir zu erzählen brauche, um auch der Zeit. / Who is a poet? He whose life is symbolic. In me lives the belief that I need only speak of myself in order also to speak of the age. (T. Mann. Königliche Hoheit)

At the turn of the 19th century, Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) penned a novelistic and fragmentary variation and extension of the myth of the Sängerkrieg (War of Minstrels), the poetical account of a 13th century Fürstenlob - a contest in praise of the prince in the Prussian court of Thüringen won by Heinrich von Ofterdingen.¹ As Friedrich Schlegel's commentaries make clear, Romantic poetry sought not just to bridge the intellectual and the natural, but also to reconfigure the condition of everyday life; a gesture epitomized by Novalis' use of the mythological region of language in his Märchen (fairy tales). The work of mythology as Schlegel suggested meets up in this way with Heinrich's view of poetry, in the inversion of a content that seems far away, but which in the end transforms what is closest at hand. The poeticizing of knowledge

¹ The story appears in various forms throughout German mythology, but was rediscovered in the modern period by the German poet Johann Jakob Bodmer. In E.T.A. Hoffman's version in the second volume of *Die Serapionsbrüder*, Heinrich's words mingle with moonbeams. Wagner merges the story with another German myth of a poet, the *Tannhäuser* (another 13th century story but not attested until the 15th). In this myth, the poet finds the mountain of Venus only to leave filled with remorse. The poet-knight seeks out the Pope to beg for absolution from his sins, but Urban IV replies that this would no sooner be possible than his crosier would blossom with flowers. In three days' time the papal ferula indeed blooms, but the vicar's messengers can no longer find the poet who has in the interim returned to Venusberg. Taking forward F.W.J. Schelling's reading of the poetic view of mythological thought, Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that myth contains heterogeneous meanings as foundation and fiction (2006:52). Thus Nancy reads Schelling's call for a new mythology as a claim on the truthfulness of poetry – "poetic fiction is the true – if not truthful – origin of a world." The tautegorical nature of myth is the sublation of the dialectic meanings of fiction as and of foundation. The figuration of a world is a break of a particular kind. If community is not the merger of individuals, but the "will of community", then not only are community and communion myth, but when the myth is interrupted it births the voice of community – a singular voice Nancy calls literature. The mythic and the literary are thus bound together, the latter interrupting the former by "giving voice to being-in common...being in common" is the being of literature. (2006:64-5) Such figurative birthing of a world, of the voice of community, is complicated by what George Williamson (2004) calls the longing for myth in Germany. As he and Nancy both note, the poetic carries a dark shadow in the wake of the Aryan myth, one that threatens to make us mute before humanity.

emphasizes the ‘pre-established harmony’ of subjective “compositions of nature” and nature itself. It is only poets that can feel what “nature can be to man.” Myth, like language, August Schlegel contributed, as social structure, symbolic structure, and poetic structure was intended to transcend the Enlightenment’s privileging of reason through a higher order system of meaning. Among the most striking episodes of poetic retelling comes when the young poet’s caravan, en route to his grandfather’s home in Augsburg, rests in a village where locals are afraid of a strange hill nearby. Following a miner into the hill’s caves, the group encounters a hermit in a room with stone table, carvings of Prussian nobility, and a large book lying open. When the others leave the room to explore, Heinrich stays behind, enchanted by a book that falls into his hands but which is written in a foreign language. It had no title, but its engravings seduced him, until, in a flash, he recognized his own visage among the figures in its pages. Frightened, he thought himself at first caught in a dream, or else deceived, but as he turned the leaves he could no longer doubt his eyes or the resemblance. Page by page he saw the scenes of his life, his home, his friends, as if from another time, even the cave around him and the hermit beside. He saw himself countless times in different dress and situations, growing into a noble, august figure, a guitar resting in his arms, standing in an imperial court. The last figure’s images were obscured, but the rapture they inspired was intense. Sorrowful, he asked the hermit what he knew of the book, but the old man recalled only that it had been written in Provence and that it tells of the life of a poet.

In the pages of dusty books, ones we sometimes cannot even read, or the magical music of poetic voices, or else in the very way we walk, through a mountain or into a childhood home, we find life transformed, if only fleetingly, into a work of art. The

Frühromantik (early Romantic) imperative, Schlegel famously wrote in his 1797-1798 notebooks, was the “mixing of all poetries, All Nature and Science should become Art. Art should become Nature and Science. Imperative: Poesy should be moral, and Morality should be poetic.” In their critical Athenäumfragment 116, the Jena collective called for all genres and forms to “mingle and fuse in a lively and sociable poetry, one that makes life and society poetic, that poeticizes wit and fills the forms of art with everything good, with the vibrations of humor... Romantic poetry is in the arts what wit is in philosophy, and what society and sociability, friendship and love are in life.”

In philosophical readings of Frühromantik, the relationship between creative production, the metaphysical sovereignty of art, and truth has been contested, either as a skeptical revision of the Platonic doctrine of correspondence through Kant’s aesthetic judgment (Frank 1989)² or as an objective idealism premised on the organicity of Nature. (Beiser 2006) Such distinctions have been mediated more recently by accounts of the centrality of Absolute Being, by thinking the “concrete and internally differentiated” unity of both the world and of thought. (Nassar 2014) My own interest has been in the Romantic insistence that the structure of the Absolute, in the congruence of opposed forces (the “real” and “ideal” activities of the desire to go forward and to be limited), is a fundamentally social and poetic principle of love, of life as essentially together. Our apprenticeship is to the world, Novalis says, a world remade through poetry. To call upon another genealogy of Romanticism through Wittgenstein, I understand these activities as operating with a form, a life; that is to say, to speak of truth and fiction is to already agree in language. (Wittgenstein 1954: §19 and §241) As Stanley Cavell (1988) has indicated, agreement in a form of life also consists in contestations over what counts *as* and *for* life.

² On the Romantic relationship with Plato, see also Hartmann (1923) and Kluckhohn (1953)

It bears the possibility of exclusion from life (a form of death), as much as the possibility of life together. (See also Das 2007; Das and Han 2015) Our forms of life appear as both the ground and object of a literary work, and this work in turn bears the capacity to remake agreements in forms of life.³

The discovery of Romanticism was for me serendipitous. I saw the legacy of the Romantic motif (Stocking 1989) in anthropology in Boas' assertion that, as cosmographic scientists, (in the Humboldtian sense of *Kosmos*) we attend "lovingly" to our object of inquiry, and as such are driven by an "affective impulse" to manifestly true phenomena. (1940: 645) In Lévi-Strauss, I found it in the figure of the artist painting miniatures (like Clouet's lace collar), standing between mythological and scientific thought, integrating the structural reworking of events (the *ingénieur*) with the eventemental structuring of structures (the *bricoleur*). I found it too in ethnographic attention to the ordinariness of magic, as it entangled ethnographers in Bengu oracles in Zandeland (Evans-Pritchard 1937), in cascading misfortunes of witchcraft in the Bocage (Favret-Saada 1977), and in the commodification of sorcery through the circulation of books on the Putomayo river. (Taussig 1987) Reading this history through its resonances with the writers of the Jena circle, I began to secure for myself a relationship to literature and to philosophy, in which an anthropological voice could be recognized even as it was made literary, and which has continued to define my work.

Read as a Romantic science then, I located anthropology's concern within *a posteriori* logics; that is, with the conditions of possibility for experience to be grounded

³ I share Gabriele Schwab's (2012) sense that literature is, or has the potential to be, or is produced by, a form of life in at least two ways – in the way Wittgenstein uses it, as making possible the function of language by determining agreements in the given, and in its concrete, relational mode, as an object that appears within a form of life and simultaneously remakes it.

in life together, between subjects rather than in a transcendental subject. This picture of anthropological thought proceeded from the play inherent in Lévi-Strauss' analysis of products of collective unconsciousness such as myths to which no authorship can be assigned, and Veena Das' (2007)⁴ sense of the autobiographical nature of ethnography in which autobiography is written from an impersonal region of the self. I started to understand anthropological thought as emergent from what Novalis called conviviality (*Geselligkeit*).⁵ In thinking through life among others as stitched together at least potentially poetically, I would try to place my own conditions of experience under risk. Such was a relativism not of ideas, but of the possibility for thought. It meant, moreover, training ethnographic attention on the very grounds of its own production, that is, on the question of making a life literary.⁶

⁴ In her early work on Sanskrit texts as a cipher to cultural meanings of Hindu caste and ritual shows, the methods whereby we uncover social impositions of order onto reality must be found between ethnographic fieldwork, and the analysis of "finished products of collective consciousness...and [the extraction of] underlying principles underling conceptual orders" therein envisaged. (Das 1977: 4) For Das, the analysis of such products (be they mythic histories like the Dharmaranya Purana, ritual rites like the Grihya Sutra, or literary characters) and organizations of social institutions (like caste, artistic practices, or urban rhythms of life) in their pursuit of the same order belong together, collapsing the space between the ethnological axis of analysis and the ethnographic. In his analysis of the brilliance of Swaihwé masks among the Salish speaking peoples in the Pacific Northwest, Lévi-Strauss (1988) makes a related claim about the relationship between plastic objects and myths – neither of which can be interpreted as "separate objects" but only in conjunction with others. It is only through comparison of transformations (in the geometrical sense) that 'cultural meaning' can be discerned, but moreover the meanings conveyed and the plastic structures of the work of art maintain homologous relations.

⁵ To this end, I share Clara Han's (2012) sense that we must also trouble the self through its relations to other people, other places and other times. The self, she suggests, requires a continual work, evidenced in our presences (or failures of presence) to one another.

⁶ Such a desire meant approach literature as both apart of ordinary life and as capable of providing resources through which it can be remade, perhaps at another threshold, more real than the real. Shulman's (2012) work on the imaginative praxis of literature in medieval south India, describes how worlds are born of minds, for example in 17th century Sanskrit writing on bhāvanā, an imaginative universalization. Through a series of stages, first from 'direct meaning of words' (abhidhā), to a generative process of some sense (say of the desirability of Sakuntala) and the direction of knowledge (that she is inaccessible), by way of enjoyment, "spectator can relax into a direct experience, universal in essence," (76) which is called rasa. By such a logic of imaginative praxis, Schulman describes how we might understand fiction as making use of particular kinds of truth-claims. This occurs through a combination of forces, from the external framing that grants a 'cognitive advantage' to the poet who speaks (but which may subsume her as well) to our absorption in the narration, in a 'fictive mode' that is inflected in the audience in personal ways. (Ibid 206)

Anthropology and Literature

Anthropology's relation with literature has often been predicated on their shared concern with how words allow us to move between worlds. Didier Fassin (2014: 41), for example, writes citing Marc Augé, "writers and anthropologists share "the same fertile ground" of facts and events...the question to be asked is: What do they do differently in their treatment of this "raw material?" Their constraints, he argues, are different however. For Fassin, life exists in a tension between the real (what exists or has happened) and the true (what has to be regained from deception). Anthropology and literature both move to "recapture" life, or to recreate a world (in his language, move through a vertical approach to life), but ethnography's commitment to a certain faithfulness also to reality (the horizontal) marks an important political and ethical aspect of writing in relation to life. "If the fictional imagination lies in the power to invent a world with its characters," Fassin argues "the ethnographic imagination implies the power to make sense of the world that subjects create by relating it to larger structures and events." (2014: 53)

Where anthropology has turned to literature, it has often been as a route through which to dislodge the politics of representation, or else to overcome the skepticism that shadows ethnographic knowledge. Vincent Crapanzano (2004) has stressed the enmeshment of the ethical, the literary, the philosophical and the anthropological through a "transgressive montage" that not only tries to dislodge our experiential categories by revealing their constructedness, but also tries to subvert the aesthetic criteria which make such constructions possible. Whether or not one accepts his insistence that the ambiguity of human nature and our embracing of the imaginative play, as engaged social actors,

makes us bad epistemologists (See also Crapanzano 2014), his warning that we remember the stakes of acknowledging the strategies others deploy in response to the fact of interpretation (and thereby, their humanity) is crucial to such an endeavor.⁷ The tacit understanding of the literary primarily as mediation, is evident too in ethnographic work on literary practices, which emphasize how these practices function as a mode of articulating politics – that is, as a technique of voice in service of exogamous ends. One finds the literary in service of the political in the worlds traversed by many anthropologists, in Bate’s (2009) interrogation of the folding of oratory and the political, Furani’s (2012) writing on the traversal of multiple social realities through poetry, and Cody’s (2013) analysis of the mutual imbrication of literary activism and citizenship among the laboring women of the Enlightenment Movement. But if something about the literary has seemed to resist the kind of ethnographic work that would be able to encounter it for itself, it can be gleaned in the ways it emerges in the lives of anthropologists for whom it has, like my interlocutors, played such an important role. This is especially striking in Lévi-Strauss’ reflections in *Triste Tropique*, and in Michael Jackson’s (2006; 2012) memoirs. My concern is how we recognize the literary as *literary*, as a form of life. Can we think of literary not merely through forms of communication and their relative efficacy and texture, but also in their physiognomy? Where does one look for it? Can it be of anthropological interest for itself, rather than as a route to elsewhere, and if so, how might we understand the literary not as a separate

⁷ Others have turned to the fieldwork practices of great writers, like Rimbaud and Pushkin, in order to train our modes of entering into the worlds of others. (Bensa and Pouillon 2012) And for many in the wake of *Writing Culture*, the literary arose as a technique of writing through which to confront the legacy of colonialism, as an enactment of reflexivity premised on an understanding of culture as text. But if calls to provincialize the West (Chakrabarty 2000) are treated now as trite after all the effort to, as Michael Taussig (1989) argues, transcend the inviolability of the referent through collation, then I agreed with Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf’s (1989) reply, that this collation everywhere seems, in its essence, more concerned with form of presentation than with the ‘referent.’

domain of social life. Can we think of the literary, the ethical, the political, in their mutuality?

It was this curiosity about the union of life and literature⁸ that drew me to my fieldwork in Berlin. As Lévi-Strauss (1961: 382) wrote, the anthropologist is born halfway to the field, motivated by the pursuit of answers to our questions that others elsewhere may have long since devised. Our field sites are not *objects* of analysis, but places from which we learn to find answers to our questions, subjects in their own right. Our scrutiny of those worlds then makes possible an “aesthetic contemplation.” My own search began as an exploration of the ways in which the reception of Sanskrit philosophical-poetry in 19th century had left indelible marks on literary and intellectual culture in Germany. But as I moved between archives, bookshops and libraries, my work turned towards the number of ways in which life was itself literary throughout the space of the city.

⁸ This language has not only been deployed by the Romantics. For Bakhtin (1919), the unity of art and life is a naïve and mechanistic occurrence in human life. Because they are bound apart – “when a human being is in art, he is not in life, and conversely” – their unity can only be in mutual answerability, and in liability to blame. “Art and life are not one,” he writes “but they must become united in my self – in the unity of my answerability.” Having parsed the history of aesthetics on the continent since Baumgarten, Tolstoy (1899) charges that all theories of art produced by aesthetics had until that point seen its purpose in Beauty, and the latter defined either in objective or subjective terms, neither amounting to more than a justification for the existence of art. Troubled by the use of art to the exclusion of the people, by the dominant classes, by some religion and by a principle of science peculiar to our times, he writes that art is, or ought be, “an organ of human life.” (189) It is art, he argues, that transforms our consciousness of the “brotherhood of man” into a feeling. Art might achieve by internal means what we have otherwise only done by violence and fear, and through it then violence might ultimately be put aside for good, the “social life of man” made possible alone through art. A universal art, borrowing his language from Marx, would “educate people in union...not by reason but by life itself, the joy of universal union reaching beyond the bounds set by life.” (191) All this Tolstoy thought could be achieved through “imaginary conditions.” For Dieter Heinrich (2001) the connection resides in their relation to a more or less Kantian subject and its understanding of the world. Alexander Nehamas (1985) has argued that we might read Nietzsche’s perspectivism as simultaneously an aestheticism, in which the world appears as a literary work of art. The ambition to a philology of the world, Nahemas convincingly suggests, is manifest through the production of a literary work, namely himself, as an anti-philosopher who can assert positive claims without falling into dogmatism.

This dissertation examines how the literary and the everyday are braided together in the German capital, a quarter century after re-unification. Through my ethnography, I explore the daily labors of literary culture - among specialists and ordinary people, from reading and writing, to creating art and debating philosophy - at a time when questions around the aesthetics and politics of representation have reemerged as central to confronting ethical tensions. The stakes of this study are especially salient in a society that historically has made the literary into a sign of local culture, and whose re-emergence on the world stage has been predicated both on new forms of encounter with its difficult heritage (Macdonald 2009), and on an aspiration to particular modes of cosmopolitanism inhabited in its capital. These forms of labor, I suggest, both engender and are produced by urban ecologies, offering a critical vantage on enduring structures of economic, racial, and expressive inequality. The literary is not limited to the pages between the bindings of a book, but rather suffuses space, from the concrete and trees of city streets to the organization of social life. Literary forms of life allow city dwellers to remake the world around them, affording new ways to confront catastrophic pasts, inhabit fragile presents, and imagine better futures. I argue for a picture of the literary, then, as a form of life, in which the movement between categories like the rational and the imaginary, the real and the fictive, the personal and the collective, the human and the natural, the ordinary and the fantastic, allows for ethical worlds to constantly be made and remade. If the literary emerges from everyday life, it also carries the potential to both transform and destroy it.

Capital of Thinkers and Poets

When I first arrived in Berlin to do fieldwork in 2011, I found a city in the throes of transformation. Changes in demographics and in the rhythms of life, many said at the time, were brought about by the low cost of living ushered in by housing and economic policies of reunification. This availability brought in waves of artists, and between the late 1990s and early 2000s, Berlin had become a global center for art and literature, but also a stage on which Germany more broadly could perform its cosmopolitanism⁹, and its aspirations toward and achievement of a nation of *Kultur*. Only ten years earlier, Ulrich Schreiber had founded the Internationales Literaturfestival Berlin with help from the German UNESCO committee, and it had quickly become a premier global institution. The success of the festival was premised on, what the national paper *Die Zeit* called, the purity of literature on display. One of its volunteers once described its ambition to me as bringing “all the world’s literature to Berlin,” to celebrate literary work wherever it could be come, but also to make Berlin into the home for such open exchanges of creativity. Local newspapers cheered Berlin’s cosmopolitan successes as a place where “Middle Eastern poets rub shoulders with Indian short story writers, and novelists from European countries converse with their contemporaries from the Far East.” (Kiesel 2009)

⁹ In light of the anthropology of cosmopolitanism, one might want to understand Berlin as a place of contradictory forces and tensions, on the one hand as a place where global ecumene is enacted (Hannerz 1992:217-63), on the other as a site suffused with anxieties about and expressions of tacit nationalism. Huyssen (2003) has revealed how the relationship between a community or nation’s present and its past has become unsettled by new forms of representations, a temporal process which is mirrored on the spatial axis by the shrinking of place by “modern means of transportation and communication.” The past therefore, Appadurai (1996: 30-31) has argued, can no longer be returned to through a “simple politics of memory” but rather “has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios, a kind of temporal central casting, to which recourse can be taken.” This work brings these two temporalities closer together – a difficult past and the confrontation therewith, and the politics of global futures – by treating them as essentially braided together in the time of the city.

In 2005, the parliamentary coalition led by the center-right Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU) launched an initiative called *Deutschland – Land der Ideen* (Germany – Land of Ideas) ahead of the World Cup's return to Germany the following year. When Bundespräsident Horst Köhler came into office, he declared that this would be the motto of the Federal Republic. Among the moments and exhibitions hosted around Berlin, perhaps the most familiar was the *Ideengang*, the Walk of Ideas, including a twelve-meter-high sculpture of books outside the Humboldt Universität, titled *Der moderne Buchdruck*, Modern Printing. Seventeen names stretched from the base to the top, from Goethe to Grass, celebrating the heights of German literary achievement. It was on the terms of these works that the German state explicitly sought to brand itself to the world, the impact of which was compounded when German spectators publicly wrapped themselves in their flag for the first time since the fall of the Nazi regime.

During the time that I lived in Berlin, the monuments were no longer there, but in their place were smaller, humbler and more mundane concrete structures. Alongside other new buildings in Mitte, construction had begun on a city palace (*Stadtschloss*) on the footprint of the winter residences of the Prussian royal house (which also housed German emperors from unification through the Republic).¹⁰ Scattered around the site were short concrete stones, a meter wider, which became a surface for a more improvisational and unofficial remaking of the landscape. In blue paint, a bookmaker had sprawled lines from great German works, in crevices and corners of the concrete structures the city was using to support the new building.

Was wir tun, was wir schreiben, was wir sehen und was wir denken, wird überwacht! P Hauser

¹⁰ The palace had been destroyed by the East German regime.

(What we do, what we write, what we see, and what we think will be supervised)

Man muss die toten Wörter wieder lebendig machen. M Schischkin
(One must make dead words live again)

Berlin ist der Angel-und-Dreh-Punkt, wo sich besonders scharf abbildet, dass die Welt mit ihren Problemen zu uns kommt. J Habermas
(Berlin is angel and fulcrum, where it is marked particularly sharply that the world comes to us with their problems)

On the other side of the city, far from the large black glass buildings that hosted the ILB, an NGO supporting educational and employment for women, Baufachfrau, had begun turning Berlin into a “sustainable” and “ecological” library, hollowing out trees in Prenzlauer Berg and equipping them with bookshelves so that residents could exchange books with neighbors and passersby. In cafes, books were used as shelves, holding up other art works or plants. Under bridges in Alexanderplatz, poets read their work outside into portable microphones, as crowds shuffled into street buses, and musicians played on the tracks. On the S-bahn, groups of artists jumped from the platform and rode along to the next stop, playing music, singing, reading poems or selling papers, and quickly escaping before the controller came to check their tickets. In neighborhood bookstores, scores gathered to have dinner, drink and share stories. In living rooms, reading groups discussed the new list of Booker Man winners, exchanged sympathies for lost family members, and complained about their jobs. Walking tours recovered literary artifacts of the city, and read them aloud to the group. Writers sprawled couplets and aphorisms on urban ruins, walls were adorned with plaques marking the homes and favored haunts of famous writers, and streets were more often named for celebrated intellectuals than not. In these ways and others, literature appeared throughout the city in unexpected places and times, structuring social life beyond the walls of officially sanctioned artistic space.

Since even before the birth of the modern state in the long 19th century, the imagination of the German nation and its limits have been tied up with a picture of the life of the mind – a paradigmatic identity noted by writers from Hölderlin to Marx, de Stael to Tucholsky and frequently expressed (occasionally pejoratively) through the epithet, “Land of Thinkers and Poets.” Leibniz famously said of the German language, *Philosophiae nata videtur*, philosophy is her nature.¹¹ The cementation of this social imagination of the cultural bourgeoisie themselves, and the nation they dreamed up on the basis thereof was effected, Boyer argues, through the raising of a series of central metaphors of inwardness – *Geist*, *Kultur* and *Bildung* – to the status of lexical totems of German identity. The *Gebildeten*, the educated, or intellectuals, of the educated estate, projected onto a future Germany the emergence of a *Kulturstaat*, a culture state, a rational, modern institution that would replace the aristocracy who aligned themselves with the industrial bourgeoisie (c.f. Föllmer 2002) not with the merchant class (as in the bourgeois revolutions of their neighbors), but with the university and the Kulturträger, the bearers of culture, themselves at the helm. In the eyes of many intellectuals, the encroachment of external forces, most importantly the rise of print capitalism, threatened to derail the unfolding birth of a country of letters. (Boyer 2005: 50)

In similar fashion, the nation was imagined during its “axial age” as a collective subjectivity charged both as a site of a future history and a reencounter with the past. For Bernard Giesen, the intellectual class served as the hinge between the unity of the people,

¹¹ Dominic Boyer has helpfully drawn out this identification through the historical development of a characteristic tension between *Innerlichkeit*, inwardness, the region of personal cultivation or *Bildung*, and the external political world of *Kultur*. This best-known feature of the typical German, he argues borrowing on Thomas Mann’s language, is a characteristic predisposition for “dialectical social knowledge,” a story of Germanness that runs from the *Bildungsroman* to the “ordinary middle-class man.” (Boyer 2005: 48) The settling-in of this nature is grounded in an “ideological transposition” of the 19th century, effected by the rise and dominance of the cultural bourgeoisie, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, who, in contrast to earlier states in England and France, crafted the German nation in their own image. (See also Kocka 1989)

Allgemeinheit, and the peripheral elites. Structurally, their position manifested a paradox between control of the hegemonic culture qua education, or a cultural disciplining, and their relative exclusion from the share of power either in the old system of land vassalage, or in control over wealth and capital in the new metropole. “Out of this dissonance”, Giesen suggests:

there arises a self-evident compulsion to radically redefine the relation between periphery and center, and to attribute to the periphery an autonomous, original, and indeed superior culture, even while viewing the center as commanding power and wealth only through historical coincidence, and as projecting its hegemonic cultural claims without substantiation. (1998:7)

The intellectuals, thereby, grounded their position through control of access to the “other-worldly”, the “source of identity,” which also requires both a “*monopoly* in the resolution of all such tensions” and a willing to embrace “variations of its own theme” by members of its own order. (1998:41) Their second requirement was a relation to a faceless, ambivalent and indifferent public, with whom they maintain a vaguely oppositional relation through discursive rituals. Such a landscape grows out of the conditions, historians have argued, in early modern Germany, where the censoring of cultural production, and its control over knowledge, or Foucault would call qualifications of discourses of truth, threatened traditional authority. If, as is well known, this shift was marked in the sciences by the production of the expert as an arm of the bourgeois state, in literature such control increasingly took the form of technologies of copyright, sale, access to print and patronage. (See Tennant 1996) The radical reformation of the culture

of knowledge by the printing press can also be read in the metaphoric traces of language itself (Wenzels 1996)¹².

The rise of the cultural bourgeoisie made inspirational heroes of great writers, valorizing their role in crafting an image of political imaginations and discourses broadly, and in everyday life. The influence that writers wielded in shaping social and political life cannot be overstated. However, Berlin's specific role in this process of political production has also been historically inconsistent. And Berlin was, as many friends told me, *not* Germany. In her monumental history of Berlin, Alexandra Richie, for instance, famously called the city *Faust's metropolis*, an allusion to the crudeness that Goethe was so keen to point out. Rather unlike the magisterial beauty cultivated by many European cities, Berlin has always been "shabby", and, as she says echoing Siegfried Kracauer, artless. The city's identity, she argues, has always been bound to its capacity for change, and the rebuilding that has taken place since its destruction in 1945, and more rapidly since 1990, has tried to show how the city has changed yet again.¹³ Its ethos, Haxthausen

¹² Several of the essay's on Gerhild Williams and Stephan Schindler (1996) collection are relevant to this point.

¹³ From the first mention of Germania by Tacitus, Berlin had very slowly risen from an unlikely geography into an official city in the twelfth century on the back of local labor by Christian settlers (like the Cistercians) and as trade shifted across the Spree river (Richie 1998: 23). In the 17th century, it became the powerful capital of Prussian command and expanded considerably under Frederick. Napoleonic rule turned Berlin into a city for experimental reform, and it was in this period that the city became a center for artistic and intellectual life. Richie suggests that it was in the Berlin of this period that a Romanticism born elsewhere met with firm political ideology (107). By 1848, however, the industrial revolution wrought havoc on the laboring classes in Germany, and forcibly, painfully, converted peasants into factory workers. Artistic edges were scrubbed off, and Berlin was reimagined as a city for undifferentiated labor, a symbol of the austere, hard-working German people. While much of the revolution in German Confederation was spearheaded by the petty bourgeois and the educated estates, a largely agricultural laboring class in the Rhineland inaugurated a political reaction to the capitalists already at this stage. Despite the successes of the cultural bourgeoisie in the inauguration of a modern national imaginary, the Frankfurter Nationalversammlung was dissolved by 1849 and large numbers of intellectuals, mostly liberals, were forced to flee, many to the United States. But it was also in the wake of this revolution that the concept of national literature gives birth to a reorganization of the institutions of cultural production, through the critique of the liberal public sphere (Hohendahl 1985). With the 1896 Gewerbe Ausstellung (Trade Exhibition), Berlin announced its challenge to Paris as a world capital, by revealing its presence over, "the totality of cultural achievements." (Simmel 1998: 75, c.f. Webber 2008)

and Suhr (1990) indicate, is its anomalousness, its “relentless self-renewing modernity,” and its artificiality.

If Berlin is a city constantly undergoing changes in the organization of social life, the twentieth century and early twenty-first have likely been its most dramatic. The fall of Hitler’s world capital to-come left considerable debris – as many as 80% of the buildings had been destroyed, and in their place was a system of international control that utterly determined its reconstruction. As Andrew Webber (2008:12) notes, borrowing language from Aleida Assmann (1999), Hitler’s palaces, “were also a façade for a more hidden network of bunkers and cells, excavated ruins of which now furnish the space for the documentation of Berlin’s ‘Topography of Terror.’” Webber reads the twentieth century as one in which the topoi of the city, their spatial configurations of internality and externality became especially entrenched, becoming layered with different times and affects. As he, Huyssen, Scheffler, and other scholars of German literary history have remarked, Berlin seemed condemned as a city always to-become (*Berlin wird*), and never to be.

Two generations of ethnographers moved through a divided Berlin¹⁴, and its immediate aftermath. John Borneman (1992), emerging from several years of fieldwork on kinship across its “moieties,” called the city, “the ultimate postmodern space,” with a,

¹⁴ It has been argued that the emergence of Germany in social scientific research at the end of the 1980s is tied to changes in both political and scholarly discourse of the post-war and then Cold War. Though earlier contributions were biased toward “rural social organization,” (Freeman 1973) later work struggled to make room to circumvent the re-inscription of the uniformity of “Europe” as a Boasian “culture area,” calling instead for a way to move between the levels of analysis, from the “ahistorical ethnographic” view from the village and local events to the larger processes of “state formation, national integration, industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, class conflict and commercialization.” (Boissevain 1977; cf. Goddard, Llobera and Shore 1996) While recent modes of engaging Germany have focused on the centrality of kinship and belonging in Berlin, as the “topos on which ‘nationness’ is mapped” (Borneman 1992:19 and 1997) and the specificity of ideology, (Dumont 1994) others have made a central motif the production of local memory (Eidson 2000; Till 2005) and nostalgia (Berdahl 1999, 2009) in the, “making, unmaking and remaking,” of the nation-state (Breuilly 1992).

“shifting (until recently declining, now rapidly expanding), heterogeneous population, [and] a discontinuous and ruptured history.” When I arrived, the population was again in official decline, except in Prenzlauer Berg. In the first years of the period of reunification, anthropologists were drawn to a local language to describe the sense of loss felt by East Germans whose country no longer existed. This Ostalgie, a nostalgia for life as it was in the East (Ost), stood in stark relief against the triumphalist discourse in the West. It was often conceived in relation to products or ordinary practices no longer in circulation after the fall of the Wall.¹⁵ In the film industry, through its association with “communist kitsch,” such sentimentality has been read as a, “failure to engage history,” (Enns 2007) – a critique offered by many in Germany who felt such nostalgia turned a blind eye to structural oppression of one kind (as past violence), in order to avoid another (contemporary and neoliberal). Others, however, took Ostalgie expressions in literary and filmic media to be cathartic messages to the East Germans living in a “foreign” land, by preserving their experiences of daily life and thereby normalizing them for Western viewers as well. (Cooke 2003) Boyer (2001a: 426, 436) writes of these dual tendencies of Ostalgie through a literary ethnography of Berlin at the height of this period.

In memory, nostalgia about the GDR [English for the DDR] intensifies in precise correlation to the criminalization of the GDR past in the mainstream media. This is, I believe, inadvertently linked to erasure of signs of the GDR. The shallower the reservoir of public symbols and associations, the more mnemonic space is cleared for caricatures, both positive and negative, to flourish. I am daily struck by the growing absence of artifacts of the GDR in the city center. The erasure of the Berlin wall has been among the most successful projects of semiotic renewal.

¹⁵ This process, however, involved not just a longing for a particular item and a polished image of a now lost nation, but a restructuring of the ways in which people relate to products – for example, the difference between identifying products through brand identity versus “product biographies.” (Blum 2004: 235)

The situation had reached another stage in this transition when I first arrived in Berlin. Gentrification and the rise of Berlin again as what its mayor's office called "a world capital of literature" had entirely shifted the center. In most of the central city, the DDR shows up only in museums, in traces like the street signs, or in the occasional East German soft drink in the back of a Spätkauf, but less and less often as an object of memory and longing. Those who were there to remember, after all, were no longer there (or so the saying goes). Those artifacts earlier ethnographers noted were themselves now a memory. In less than two decades then, the "Berliner" had watched their city disappear around them twice. On many occasions during my time in Berlin, friends repeated to me a common refrain; "there are no more Berliner in Berlin." Now, more than two decades after re-unification, it was uncommon to meet someone in Berlin who had been raised in the East city during the period of division. The "original"¹⁶ inhabitants were displaced. The nostalgia for the East (Ostalgie) that marked post-Wall experiences of East Germans and was the subject of earlier ethnographic work in the region, was not available to a population too young to remember life in the DDR, or who never lived in either Germany to experience it. While such a picture is not entirely supported by sociological data, the fact that such talk is so commonplace and consistent tells us something important about popular imaginations of place.¹⁷

¹⁶ This is an extremely significant and problematic category in Berlin. After re-unification, many inhabitants of the former East were forcibly displaced from their homes and relocated to make room for reclamations by "original" inhabitants prior to the division (i.e. pre-Nazi period ownership). This created something of a housing vacuum and a great deal of confusion regarding claims to property. At the same time, the government inherited by law assets belonging to East German organizations, with the explicit obligation of rehabilitating economically troubled holdings. The fortunes of such properties have been varied.

¹⁷ An article in the Berliner Morgenpost shows the relevance of such discourses "Zugezogene und echte Berliner: Wer kam, wer ging, wer heute hier wohnt" [Newcomers and Real Berliners: who came, who went, and who is living here today], the periodical provides an interactive map on shifting demographics in the city. According to their figures, 2.9 million new residents have come to Berlin since the fall of the wall in 1989 (45% from abroad), while 2.7 million have left the city (36% to countries other than Germany).

Since the 2000s, there is also a second wave of nostalgia, or a general sense of loss, among Berliner witnessing waves of expatriates flooding the city during its rise in the global cosmopolitan imaginary. Much of these “real Berliner” were too young to remember much about life in the DDR, but nevertheless felt themselves increasingly without the city where they were born. Berlin re-emerged as a global site of the cultural both because the low cost of living had drawn in new artists, musicians, and writers, as well as young people in general, and because of the allure of the revolutionary generation (of May 1968, and subsequently) in the old East now available to a wider population. Thus while Berliner were largely happy to be the center of international attention and a hub of bohemian activity, this quickly gave way to farce (in the view of many of my friends) as wealthy Americans and Brits replaced Berliner. Mourning for the Berlin that was destroyed by its own popularity swept across popular discourse and inundated talk during my time in the city. A quick review of newspapers reveals this sentiment readily. “Berlin soll nicht mehr cool sein” [“Berlin should be/is no longer cool” one headline reads, “der Strich traf mitten ins Herz” [the sting hits in the middle of the heart].¹⁸ To be a “real” Berliner¹⁹ in a no longer “real” Berlin, affords one a particular (and even enviable) perspective. The city is “fluid”, “dynamic”, “moving” people often say, as Franz Hessel had almost a century earlier. “After 1989,” a young author quotes from Klaus Kürvers, “every Berliner was a stranger in their own city,” (Braun 2015: 228). If some of these new migrants “chose” to live there, they were still “exiles” in search of freedom and found one riddled with contradictions. “I no longer think no one is from Berlin,” he says

The center of the city proper (transit zones A and B) houses the majority of the new residences, while the outskirts remain largely “real” Berliners.

¹⁸ “Berlin soll nicht mehr cool sein.” Frankfurter-Rundschau 10.03.2014

¹⁹ The echteberliner (real Berliner), another article claimed, was a process: they must “1) despise everything out side of Berlin, 2) be an artist, and 3) be different.”

“everyone is from Berlin.” (Ibid: 38) Berlin has emerged again, in the words of one writer, as a city that attracts people because of its “weirdness, perpetual incompleteness, and outlandishness,” ugliness then that “gives newcomers the feeling that there is still room for them...it is this peculiarity that makes Berlin the capital of creative people from around the world today.” (Schneider 2014: 8)

The cosmopolitanism that purported to make Berlin a global city²⁰ on the basis of its role in staging a world literature now threatened to make the city something other than itself. But during my fieldwork, the outbreak of the so-called European refugee crisis, also called into sharper refrain the problematic contradictions at the heart of such a politics. In 2014, protests against Germany’s asylum policies broke out largely around opposition to limited housing rights, and in response to a number of tragedies across Europe in which large numbers of refugees died in transit to the continent. At a moment when life in Berlin was characterized by so many conflictual forces, the literary appeared again as a site of highest tension. At the level of discourse and of everyday life, it was often through literature that ethical possibilities were articulated, and occlusions made

²⁰ While the classical scholarship on “global cities” has defined such urban spaces as nodes in post-industrial service economies and as hubs for the acceleration of both capital and hi-tech informational flows (Sassen 2001, 2005), Berlin’s claims to globality seem to be located elsewhere. For Sassen, major cities emerge in a new strategic role in the transforming global economy, as 1) “command points” of transnational flow, 2) as centers in financial and specialized service industry, 3) as “sites of production” at the leading edge of industrial innovation, and 4) as markets for these new products. Such a shift in the structure of economic circulation, Sassen hypothesized, meant also that the economic fortunes of the city became untethered from the hinterlands or national economic landscapes. (2001: 30) As Berlin has increasingly announced its aspiration to become a “global city”, several studies have revealed a number of economic obstacles when measured against the classical picture. (e.g. Kratke 2001; Kulke 2003) Rather than begin with the classical and most comprehensive picture of global cities, it starts by taking seriously Berlin’s own emphasis on cultural production (rather than economic wealth, global capital, telecommunications and financial institutions) as its claim to globality. If earlier research on the “global” treated globalization as a universalizing process that, while expressed within national boundaries, nevertheless transcends such local designations, making the local expressive of world-wide relations and processes (Kearney 1995), I ask how we might take specific histories and urban practices as not the touching point but the very grounds for the emergence of forms of globality.

manifest. I argue, moreover, that literature emerges in people, actions, and places outside anticipated structures of recognition.

Fieldwork in a Literary City

During two summers, in 2011 and 2012, I undertook exploratory and archival research in Germany, in Berlin and in Heidelberg, at first on the reception of the Mahabharata and Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, and subsequently on book culture and the antiquarian trade. My major fieldwork was undertaken between 2013 and 2014, during which time I lived in three districts of the city, one in the far west, one in the east, and one near the city center. Prior to arriving, I reclaimed my German citizenship under Article 116 II of the Grundgesetz (German Basic Law), which provides for those who had been deprived of their rights by racist purity laws during the period of Nazi fascism. My maternal grandmother had been a German citizen but was forced to leave the country and was stripped of her status under the Nuremberg Laws that declared Jews and many others inferior peoples. My paternal grandmother survived in the extermination camp at Auschwitz for several years; both grandfathers fled Nazi persecution by outwitting their officers. This personal history situated me in the field in a number of ways, and many upon discovering it, were keen to press me for more information.

Over the period of my research, I heard hundreds of readings, worked with writers, editors, publishers, booksellers and patrons in each of Berlin's twelve boroughs, and interviewed state culture officials. I also consulted state and private archives in Berlin, as well as in Heidelberg, Bonn and Frankfurt, and worked with staff from the

Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (Association of the German Book Trade). From state offices, I was able to secure demographic and economic data for the past several decades, as well as records for relevant court cases on artist's rights. Through the period of my work and in the years following, I produced a media archive of major national and local newspapers, journals, magazines, and flyers, collected posters and pamphlets, and received many books from friends. Participating in the circulation of texts allowed me to track the informal movement of different kinds of works through variably intimate social networks, as well as the relationship between forms of exchange and forms of literature. Where I have drawn on literary texts in the chapters, it has been as a reflection of their presence in the worlds through which I am moving.

The initial phases of the research mapped out networks across the city, during which time I visited salons, joined reading groups, and participated in local events, in order to map the larger landscape of literary activity in the city. During the first months, I visited bookstores throughout Berlin, participating not only in their daily traffic, but also cataloguing their collections, changes in their displays, and the patterns of interactions that took place. I became a member of several readings groups of various compositions and with different thematic organizations, in order to document collective reading practices. In the fall, I worked with writers in workshops organized near my residence, and a northern central borough of the city. I was also able to participate in a number of major events including the ILB, Buch Tage, and the Poesiefestival Berlin. Photographing literary work covering the physical terrain became an important way of understanding how space could be remade through literature, as did recordings of the soundscape that echoed from formal events and impromptu performances alike. Taking my cue from

Malinowski's famous suggestion that one take walks around the village during downtime, I made a method of long, circuitous jaunts through several nearby districts, registering the rhythms in which these literary impressions arose.

Having charted a broader set of relations, I identified a series of primary sites, where I conducted intensive fieldwork for the remainder of my time in Berlin, and which were chosen as cases that could offer critical angles on this larger landscape. I describe them in greater detail below, but in each, I found teachers and friends among those I encountered who were eager to educate me about their form of literary work. Some worked as literary professionals, earning a wage for their labor. Many earned salaries elsewhere but spent most of their time and energy on their literary pursuits. Still others encountered the literary life only fleetingly. I have come to think of these sites as offering fragments of life, in the sense not of mereological elements, but as whole in themselves, at once complete and incomplete.²¹ In each, I volunteered to help with the labor however I could, often setting up reading spaces, arranging schedules, introducing members, and serving beer. Many of the conversations and scenes throughout the dissertation, however, emerge outside of the official spaces of literary labor, in café and bars, public parks, basements, and apartments.

²¹ I borrow this definition from the Romantic characterization of the fragment. Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe describe it thus: "The fragment in itself, almost immediately, also sets forth the truth of the work...the relation of fragment to System, or better yet the absolute fragmentary grasping of the System thus depends on the dialectic concerning the Work taking place within the fragment. The fragment itself is a Work in a certain manner, or is at least 'like a small work of art,' inasmuch as it is meant to seize upon and 'sketch out' its own silhouette in everything – poem, period, science, morals, persons, philosophy – insofar as it has been formed (and has formed itself) into a work. (Hence the contrast and crucial motif of *Bildung* throughout the fragments, in its two values of formation as putting-into-form and formation as culture. Man and work of art alike are what they are only insofar as they are *gebildet*, having taken on the form and figure of what they ought to be. The motif of the 'education of the human race' is widened and transfigured in Jena, beyond Lessing, Herder and Schiller, in the motif of the total putting-into-form of an absolutely essential and absolutely individual humanity. (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1998) The fragment "alludes to a particular way of inhabiting the world," thereby "marking the impossibility" of an imagination of a whole (Das 2007:5)

Throughout my fieldwork, writers insisted regularly that I use their real names in my work. The majority of those who appear therefore are not pseudonyms. All others names have been changed. I have used German conventions for abbreviations. (e.g. DDR for the East German Deutsche Demokratische Republik, BRD for the Bundesrepublik Deutschland, CDU for the Christliche Demokratische Partei).

Overview of the Dissertation

The chapters of the dissertation are organized around a cast of characters who emerged through interlocking scenes of the city. Each corresponds to one of the fragmentary sites that grounded my major fieldwork.

Chapter One documents the daily work of the charismatic editor of a new literary magazine in Berlin, and shows how the archeology of a street is resurrected into living literary forms expressed in poems, fiction, and memoirs through writing, reading, and walking tours. The magazine is named for the *Flâneur*, the stroller of the French boulevard who became an important symbol of urban modernity, popularized early in the last century in Germany by writers like Hessel and through Benjamin's now famous commentary on Baudelaire. In the chapter, I compare what I think of as four *forms* of the Flâneur "technique" – as my interlocutors call it. First, I follow the Flâneur group through the research process whereby materials are garnered for writing. Here I show how Flâneur logic guides an inhabitation of the street, as the editor makes friends, conducts interviews, and finds himself in archives. In the second section, I take up a recurrent feature of the magazine, whereby the editor retraces his steps in a new form, providing a

kind of schematic picture of the walking that comprised his stay at various locations – I take as my example the version written for the inaugural issue on Kantstrasse in Berlin. Third, I provide an ethnographic account of the walking tour the editor leads based on the Kantstrasse issue, underlining how the same street can be recast in yet another way, as connections based not on semantic relations but on geographical proximity. I then turn my attention to the magazine’s understanding of their ancestors Hessel and Benjamin, moving between conversations with the editor and my own readings of the original texts. Through this, I show how the Flâneur of today’s Berlin is materially and conceptually distinct from its predecessors, even as it draws on similar logical structures. Building on the nature of these continuities and divergences, I show in the end how, like their ancestors, the Flâneur language ultimately breaks down as “literary” speech begins to fail. It is in these moments of failure, then, that we also begin to see the kinds of tensions that the “literary” is intended to transcend.

Chapter Two explores the relationship between the home and literature, by tracking how the experiences of multiple forms of exile are brought into an encounter within a literary space. In particular, it draws on my ethnography with a salon founded explicitly to make such encounters possible, engaging with their language of an “intimate space.” More acutely, it tries to think about Berlin as a place in which various experiences of writing in a state of exile are brought together in particular and occasionally challenging gestures. I draw out the slipperiness of exile as a category first through appeal to its vague status within the legal regime, and in particular through its relationship with associated terms like asylum. I turn then to the voices of my interlocutors, beginning with the case of the exile of German intellectuals in the Nazi

period (as well as their repatriation), in part to reinvigorate Said's path-breaking conception of "exilic consciousness" and partially to trouble it. In the second case, I try to think with one of the writers in Salon Exil whose life and work marks her experience out, not as a difference in degree but seemingly of kind from that of her German friends. I place her words in conversation with those of the philosopher Stanley Cavell's writing on the melodrama of the unknown women, thereby highlighting a very different arrangement of literary forms of life. For my friend, exile is not about searching (even unsuccessfully) for a state of rest or being at-home (in fact, she says, she brings her home with her anyway), but instead makes the literary life in exile a matter of being (un)able to bare one's self, to write at all. Finally, I come to the members of Salon Exil's circle of supporters, those East Germans whose Berlin has seemingly evaporated beneath their feet, and whose labor makes possible the communication of these two other exiles. In this last moment, I try to draw out what it is about Berlin, and in particular literature in Berlin, that makes such a coming together possible and what kind of work it requires.

In **Chapter Three** I draw on ethnographic work at the Autorenbuchandlung, a bookshop in the old West, that was opened in 1976 by a collective of some of Germany's most celebrated writers, in order to resist the "flattening" of the book trade, and to protect a space for art and political critique. The Berlin bookshop is one of hundreds of independent bookstores and small-scale publishers who have resisted the concentration of capital in the book market in Germany and found niches with local reading publics. I provide two pictures of a Kiez (neighborhood) bookshop, in which there appears a conscious effort to resist the encroachment of global capital and its associated forms of social organization. Rhetorically, at least, two aims seem distinct – on the one hand, to

preserve the boundaries of a social body, as my friend tells me “the village in the world city”, and on the other, the defense of the authentic art-work against commoditization. Second, I will try to flesh out some of the economic context that makes these scenes possible, by appeal to the peculiar mode of book production adopted by law in the German state. I suggest that the history of regulating the book trade lays bare the material conditions of the ideologies of art we encounter in the first part of the Chapter. Following the language used by most of the people I knew who were involved in the production and sales of books, I trace how these political and economic policies make possible a form of life predicated on the value of art itself. The bookshop is, neither in daily life nor in discourse, simply a site of economic transaction, though it is this too. More importantly, strict commodity exchange is displaced by an economic logic that grounds and simultaneously is grounded in a social network of the neighborhood, the Kiez, through an alignment with judgments of aesthetic value. The value of social relations, and the value of the artwork thus become merged in an oblique relation to the commodity value.

In Berlin, live performance has become a central component of the literary landscape, from large-scale events with clamorous soundscapes to the poetry stages, to readings that take place in nearly every bookshop in the city. In **Chapter Four**, I examine how being present to hear literature comes to be understood as crucial to a literary form of life. Drawing on my experiences in a workshop that supports young and established poets in the former East, I show how for many Berliner, the sound of the human voice is understood to engender an alternative form of intimacy. Founded in 1991, the Literature Workshop was established to explore poetry as what exceeds the written word, hosting readings and cross-media installations. I argue that these scenes of poetic

performance challenge us to nuance the terms of debates that have dominated thinking about the social forms literature engenders. For one, anthropological approaches to the division of oral and written literature have established the durability of the semantic content of the code in memory (internal in the first case, external in the second) as a reflection of concerns about the stability of social organization. Such efforts have been, in my view, part and parcel of the re-definition of “text” through the separability of sign clusters from the context of their utterance. Second, a number of literary theorists have turned to the language of “stranger sociality” to describe the mode of relating germane to encounters with texts, a notion which seems to suggest that literary intimacies are mere fantasies. My fieldwork suggests that in each case – for memory, intimacy, and the relationship between them – durability is not necessarily what is at stake. Instead, my aim here is to take seriously both non-semantic forms of memory, and the intimacy of little moments.

In the **Conclusion**, I return to the literary life as a question of the mutual imbrication of aesthetics and ethics. Reading the history of these questions in Germany alongside a return to the form of life, I suggest that the work of the dissertation might understand in the register of an ordinary aesthetics. I begin by asking how anthropology might become literature and yet still know itself. Drawing on Wittgenstein’s language of a form of life, I argue that the binaries that mark characterizations of the literary – truth and fiction, the ordinary and the fantastic, aesthetics and ethics – are expressions of deeper agreements in the given. What literature gives to life then is a route through which to remake the world.

CHAPTER ONE

The Flaneur In the Footsteps of Memory

Je ne puis méditer qu'en marchant, sitôt que je m'arrête, je ne pense plus, et ma tête ne va qu'avec mes pieds. / I can only ponder while walking, as soon as I stop, I think no longer, and my head only goes with my feet. (J-J. Rousseau, Confessions IX)

More than two decades after reunification, Berlin is a city torn between an aspiration to become a global center of art and a continuing struggle with its fascist past. It is also the capital of a Germany that has long since manifested a paradigmatic identity with the literary life. The impulse to define life in the metropole through literature is unsurprisingly then a crucial site where the burdens of history and imaginations of the future are negotiated through attention to the present. Connections between past, present and future, my friend Fabian²² – an artist-editor of a Berliner literary magazine – taught me, could be rendered literary in daily life through a special logic of walking. This chapter aims to show how these relations unfold through Fabian's work to bring alive moments of the past; moments retrieved through their traces in material artifacts, as solid as buildings and fragile as old posters, photographs, or discarded menu cards, and in crumbling monuments hidden from public sight. This artistic labor is effected through a reinhabitation of a literary approach first conceived centuries earlier in the birth throes of

²² The space I afford Fabian's voice throughout this chapter, the seriousness with which I take his readings, is testament to conception of ethnography as essentially collaborative, and anthropology as providing us modes through which to think *with* art about the world, rather than *about* it or its uses for representation.

the modern European city, but now emergent against the backdrop of a traumatic history that has proven difficult to absorb.

For early sociology, the city embodied the “modern” form of conflict between individual consciousness and the “sovereign powers of society”; the “violent stimuli,” the “rapid crowding of changing images,” the continually shifting presences of strangers that surround metropolitan life beget an “intellectualist character,” a kind of defense mechanism against the sovereign power of the city. (Simmel 1903) The development of this attitude moreover could not be extricated from the rise of the money economy, from the capitalization of social life, alienation and the “indifference to difference” that made every stranger like every other. Such a collapse of spatial, geographical distance meant the displacement of distance itself to the internal world, in Guy Debord’s (1967) view, as a “spectacular separation²³.” On the streets of Paris in the long 19th century, the trappings of modern life came to be associated with one walker in particular, the Flâneur, whose strolls down the boulevard expressed bourgeois leisure and life in a city more generally, where one could disperse into anonymity, lost in the faces of the crowd. Through Baudelaire, the great poet of modernity and Paris, the Flâneur became the sign of the alienation of capital, torn between his positions as “disengaged and cynical voyeur on the one hand” and an artist deftly entering the lives of his subjects, on the other. (Harvey 2003: 14) The artistry of his jaunts enabled the Flâneur to effect collapses and erasures, not just across geographical space, but also time. He incarnated anachrony into the material of the street, folding the modern into the past through memory, rejecting the

²³ My emphasis. Debord’s fragmentary text(s) traces the replacement of Société with an illusory representation, a degradation he laments and which could be overcome through the skillful use of techniques like *détournement*. In a similar vein, Debord’s *dérive* is a kind of ambling through the streets to recover its particularities, and to dislodge the city from its capitalistic-utilitarian levelling-down.

“self-enunciative authority of any technically reproduced image” (Seale 2005) in favor of the literary encounter, thereby remaining out of step with the crowd that was the condition under which he had been born and to which he owed his literary existence. Despite the particularity of post-Revolutionary Paris, however, the Flâneur was to soon dissolve into the category of modernity in general, due in part to modern life’s “saturation” with the perceptual attitude he embraced. (Buck-Morss 1986: 104) When the Flâneur re-emerged in Berlin in the 1920s, in the work and person of writers like Franz Hessel and Walter Benjamin, it was again out of place, literarily, politically or otherwise – something foreign, outmoded and ill-fit for the realities of an inter-war economy. As Kracauer (1930) would say, the Flâneur tried to call urbanites away from emergent distraction industries in favor of a more embodied, immediate, and mindful inhabitation.

But this famous iteration was not a mere copy of its predecessor; the Flâneur had been transformed, acutely aware of its own emergence from a singular condition. This time too the figure was short lived, forced out of a world shattered by the rise of Nazi fascism. If the Flâneur of old walked in order to observe to the world while remaining himself invisible, disguised by the crowds, such a discreet witnessing took on a new burden in the era of fascism, as preserving for the collective consciousness the sight of terrible violence. The strategy of writing memory from the street level view allows, as de Certeau (1984) famously showed, for an everyday *rhetoric* that breaks the dominant narrative: these procedures, this rhetoric of walking, combines various styles - that is, symbolic manifestations of ways of being-in-the-world, and uses, crystallizations of these communications as “actual facts.” (161) This allows the walker to tell a story in the gaps

of official discourse, spatial arrangements, and symbolic orders – a power all the more crucial in a place that is, on the surface, so determined not to let the reality of fantastic stories of violence slip away, but which in the very act of establishing *the* story of the past reveals its unwillingness to let those experiences breathe.

Drawing together Ernst Bloch's language of "nonsynchronous contradictions" with Susan Buck-Morss' reading of Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*, Michael Taussig (1986: 166) suggests such contradictions "come to life where qualitative changes in a society's mode of production animate images of the past in the hope of a better future." Paraphrasing Bloch on the rise of German fascism, Taussig cites the "impoverishment of the Left in regard to revolutionary fantasy" that "made it an accomplice in its own defeat," and from which Germany might learn a lesson, if it were to put to better use the utopic images that, while "stimulated by the present, refer to the past in a radical way" thereby making possible the transfiguration of the promise for a future otherwise blocked by present conditions. (167) The space of redemption is thereby shifted from the individual to what Rochelle Tobias (2012: 665, 679:) calls the "mystical now and punctual present," a possibility she reads as located in the "shining (*das Scheinen*) in the night sky [that] symbolizes for Benjamin the possibility of freedom from all semblance (*Schein*) in a realm beyond art – in life or the ethical sphere." The possibility for a future rests (first with the poet and then the historical materialist) in the fanning of what Benjamin calls "the spark of hope in the past," "signs of a life that is not constrained by the representations of art or the political order." (Tobias 2012: 680) Thinking revolution thus takes on a very different character.

I first encountered another modality of the Flâneur in 2013, in the person of Fabian, who while regarding himself as a literary descendant of Hessel's, occupied an entirely different Berlin; a city that, in the wake of the events of the 20th century, demanded a different sort of engagement. Part of the booming population of young Germans but also expatriate artists in the city, Fabian was like many of his peers caught by the awkward political economic and racially problematic conditions of the city. But the seemingly bourgeois status of the white, masculine face in an increasingly gentrified city where newcomers are conditionally welcomed on the basis of their potential for economic independence and "good behavior," is not merely a farcical repetition of the Baudelairean dandy. In his introduction to a new edition of Hessel's *Spazieren in Berlin*, Reininghaus (in Hessel 2013[1930]) suggests that Berlin is now a "capital of walkers." The rhythms of red traffic lights adorned with the familiar little man (the Amplemann) present impediments to free movement and dangers and obstacles to the walker's aesthetic pursuits abound. The "real Berliner [echte Berliner]," he writes, distinguish themselves primarily by the skillful manner in which they form arcs around the homeless, the newspaper salesmen, the child or animal rights activists who want a signature, and the groups of tourists. Like the Berlin of the 1920s, Berlin today is also home to, and in many ways defined by, people whose lives started elsewhere – a parallel that, combined with the rapid pace of everyday life in urban spaces, Reininghaus thinks mark it, perhaps surprisingly²⁴ as the ideal sort of place for a Hesselian-Flâneur logic to emerge.²⁵

²⁴ This is in reference to the leisurely-ness often ascribed to Flanerie and the "indifference to difference" of the city.

²⁵ In a similar gesture, an April 2014 episode of the German radio program Forum SWR2 convened an on-air discussion asking whether we might think of the Flâneur as a form of life (Lebensform²⁵), if such people were now extinct, and either way, how they inform contemporary modes of inhabiting the city. Tina Saum, who herself had founded a "laboratory for Flanerie" in Stuttgart and occasionally in Berlin, declares that Flâneur has now again, as it tends to do, been revived [wiederbeleben] – a suggestion that reminds the

Yet Berlin is also a city with an increasingly complicated relation to its own history of violence. The popular notion of the Sonderweg, the “special path” that lead Germany from the height of civilization to the worst human catastrophe, long did away with the possibility of an unproblematic reclaiming of even seemingly untainted accomplishments. The capital of what newspapers call the strongest political power in Europe, Berlin is still not the command center of technocratic or financial networks that conventionally mark global cities. (Krätke 2001) Home to huge immigrant populations and welcoming historic numbers of cultural tourists since the early 1990s, Berlin has instead made itself global by encouraging the migration of culture producers. Driven by a compulsion to mark its shame, the city erected enormous numbers of memorials, and much debate has arisen among dominated or victimized groups as each staked a claim on the landscape of acknowledgment, leading to even further construction of memorials. These two forces – the suffusion of space with shame, and the desire to open itself to the world – are interwoven in singular gestures.

During my fieldwork with artists and writers in Berlin, the Flaneur (alongside other characters, like the exile and bookseller) guided me to myriad ways the *literary* becomes a modality of life in the city, and I learned to encounter these characters in the streets and not merely as frozen figures within the bindings of a book, real or fictional lives to think alongside. What might it be to think the city through walking and reading in a way embedded not only in the dense immediacy of stranger socialities but also in the historical past? Individual manifestations of the Flâneur, I argue, cannot be understood simply in terms of a universal process of modernity or “Flâneur attitude” that transcends

moderator of Benjamin’s review of Hessel’s the “Return of the Flâneur” [*Wiederkehr des Flâneur*]. The discussion turns again to the freedom required to do what one wants. It is suggested by another participant that the Flâneur speaks to something we have lost.

national boundaries. In Berlin, where the politics of memory and its public discourse require overt acknowledgments of guilt, evinced everywhere in the mass proliferation of memorization and in constant reference to the violence of the Holocaust in political discourse, the desire to make history present (as in the Romanticism of the French Flâneur or an earlier Germany) is torn in radically opposing directions. We look backward ourselves against forgetting devastating atrocities, as well as to reclaim more ancient poetic genius.

How do we receive history, and how do artists in the city recast this relation? Literature and history, artists teach us, need not be radically opposed, nor unified as pure functions of the imagination. The struggle is to define a semantic domain of the Flâneur, not as versions of a myth in one single medium, but as an idea that moves between mediums and between times and spaces, as they are produced in the work of art, negotiated through a new form of “historical and archival production.” (Bonilla 2011) Like the region of rumor, something about this domain of language seems to have the “potential to make us experience events, not simply by pointing to them as to something external, but rather by producing them in the very act of telling.” (Das 2007:108) In a recent essay, Roma Chatterji and Ein Lall (2014) suggest that some experiences, for example those of traumatic pain, must go beyond words. In their experimentation with multiple mediums – texts, dance, photography and anthropological reflection – “multiple translations” make it “possible to address the deformation of language that a traumatic event creates, moving the body in pain to occupy other modes of habitation.” Chatterji and Lall’s dancers are responding to a pain that is pointed to but unregistered in texts on the experience of devastating violence – in so doing their bodies are made to register that

pain, not as a simple repetition or reconstitution of everyday life (or, as they say too, a recreation of a world), but rather “the world that is being coproduced here is a shadow world, a world made stranger by speech that is untethered from its source.”

This performative possibility of achieving something that cannot be registered otherwise, is, I think, helpful in understanding the kind of work that Fabian’s literary labor achieves, in juxtaposition with other domains of language that fail to register even those pains they seek ostensibly to mark. I found that walking the streets with Fabian and his colleagues was an experience in which, at each moment, figures from the past swelled up owing to their associations with particular buildings or specific spots through a kind of literary labor that Fabian and Flâneur performed. Each moment, it seemed, contained multiple times. This walking enacts what Fabian describes as literary connections between places and times, effecting, in Andrew Irving’s language (2007: 193) a “creative play of place”; these decisions made in a practice of walking (and perhaps writing) allow events and experiences to emerge from the past, not just from an individual’s memory but also the collective’s, adding *mnemographic* depth to the lived experiences of a place. The densities that accumulate vary according to various forces, the character of the memories, the material of the street, the ambitions of the author.

In the forms of the Flâneur I present here, every moment has both a vertical and a horizontal axis. Each moment, to put it another way, has more than just a duration – there is also a way in which figures swell up owing to their associations but also through a kind of literary labor that Fabian and *Flâneur* perform. I hope to show ethnographically how multiple forms of the Flâneur emerge: those employed by Fabian, as well as those expressed in 1920s, by writers who *Flâneur* engaged continually and explicitly during

our walks, at times as ancestors and at others as artifacts of a different world. Focusing on Fabian's various walks along a major Berlin thoroughfare, Kanstrasse, I will first trace how Fabian conceives of his project in terms of forging literary connections between concrete elements he finds on the street. By comparing his research, the texts he produces, and the re-imagination of the text back into a physical walk (as a tour), I will try to trouble distinctions between the literary and real without fully collapsing them into each other. In the final sections, I will explore how an internal limit of the literary forces shifts in the registers of Fabian's language, in particular how the ethical project of engaging a difficult history surfaces in ordinary, rather than poetic, forms.

The Weave of Memory

The politics of memory, and its relation to the work of art in the contemporary global city, is a theme that remains central to anthropological, sociological and literary thought. And it is no surprise that any number of approaches to memory work have emerged in the past few decades, particularly in relation to trauma, through an engagement with urban experiences. Andreas Huyssen (1994; 2003) has suggested this alignment of the city as the site of a certain kind of memory work through art, arises from emergent crises in the ways the past has been kept in the past, the security of which was ensured through material traces in the built environment. If *history* allowed for the stability of a transitory and present modernity by fixing a narrative of historical time, *memory*, in the hands of poets, seems occupied with the hauntings of that past. It is memory, not history, Huyssen famously argues, that is hypertrophied in the contemporary moment, as an act more and

more commonly associated with our actions in the present. If history is no guarantor that the horrors of the past will not be repeated, the argument goes, why should our “notoriously unreliabl[e]” memory (2003) be any better? The solution can rest, he continues, neither with Nietzsche’s creative forgetting, nor with a preoccupation with the future, as in the triumphalist, neoliberal discourse of globalization.

Memory work²⁶ in the age of hypertrophy might just as easily lead to a melancholic fixation on trauma, to a self-indulgence of the present. For Huyssen, the dominance of trauma has been a symptom of its position at the threshold of remembering and forgetting, and threatens to eclipse the larger functions of memory work – a threat manifest in the ways the Holocaust has been read as the “ultimate cipher of traumatic unspeakability,” and which could lead to the making-traumatic of the whole history of modernity, victimizing subjects universally and somehow denying their agency. Huyssen, like many in Europe, puts his faith in the redemptive power of human rights discourse (rather than psychoanalytic categories), because its “function” is to allow peoples to break from traumatic repetition. Art seems to share this function. He remains convinced, as has much recent scholarship on memory, that memory discourse and their forms of labor are “absolutely essential to imagine the future and to regain a strong temporal and spatial grounding of life and the imagination in a media and consumer society that increasingly voids temporality and collapses space.” (Huyssen 2003:6) Implicit in such a framework, however, is a picture of modernity and life in the city that reproduces elements of the discourses we seem otherwise keen to avoid, notably that technology and globalization are *now* shrinking space and evacuating time; tropes thoroughly critiqued

²⁶ Litzinger (1998) develops this term in light of Yao Chinese cultural politics, to emphasize the ways in which the past becomes “objectified in different cultural forms” (226) but includes among these, land and the body.

by anthropological and sociological literature on the category of modernity and which my ethnography in Berlin suggests to me we ought finally move beyond. Whatever the critique of trauma theory, the alternative proposed by scholars of cultural memory seems impotent to break free from the dichotomous structure of speaking and silence. Ethnographic studies on memory in Berlin, while important for having revealed the multiplicity of place²⁷ in the era of transformation (Weszkalnys 2010) and the tensions that rest at the heart of their construction (Till 2005), have likewise rested on languages of public/private, space/time, personal/impersonal or memory/history.²⁸ My suggestion here is that these categories seem inadequate to the lived experiences of my interlocutors, for whom this promise of art to free them from the “repetitions” of trauma carried at its heart a limit that has been missed by research, especially in Berlin, which has focused largely on how such memory work “pervades real public space” (Huysen 2003).

If we follow Huysen, these connections come into clearer refrain as we notice that the concrete figures of the built environment in the metropole are increasingly treated as palimpsests of space. This palimpsestic nature has always, he suggests, been an

²⁷ The emphasis on making place has also been shown to be shot through with forces that produce difference, like race (Lewis 2001), allowing for various extremes of political possibility, from the democratization of publics to the covering up of structural violence. Interestingly, the anthropology of memory has also inherited much of literary studies’ emphasis on the problematique of transnationality as constituted in knowledge practices that were conventionally thought principally a site of national imaginaries. (e.g. Schwenkel 2006)

²⁸ Unlike research in other parts of the world, ethnographic work on memory in Berlin almost exclusively focuses on the built environment, and the lives that have produced the new urban landscape. At the same time, literary studies like Huysen’s, which overcome this emphasis on processes like memorialization, can be complimented by the sensitivity to life that that ethnography brings. At the same time, the most well known and nuanced ethnographies of Berlin (Boyer 2005; Borneman 1989) are grounded in an entirely different moment in the development of the city and its practices of history-writing, the period of reunification, which while crucially reverberating still, bear now a different relation to the broader category of past that is under interrogation here – especially since in the last decade the population of the city has become considerably younger, and their memories of the Wall more reliant on secondary accounts. And while the best anthropology of Europe in the age of “post-socialism” has poignantly unpacked problems of the ownership of history, and the refractions of large political oppositions (Herzfeld 1991; Watson 1994; Verdery 1996) I have resisted beginning from such determined narratives in hopes of taking the Flaneur’s ordinary, literary politics as seriously as I can, to allow concepts to emerge from the encounter.

inalienable feature of literary works. For Huyssen, this literary nature of the palimpsest need not mean we read the city as text, but instead that it might be taken from literature and applied to the nature of urban space. If memory studies have been positioned against the criticisms of deconstructivist literary criticism and architecture concerning the imperialism of *écriture*, I am perfectly willing to accept, at least provisionally, the Romantic spirit in which not just concrete structures, but *life* might be made literary as an ethnographic reality. I have no interest, however, in suggesting anything like the redemptive potential of such a life. Instead, I want to show simply how the literary is a feature of ordinary life, which though it provides it certain possibilities, is not an escape from it. Rather than think of memory work as a negotiation of a problematic tension between binaries bound together, like space and time, public and private, remembering and forgetting, I want to shift the terms of analysis by suggesting these categories are, in their very essence, interwoven – they are neither collapsible into one another, nor are they strictly different experiences in an oppositional struggle. What would it mean to think of the language of memory as unfolding, as defined by a constant work, without needing to work *toward* a durable structure of time?

How to Talk About a Street

Along with his girlfriend, Grashina, and friend Ricarda (now the group's publisher), Fabian helped found a literary magazine around the concept of exploring one city street at a time. Fabian had studied philosophy, and had been involved in film and music projects throughout Berlin for several years. Fabian and Grashina reminded me of many young

artists I knew in the city – a generation eager to explore the world through the production of cultural forms, and lacking the tick of nostalgia for the DDR that marked the speech of the previous generation. The economic condition of the city made it possible for them to live comfortably without having to take up time-consuming forms of labor – like many others, they often worked odd jobs and spent most of their time on passion projects that turned little profit, like *Flâneur*, which sold just enough copies to reproduce itself and to occasionally add a feature or two. As a reading public developed, the group agreed quickly on a “literary” or “subjective” perspective on urban space, a concept they later identified with the Flâneur. *Flâneur* became the young journal’s title. The initial print run was humble – the team was not expecting an immediate demand and ordered only a few hundred copies from their printer. Despite their modest vision, *Flâneur*’s first issue on the life and history of the nearly two and half kilometer Kantstrasse sold out in just days. Surprised and delighted by the reaction of their reading public, Fabian and our mutual friend had developed the idea of a walking incarnation of the issue as a literary tour, a re-imagination of the concept that seemed nevertheless a natural extension.

A stray thought emerged one day suddenly from Fabian: “what if something as seemingly stable and real as a city street were instead a fragment, some place between an empirical reality and a fiction, a dream and a routine, a present and a past?” In this way, as I heard frequently, we cannot say “this is Kantstrasse” but rather “this could be Kantstrasse.” This refrain was to become the banner motto for the tour and the magazine alike. Reflecting back on the origin of the magazine, Fabian recalled Ricarda’s epiphany as she awakened to a particular experience of the streets she had always known but now saw through new eyes.

Ricarda was travelling back and forth between Berlin and New York at the time and coming back to her old neighborhood in Charlottenburg, she realized that, for the first time, she started walking the streets of her childhood with open eyes and an actual interest for the place she grew up in (the first glance is a very Flâneurish perspective...) G(rashina) and me came on ... and we worked out a concept that would take the street as the fragmented [micro]cosm that it is. We were not much interested in providing guidance... taking the street not as a logical linear construct, but a territory that most of the time is only accessible through various historic layers, by embracing the randomness and the disturbing parts of it, by looking at it subjectively and allow ourselves to reorder things in a rather literary sense that finds itself at the edge of facts and fiction - all stories do I believe.

Flaneuring [*Flanieren*], then, is what Fabian calls a technique²⁹ of thought. It is a strategy of experiencing a place that Fabian often references in opposition to others, such as those of the journalist, and the travel guide writer. Indeed, for Fabian, the technique is not just about the aesthetics of walking, but a way in which to inhabit the world, or at least the city. As Benjamin famously wrote, losing one's self in a city requires some education, an art he called *Irrkunst* (art of erring). For Fabian, this art takes on another valence. "We are always mirroring ourselves," he often said, "you get rid of the idea that you have to tell the truth." He described this mirroring as a projection, a literary play with the connections between material objects, characters in the world, and historical events, that isn't beholden to the truth. The street for him becomes a screen, where a literary labor is free to play with the elements it finds there, and thus these new relations, for Fabian, bear the marks of their creator's subjectivity – they are a kind of therapy. Yet the relationship between the fictive and the real is more complicated than it appears - as I will explore below, Flaneur's work rests on extensive research, gathering stories, plumbing

²⁹ Fabian's educational background is clearly inflected in his deployment of the language of techniques. Shades of the Platonic notion of *techne* as productive of reflexive knowledge, and the Aristotelian association with disposition (*hexis*), as that which brings into existence as a form of reasoning, come hand in hand with Foucault's recalibration of *techne* as technology, as the governance of practical rationality by conscious end.

archives, conducting interviews, collaborations, and concrete experiences with the street's denizens. It is not entirely untethered from the world as he finds it. This is all the more significant in a place that historically turned, and contemporarily turns to intellectuals as a symbol of local culture. (Boyer 2005)

Fabian regularly insisted on the tangible nature of the interaction with the street as a mode of turning back, and the resistance he found in the matter of the street as part and parcel of the adoption of the *spirit* of the Flâneur, even if its materiality is distinct. Each version (walking for research, the text as walk, the tour) seeps into the other in occasionally unexpected ways – Fabian's understanding of the Flâneur technique changes from his experiences working on new issues, new stories are provoked on the tour from participants, while he is writing for one issue he is planning the next and selling the last all while revisiting Kantstrasse.

The Making of a Walk in Words

In order to trace how these literary connections are forged, let me turn to a series of stories, elements of Kantstrasse, as they were picked up, arranged and re-arranged; first in the team's research, then in a written text, and finally as the text is brought back to the street on a tour. In each case, it is the relations between elements that find new incarnations; a bricoleur-like play with what are nevertheless relatively motivated components.

For Fabian and *Flâneur*, the process of producing an issue begins with the selection of a street to explore. With a map of the city in hand, the group walks the

streets, allowing each to make an impression on them, some bad and some good. It could be anything that draws them in. George-Schwarz-Strasse is often the example as everyone shared a feeling of uneasiness there, a sensation they described as “cinematic,” like a horror movie where a kind of imminent danger hung over the place. It takes two months to gather materials from the street - half of the issue will consist of work produced by the team, while the rest is contracted with local artists. Funding secured from their publisher Ricarda’s private funds (and in recent months, from the Goethe Institute as part of their ongoing efforts to export German culture), work begins in earnest when the walking begins. One day, an Italian journalist came to interview Fabian about his work, asking whether the first view of a place when the team arrives was somehow privileged, free of the judgments that burden later walks. “Is it undistorted?” he inquired. Over coffee, Fabian explained to me why the journalist had misunderstood the project. “Well, I do think it’s very powerful, and there’s a kind of naiveté in the child’s view of seeing something for the first time...but I think it’s not a distortion, because that is, exactly what it is. Even if you’re a child...you’re already a container filled with all sorts of influences.” In the Flâneur technique, every perspective is as much a part of the picture as every other. “All of these stories are super personal, and that’s why people can understand them somewhere else. It is because they are subjective and not objective.”

Kantstrasse was an obvious choice – it was a familiar street in a familiar city, but one with compelling layers of history. Kantstrasse itself was built at the end of the 19th century as part of an effort to make the Charlottenburg district feel more Parisian. Running east-west from the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche near Breitscheidplatz to the district court, the street has had many lives; as a center for theatre and arts at the turn

of the century, de nomine “Chinatown” (or Cant-on-strasse) in the 20s, site of a Nazi jail in the 40s, and architectural experiment in the 1950s. After the Wall fell in 1989, the city’s center of gravity shifted eastward leaving the street less crowded, and its once ahead-of-the-times aesthetic now a strangely unoccupied exhibit of bygone sensibilities.

Much of the first month is taken up with walking the block, wandering in stores and spending time with whoever enters. Each person Fabian meets, he asks to arrange a time to sit and talk over coffee; his desire, he explains, is to become “part of the street.” In the course of researching Kantstrasse, Fabian had sung with a men’s choir for Easter at the local Baptist church, hung around his favorite coffee shops and evening haunts, and spent hours eating and drinking with locals and playing football with children from local schools. One follows on sparks of friendship as a method, he said. “We’re really interested in not having that distance, or to kind of overcome it. At least to not be intruders. Because journalism is very exploitative sometimes just for economic reasons because of the time they take. But the more time you take the less exploitative you become.” This process, I often joke with Fabian feels a lot like ethnography. Occasionally he goes to readings in the local shops as well, leading him not just to more stories but also to collaborations for *Flâneur*.

When we met up in May, Fabian had been to a barbershop on a new street already more than fifteen times, spending afternoons there, watching people come and go, and getting to know the barber. One day, over a bottle of wine, the proprietor mutters “I should charge twice, once for the haircut, and a second for therapy” and against the backdrop of the series of chairs facing mirrors, an idea was sparked. On a normal day, customers find themselves staring at their own faces for uncanny lengths of time – today

the barber would take their chair in an empty shop, watched by a camera, and speak in a stream of consciousness about his life, his business, and the neighborhood. At the end, it is decided not to use stills from the film, but rather that someone would return later to take photographs of the various objects around the shop that are referenced in the monologue and that these would be “sculpted” alongside the transcript. “It sounds very archaeological, the work...there’s an interior of the self and there’s the sculpture he creates of himself.”

Part of the daily work of producing *Flâneur* Fabian calls “directing” with elements. One afternoon it is decided to explore how side streets interact with the mainline through photography. As the shots are arranged for a number of streets, it begins to draw late and the light is no longer sufficient, but without adequate equipment and with no time to waste concern begins to set in. Fabian quickly decides to call friends he’s been making during the past few weeks of walking, and asks them to drive their cars to a nearby intersection. When they arrive, Fabian begins to conduct an orchestra, lining cars up in different arrangements at each cross street, quickly snapping photos and then realigning shots. In the end he preserved the light information while removing the cars, leaving just the “stage lighting” on each street. “Sometimes it’s about just seeing the vision of the place.”

One afternoon in Charlottenburg, Fabian found himself walking, head down, and noticed scuffed Stolpersteine outside an apartment building at Kantstrasse 120-121. These “stumbling stones” were monuments created by Gunter Demnig, marking the homes of victims of Nazi violence, and Fabian had, unlike those passing by too busy to look,

stumbled upon such a mark of violent history. Bending down, he read the inscriptions: “Here lived Julius Tauber, b. 1906 – deported 29.10.1941. Lodz/Litzmanstadt. Died 28.10.1944.” Alongside the first, a stone for Erna Ewer. How did these stones get here? What happened to this family? Did they survive? He decided not to let this story lay here unattended and returned home to search for the victim’s family. Archives in the Berlin district office provided him a skeletal story – Erna lived with her daughter Ruth, son-in-law Julius and grandson Michael, and was deported to Poland where she was killed. Her daughter, Ruth, survived a stay in Auschwitz, ultimately immigrating to the United States with her son, Michael, who had managed to survive. Through diligent pursuit of connections and some luck, Fabian succeeded in finding the boy Michael’s phone number (still in exile across the Atlantic) and decided to call. When the now old man answered the phone, Fabian’s face dropped in surprise.

In the conversation that ensued Michael described the house in great detail – “there is a large door, three panels with windows, walk straight there is an elevator, one of the old ones with a gate and lever...upstairs you’ll find the apartment just off the landing to the left, it faces the street.” Fabian hurried back to the street and followed a resident into the building. He followed Michael’s memories through the hall, slowly making his way up a small staircase and resting his hand on the banister, pausing briefly at each door. When he arrived at the unit where the Tauber’s once lived, he knocked gently. A man of probably thirty answered in answered in a thick Swiss accent. “Was darf’s sein?” [Can I help you?] Fabian told the man he had come to see the apartment where Nazi victims had lived, and wondered if he could look around. But the man’s face

remained blank, unmoved; he found the request strange, and Fabian was forced to turn about. The walk ended.

Michael, it turned out, had sent the stones to be placed on Kantstrasse in 2010 but had not been there to see them. Passing his eyes over them again as he left, Fabian decided to polish the bronze stones. He took pictures before and after and put them in the issue.

“There are always quite a lot of dead figures.” Archive work tails the interviews, meetings, and artistic work. Fabian tries to piece together every reference, and search out the local histories implied in each story he collects. Often this means consulting a large amount of historical scholarship, and Fabian’s publisher often has to temper his enthusiasm for the material in order to help Fabian focus on feasible aims given their compressed publishing schedule. Fabian tests his knowledge frequently – in Canada this took the form of engaging in the ongoing national elections. In bars and cafes, Fabian tries to provoke discussion and debate with locals on the latest issues. One evening at a reception for the Goethe Institute, which had provided funding for the project, Fabian gets embroiled in a heated back and forth with another attendee, bordering at times on outright confrontation. “I was playing it a bit on the edge because this is the first night where I can have that [kind of debate] now and he wasn’t just telling me ‘oh you just don’t understand this place’ ... it’s a good moment because I felt like I did my homework.” During the research, Fabian carries a large unlined sketchbook around everywhere he goes. Notes from every interview, and every encounter, are sprawled widely across the page in pencil. Each note is either marked with dashes or surrounded in

a bubble, and often punctuated with a date and a notation for further research. At times, a red pen can distinguish layers of work.

Small Texts and Footsteps

While working on an earlier project, Grashina, Fabian's girlfriend, had begun a technique of collecting tiny observations, chance encounters or conversations on snippets of paper, which she then compiled randomly throughout the text. These traces of a walk "[tell] a story without really telling a story" she told me. Grashina decided to continue jotting down thoughts or encounters, "[scattering] these pages throughout the magazine to create an atmosphere of an actual petit Flaneur strolling through the magazine." The idea to place them alongside, around or throughout the other pieces in the volume, rather than giving them their own conventional text block came later. Grashina writes her fragments as Fabian and she work, but they are not inserted until the end of the design phase. Her fragments were dotted throughout the text as Fabian put together, in the final hours, his own sort of walk in words, a recurring piece called *Traces of Resistance*, which served as an artifact of the process of putting the entire issue together. It was Fabian's way of making his way through the story of writing the issue, a walk then not just in texts but through them. The two sit side by side in the final version – hers throughout *Flâneur*, on the sides, tops and bottoms of pages, climbing through crevices between words, slinking their way alongside the movement of other pieces, down side streets.

Now we do a mix, some fragments are still found on other spreads and some are clumped together on a separate page...There is no order. I find the fragments really reflect the nature of the street or rather how I interact with the street. The

first issue had a lot of conversation snippets of people in bars as I spent a lot of time in this one particular bar. The Leipzig street was a pretty desolate street so the fragments become more abstract and dramatic. For the Montreal issue I took the fragments to a more narrative level. I don't know if you've seen the new issue yet? I got this real sense of being an identity-free person in a place that is so very much about where you are from, what you believe in etc....so I couldn't help but imagine what it would have been like to have grown up there. So there is this narrator who imagines from being a baby to hitting adolescence, the lines between imagining and reality are blurred and it's all sort of fantastical. These appear in a chronological order and live on their own pages. They have a different color to the short more random fragments. I don't know yet if I will continue this. I just wanted to experiment with a more narrative style and immediately had a story to tell in Montreal. I have no idea how readers have reacted to them...I am more into a very direct, non-frilly writing style which works for the fragments, and in that sense Fabian and my writing really bounce off each other as his is very philosophical, descriptive and poetic. A lot heavier than my writing.

At the bottom of the final page of the Kantstrasse *Traces*, one of Grashina's tiny texts culminated her walk alongside his, in her own font and position.

»Manfred, how are your hemorrhoids? You feeling any better?«
His drinking kept him from getting to the hospital to get those nasty fuckers cut off * My question calls forth an annoyed sigh from the bar lady * Others erupt in excited chatter * His hemorrhoids are apparently the topic / No operation * »I've cut down on drinking and smoking« His butt – fine.

Traces, through which Fabian gives an account of how an issue comes together, began from the intuition of a shared spirit of resistance among characters with whom he worked on Kantstrasse. As *Flâneur* developed, it became increasingly obvious to him that his own project was also about a kind of resistance. Inhabiting the Flâneur technique requires resistance to the traps of other patterns of thought: “if you go into that travel guide trap you automatically go back into colonial thinking, because you want to make something “handy” or you want to make something “enjoyable” you want to sell a place or point out all the exotic features, but not go too deeply [let real human stories have a voice] because it could make the place weird, or creepy [or frightening]...so for me it's

about resisting that colonial thinking, especially now we're going places where we have never been before." This language emerged in Fabian in particular after the experience of working in Canada, where much of the discourse *Flâneur* encountered centered on the history of colonial rule. At the same time, it echoed a pattern of speech he'd learned as a student of cultural studies in university, where he encountered Benjamin early on but whose approach he now abandoned. Of all the pieces in *Flâneur*, *Traces* is the lengthiest, requires the most time to complete, and is the last to be submitted. Work begins as soon as the street is selected, and continues throughout. It is not finished until the rest of the issue has been completed, themes have begun to emerge, and direction to the stories given. This language emerged in Fabian in particular after a visit to Canada, where much of the discourse the group encountered centered on the history of colonial rule. At the same time, it echoed a pattern of speech he'd learned as a student of cultural studies in university, where he encountered Benjamin early on but whose approach he now abandoned.

"Resistance is a basic human condition." Fabian explained to me,

It's very powerful...focusing on the resistance you really get those characters, because you capture them at a more extreme level of their identity...that doesn't mean that they might have regretted twenty years later, or as I've said some of these links that I do are kind of literary truth, not all of these characters would maybe agree with links I'm trying but I also think it's nice to draw these parallels because all of the sudden, you see this historical situation and there was this resistance and it led to this or that. But to link something that happened in the 20s with something in the 90s where you can't see the direct, logical line but there is something that's ideal, but it becomes something universal in that you tell a story and you find something human, and in the other story too and you get some recurrent pattern.

Traces is a series of words, and a collage, curated under a motto of urban life – an epigraph from Hessel (“We can see only what looks at us. We can do only...what we cannot help doing”):

This manifesto of resistance draws lines between different lives
that are connected through the street until
»the woods are all black but still the sky is blue«

The allusion is to the first volume of Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*; the text was translated in the 1920s by Benjamin and Hessel, and the immanent critique produced from this labor led to the developments in Benjamin’s thinking about memory and time in the 1930s. Twenty-two numbered fragments follow, a two-page collage, and another twenty-eight fragments. The text is a meditation on the street, on an attitude to the street of which it is, itself, an example. It is itself a walk, another version of Flâneuring on Kantstrasse. We begin this time with a reflection on a song stuck in the Flâneur’s head, and an “old Romanian” singing a picture of history. It’s the faces of the people on the train that triggers the thought and the “half-forgotten melody.” The song, “lies on the threshold of oblivion...that remains anticipated but never occurs.” The voice comes from another world. It tells the listener that, “we lived at the same time.” “We are dependent on these shadow pictures; they are the clay that binds us together, because we alone have no connection. Our knowledge, be it only a removed one – makes us allies, comrades, linked. This is the history of a street, a documented statement of connections.”

Each subsequent segment adds a link - a name, a story, or a work of art - arranging this cast of figures in two columns side by side. Sometimes a heading precedes a segment – other times only a number. [2] Under the name *Leonard Frank*, we read, “Leonard Frank says that every centimeter of Berlin contains the entire world.” [3]

Hessel comes next, connected to Proust through his work with Benjamin on translations – “this was the Flâneur, with him the Flâneur had come back again, this time resurfacing in Berlin. (»Here and not in Paris, one understands how the Flâneur distanced himself from the idea of the philosophical stroller, and was able to take on the traits of a vagrant in the social wasteland, a rambling werewolf, which Poe fixated in his Man of the Crowd«, said Benjamin.)” [4] Franz Blei recounts the story of Hessel’s umbrella in his own words. [5] Nabokov is next, sitting to write *Lolita* while fleeing the Nazis at the moment Benjamin and Hessel die. [6] Down the neighboring column, Roche’s novel and Truffant’s film, the latter of which, only Helen Hessel (the center of their love-triangle) lives to see. [7] Helen, we learn, translates Nabokov’s *Lolita*. [8] The *Suddeutsche Zeitung* reviews the film, *Jules et Jim*, a year after its release. [9] Bowles and Isherwood were both in Berlin at this time as well, masters of both “The fictional in one’s own autobiography..[and] the truth in fiction.” [10] Capote names Sally Bowles for Paul, and [11] a film based on Bowles’ *Goodbye to Berlin* is made near Savignyplatz, on what is now Else-Ury-Bogen.

[12] If Isherwood and Hessel ever met, it would have had to be at *Eldorado*, – a night-club and transvestite cabaret at Kantstrasse 24 and now memorialized in a “disdainful” casino with a sign “SPIELOTHEK.” [13] Another Nabokov novel, *Mary*, and now the writer comes to hate the post-Eldorado Berlin - the Flâneur walking these words is reminded of “Else-Ury-Bogen, in which her books are once again sold today, now that they’ve stopped burning them.” [14] Else Ury lived here at Kantstrasse 30, and Nabokov was in the United States when she was gassed a day after her arrival at Auschwitz. [15] Ury’s schoolmate, Wilhelmina Felsing marries Louis Dietrich, whose daughter is named Marlene. [16] When Marlene returns to Kantstrasse a star, she visits

Hollaender's Tingle-Tangle-Theater in the basement of the Theater des Westens. On the second column of the second page, we find that Trude Hesterberg is also in the audience. Hollaneder's Uncle Gustav directed the *Sternschen* conservatory and made it possible for her to become a singer despite her father's protests. [18] The next fragment is Hesterberg's *Wilde Bühne*; this evening is also an encounter with a time 10 years earlier, when hers was the first cabaret directed by a woman. [19] In her early days, she signed the best talent, including a young Bertolt Brecht. Twenty such lines into the piece, a reflection written in Fabian's voice:

Maybe flaneuring is the opposite of reading books. Or rather, two different sides of the same page. Maybe this is what the reader does, when he leaves the room and wanders (his) streets. In a book everything is already laid out, in the street the flaneur has to go in search of images first. (»The pictures, wherever they may live« W.B.) Walter Benjamin says that the city opens up to the flaneur like a landscape; it encircles him like a room. (Acceleration; past; remembrance) Bertolt Brecht says that reading books and going wandering in faraway lands means, »out of the room and into the stars«. (Lightspeed; irresistible; the present as the future's past)

The fragments resume where they left off on the other side of the images. The Kantstrasse *Traces* ends with the quotation with which it began. The relations between elements of the street, the different values ascribed to spatial arrangement (as representations of real topographies, political boundaries, or semantic connections), between the concrete street and the fragmentary nature of intertwining lives, is inverted in the collage presented in the middle of the text. Greyscale images appear like an old still. Names are arranged as streets, often at right angles and indicating multiple folds in time and space. *Walter Benjamin* is placed vertically, like a book's spine, between *Kurt Tucholsky* and *Franz Hessel*, each facing the opposite direction; the three with *Christopher Isherwood* draw the longest thoroughfare in the frame, off center to the right.

Proust, Becht, Frank, Blei and Grund, all facing upward, name streets jutting off the mainline. Roche and Stephane Hessel each point toward the bottom right at forty-five degrees. This mapping of social relations into the form of city streets is reminiscent too of the concrete Berlin streets I knew, more often than not named for great writers, artists and intellectuals.

A Walk on Kantstrasse, February 25, 2014

I met up with Fabian as he was leading a tour, a mixed group of locals and tourists, Germans and expats, around the Charlottenburg borough of Berlin. Down the grey stairs of the train station at Savignyplatz, I found myself in a familiar corridor of a street, bustling restaurants on one side, bookshops on the other, opening up onto the grass square bordered on three sides by stores and on the fourth by a main road. A bronze August Kraus cast of a boy pulling a ram, well-maintained lawns, trendy store windows, and stone apartments grace the streets. The assembly gathered outside a bookstore, the Bücherbogen [Book arches], and we took turns introducing ourselves as new members joined the party; a German-American journalist living in Berlin; a recent British expat who left a corporate job to take up life as a writer; a German doctoral student, studying literary and musical history; a young German couple who frequented such tours; a theatre director here after a stay in Taiwan. Fabian was gearing up to leave for a research trip, the first for *Flâneur* abroad, to Montreal's Rue Bernard, so this was to be the last outing for a while.

Our two-hour excursion was billed as a “literary tour” of a major thoroughfare in the former West Berlin. As we walked toward Kantstrasse from Savignyplatz, Fabian explained that the wide streets of Charlottenburg were intentionally reminiscent of the Parisian boulevard, part of a vision von Bismark had for the city as Germany entered a new era on the world stage at the dawn of the 20th century. The area enjoyed economic success as it built itself up on the French model, with spacious parks and residential housing and a booming commercial district around Kurfürstendamm, Berlin’s Champs-Élysées. When the Prussian government passed the Groß-Berlin-Gesetz in 1920, Charlottenburg (along with six other former towns) was annexed to the greater Berlin. Since the turn of the century, Fabian explained, the area had - also like Paris - become a meeting place for artists and thinkers, many of whom frequented some of the more well-known stops on our walk. Names like Brecht and Döblin brought a Parisian cache to the area. “This” he went on “is how places and times move.” The period prior to the Great Depression would be celebrated as a “golden age” for the area around the Ku’damm, as it blossomed into the epicenter of bohemian artistic life, including for the newly imported Flâneur aesthetic (no longer in fashion in Paris), enlivened by the presence of writers like Hessel and his friends. During the period of division, these streets were the symbol of the economic boom in the West, and, in 1968, of the leftist student uprising. But since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the center of the city had rapidly shifted east, leaving empty and uncannily anachronistic “modernist” architecture in its wake.

We stopped briefly at the corner where the square meets Kanstrasse to talk about Nabokov, before continuing on down the way. “The Russian writer spent 15 years in Berlin writing under a pen name, and living secluded in the Russian émigré community,”

Fabian told us while turning to the group. “It seems he never took well to the city. Nabokov’s debut novel, *Mary*, followed another Russian émigré to Berlin after the Revolution, and was set all around us. You could see the lights the way they were for him.” The group traded stories about *Laughter in the Dark* and *Details of a Sunset*, noting the architecture as we took to walking again. “You know there is this scene where he describes hearing the sounds of the train as so loud, it feels like they’re coming through the apartment” – Fabian points to a building across the bridge from the Savignyplatz haltestelle – “I like to think, he could have been living right there talking about this train.” We took turns walking next to Fabian, asking for this or that clarification, or for this or that point of interest. Meanwhile, the rest of us shared bits of our own histories and literary tastes, about lives in the academy, in newspapers, and multi-nationals, world travels, favorite cafes and expatriation. “The people in my department think it’s odd I’m writing about gramophones” – “I used to work for one of those international conglomerates, but I’m here now writing short stories” - “I’m living in Taiwan, I’m here for the year though, I’m working on an ecological theatre project staging Taiwanese mythology.”

Fabian’s attention darted around as he considered where to pause for another fragment, occasionally stopping to read a marked passage from the magazine. A “Chinese food menu”, made to reconstruct the “China town” of Kantstrasse (jokingly, he says, called *Canton-strasse*) – a mythic if concretely absent area of the street. A few lines from a novel. A picture, a few words. As we walk, conversation partners develop and disperse, recombining every block or two. Conversations formed and broke up – we told stories, shared favorite books, traded business cards. We pass the Schwarzes Cafe – a former hub

of bohemian activity when the Wall still stood - and the group comments on its bizarre bathrooms, unfinished décor, and high prices. An old-fashioned neon sign, red, blue, and green, sits in the window of an otherwise bare façade. The proprietor, Fabian says, took art from renowned patrons as payment for bar tabs, and so the walls were covered in their works. There's a cinema to the left that still paints its billboard by hand, and was opened after the War despite objections that film was not the sort of thing the country needed at such a time – its owner insisted on quite the opposite.

When interest waned, Fabian dragged us along somewhere new. We came to the Theatre des Westens where an old blue-and-white plaque for Trude Hesterberg reads: “The Wild Stage...and thus laid the foundation stone for modern, German, literary-political cabaret” [*gegründete ...die Wilde Bühne und legte damit den Grundstein für das modern, deutsche literarisch-politische Kabarett*]. Her production in the basement of the historic theater was the first of its kind run by a woman, and it was there that Marlene Dietrich would hone her craft. After her role in *Die Blaue Engel* (a part for which Hesterberg also auditioned), Dietrich returned here to Kantstrasse on tour as a star – the composer of the score, Friedrich Hollaender, reopened the theatre in 1931, three years after it had been forced closed. This, Fabian confided, was the story he preferred about the building and the relationships that passed through it. After the Machtergreifung, the Nazi seizure of power in early 1933, Hesterberg joined the Party and a cohort of artists in “defense” of “German culture,” opening a new cabaret that proved a commercial disaster. “It ruins the place, the story, once you know that.”

Stopping soon down the road, Fabian reminded us of Truffaut's *Jules et Jim*, based on Roche's first novel, exploring his relationship with Hessel. “The writer

Isherwood was also here at that time and while he is here he met Paul Bowles in this neighborhood, who was taking part in the vibrant gay community in 1931.” He pointed across the street toward a bodega, “there was a club there, perhaps it’s where they met...Isherwood wrote a kind of fictional autobiography called *Goodbye to Berlin* and names the protagonist Sally Bowles. And this character inspires another in a novel by a writer you might know, Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. Let me just read these two quotes.” Fabian pulled out his copy of *Flâneur* and turns to a page marked by several yellow notes and reads. “Ok the first one from Sally Bowles: “I can’t be bothered to explain, darling. Here, read this, will you? Of all the blasted impudence! Read it aloud. I want to hear how it sounds” and then this one from Holly Golightly: “Would you reach in the drawer there and give me my purse. A girl doesn't read this sort of thing without her lipstick. Maybe this will come in handy – if you ever write a rat romance. Don’t be hoggy, read it aloud. I’d like to hear it myself.”

As we turn around and look down another street, we get another angle on the theatre and learn about the collective efforts required in building it. A few take pictures on smart phones, others take down notes, but as interest wanes we step further down the side street. Fabian points down the road behind us towards a brown building on a side street. “A wealthy philanthropist had owned the building and rented rooms to artists, hosting gallery exhibitions and inviting wealthy friends to ensure his residents’ work was sold (and that he collected rent).” – “What are those animal skulls hung below the highest windows” someone inquiries from the back of the group. “I’m actually not sure, always more stories to find I guess.” We turn back towards the theatre as Fabian points. “This is a good angle to look at the building again. The same guy who built the artist housing

behind us, when he saw it was successful, decided to build the theatre. He didn't have the money, but he asked the city for a permit and a guarantee for the land and then went to individuals and companies asking them to be partners in the new theatre and they would share the profits." Turning back and forth between the buildings now on either side of us, just a block apart "you see there is this kind of relationship of these two even though you can't see it from their design or anything, they look totally different."

Fabian called us over to an iron gate and lowered his voice, pointing to a large hotel, Kempinsky, and told us not to go too close. The original owners of Europe's oldest hotel group had been German Jews who were stripped of their holdings during the Arianisierung (the policy of finding Aryan replacements for less desirable business owners). After the Wall fell in 1989, descendants of the original Kempinsky asked for recognition on the building but were denied by new corporate management for fear the story would impact business. In the 1990s, when a small plaque was finally erected, family members were not invited to the public unveiling. "They don't like it when I tell this story" Fabian announced, turning around to the empty lot by the gates. We were standing, we now discovered, outside the footprint of the former center of Jewish life in the city, where now all that stands is a crumpling tower in the back corner of the lot. "I pass this every day and never knew what it was." someone murmured from the back.

The neighborhood changes as we come to our final stop outside a residential building, and Fabian arranged us in a semi-circle, making room for shoppers and residents passing through. His affect changed as he knelt down to point to a scuffed, nearly hidden Stolperstein on the ground. Fabian told the crowd Taubers' story, his voice quiet and contemplative, especially as he described his phone call with Michael. "When I

saw this Stolperstein here I thought, you know, someone should find out about the story behind it.” He pointed to the Swiss flag hanging outside a window above us. The tour ended here, though we walked together back to the station near Savignyplatz where we met. Several of us exchanged information, and agreed to talk again soon.

This was how we walked Kantstrasse.

Art, Voice and Memory

In the past two decades, geographical and sociological work on urban life has increasingly and successfully traced the interplay of public art projects and urban restructuring (Sharp et al. 2005), the relationship between symbolic economies and the cultural determination of public space (Zukin 1995) distributed as claims to participation in the city. More recent anthropological interventions, for example the powerful work of Theresa Caldeira (2012), have explored how artistic production not only marks urban landscapes, but gives rise to new forms of political action that fracture publics and refuse integration, while affirming “rights to the city”, thus demanding a rethinking of democratic practice and the production of the city in aesthetic and political terms. Bourriaud’s (2002) picture of relational art as one in which the artist enables a community, a way of living, has found a home in such conversations, through the implications of witnessing – in Berlin this thought carries a double weight, because relation art makes possible a Rancièrian community of sense, but also because it remakes the act of witnessing itself. My desire here is to bridge this development in ethnographic

attention to the play between aesthetics and politics, with a burgeoning anthropology of memory that takes seriously what Carlo Severi calls the chimeric imagination. Severi's (2015) argument seems particularly helpful, as his analysis allows us to overcome binaries of oral and writing cultures (see also Barber 2007) that too hastily sidelines the literary (or the art work) to the etchings of symbols onto some enduring material medium, in a way that retains, and in fact highlights the specific refractions of art in the social production, circulation and consumption of memory. Overturning the assumed fragility of memory arts beyond those written down, or else written down in declarative and supposedly transparent manner, Severi's (re)turn to Warburg's Hopi chimera reveals an imaginative function in memory that combines images as they present themselves "to the mind" rather than the eye, into single bodies, somewhere between sign and image.³⁰

Flaneur's particular chimeric construction recalls Chatterji and Lall's (2014) suggestion that some experiences, notably those of traumatic pain, must go beyond words, "the memories that are recalled take on the character of the uncanny – they belong to another I, one that I no longer recognize." This performative possibility of achieving something that cannot be registered otherwise, is, I think, helpful in understanding the kind of work that Fabian's literary labor achieves, in juxtaposition with other domains of language that fail to register even those pains they seek ostensibly to mark. Moments, they write, contain multiple times, pasts, presents, futures, "much as a drop of water might be swarming with organisms that it has gathered from different places." Neither past, present nor future are secured but are rather capable of impinging on each other all of a sudden. They are not, as we shall see, secure moreover from the force of doubt that

³⁰ Such an understanding of memory *arts*, tellingly recalls Lévi-Strauss' categorization of the artist in distinction from the engineer and the bricoleur in *La Penéee sauvage*.

creeps up at every instance. Small ruptures threaten more skepticism, the failure of not just everyday expressions, but poetic ones made to exceed the limits of ordinary speech, reifying again the intimacy of daily life and great events.³¹

In this light, what might we learn from the world of the Flâneur, or more generally about literary life in Berlin?

For Fabian and *Flâneur*, much inspiration is to be drawn from their ancestors of the 1920s, Benjamin and Hessel, friends who walked in the city nearly a century earlier whose own encounters with and writing about the street has been the subject of scholarly and public attention for some time. Two other figures are likewise often referenced - the Parisian founder of *modernité* Charles Baudelaire and the Swiss novelist Robert Walser. The forms of Flaneurish thought, whether as an object or form of literary criticism (as in Benjamin and his accounts of others), a genre of writing (in Walser or Hessel), or a tour and paper magazine. “Flâneurs share an interest in looking into the past, with the writers who came before them” Fabian told me once. Yet while the spirit and component elements of these variations stay the same, the relations between them are constantly transforming, across time, media and space.

Benjamin’s³² early work on Baudelaire developed out of physiognomy of the *bohème* marked by a position of political revolt against the emperor Napoleon, a

³¹ A number of important scholarly texts have mobilized the language of memory in highly productive ways, many of which are reflected and refracted through the concepts I deploy here. (e.g Bruna; Yates; and in Germany in cultural geographies like Till 2005) In this chapter, however, I avoid that language for a number of reasons, perhaps the simplest being that it was not in my experience the operant language in many of the circles I entered during my time in the field. This, it seems to me, likely has to do with the contemporary demography and sociology of Berlin, in contradistinction to the city as it was even a few decades ago. The major exception to that we find in Chapter 2 where many of my German interlocutors were older Berliners who had grown up in the time of the division, and as such, much of their speech was couched in terms of direct memory and memorialization.

³² As a young man sometime between 1914 and the beginning of 1915, Benjamin begins a German translation of Baudelaire’s most famous work, *Les Fleurs du mal* - a project he returns to several times over

conspiratorial aesthetic, and ultimately an identification with the splenetic ragpicker. Baudelaire's fate is to be caught in a dulled state of opposition to the rule of his own class. The significance of such a historical position however comes to light in the development of Benjamin's approach to texts, in particular with the break from historiographic analysis that level-down revolutionary events in favor of a story of natural progress. In this way, the turn to the dialectical image in the 1930s – the textual practice whereby a certain present meaning of the past appears in a lightning strike – runs on parallel tracks to the encounter with Baudelaire. Literary physiognomic types arose in the city alongside panoramic representations of the *Tableaux parisiens* to ease anxieties about a social world that erased individuality, inevitably contributing to the phantasmagoria of Parisian life – a condition born of the commodity fetish and the covering-up of reality through the suggestion of a “real.” (1991: 537-569) What makes Baudelaire such an interesting case for Benjamin is his inability to do anything about the condition of contradiction, marking him out from Poe's detective stories. Instead Baudelaire has no choice but to bear these aporias in his very being.

In an uncanny set of views of the city in the *Berliner Kindheit um 1900* (a work in photographic-philosophy that constituted his “political view of the past”), we see through the eyes of the child in memories and at a moment of particular precarity, arranged and rearranged several times by editors in the time since Benjamin's untimely death. In his forward, Benjamin confides that it was in 1932 that he began to realize he might not see his childhood home for a long time. “I had learned the procedure of vaccination many times in my inner life” he wrote, calling up images he says most viscerally churned up

the next several years. The completed text and its accompanying essays and introduction (including *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzters*) at first met with little interest among his contemporaries, leading Benjamin to deliver public lectures and readings on Baudelaire at the Reuss und Pollack bookshop on the Ku'damm.

feelings of homesickness while in exile – those of childhood (2013: 9). Longing is to the mind, he goes on, what the vaccine is to the healthy body. If Baudelaire's action/inaction concerns a blunted revolution and reveals contradictions in the rule of the cultural bourgeoisie, the Flâneur of the Deutsche Sprachraum pertains to a vaccination of the soul. The space of the city where he grew up becomes for Benjamin a screen against which he can draw and confront both his past and his future.

The boy Walter's walks are an escape from his privileged upper class surroundings. He is out in search of the nooks and crannies of urban space, untapped resources for the child's imaginations. No doubt it is the adult Benjamin's voice that intercedes on Krumme Strasse, lamenting the self-satisfied wall erected around his neighborhood, a kind of prison of bourgeois pride. On the street with a bend, with an old pool and stores selling all sorts of sundry items, Walter finds not just an escape but a manner of sexual awakening as he strategically ducks between windows, even scanning accounting books as an alibi before finding more illicit material for his gaze. He had timed his adventures to the absence of traffic, taking his time even as "rosettes and lanterns...celebrate the embarrassing event." Sex and class are bound together for the child. Benjamin describes in the Berlin Chronicle how Ariadne the prostitute seduced wealthy sons across the boundaries of class. The young Walter collects "postcards," images that spiral out not in lines but around curves, that sometimes zoom in and others out, and through which the adult Benjamin then walks again, as if they held some political promise that he could reclaim.

Benjamin's *Eisenbahnstrasse* begins with an epigraph declaring the dedicatory naming of the street composed in his fragments: "This Street is Asja-Lacis-Strasse, for

the engineer who broke through the author.” Here too a desire to “map” his life, constructed by what he describes as a learned practice of getting lost. In this way it was Paris, where he spent much time during his exile, which taught Benjamin about Berlin. We find a street punctuated by activity and reflection. Time here too is crystallized in various ways, into buildings and economic analyses, urban debris of various kind, to highlight in every case what is rejected from history. His occupation is with the actual and the ephemeral.

In a recent essay Iris Bäcker argues that despite all the points of contact, the Berlin imagined by Benjamin can be distinguished from that of Hessel through each author’s “narrative strategy” [Erzählstrategie]: “Hessel is Flâneuring [*Flanieren*] in space and Benjamin is ‘Flâneuring’ in time.” (Bäcker 2008: 102)³³. To distinguish this insight however from a limitation within the narratological frames, we might call the distinction the primary form or modality of the Flâneur, as it involves not simply a matter of rhetorical style but the primary orientation of movement – we might compare this with his *Eisenbahnstrasse*. Note the language of images in the subtitle of Hessel’s most famous work, *Walking in Berlin [Spazierien in Berlin]*, “a textbook of the art of going for a walk in Berlin, very near the magic of the city that hardly knows itself a picture book in words.”³⁴ Walking, for Hessel, was like reading a street, the faces that pass by, the window shops, the trains and cars, like turning pages. Reading the city meant to make it one’s own. Hessel’s Flâneur, Bäcker, writes, “alters awareness of the familiar correlations between near and far, so that the usual forms of the city disintegrate and are

³³ For Bäcker, the strategy of the *Berliner Kindheit* is a development from the writings on Moscow, and though it is Hessel who originally discovers the Parisian figure in Berlin, in some ways it is Benjamin who is stuck closer to the Baudelairean image

³⁴ Ein Lehrbuch der Kunst in Berlin spazieren zu gehen ganz nah dem Zauber der Stadt von dem sie selbst kaum weiss ein Bilderbuch in Worten

collaged into the new ‘pages’ of a freshly created ‘text.’” (n.d. 105)³⁵ The rhythm of walking, Hessel instructs, is maintained at a pace conducive to maintaining the “first look” perspective, deconstructing and rearrange images to aesthetic aims. It is utterly unpragmatic.

Ironically what marks Walser³⁶ as “so Swiss” for Benjamin is *shame*. “As soon as he takes up the pen, he’s seized by his desperado mood [Desperadostimmung]. All seems lost to him, a torrent of words breaks out, in which each sentence has the task of forgetting the past.” (Benjamin 1991b: 325- 326) The walker’s stumbling through blackness keeps us in the present by erasing whatever came just before, save for the occasional glimmering light of hope that dots his path in the form of the figures he meets. These “garlands of language” are like the depraved heroes who appear out of that darkness. Such figures, he writes, (in Germanic literature) come from the forests and valleys of Romantic Germany – “[Hebel’s] Zundelfrieder from the rebellious, enlightened petty bourgeoisie of Rheinisch cities at the turn of the century. Hamsun’s characters from the prehistoric world of the fjords – it is people drawing their homesickness into trolls...what they cry is prose. Because the sobbing is the melody of Walser’s loquacity. It tells us where his loved ones come from.” (Ibid. 326-7) This is a process of healing. A cure. Walser’s walk is punctuated by people, as well as by nature, by rupture and continuity, but in each moment there is a reflection of some larger

³⁵ Hessels Flaneur ändert bewusst die vertrauten Korrelationen zwischen Nahem und Fernem, so dass die gewohnten Gestalten der Stadt zerfallen und sich zu neuen ‚Seiten‘ eines neu geschaffenen ‚Textes‘ collagieren lassen.

³⁶ Walser had come to Berlin in 1905 and through his brother Karl, a painter, met and befriended a number of other important local figures. Taking up a post as a secretary for the anti-conservative Berliner Secession, an artist representation organization founded at the end of the previous century. His now famous *Der Spaziergang* [The Walk] was released in 1917, comprised in part of work explored for smaller publications. For Walser, the walk of the writer collapses writing and walking in a complicated single gesture; one that encapsulates both Romantic moments of joy in the appreciation of everyday, simple nature, and the constant deferral and anxiety that shadows the modern condition.

structure of life – each encounter is self-contained and discrete though somehow also reaches out beyond itself. Each is a moment, an example of the Flâneur experience and a meditation on it. Further, if Baudelaire’s (or Poe’s) domain was the crowd, Walser’s figures seem to stand somewhere between the vague urban stranger and the indexical human face; Fabian’s stories lay on the other side, with very particular voices and characters that do not so easily dissolve into more general signs. In the passage below, the walker leaves town on a small road and comes across a large, sullen, outcast man named Tomzack. He calls out to the giant, but hears no reply. Shortly after he steps “out” of life and into rapture.

I knew who he was. For him there was no rest... He had no soft bed to sleep in, and had no cozy, homey, home to live in. He lived everywhere and nowhere... He takes no part in anything, and no one took part in his life or his comings or goings. Past, present and future were to him an unsubstantial desert, and life itself was too low, too small, too tight for him.... An unending pain spoke from his tired, flaccid movement. He was not dead or alive, not old and not young...He died every moment, and yet could not die. There was no grave with flowers for him there. I avoided him and murmured to myself “Goodbye and may it go well for you, my friend Tomzack.” ...The path and the forest floor are like a carpet, and here in the interior of the forest it was quiet like a happy human soul, like the inside of a temple, like a palace and an enchanted...where everyone is asleep and silent for hundreds of long years.... It was so solemn in the forest that beautiful and solemn imagining seized the sensitive stroller all by itself...Sounds from the ancient world came to my ear from I don’t know where...Oh, how I also want to be happy then, if it should be, to go to the end and die. A memory will then bless me in the grave, and gratitude will revive me in death. Mere steps on the pleasant ground were enjoyment and the rest lit prayers in the sensing soul... Soon I stepped back out into the bright outdoors and in to life. (Walser 1917: 30-32 my translation)

Benjamin’s well-known review of Hessel, “Die Wiederkehr des Flâneurs” [The Return of the Flâneur], distinguishes the native’s view of the city from the outsider who is enamored with the picturesque and the new. The native instead draws on the faculty of memory, delving into the past, as well as memorizing as he walks, functioning like a

Muse or echo box for the stories and voices of the street. We find even in reading Hessel, Benjamin shifts to the category of time as the dominant orientation of the Flâneur. True to form he does so however through a mapping onto the city as landscape ‘made of living people’ as he quotes from Hofmannsthal. This call of the Flâneur in Berlin was sounded at a moment of change, a lament for something still yet to come fully to fruition, and was as such an ethical demand – as Benjamin says, for Hessel it was a rallying cry for a more complete “dwelling,” a more genuine inhabitation of the city, not for some people, but for everyone for whom Berlin was a hometown. Baudelaire decried that the city itself changed faster than the hearts of those who lived there, and in this light, Hessel’s book is an,

“instruction manual for taking leave.” It is a cure offered to the social body, even if largely rejected or unnoticed.

In the production of the journal, Fabian’s walking followed in the footsteps of serendipity, allowing history and distance to be overcome in small eruptive moments of connection. In *Traces*, fragments arranged first by logical steps, and then suddenly transplanted in that form into spatial distributions, mirroring the arrangement of the streets we walked in both previous incarnations. Fabian’s encounter with the living, human voice of history in the present, in the character of Michael Tauber, came to resemble the ways in which space is traversed by Hessel in one of the stories from our tour. On a sunny day in Berlin, Hessel is carrying an umbrella, and asked why, he replies “it’s raining in Paris.” When we “stumble” over a stone then, the distance to that past moment are collapsed, much like the distance to France. Perhaps other times and other spaces are, in world of the Flâneur, not necessarily other at all. Time and space are for

Fabian, not distinct directions, but belong instead to the same category of collapsible distance, a separation that can be rearranged interchangeably, this time for that place.

There is a crucial difference between Fabian and his forbearers – the pervasive awareness of the looming specter of uncertainty as a trope in the ordinary worlds they inhabit. In Fabian’s words, we see that the collapses, in or between time and space, of blame, or identity, don’t quite work fully. Recall that on the naming of streets Benjamin writes, “this street is called” and Fabian “this could be.” The Stolperstein on which we trip into the past is neglected and needs polish, the Kempinsky family goes uninvited to the plaque ceremony, the current resident of Tauber’s house is unmoved by the story of its former occupants. Fabian points out that while it’s raining for Hessel, it is not for Blei. These ruptures or disjunctures are mirrored by Fabian’s insistence on resisting the single story of the street, the “colonizing” narrative.

These worlds, streets, lives, texts and stories, are similarly fragmentary, singular and complete in themselves and yet also open and shifting. Fabian’s Berlin is suffused by a “culture” of guilt. Shame is announced everywhere, constantly, and around every corner. Our neglected memorials and forgotten stories take on the meaning of showing the limits of such efforts to make amends for the past, even as ever more plaques, stones and statues spring up. From a privileged vantage point in history, one could say that Fabian’s sublimation of space and time is an artifact of being able to assume those processes as already there from an earlier moment. But one could no longer collapse Berlin and Paris - the insistence on the particularity of *German* guilt makes that quite impossible. And in the same way, one cannot simply re-inhabit ancient pasts, because of the suspicion that trails any attempt to look backwards for anything but darkness. The

threat of a taint is too great. Yet avoiding such lived expressions masks another kind of violence, and everywhere reveals a subtle limit of a confrontation with history.

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The summer after we met, I decided to ask Fabian what he thought about this question of guilt, and the Flâneur's power to reveal the contradictions in the language of shame deployed so often within German public discourse. But Fabian brought up the issue before I had a chance. The "advertising" ethic, Fabian said, has taken over everything. It seemed to him that "people are not used to the Flâneur technique – we're in a marketing dictatorship...everything is full of positivity, and a lot of it looks like journalism but it isn't...These things have to be learned, these cultural techniques have to be learned, the literary techniques as opposed to journalistic approaches." But what about the world *Flâneur* lives in, the one being projected on to the places they visit? Like Walser's pen, this loosed a torrent of words.

This euphoria, there's not much space for the past – and maybe that's necessary from their perspective, because if you're on the forefront of building a city and selling a city, maybe you kind of have to be focused on the future. It's hard for them.

It is hard, that is, to lament the passing and to acknowledge their disappointments and failures. The conversation turned to the media hype over Berlin during the past decade, enormous influx of tourists and expats from the young artist class. Yet the affordable and avant-garde world that attracted these visitors also threatens to destroy it. While on the one hand, cultural production becomes the linchpin for the transformation of Berlin into a

world city, this boom has led in subtle ways to the reproduction of exclusion against other groups.

You might have heard about the bashing of the Schwabisch [wealthy southern German newcomers] ... there was this [tabloid photograph of] graffiti that said “don’t buy from the Schwaben” and they took a picture of it and put it right next to a picture from 1933 of “don’t buy from the Jews.” ... Under this whole “we have to protect our city” there are certain kinds of racisms, certain kinds of anti-Semitism, certain kinds of stereotypes – they are all of the sudden legitimate, you can get away with them, and that’s where the far left is always very close to the far right. I think it has to do with disappointment.

The crux for Fabian rests between action and rhetoric. Words and memorials flood the city, but economics and persistent structures of exclusion tell another story about life here. The Flâneur, the writer, the walker, demand we look at the multiple fragments, the ruins, that lay everywhere on the ground. But if, as Fabian thinks, such literary techniques of living in the city are forgotten, dangerous and hegemonic stories can settle in – a condition one worries we are watching unfold in the highly publicized rise of radical-right parties across Europe. Each fragment, the textures of which we find hidden, and in need of literary recovery.

We get used to rhetorical guilt. We changed our use of language, certain words have been abandoned ... [but] you don’t believe it anymore, the words don’t have any value anymore because they are so overused, it’s a bit like these memorials ... it’s like a huge PR campaign, running around and being guilty. And it has worked so well because people believe we’ve dealt with our history. But did we really? ... We managed to create an economic system in Europe that works for *us*. And no one mentions it. Because we’re busy running around telling this myth of the hard working German who is aware of their history... But now the conservatives... have to defend themselves... they say, “we are for the EU because we are aware of history.” So even this economic system they’ve created around themselves turns into something they are doing to pay back for history.

He often cites May 1968 as a rare moment of genuine critique in which children accused their parents of crimes. Yet this entire pattern of speech partakes in a rather

ordinary series of utterances bordering on the point of cliché, a common feature of ordinary conversation, borrowing from official discourses, past histories of aesthetics, and public intellectual labor. What has been added among the grandchildren's generation – those who, like myself, find themselves thrown into a world two generations removed and yet made to constantly bear a kind of witness in our flesh, is a desire to throw off the “excessive” burdens of guilt. The desire to unburden one's self from guilt however bears the double threat of forgetting history that could lead to the repetition of such violence, generating a moral conundrum that is often gingerly navigated.

I highlight the everyday nature of this utterance to put pressure on the limits of the literary to *express* the tensions that emerge as aporias in ordinary speech. As Benjamin reveals about Baudelaire, or Fabian reveals about Hessel, these disconnects of literary speech are an inherent feature of such language, *and* its opposite. Encounters with the limits of literary speech in the register of the everyday tell us something important about its purpose in this domain of life, in this case a way out of a certain dilemma by dislocating the terms of engagement. The shift in his language reveals again that a certain contradiction inheres in the confrontation with social guilt, because as soon as we have succeeded in “dealing with it,” we have failed. But what about in the pages of *Flâneur*, in the fleeting moments of allowing one's self to be swallowed up by the literary relations, rather than concrete ones, between times and places?

If this technique provides us a mirror, a way to project unannounced burdens, forgotten struggles, and buried disappointments, here it seems we have uncovered the task of Berliner Flâneur. The discourse that on the surface seeks to keep alive memories of violence to protect us from falling into familiar traps, covers up other experiences

(including of suffering), re-inscribing violence into structure of social life. The literary project works by revealing that no fragment is secure from the force of doubt that creeps up at every instance. Small ruptures threaten more skepticism, the limits of not just everyday expressions, but poetic ones made to exceed the limits of ordinary speech, reifying again the intimacy of daily life and great events. The Flâneur seems in this way as concerned at heart with question of reclaiming the human voice (in history) that we have lost in the dissolution (as we come later to find) into the collective and the ephemeral. The pattern of the Flâneur, I have tried to argue, is not about one form or another, but of a certain imperative to ask a question, about freedom and the human voice. Literary approaches to the street, and to history, allow us to abide a tension that seems to inhere in the German confrontation with the past without resolving it – the desire to work through the past, as Adorno would say, rather than process it, for a forgiveness without forgetfulness.

The longer I lived in Berlin, the more I found myself needing to walk. Nearly every day I walked a larger and larger circuit around my Kiez. Sometimes walking in Berlin, like writing in Berlin, can till the ground and churn up ghosts we'd thought long since exorcised.

CHAPTER TWO

The Exile An Unknown Writer and the Politics of Voice

*Nul ne peut donc écrire sans prendre parti passionnément (quel que soit le détachement apparent de son message) sur tout ce qui va ou ne va pas dans le monde/ No one can write without passionately taking sides (whatever the apparent detachment of his message) on what is going wrong in the world. (R. Barthes, *Essais critiques*)*

Early one evening in February, I arrived in the Wedding district of Berlin, part of the former French quadrant. It is one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, with high numbers of immigrants, and one of the last boroughs to feel the impacts of gentrification, preserving a two-century-old tradition of housing for the working-class and poor. I disembarked at the S-bahn station at Gesundbrunnen, which opens onto a massive shopping center built in the late 1990s, and crossed the street to the glass walls of the Lightburgforum, a small cultural complex that every month or two played host to meetings of Salon Exil, an intimate stage where writers who might have no home for their words meet to share work. I was met with a warm smile and an embrace from Dr. Christa Schuenka, the Salon's director, an activist and translator. Christa had become a mentor to me during my time in Berlin – for months she walked me through intricacies of translation culture, publishing politics, and a dense network of local literary history. An older woman with grey and blonde hair, who sighed heavily at times seemingly from the weight of life's experiences, she was a natural teacher and a warm presence. "Come, please, thank you so much for being here early, I could use your help with these chairs."

In 2010, Christa founded a "salon for encounter," borrowing on the structure and organization of those institutions most often associated with "high culture" in Berlin and reserved typically for distinguished and transitory guests. Here, however, writers and readers were brought into a more intimate and enduring space, one in which experience of exile was both the impetus for invitation and the topic of discussion. Christa had founded the Salon under the auspices of PEN Zentrums Deutschland, the national branch of the international literary organization Poets, Essayists, Novelists, where she had for many years run the Writers-in-Exile program jointly on behalf of PEN and the German

government. Throughout the Nazi period, International PEN helped countless writers and artists escape persecution, and a German PEN center was founded in exile in 1934 in London. In return for the help of the world for the plight of German writers between 1933 and 1945, the state, in the person of Minister of State for Culture and Media Michael Neumann, granted federal funding for a Writers-in-Exile program in 1999, offering scholarships and aid for five to six refugees to live in Germany, under expedited asylum status (generally granted under two months), and receiving paid healthcare, security, language training and networking opportunities. The program provides up to two years of funds and housing for writers from anywhere in the world who need refuge, along with language training, counseling and expedited asylum status. Only a few writers are in the program at any time, housed in four cities throughout Germany, but most lived in Berlin.

She no longer held that post when we first met, opting to hand over the reins and focus her attention on this subsidiary project, a literary Salon aimed both at opening up a reading public for new arrivals, and creating a space where various politics of exile, and relations to writing in the context of those experiences, could be explored. Artists, the program argues, bear a double burden in exile, because they require an intimate public, something denied to them when they find themselves without language, without a way of expressing themselves in local cultural terms. It was this ground that the Salon wanted to give them back, in a new place. Outside of PEN's official bureaucracy, the Salon had more freedom to maneuver, but found itself increasingly struggling financially, given rising costs and a dearth of individual donations. Where major organizations like the DAAD [German Academic Exchange Service], the International Literaturfestival Berlin (ILB), and the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) celebrate the "rooted

cosmopolitanisms” their work engenders, or as the HKW literature claims, an “openness to the world that is consciously grounded in the history and place from which it is grown,” Christa often emphasized that she was unconcerned about how “great” a writer seemed. “We are responsible for those who are really in danger,” she would say. One official from the ILB had explained their selection criteria to me in terms of “political relevance.” “Aesthetics” he noted confidently “is the politics of literature. ...It is crucial for the work that we would like to imagine that it has a particular moment – addressing themes that enter into European discourse insufficiently, or even just in an aesthetic way: forms of storytelling and writing that open new perspectives on the world...we try to be a corrective to the German book market.” What is tacitly evinced in such language however is that such relevance must be structured by gaps already anticipated by European discourse.

“We want to provide a literary dignity to authors,” Christa told me. “Today,” her website and flyers read, “we speak of exiles primarily in connection with artists, writers and journalists” as those most directly impacted by the crushing oppression of the freedom of expression. The condition of exile can endure, often for many years. “It is not easy for anyone to live in exile” she explains, “but for authors, it is especially difficult, because their work is more acutely attached to their native language than that of a doctor or an engineer, and the thoughts they express, the images in which they express themselves, are rooted in the cultures of their homelands.” Such artists are uprooted twice;

First from the soil that nourishes her writing, and thus also from the extensive networks of common history, common myths and narratives, which they share with their readers. Secondly, through the loss of resonance with her own reader

community [Leserschaft] that influences her writing and is in turn influenced by what she writes. For writers exile ultimately means the extinction of her own identity as a writer...and thus as part of public life.

To make this situation “somewhat more bearable” [etwas erträglicher zu machen], the salon stages an “encounter” [Begegnung] with potential readers. Another encounter is staged simultaneously, in the form of conversation *about* exile. Christa studied philosophy and philology, earning a doctorate in 1977, and worked since then as a translator of English literary texts into German, publishing more than a hundred and fifty major novels for the German market since the 1980s. In 2006, in recognition of her achievements, German PEN asked her to help organize the International Congress to be held in Berlin – eighty years after the fateful meeting predating the rise of Hitler’s regime. She was invited the same year to serve on the Board of the Zentrum, and quickly placed in charge of the Writers-in-Exil program. In her time with PEN, she had overseen the careers of more than twenty-five Stipendaten. Almost none of the writers in the program had applied by themselves to come to Germany; many were recommended by NGOs, often Journalists Without Borders, Amnesty International, or by International PEN itself. Others had made their way to Christa via colleagues already living in exile. This personal history also allowed Christa to move through the German literary-political landscape with an ease that would never be afforded a foreigner. But it also meant that she could serve as an intermediary between worlds, trying to make herself into a conduit for their encounter.

When I first became involved with Salon Exil in 2013, three Stipendaten were living in Berlin; one from Tunisia who had been in Berlin for some time, and two newcomers, one each from Georgia and Vietnam. If possible, Christa tried to find

funding to help the families of their writers escape as well, finding them bigger apartments or larger stipends. But the Salon participants include not only the newcomers to Berlin, but also those who have lived other experiences – most notably and recurrently, those who were exiled from Germany during the 1930s and 40s and have subsequently returned “home.” This particular winter evening, it was this second type of encounter that was on stage, as Christa had invited a close friend and supporter of the Salon, Micah, to speak about his own exile from Germany in China during the Holocaust.

This winter night, I arrived at the Salon an hour early as I did each time to help Christa and other members of Salon Exil’s core circle arrange the facility for the event. We brought far more glasses and wine from the kitchen than we would ultimately need, and debated how best to arrange PEN materials, exile newsletters, and recent publications out on the table. As people began to arrive for the evening’s conversation, two of Christa’s friends, Dörthe and Else, stood behind a bar alongside me, collecting tickets and instructing me to pour wine or beer for the guests (for which we charged an additional Euro or two). The Salon’s box of funds only contained a handful of large bills, so we made change for guests out of our pockets. Many in the Salon circle were, like these fellow volunteers and Christa herself, older East Germans. Dörthe spoke well in English and translated occasionally for Else (whose second language was Russian) with Stipendaten who were less proficient in German. They liked to talk to me about Berlin before the Wall, about the price of goods, about their lives as intellectuals, and how the city had changed since that time. When it was time to take our seats alongside the ten or fifteen other guests, Else smiled at me and jingled the large donations can that still contained only the one Euro coin we placed inside an hour earlier.

While in most literary Salons in Berlin, we would here turn to a formal reading of texts and then a question and answer session mediated by an “expert”, typically a translator or university professor, Salon Exil interspersed short excerpts into a conversation between two speakers who already knew each other well. When speakers were not old friends of Christa’s, they were Stipendaten or former Stipendaten with whom she’d engaged intimately over the course of several years. Occasionally they were alumni who had returned to their countries of origin, or moved on to stints in other programs in Europe or elsewhere, and came back to visit, to update everyone on their journeys. Micah spoke that night with native fluency in German and English – though the conversation was largely in German, some members of the audience struggled to express themselves and so, at times, English served as the lingua franca. He explained that he was born in Shanghai to German parents, prior to the rise of the Nazi Party. Though their decision to expatriate was their own, the family found themselves unable to return by the mid-1930s. Micah’s parents had been leaders of their Jewish and Marxist communities; his father was a successful architect and his mother a bookseller. “Tell them about your mother the spy!” Christa smiled and interjected. “Oh yes, yes, my mother was recruited into military intelligence, [it was] mediated by American leftist journalists in the region. In 1938, she was able to secure transit to Switzerland, and arrived in Danzig in 1939 to help the development of resistance, before the family was dispatched to Britain.” In the 1950s, Micah returned to East Germany and became a celebrated translator and authority on Shakespeare. Their conversation was continually punctuated with intimate jokes and personal asides from the history of their friendship, chides to bring out little stories or just for their own pleasure.

The room was rarely crowded, and Christa and her friends already knew nearly every guest, which in turn meant we generated very little in the way of revenue. After the event many of us gathered next door for beer and coffee. I took a seat on the far side of the table with Else and Dörthe, while Christa sat across from Micah and one of the Stipendaten, Najet, at the other end. Najet is a middle-aged Tunisian poet, who since the year prior had been participating in Christa's events and was living in PEN housing around the corner from the Lichtburgforum. She looked tired and didn't speak much, occasionally smiling and nodding her head as people asked about her children or about her health. After rising to celebrity as a child poet, Najet had endured two periods of exile, this latest leaving her in Germany far disconnected from friends, and able to speak to her children only very irregularly. She wasn't feeling well – "I've been very sick, it has not gotten better, but I am ok, I am ok," she tells us. Christa brought a man over and introduced him to her, "this is Konrad, he is making a film about the PEN Stipendaten. We'd like to plan a reading for you, if you would like? When are you free? Do you have time next month?" Najet nodded, smiled again, and sat back into her seat. She spoke to few people, and understood German and English better than she could express herself in them.

What is striking about this scene is how very different experiences of exile are lived by writers in Berlin. My suggestion throughout is that a picture of politics and its literature are alternative. Micah's exile has ended for good. He speaks daily in his mother tongue among people (of his generation especially) who share his experiences of life interrupted by catastrophic violence followed by a half-century of uneasiness, political strife, and a forcible separation of families and friends by a Wall that staged a mythic

battle of global superpowers. Najet had no such resolution, no capacity or desire for a happy alternative. Her life remains intractably torn asunder and there is no home to ever return to where people will know her experiences without her having to voice them. “My Tunisia” she told me often “has been destroyed, there’s nothing to go back to now even if I could.” This remaining unknown, I will argue, is not an effect of a failure in the politics of literature, in which the writer sheds light on a hidden condition, but rather the inauguration of an alternative politics that refuses this desire for the *truth* of violence.

At the same time, Christa, Dörthe and Else live in another sort of exile, as the home they once knew, the Berlin of the DDR, has evaporated from beneath their feet. Their Berlin has in many ways receded from the world, replaced by the booming cosmopolis dominated by English speaking youths, Western European values and triumphalist story of history. Often friends told me, “there are no more Berliner in Berlin,” indexing the rapidly shifting demographics of the city since the early 2000s. This condition has left them to mediate a strange multiple existence, between the gendered memory work of mourning (Das 2007), the well-documented phenomenon of nostalgia for the DDR commonly called Ostalgie (Berdahl 2009; Shoshan 2012), and their roles as contemporary intellectuals whose credentials as German keeps possibilities open for those others for whom they care.

The burden of this chapter then is to track not just the fact of this multiple politics but the relationship between them. Below I trace how, in the example of Jacques Rancière³⁷, contemporary aesthetics has developed a language through which to approach

³⁷ I turn to Rancière as a contemporary incarnation of this general architecture, both because of his significance for professional discourse in philosophy and art on the relationship between aesthetics and politics, but also because of this declaration of his newness. In art and aesthetics periodicals in Germany, writers like Andreas Mertin (2012), for example, have suggested Rancière allows for a “carefully separate”

the politics of literature. While read by many as inaugurating a new critical contemporary moment, however, the range of possibilities for this politics, is limited by its inheritance of a manner of speaking that tacitly privileges European experiences of violence in the twentieth century and covers other imaginations.³⁸ Despite its radical tenor, the structure of the story that dominates our picture of the writers in exile, one perhaps first articulated by post-War Marxist aestheticians (many of whom were themselves German exiles), is quietly re-inscribed. This story is one in which the singularly horrifying plight of European Jewry figures as so extreme and unfathomable, that all other experiences of exile come to be measured through it. Through figures like Brecht and Adorno, the writer came to stand for the persistence of a culture in the face of destruction, and while experiences of the war and its aftermath, as well as the ostensive politics adopted in response, are enormously varied, they each reify a picture of the role of literature. The task of the writer is to make herself and her experiences known, to make visible the existential threat that, at the same time, produces her as such a writer. And it is into this structure that writers who are now invited to Germany, often explicitly as reparation for

what has been “cheerfully cluttered” in Germany debates – namely the relationship between art and modernity. Needless to say, other German writers have taken up the language of aesthetics/politics to different ends, e.g. Braungart’s (2012) theses on aesthetics as the “style” of political communication, Bohrer (2011) distinction between poetic memory and historical memory in the post 9/11 *Zeitgeist*, or Mencke’s (2013) aesthetic anthropology.

³⁸ This reification is evident in anthropological literature as well. From attempts to parse out the particularity of exile from the encompassing pathologizing of the discourse on trauma, for example, by attending to possibilities of “resilience in and transcendence of ‘horror.’” (Lumsden 1999:30) Within anthropological writing on refugees in particular, geographical displacement remained the primary indicator of “being in exile,” a status understood to be accelerating in parallel with the pace of global capitalism and migration. In this way the modern refugee is somehow both understood in light of long histories (often the exile of ancient Jews) or, antithetically, as a newly emergent phenomenon rooted in the experience of displaced Europeans in the Second World War (Malkki 1995a,1995b) The subsequent turn to a language of “shifting identities” exacerbated by the speed of “modern” movement, still a field of displacement but now appearing everywhere “problem of our times” (Everett and Wagstaff 2004). Or else, it has been positioned as a novel matter of “collapsing geopolitics” in the wake of the Cold War, such that distinctions between “home” and “exile” or flight and return have suddenly become muddled. (Carruthers 2008)

Germany's own crimes decades earlier, are forced to fit themselves. Such an erasure by the master symbol of other means of suffering is effected by raising those experiences to the level of a metaphysical language, aesthetics or politics *as-such*. In this desire to make the invisible into the visible, a dialectical politics is reestablished as universal by placing it in the masculine philosophical voice of metaphysics. This effect is doubled, moreover, in a country and a city that have so famously turned and returned to literature and the cultural bourgeoisie generally for the resources through which to confront political and ethical tensions – a place, what is more, where the literary has also been made into the symbol of local culture.

This heroic picture of the writer in exile structured the ways people spoke about and understood such a condition in Berlin, but it was also confronted daily by writers and those who try to create a literary space for them. If their options were either to perform anticipated structures of alterity and suffering, or fade into invisibility, it is not as an effect of a “failure to acclimate”– as in Edward Said’s famous reading of Adorno – but instead, a certain capacity to endure remaining unknowns. Najet’s words and her manner of finding a life in the city trouble the very nature of this dialectics of truth (and the associated language of trauma therapeutics), and propose an alternative politics, one of becoming and remaining unknown. Her voice, as I heard it, calls for us to recognize a greater degree of difference in the structures available to the politics of writing in exile. I understand her ability to wait, rather than accept an undesirable penetration by the knowledge of the other, to be an expression of the melodrama of the unknown woman. The feminine region of voice of the writer in exile has been covered, both in the world and in scholarship, by the desirous knowing of a masculine. It remains unnamable,

denying a transcendent resolution, a re-inhabitation of ordinary life on the terms of the masculine would-be knower. And yet figures like Christa seem to determine to make themselves a cipher between worlds, or between alternative politics.

My principal concern is with a shift in terms. A shift, that is to say, from the masculine region of voice to the feminine, within a term like the unknown, the invisible, the unheard. Rather than reinscribe the metaphysician's faith, as Nietzsche would say, in the opposition of values, or a value and its negation, for example between truth and falsity – a faith I have come to think of as uttered from the masculine region – my suggestion is that another picture lies *beyond*. What is of interest from the feminine register of the term *unknown* then is the work that it requires to remain there, a work that recalls not oppositions but rather what Foucault calls the “double” of a term. He writes:

It is not a question of installing, as people say, another scene, but, on the contrary, of splitting the elements on the same scene. It is not a question, then, of the caesura that indicates access to the symbolic, but of the coercive synthesis that ensures the transmission of power and the indefinite displacement of its effects.” (2004: 15)

The picture of politics and literature then that rests in the capacity to remain unknown, pertains not to her being “not known” but instead to this doubling.

Aesthetics of Exile and the Politics of Literature

Between 1933 and 1945, untold numbers of writers fled Nazi persecution, first in the form of censorship and exclusion, and later as physical violence. Jews, leftists, and intellectuals in particular were understood as contiguous groups, and stained by their “un-Germanness.” Many took part in successive waves of flight, as more European capitals –

Amsterdam, Paris, Prague, and so on – fell to the Nazi war machine, forcing evacuees to take refuge in the United States, South America and East Asia. Already during this period, writers, philosophers, and social critics took to print to declare a vision of humanity and human rights that required international action against Nazi persecution – universities in exile and underground associations flourished in cities like New York where a generation of intellectuals found a ready reading public in students. In the decades since, the plight of these exiles has been the subject of an enormous publication effort, as well as a topic for a massive industry of scholarship. The Leo Beck Institute, for example, divided between homes in Berlin and New York, has, thanks to funding from the German government, produced massive catalogues of Jewish and American publishers dating to the 1940s and made them available to the general public. Countless thousands of books and articles have been published on the topic, often reproducing old arguments in light of the discovery of new texts or letters, or extending the effort to other marginalized and dominated groups, for example Hungarian or homosexual literature. Wolf Lepenies (2000) has called this the “victory in defeat” of German culture, suggesting it proves a “fundamental assumption...it could not only compensate, it could even take its revenge on politics.”

Brecht is perhaps the most commonly cited example in daily life in Berlin. For Rancière, Brecht is unusual for the seriousness of his engagement with Marxism and in a sense, it is a version of post-War Marxist aesthetics that I want to suggest is at stake in the truth-exposing exile literature of the period. It is Brecht’s eminently dialectical relation to truth, Rancière suggests, that makes him such an enticing political writer.

There is no question of telling the truth about Brecht...for the trackers of the unthought, Brecht is not easy. He thinks everything – and its opposite. He doesn't commit slips, he winks. Not the way a showoff – an ironist – would...but the way a dialectician – a humourist – would, using the truth as a splitting in two. (Rancière. 2011: 100)

The picture of political action here is one in which the *truth* can shatter the illusory world of the petit-bourgeoisie, by revealing to them the conditions of their power. But the identity of difference (the dialectic) that is the truth of the world at the same time renders truth impotent, *use* collapses inevitably into *uselessness*. “There is” therefore “no politics of truth.” Consider Brecht's poetic criticism of Thomas Mann, for his refusal to take up the helm of the Soviet's Free Germany Committee in 1943. Lehnert (1982), for example, suggests Mann seems at times less willing to distinguish the non-Nazi German from his guilty counterpart (perhaps, the suggestion goes, because of a desire to work within the interests of American foreign policy), Brecht was more than happy to ally himself with the communist intervention (though Russia is never mentioned in the poem). In the *Kriegsfibel*, Brecht manifests desire to “identify with the German soldiers, inviting the reader to do the same” (1984:199), a “blind patriotism” someone like Mann is able to spot, even if Brecht's interest is in a *future* Germany. Thus Mann and Brecht occupy two political possibilities for Germany articulated from exile – one limited by a “romantic heritage and bourgeois class perspective” and the other by Marxist ideology. At the same time, they share the burdens of the genre of writing in exile, relying on autobiography, ambiguity and self-accusation. (1984: 200) It is here then that one finds the ultimate expression of the individual exile writer made to bear the burden of his entire class symbolically, and the entire nation rhetorically.

From the *Flüchtlingsgespräch*, one might argue that, not only has the exile drama never existed - “in the sense of a literarization [Literarisierung] of the semantics of exile”- but it could not exist. (Feilchenfeldt 1986: 149) While in exile “every statement of exile [becomes] authentic,” the authenticity of the experience of exile as an existential experience cannot be played out by actors (ibid). The realization of the drama on the stage unavoidably prevents the “authentic statements of exile.” (150) Brecht thereby ostensibly distances himself from the rest of the genre, because he rejects the representation of authenticity [Begriff der Authentizität]. This is effected in the choice of the dialogical form, which allows for “das Exil” to find his “corresponding interpretation through Brecht as experience of exile itself.” (ibid) – hence Brecht’s dictum “the best school for dialectics is emigration.”

This general aesthetic character might be captured succinctly in relation to Hannah Arendt’s picture of judgment, and in particular her question of the *who* as it pertains to the plurality of human action. Arendt’s emphasis is on the disclosure of one’s self to the collective as a mode of political action. The capacity for stories to be told, for narratives to be constructed that ascribe significance to action, and which produce in their reception by an audience, a community of memory. Or else, we might turn to the third of Said’s 1993 Reith Lectures on exile. Said is largely invested in the exile of groups, although he begins his discussion of intellectual exile through an invocation of the pre-modern condition of wandering; the exile as someone who “never felt at home.” But while the popular imagination seems to take hold of this operation as a complete break, Said suggests such a “surgically clean separation” would in fact be preferable to the actual state of being. Instead, “the exile...exists in a median state, neither completely at

one with the new setting, nor fully disencumbered of the old; beset with half-involvements and half-detachments; nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another.” Said distinguishes “marvels of adjustment” however – notably those intellectuals who fled the Second World War, many of whom found their way to the United States – from those who “cannot or...will not make the adjustment.” While in subsequent lectures’ attention turns to Mann’s “good war”, it is the course of the “intellectual as outside” that is the “right role” – in this way, the condition of exile the exemplar of the life of dissent best suited for today’s world. “Exile for the intellectual,” Said writes, “in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others.” A key feature of this condition moreover is that content with disagreeableness which becomes a “style of thought, but also a new, if temporary, habitation.”

Life was at its most false in the aggregate - the whole is always the untrue, [Adorno] once said - and this, he continued, placed an even greater premium on subjectivity, on the individual's consciousness, on what could not be regimented in the totally administered society...by virtue of living a life according to different norms, the intellectual does not have a story, but only a sort of destabilising effect; he sets off seismic shocks, he jolts people, but he can neither be explained away by his background nor his friends.

Such features of Adorno’s life mark too the form of his words – “fragmentary...jerky, discontinuous.” Said reads Adorno’s unwavering gloom as indicating the absence of respite one might hope to find in their own work, as if there were no refuge even in writing. But for Said, Adorno has missed the “pleasures” of exile, emanating from the dislocation of the possibility of “dwelling.” He enumerates a few. One is the surprise of learning to make do in instability – “an intellectual is fundamentally about knowledge and freedom. Yet these acquire meaning not as

abstractions...but as experiences actually lived through.” Moreover, the double vision of being neither at rest here nor there allows the exile to stretch ideas to broader applications. Drawing from the case of Giambattista Vico, Said suggests a further pleasure is to be gained from a condition that demands attention to the contingency of events. Displacement too means liberation from the burden of conventional “success” since one is fated to the position of marginality.

For Said, the literary feature most appropriate for characterizing the state of exile is irony (and not, as in Rancière, dialectical humor, or Bahktin’s Rabelaisian critique of Romantic humor, or Erasmus’ humanist folly). Another exile, Lukács (1973: 92-3) considers the political use of irony,

consists in this freedom of the writer in his relation to...the transcendental condition of the objectivity of form giving...irony sees the lost, utopian home of the idea that has become an ideal, and yet at the same time it understands that the ideal is subjectively and psychologically conditioned, because that is its only possible form of existence...Irony, the self-surmounting of subjectivity that has gone as far as it is possible to go, is the highest freedom that can be achieved in a world without God.

Yet if this is the Romantic horizon of possibility for exile, it is certainly – as Said points out – not the case for everyone living in such a condition. At the same time, as a symbol of the other possibility, Adorno’s constitutional or “metaphysical” exile is hardly a case of failure, whatever his maladjustment. These are undoubtedly extremes, but more than that, the emphasis in these ideal types is on the public role of the intellectual, i.e. to “destabilize.” A view from the perspective of ordinary lives might require another language, one where philosophical objections and dislike for popular cultural forms are replaced by a humble desire for the small trappings of everyday life. Adorno may not find lasting solace in his work, but he is able to continue on with his intellectual labors, to

speaking and to be heard. Said and Arendt can be neatly opposed in this one respect, in the emphasis on the nature of Irony to constantly break narrative. But whereas for Said, the political possibility for writing in exile rests in its capacity to shake existing narratives, (e.g. to destabilize ideological structures of oppression), it is for Arendt our capacity to then tell a story of judgment (to tell the truth that was uncovered in the previous act) that makes possible a future life. The inversion of the structure notwithstanding, its general character remains.

Repetition in a Contemporary Aesthetics

In his essay on *Le Chair des mots*, Jacques Rancière (1998) suggests that philosophy seeks to loose its language from “all the glamour of mimesis,” though “only at the price of uniting with the most radical forms by which literature mimics the incarnation of the word.” It is “these mad sorties of philosophy,” that life in the contemporary Western world contrasts to the literary, to the “solitude of words and the pure chance of their encounters from the philosophical and political mirages of incarnation.” While philosophy hopes to avoid vacuity and seeks footing by binding words to a state of affairs, literature’s power rests, paradoxically, in the extent to which its words are free from sedimentation in particular things or states in the world, bodies that might incarnate their power.

For Rancière, it was Lyotard’s re-imagining of the place of the Kantian sublime, as a reflection on mourning, which realigned the relationship between aesthetics and politics at the end of the 20th century. In the long shadow of the Second World War, and

the more proximate disenchantment (emanating from the fall of the Wall in 1989) with the possibility of critique in the wake of failed projects of utopian society and avant-gardist realignment, art turned to nostalgia. In a similar manner, the political fervor of 1968, in which children questioned their parents about complacency in the Nazi regime and students turned to the left to challenge authoritarian hypocrisy, morphed into a routine that presents itself as “critical” while preserving the status quo. (2000: 10) Mourning allows us to make art “witness” to that which exceeds thought (or remains unthought, unseen) in the realm of politics, those features of the contemporary order that remain covered up. In this moment, reflection on art reclaimed its place at the point where thinking breaks down (rather than, as some modern writers would have it, as part of a political endeavor to make *thought* into the *world*). That is to say, “where a mise-en-scène of the original abyss of thought and the disaster of its misrecognition continued after the proclamation of the end of political utopias.” (2000) What is at stake in the particularity of the category of literature vis-à-vis politics is therefore essentially an account of how words circulate and what they do in and with regards to the world.

Aesthetics, in this light, refers to the marking out of a particular arrangement of the seen and unseen that determines a “place and stakes of politics as a form of experience.” (Rancière 2000: 13) In Plato, the political regime of writing (and theatre) in particular is extended to the whole of art, since literature effaces the grounds of the circulation of words “for the relationship between the effects of language and the positions of bodies in a shared space.” From Plato’s notion of the *silent* word – one that does something in the world regardless of who its user is, or whether their use is legitimate - we arrive at a notion in Rancière of *literarity* as an *excess of words*. When

language functions as a challenge to the *proper* (in the Platonic sense) order of things, without respect to whether the speaker and the audience are in their rightful places, it can serve to unsettle that social order itself. There is, therefore, a political regime to which such art practices seem bound from the start, indeed because of this tendency to shake positions of speech from solid ground, obscure identity, and, perhaps most importantly for Rancière, to ‘deregulate’ delimitations of time and space - namely democracy.

Literature’s efficacy in the domain of power, in the political, is not bound to politics of its writer or reader, but *as literature*, in that literature changes the rules of what is or is not known, what can or cannot be said, heard, or seen. (Rancière 2006) Thus literature is, for Rancière, also distinct from writing in general, and from language as such -- it is a particular mode of ‘carving up the world.’ To say then that the political regime of literature is *democracy* is not to say that there is *one* politics of literature, for democracy does not refer to a particular mode of expression, but is rather marked by the disruption of a determined connection between expression and content. (2011: 14) It subsists as a site of “clashes.” Literature offers a paradox through its toleration of the play of tensions, the limits of whose power it tests “either by trying to radicalize the mutism that distinguishes it from democratic chatter, or by trying to exceed the democracy of the letter by making itself the language of the collective body.” (26) To put it more simply, literature is forced to cancel itself out, because its process of *differentiation* ultimately renders its own difference *indeterminable*.

If, as Nikolas Kompridis (2014) suggests, the “aesthetic turn” in thinking about politics is instead a *re-turn*, it is in many ways a move toward a Romanticism that has for some time been the “refuse bin” of concepts in a war over what counts in theorizing the

political. It seems, he argues, that whenever thinking the political has run up against its own limits, it has reached out for the aesthetic. In this way, the return in the past few decades to the centrality of the relation between aesthetics and politics affords us an occasion to revisit an equally ancient concern about the nature of the literature that seems at once over-wrought and yet unsatisfactorily theorized. Anthropology too has turned now to the aesthetic both as a form through which politics is expressed, and yet something in excess of the political. (Mookherjee and Jazeel 2015) Such an interest has been especially important for ethnographies in scenes of violence, where art becomes a medium through which ethical responses to critical events are fashioned in the stitch of everyday life.

Literature's power to remake the world has made it a prime target during moments of political strife – certainly this is the case in Germany where censorship, banishment and death have historically been wielded to devastating ends against its writers. What happens then when the literary life is put in jeopardy? What sorts of possibilities for forms of experience, as well as forms of expression, are engendered by threats to the literary? Or, to use Rancière's language, what kinds of distributions of the sensible (of time and space) might we encounter in situations where the capacity to articulate them is at risk? What might it mean not for a particular configuration, but for the very mode of articulating a form of life to be under threat?

Such a line of inquiry allows too for the inclusion of a particularly anthropological voice in ongoing debates. One thinks of the ways in which sensitivity to ordinary life might provide grounds for a critique of the emphasis on the "ruptural" character of democratic change, wherein the paradox of a revolution born from a previous

order appears as a problem. My sense is that, while Rancière attends to the interplay of the desire to establish consensus, and the move to break it (what he calls *dissensus*), the lived quality of such experiences has fallen from view. Whatever the *excess* of some words, some are still unable to reach for them, or choose not to. What if, rather than understanding the politics of literature (or democracy) as “torn” between an extraordinary and founding critical event, and the everyday ground from which it emerges, we thought instead of the ongoing work required in the making of a world? Perhaps “becoming-woman is the first quantum,” as Deleuze and Guattari write, “rushing...toward becoming-imperceptible...the immanent end of becoming.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980:279) Such a becoming might, as they suggest following Kierkegaard, be a drive to be like everybody else, or like Heidegger’s dissolution of the authentic self into the public *Mann-selbst* (they-self). But it is more than this, because becomings, movements, cannot help but be perceived – the imperceptible is therefore, for Deleuze and Guattari, also the *percipiendum*. The political project of minoritization issues a challenge to Rancière’s idea of the achievement of the making-seen, the upending of the political order that has accomplished what it set out, by calling instead for an effort perpetually becoming-minority, lest we fall victim to our fascist impulses and simply replace one settled order for another.³⁹

Dangers to the possibility of a transformational “inscription,” as Norval indicates, might take many forms, but its *locus classicus* is undoubtedly in the figure of the exile. From one perspective, the mutual imbrication of the exilic and the literary seems a peculiar occurrence. How could the same process that carves up the world democratically

³⁹ One finds the corollary of this argument for déterritorialisation in Deleuze’s (1975) reading of Kafka’s use of German in a minor key, as an ethical act of summoning a missing people against the fascist impulse.

– that is, tends toward a space of inclusion via the indifference to difference – also be determined by a character who, by definition, stands outside? Bearing in mind, however, the paradox of literature’s political regime, it is evident why the position of the exile beyond the limits of inclusion is an ideal site through which such aesthetic negotiations might take place – as Rancière suggests, is it from such positions that the optics of a given field can be shifted by shedding light on that which, in the present order, remains hidden. The tension at the heart of such a capacity is highlighted by the lives of exiles who are made into signs of suffering at large; they are stretched between the utter singularity of their experiences of the outside on the one hand, and their being made to stand in for universal conditions on the other.

Badiou (2005)⁴⁰ points out, there is an inherent problem with the disclosing effect of poetic ideas. “Every truth” he explains, “is equally always a singular procedure,” rather than the “self-consciousness of the Whole.” At the heart then of every poetic truth is a center which cannot be brought “into presence” – what he calls the *unnamable* – something the poem is unable to make seen. Thus with every unveiling, something else remains covered. It is into this space that I want to offer an anthropological intervention.

Truth and Dialectics on a Contemporary Stage

⁴⁰ What poetry “forbids” in Plato is *dianoia*, discursive thought, the thought that is subject to the law; yet modernity has shifted this alignment, making the poem an “intelligible vocation” such that its previous incarnation as the sensible form of the Idea has given itself over to the sensible “within the poem, as the subsisting and powerless nostalgia of the poetic idea.” For Badiou, philosophy has to replace the dominance of the matheme with the poem, because the poem remains closer to the sensible while the matheme (of discursive thought) proceeds from the pure idea. One can think this in terms of Kant’s conception of reflective aesthetic judgments, in which the imagination is freed from abiding by the law of reason. In the third Kritik, the imagination’s power is extended, from the determinative capacity (to subsume particulars under concepts) to the reflective (the inverse). When Badiou writes that the “poem surpasses in power what the sensible is capable of itself” then it seems that he has in mind something akin to the judgment of the sublime which serves the same function in Kantian aesthetics.

The dialectics of truth have been put to considerable use in the politics of exile - to quiet discord, to cover wounds, to offer critique, or bear witness. At the same time, the capacity to write *from* exile has been offered as a rare position from which to speak truth to power. As such, a picture of the literary writer as born from exile has emerged within political and intellectual discourse at least since the end of the Second World War. It is the transformation of this conviction into a master symbol that I am interested interrogating. My argument, I should stress, concerns how the general features of a manner of speaking about exile, with a particular history (in relation to censorship and physical violence especially against Jewish and Leftist German intellectuals), takes hold of public conceptions of exile. Despite the many forms this story takes, a politics of making-known is constantly re-inscribed ostensibly against the fascist threat but in so doing simultaneously disallows any alternative politics to emerge. Thus in our fight against fascism, and our desire to never forget (to never let this catastrophe become ordinary), we run the risk of another kind of forgetting – one in which, as Badiou warns, a poetic power (a literary telling of the truth of violence) blinds us to another violence inhering in the new order we construct in the place of our enemy. Even seemingly dialectically opposed positions are, from another angle, identical. Perhaps more subtly, I want to gesture toward an alignment of the metaphysical voice and its preoccupation with truth with a politics that seeks out the *uses* of literature, one given starkest expression in the comedic forms.

Such operations are likewise visible as the metaphysical voice in the ethnographic register. At the end of one of Berlin's S-bahn railway lines, near the southwest border

where the city becomes Potsdam, there is an old, brown mansion surrounded by gardens that for more than four decades has been home to one of the capital's most prestigious literary forums. This stage and its guesthouse were the setting for some of the most important (and contentious) conversations in local literary history; its walls silently listened to some of the 20th century's most celebrated writers. One evening in 2013, I sat in the back of the dimly lit reading hall as a man, who despite recent popularity in Germany crossed its path now out of desperation, read from his recent book. Liao Yiwu wore a simple white linen shirt and looked down over thin-rimmed glasses, dramatically almost chanting the words that told the story of his time in Chinese state prison Tumen, learning to play the dongxiao (a bamboo flute) from an elderly monk called Sima. A gong quietly rang in the background.

His German translator, Karin Betz, sat to his right and read her version of his poems out loud when he was finished, but this time we hear them in a practiced and monotone voice. He answered questions from the audience through an interpreter to his left, about China today, about the violence he experienced at the hands of its government, about Daoism and its aesthetics, and about poetry. They wanted to know more about his relationship to "traditional" Chinese writing, his impressions of life in Europe, and how they differed from the place he was forced to leave. At the end of the conversation, Liao played the xiao for us, and roared a short final chant.

As a young man Liao read Western poetry, and rose to prominence as an official writer of the state, but when in 1989 he published two poems calling the Chinese communist system a cancer, he came under suspicion. After the violence at Tiananmen Square that summer, Liao began making use of older aesthetics of oral poetry and

chanting, challenging the state and recording his poems rather than writing them. In 1990 he was arrested and placed on a life-long black list for seditious writing, but internationally his reputation grew. Though he was invited for an international festival in Germany (first in Frankfurt and then in Köln), where his work had grown enormously popular in the intervening years, Liao found himself under the imposition of a state travel ban. Despite a formal invitation from the HKW, and an official Chinese delegation of 100 writers, Liao was barred from attending the festival. In response, he first wrote an open letter to Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel, pleading for help in February 2010. “Dear Madam Merkel...My Name is Liao Yiwu, I am a writer from the bottom of Chinese society.” He chose to write her because of her influence, because of the love the German reading public had given to his books, and because [she]:

Once lived in dictatorial East Germany, and perhaps you were trampled upon, humiliated, had your freedom restricted, and have some understanding of how I feel at this very moment. When the Berlin Wall fell you were 35 years old, I was 31 years old; that year the June Fourth massacre also happened; the night it happened I created and recited the long poem, “Massacre.” For this I was arrested and imprisoned for four years. In 1997, we founded the underground literary magazine *The Intellectuals* [unofficial English translation of *Zhishifenzi*]; in the inside front cover and inside back cover of the first issue we published two exciting photos: one was from 1970, of Willy Brandt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, representing the German people, kneeling, admitting guilt, and repenting at the monument to the innocent victims of World War II, in Warsaw, Poland; the other photo was from November 9, 1989, when the people, ecstatic, broke through the Berlin Wall.... As individuals, perhaps we once had a shared history? Maybe I am destined to experience, sooner or later, what you experienced in the past? God really looks out for the Germans.

When February gave way to March, Liao was still unable to leave China. He wrote a letter to his German readers (in Chinese and German), apologizing for his absence, still in his home in rural Chengdu. He sent along his poems – the ones we heard that night in 2013 – in the hands of his friend Liao Tianqi, with a letter and a message of

intimacy “in this China, which is free for neither the living nor the dead, my readers, your attentive listening to this story will also comfort me at the edge of the grave.” By July of the following year however, Liao, having made a harrowing escape through the border with Vietnam, arrived in Berlin where he now lives and works.

The operation of what I have been calling a dialectical aesthetics is manifest in several features of this story; Liao’s ability to petition the German state for aide, his legibility to the regime, is determined by the presupposition of a German reading public who had taken to his work. This possibility is predicated too on the intelligibility of two experiences of suffering – Tiananmen Square and the Berlin Wall – through which one can articulate their need. The success of his writings, their readability within an imagined “foreign” body of literature, simultaneously forecloses, other possibilities for what counts as “aesthetics” or “politics.” This is made clear in the structure of the reading itself, especially the necessity of cultural experts and translators, the formality and theatricality of the performance, and the types of questions posed to Liao and his work.

There are other stories of exiled writers in Berlin, however, as there are other politics of literature.

The Melodrama of the Unknown Writer

I left Najet’s apartment late one evening after many hours of talking and she began to cry. She took my hands and thanked me for the questions I asked and those I didn’t. “Journalists don’t want to know the true things, the simple things...I have had an interest in anthropology...because like this, it travels deeply in the text and explodes it.”

Christa put together a small green book, *Fremde Heimat – Texte aus dem Exil*, for which three of Najet’s poems were translated from Arabic into German by another friend, Leila Chamma. By the time they were published, Najet had stopped writing in her mother tongue, cut off from those publics first by force and now by choice. She had been thinking of writing a novel in English. Written during a brief visit to her home in Tunisia in the winter of 2008, the first of her poems translated in German is rendered *Sehnsucht*, longing. It begins with an invocation of a light, a voice. But in the second stanza, we learn the narrator is perhaps addressing Pain. “I am facing you, Pain, falling upon me, be my ink on the paper.” [*Zugewandt bin ich dir, fall über mich her, sei meine Tinte auf dem Papier*]. She is lonely, “without a homeland, without a name, without [her] loves.” She “extends her soul” [in the familiar inflection, *dir*, to you], and beseeches “be my jacket in this death, be a ship that avoids the port.” Everything is salt. The taste of coffee, letters, in her eyes, on her lips, leaving the tongue to dream of sugar. Like waves crave the rock into which they slam their pride. Twice more parallels to earlier sensory metaphors: like a boat craves “handkerchief loving women”, like eyes to water. And she is herself drawn then to the dream-images (*Traumbildern*) to which she entrusts a secret – a lost secret, because the bottle that kept it is now smashed. Another poem continues a thought,

On the street of Freedom
behind my mirror image
entrenched
I play my defeats
of a woman
who my Tears hate
A woman who witnessed my taming
saw
how one unprogrammed me
how I complied with the rules
how one trained me

broke myself

...

My poem, in mourning
accompany me
send out letters
to lick up the mud of my defeats

...

On the street
yet only
my I [Ich]
and its mirror image
me, the Word

§

“I don’t know how to approach, why not say it, the truth – no more than woman. I have said that the one and the other are the same thing, at least to man.”

Barbara Cassin (e.g. 1995) in her effort to refuse the philosophy’s masculine drive to “truth,” and especially to the *use* of language qua universals, what she calls a “strange dream of domination,” has offered Novalis’ logology as one way out. Rather than work from a dominated position within an ontological tradition doggedly pursuing the identity of thought and being, expressed succinctly under the sign of Heidegger’s *Aletheia* (uncovering), Cassin has proposed remaining within language, covered, “traveling deeply within it.” The value of literature, then, from the point of view of this alternative politics, is not in its instrumental use for the revelation of truth. While one dreams to dominate or otherwise destroy the other by bringing it into reconciliatory light, that is by contesting its difference in a Bourdieuan manner, by challenging its claim on who counts as a writer, or philosopher, the Sophistical pursuit has no designs on its would-be dominator. It simply dwells and remains open to surprise. Strange, it seems finally, that the writer should be

brought under the sway of the propositional attitude assumed by philosophy's metaphysical voice at all, but perhaps it is precisely that character of art that allows us to *see as* that positions it to be dominated by the truth-seeker. I am reminded of Hamlet, having seen for himself the ghost of his father, reminding Horatio "There are more things in heaven and earth...Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

What might a logological account look like, a story unburdened by the claim to truth or order, but which in remaining where it is, in language, a turning back that is also a growth? For Novalis, logology is the counterpart to magic. It requires a creative involution that we have lost, the missing "hieroglyph" – "we stopped at the letter. We lost that which appears for the sake of appearance." [NS 2, 593, N 416] To romanticize the world is simply to turn back again and again toward a more ordinary activity, a striving for what is already here. Being, as Dalia Nassar reads him, is neither the ideal, nor the real, nor the pursuit of either, but this activity. Perhaps it is what Hélène Cixous finds in Lispector's *Água viva*, an *écriture féminine* that emerges from an encounter and undoes the structure of subjects and their positions in fields of power, a rewriting of the world that allows for what she calls a *living* relation to words and to experience. For Cixous, the Romantic Absolute points to a space beyond the "world of the known," beyond the "world of likeness... that is to say, of death in life" (1990: 61), an absolute solitude, madness. There is a choice, in light of the "incommunicable...between staying in secrecy and clandestinity alone, or becoming keepers of the law." (120) The call for *écriture féminine* is a call to write outside the machine that has been "operating and turning out its 'truth' for centuries," to "[write] herself," "return[ing] to the body which...has been

turned into the uncanny stranger on display,” it is a writing that “cannot be theorized,” it is “working (in) the inbetween.” (Cixous 1976: 879-880; 883)

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I asked Najet late one evening about a topic she had written on in articles over the last several years – what does the writer do in society? “Which society?” I realized I wasn’t sure myself. Germany, Tunisia. Both.

For me, I always say I have no borders. I have a big country inside me. Sometimes when I miss my mother, as I miss here in Berlin some places – and for me there are no borders. Society here or in Tunisia or in another country, I think, the problems are different. But if we want to change...we have to understand each other... We have to know the people, the simple people...what [are] their problems. What is their suffering. And I think in general here people they understand. They know. Because when I go to a place I talk, they come and they kiss me. And they tell me “we are with you.” And that makes me happy, because my message is to clear things. Not only by my poems. When I can answer the question about something in my society...I have to do that.

At twenty-four, Najet was married, and took a job producing television programs about the history of Maghrebian literature. By 1981, she had begun to find herself at odds with the Bourguiba regime. 1982, her first book, published in Arabic, was released in the Tunisian market, as well as a number of political writings in then banned local newspapers. Police began harassing her on a weekly basis, sometimes arresting her for one day, others showing up at her house. She frequently found herself followed in the street. In 1983 the situation grew direr and she left the country with her husband. Though she was not at the time officially forbidden from returning, police visited the home of her parents and threatened her mother.

They told her ‘your daughter is very clever and she’s better than 100 men because she [ran] away, she know how to run away from our hands.’ And she told them ‘why you are looking for her she’s only a girl and one, just one of them?’ And he was a man I [knew well], he made a lot of affronts to me and to my mother ... And even had he tried to do...things. And he told my mother, ‘you don’t know what is your daughter...maybe you think that your daughter is only a girl. But she is not only a girl she meant a *lot* to us.’

Though she can’t utter the words, the nature of the threats is clear. She holds a tissue firmly and shakes her head as she lowers her gaze. For two years Najet remained in Yemen. “And after that we went to Cyprus. Two years in Cyprus too. After that Algeria, and after Algiera, Morroco. And Sudan. And Beirut [laugh]. And Oman [laughing more] And Baghdad.” In 1984 she gave birth to her first child while in exile, and then a second while in Algeria, and a third in Morocco. I asked if each of her children had different passports, “Yes, when I [went] to change the passport they said ‘how many times are you married!?’ [laughing]” From her traveling exile, she continued to write. During the time of Ben Ali, encouraged by news of changes Najet visited Lamarsa to see her family. In the meantime, her marriage had fallen apart, and she struggled to convince her husband to assent to a divorce. Though it was finally granted in 1998, her father subsequently threw Najet and her children out of his house. She lived on the street with her children for several years.

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Around the corner from the Lichtburgforum where Salon Exile meets is a nondescript apartment building, with grey walls and white windows. I was late because I missed the first train from my apartment, so I called Najet to let her know. We had

arranged to meet at her home, but it was hard to hear her soft voice over the phone so I found my way with some difficulty. As I approached the door, I noticed that her name was on none of the placards where one normally rings to be let in. Instead it simply read *PEN Zentrum*. After climbing three flights of stairs, I'm greeted with the shy, smiling face of a middle aged Tunisian woman, in grey sweater and blue pajama pants and worn slippers. She ushered me inside and points to a stool where I can put shoes before leading me to a nearly bare living room – two blue chairs and a blue couch, an orange shag rug, a broken old TV, large windows grazed by a young tree, a work desk with an old flat panel computer monitor, an ancient fax machine, and a cordless phone. She quickly ducks into the kitchen, returning twice to answer a ringing phone.

I can never understand the messages...they are always in Spanish...I guess for whoever used to be here in this place.

“I was born in a place by the sea” in the south of Tunisia, in a town called Lamarsa, a suburb of Tunis. Najet's mother was a practicing Muslim, but her father and brother were not. Of her three brothers, one died as a young man, at 28, in 2008. Her family still lives in Lamarsa. “My father is a Bourguinist, he likes Bourguiba despite Bourguiba [had done many] bad things [to] my father but my father likes him, I don't know why sometimes I don't know why people like him, [laughs] it is something strange. My mother doesn't like Bourguiba, she is against Bourguiba.” What about your brother? “My brother is against him - me too at the end of [his] life, when he {Bourguiba} started to make mistakes and became old I was against him, against his politics, his system, his way. One year he became sick, he has to not let Tunisia between the hands of his family to tear the country – he was ok, he was good. He educated the Tunisian people, he gave

over freedom, he made a lot of beautiful things.” Like any dictator, Najet explains, Bourguiba did not want to relinquish power, and so he began to make mistakes.

A series of melodramas punctuate Najet’s life. There is the routinized violence of her father, who reacts to her voice, to her writing, with physical violence. He is, for Najet, a microcosm of the masculinity of society, an expression of both a desire to stifle her speech and the physical violence of disciplining control. Her resistance is marked by her capacity to bear the dissolution of the world they shared.

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Najet’s rise to prominence as a poet in Tunisia was miraculous. As a young girl, her father did not permit her to attend school. He was against formal education for girls, “he had [the mentality] of the *master*” she told me. Next door to her childhood home was a school run by the Sœur Blanche, a Catholic order of nuns. Najet would sit all day by the window, watching children come in and out, and imagining what studying would be like. The sisters took notice, and one day, the priest came to talk to her father, ultimately convincing him to let her attend. She began her studies in French at six, but her mother sent her on Fridays to the Mosque to study Arabic as well. Najet hated it there because the man in charge who called himself a Sheik and an Imam was “not a true Muslim. He is a cheater.” She was not allowed to speak French at home however – “the French army killed [my mother’s] father, she hates the French language and everything French, because he was a combatant and they killed him.” [She laughs] She enjoys lecturing to me, smiling with pride, about the history of Tunisian Arabic and the historical politics of language in the region – about which she is extraordinarily well read. Najet began to

learn English at fourteen years old, drawn to it for the doors it promised to open. I asked her if she always knew she wanted to be a writer – “Oh early! I was born like that.” She began to publish her poems at the age of nine, and by eleven she was winning local and national prizes. “It was very hard to publish at that time [in newspapers],” she explained. That year a festival was held for Arabic songs, and a call was issued for poets who wanted to participate, instructing them to submit their writing in an envelope without a name or address, which were only to be included in a separate sealed envelope. Winning a place in the festival meant appearing in print in a section of the newspapers normally reserved for only the great writers.

“That’s why when I won three prizes, my name was not on the poem because, if they knew, they would never choose me because there were great poets and they were shocked when they saw me. I was only a child and one of them said ‘it is only a child! What’s this! You shouldn’t add that to [include her among] us! We are great poets!’ And there was a man who was in the jury – he is still alive he is a great composer, and he told them, “we found good poems and that is enough for us. We didn’t see that is a child now. And what is interesting for us, it is only the poems.’

Just like that, Najet became a celebrity. “I came by the window not by the door.”

The difficulty of being a woman writer, “started from the house.”

It started from the house because my father was against that and each time when I published a poem he hit me hard. He punished me. And a lot of pain. Each time. I can’t read my poems, I can’t go, he said he wanted many times to stop me from studying and from going outside. But I fight it hard. One day he cut my hair, all my hair, to make me not go outside. And he tore all my clothes, to not let me go outside, stay at home, and not go read my poems and go outside. Despite that, I left and I read my poems. I didn’t mind.

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Though for a time Najet lived free of explicit threats from the state, she found herself with little work, and unable to assert rights over her writing. She began again to write in opposition to the government, first spurred by artists' inability to stake claims on the products of their labor. Shortly thereafter, she began to circulate articles criticizing the exploitation of young girls in the propaganda machine. Through her work, she came to the attention of women living in the neighborhood where she stayed, and, encouraged by their petitions, she began operating a series of workshops and courses for women who had not had the opportunity to get a formal education. For a while, she taught large groups how to paint, how to weave, and how to write. "They were very happy, [they told me so]," She tells me. "They listened to the radio when I [did something] and they were proud of me." But when political revolt again came to Tunisia, Najet found her courses empty. People ignored her on the street and shopkeepers refused to sell her groceries. The authorities told her at that time that she could no longer publish or appear on the radio.

For Najet, writing is about the reality of ordinary conditions of life, allowing them to move. Fighting then, the politics of writing, concerns what cannot or has not been said. "Sometimes I feel I am a voice. I am their voice. Because I can write. I can talk. I can convince." But this political burden of writing can also be alien to the writer herself. Najet knows writers who are happy to have their books or poems translated into any language, but when asked if they want to meet with the people who speak those languages, they will callously refuse. Interested publishers approached her repeatedly after public appearances, but when she returned their calls, they seldom followed up. When offers did come in, they were rarely willing to put the work into "professional," serious translations. The better offers expected her to contribute funds on her own.

§

“Writing is about the simple things – it must be all people.” The writer takes her home into her own body, she possesses it and invites others in.

Even when I only had a few months in Germany, I started to feel it is really my country. I even feel now I am here more than I am in Tunisia. Because *my Tunisia*, *my Tunisia* that I know, now it isn't there, it is here with me. They destroyed my Tunisia. Mine. What I know.

It is this Tunisia, the one Najet carries with her, that we encounter in her words. The aspirational place is layered on top of an experience of suffering, the other reality of the place.

The Tunisia I know is everyone celebrating, everyone is smiling, everyone wants to celebrate his history, everybody wants to say hello, when somebody have no bread they want to give, when something happens they are all together, there is no difference between Muslim or not Muslim. Everyone we live together. There is no complaints...people are simple...

But this is not the case anymore – and it is not clear if it ever *was* in the conventional sense. One past has been lost and replaced with its opposite. Where people used to feed the hungry from their own kitchens, now they throw them out. Where people used to enjoy life together, now they burn churches and synagogues. To have a *home* can also be to turn back to one's self. It need not require we go out there among the debris to rebuild something lost or reconcile with what we find somewhere new.

Spring of 1988 in Algiers, Najet writes,

The soul closed,
I steal myself from the ring
of the Stranger

I reach
for a falling crown
Cleopatra solves the shackles
of silence
blasts from my mouth
with a blinding flash

§

The comedic literary forms – wit, irony, dialectical humor, even carnivalesque laughter – all of which promise a freedom that remakes the whole through a break, seem inadequate to Najet’s experience. In each, freedom is attained always by cycles of rupture and by return, by reconciliation. For Najet however, there is no escape from language qua language.

Stanley Cavell (1996) offers in distinction to this language the notion of *melodrama*, near this semantic domain but distinct from it, particularly as it pertains to the “specific economy of inner and outer.” It is both like and unlike irony – alike in its working on the weave of internality and externality, unlike in its status viz. the “text” (as genre or tool respectively) and its manner of approach. For Cavell, melodramas (like comedies) artistically work out the Emersonian “problematic of self-reliance and conformity.” Yet if comedy posits a relation of equanimity between all humans as a possibility for the future, by means of poetry (or the work of metamorphosis) and an exemplary pair, melodramas “envision the phrase of the problematic of self-reliance that demands this expressiveness and joy first in relation to one’s self.” (1996:9). To put it another way, melodrama is positioned relative to a problem of skepticism to excess. Nothing less than human existence is at stake (as in Emerson’s response to Descartes’

cogito). The threat of such a doubt is not to my knowledge, but to my being (known). Such a distinction is, what's more, gendered. For Cavell, the women's unknowness becomes an object of desire for the man – that is, for her knowledge. From this point of view, it is no surprise that the theme of the melodrama should be marriage. As Cavell writes, “if some image of human intimacy, call it marriage...is, [or has become available as] the fictional equivalent of...the ordinary...then it stands to reason that the threat to the ordinary...should show up in fiction's favorite threats to forms of marriage, namely in forms of melodrama.” (1996: 10) Likewise is this *domestic* that is constantly under siege for Najet in a way that it is not for Adorno: as the disruption of her writing as a child; then as the interruption of daily life by official harassment; in her divorce; in being thrown out by her family as a result of the divorce; and in Germany in her apartment where nothing is hers, and her children are entirely displaced.

In this way, the “marriage” event here that gives shape to the narrative of the melodrama might be extended through the notion of the ordinary. It is not just her marriage, but also the everyday more generally that is threatened. The division between the melodrama and the comedy is thickened further in the possibility of reconciliation, which the former flatly denies. In both cases, however the status of solitary unknowness is preferable to the ‘marriage of irritation.’ Thus Cavell suggests that the “terms” of one's unknowability, are not “welcome” to others. That knowledge as an object of desire can take a number of forms, as can the desire – for example, in *Letter to the Unknown Women* as a longing for “ratification.” (See Cavell 1996: 85-100) A final point or axis to this end comes in the way of Cavell's desire to avoid philosophizing from a register that would usurp voice through establishing a law of necessity on behalf of the other. How, we might

ask another way, do we read the feminine region of voice? Cavell's response to criticism from within feminist critical theory (See 1996: 34-36, and the lecture on *Stella Dallas*) is to refuse the inherited picture of sacrificial pain in favor of sitting with the recognition, on the part of the woman, of her own isolation, bordering as it ultimately tends to on the brink of madness. This is a distinction, he argues, between the imagined desire to be known, to make one's self known (identified with human desire in general) and the capacity on the part of the women to remain unknown, what he calls "the capacity to wait." (37) This waiting is not a failure to be known but instead a (re)claiming of one's existence, teetering between melancholy and ecstasy (ibid.) Melodrama, then, as a theatrical staging of the "unnatural doubts," is to give expression to the woman's recognition of an inability to be known, to understand, as Cavell says elsewhere, that our words might (or will, do) fail. The similarity between the skepticism that inheres in everyday life and these Wittgensteinian "scenes of excess," strikes Cavell as one reason for the popularity of melodrama, but here perhaps appears as an inversion of Rancière's "excess of words."

Cavell's reading of Emerson inverts not the relation between the masculine and the feminine, but instead between the child and mother. "Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and me," Emerson writes – the child's innocence, her openness to change, reveals to us that, "one's subject position," does not, "exhaust one's subjectivity." (35) It is the child's gaze of her mother that Cavell opposes to Brecht's description of exile as a tension between two cultures – the woman's position in the melodrama is not a problem of "not belonging" but of belonging on the wrong terms,

she is, “at odds with the [culture] in which she was born and is roughly in the process of transfiguring into one that does not exist, one as it were still in confinement.” (213)

For Cavell, literature can manifest a theatrical expression of (perhaps unnatural) doubts, but as Wittgenstein makes clear, skepticism is seeded in the ordinary. In the time I have spent with writers in Berlin over the past several years, what strikes me are not the ways in which literature works in the service of rupturing events or theatricality (though it certainly does this as well), but the myriad ways in which it is also made to become ordinary. In this way, perhaps it is unsurprising then that the ways in which literature is evoked by a dialectical regime of truth don’t express unnatural doubt but rather unnatural assurance of intimacy or acknowledgment. To be clear, this is not to suggest literature is posited as an actualized bridge to the other, to absolute understanding, but rather to emphasize that the celebration of our successes threatens to cover our failures. What makes the literary such a dangerous space is that it promises itself as a cipher through which one can overcome the distance to the pain over the other even partially; it is the threat of an amnesia of the skepticism that haunts the human condition about our solitude.

These shades of difference are everything.

The politicization of the experience of exile, as a discourse on freedom and human rights, as much as in Adorno’s metaphysics, presupposes the availability of their experience. An experience that also is supposed to undergird the very possibility of writing in the first place, the centrality of exile to literature not just literature to exile.

§

Summer of 1985.

A bloody pen
draws a line in the sand
of memory
...
From every letter
grows a finger
pointing to the dwarves
of this world
...
To me belongs the homeland
to you the border.
Who brings
the pitcher from the Berber
waters the Blood-Lily
with desert salt?
...
The cave laughs
in Carthage
embrace slaves
and lions

At the Penumbra

"In Berlin I feel more comfortable, I like the cinemas, getting North African food, and the graffiti reminds me of the murals during the Arab revolution." The words printed on the page caught me by surprise. I was away from Berlin when the image flashed across my screen, Najet with her hair done up fashionably, laughing and smiling, standing in the middle of a bookshop reading a little green book with the word Meerwüste across the top. I looked more closely – the book she was holding was her own, her first in German. Two years after our first encounter in her apartment, Najet's countenance had completely changed. The photo refers to a tour from the Goethe Institute, which is proudly displaying her book in their library, and which she joins walking through the Prinzessinnengarten, stopping the guide to ask about small details, what the birds like to eat, and why the seeds are planted in just this manner.

But the article captures two stories – one of which is subverted by the desires of the other. A quick summary of Najet’s life appears and then the usual bureaucratic language of assimilation – “language is the key to integration.” The author writes “her entire life has been shaped by language,” and so naturally she takes German courses, an opportunity afforded her by the joined forces of German PEN and the Goethe Institute. Najet is juxtaposed with another Writers-in-Exile alumna, an Iranian journalist, who declined the language program because she wanted to ultimately return home and felt herself caught in a purgatorial trap. But while Najet’s words service the needs of the discourse of aid and integration, she has indeed managed to write now, she is smiling, and her poems have found a home in German. It was Christa and her friend Dörthe who made her book possible, though, not the official structures that put it to work for a separate discourse. Dörthe’s husband had been a niche publisher, a passionate reader and supporter of the translation of prominent texts mostly from South Asia. When he passed away, the family banded together to keep his dream alive, their son even left his career to take the helm of the small imprint. Though they struggled themselves, they wanted to help, and Najet was happy to finally allow her words to move, aided by someone who truly cared for them and for her. The penumbric position occupied Christa and Salon Exil, allowing her to traverse the landscape of politics and negotiate between Najet’s position and those of the German discourse.

It is important to remark that while Najet and Brecht or Adorno represent alternative politics, they do not stand in dialectical relation. One is not the internal negation of the other, but rather a refusal of its force. And this refusal is enacted in small ways and incomplete ways. In an interview with the German portal, Qantara – an Arabic

word for “bridge” adopted by a network of institutions including the news outlet Deutsch-Welle, the Goethe Institut, and the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (The Federal Center for Political Education) – Najet captures the double bind of the multiple politics of writing.

In my throat nests the pain of all those to whom I lend a voice. For their sake, I have to be as strong as bird – a bird with powerful opinions. Only the strong can put up peaceful resistance to violence. (Kramatschenk 2015)

The “true word” she says, is the “free word.” Both God and the police can set “traps” for words. The interviewer asks her first to reply to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis before turning to Berlin. “A label like ‘writer in exile’ can also become a kind of prison,” she says to Najet. “Sometimes you don't have a choice... I'm not in prison; I'm in a wonderful city, a place I love, which is beginning to become a part of me... Every place has its own perfume. So the poems I am writing at the moment wear the scent of this city.” Even with me, Najet is always careful to mark her gratitude to Germany and to Berlin. At the same time, she acknowledges, very subtly the limits of those gestures – if there were a better choice, a freer choice, she'd take it. Her expressions are different for Christa – “[the program] makes it possible for us to rebuild our lives – we are not just surviving, but living and writing.” She wants her work to be read in German, by Germans, but her willingness to find routes to expression is not tantamount to complacent acceptance of Cavell's re-marriage. It has generated something new, using the language that might have been a prison to different ends. The “perfume” of Berlin that clings to her new words is something other than acclimation, or transcendence, it refuses the dialectics of seen and unseen, written and unwritten, in favor of bearing unsettlement, a forever incomplete return to the domestic not as a failure but as a gesture of resisting the force.

Early in this essay I suggest that its concern was with marking a shift in the relationship between a term and something else. This shift is not an escape from a particular language, I suggested, but within it, to another region of voice. It is a move from the relationship that marks truth and untruth or masculine and feminine, to the relationship of the mother to the child. Or perhaps from the child poet who learns to speak in a world that fights her, who mirrors the second childhood of life in exile, stuttering in language, or seeing one's words in a language we cannot ourselves read.

CHAPTER THREE

The Bookseller Markets, Villages, and the Value of Literature

*Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli*⁴¹
-Terentianus Marus, 1286

On an early trip to Berlin, the university I had been affiliated with had arranged for me stay for a few months in housing they maintained for visiting researchers near the center of the city, and which made for affordable accommodations. After dropping my

⁴¹ "The destiny of books is according to the capabilities of their readers." The phrase is shortened by Benjamin in *Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus* to *Habent sua fata libelli*, "books have their own destinies."

bags off in the room, I chatted with the student who worked at the desk during the summers. She smiled, “oh, you speak German!” – she had, she confided, been used to visiting scholars mainly from the natural sciences, and asked what I was there to work on. “If you’re interested in books,” she said, “there are some great neighborhood shops [Kiezläden] not far, let me give you some names,” and jotted them down on the back of my check-in form.

Walking over the bridge that crosses the Spree River, I found myself in one of the most densely commercial regions of Berlin, surrounded by imposing new buildings, throngs of tourists and men and women in tailored suits, talking loudly and walking briskly. One sees sites like these frequently in Mitte, but they are scarce in other parts of the city, and many of the Berliner I came to know avoided it in favor of the generally cheaper, less commercially congested, and younger districts. Down the street from one of the most bustling transit terminals in the city, at an intersection known for its banks and department stores, I caught a glimpse of a statue of G.W.F. Hegel and a sign for a bookshop. I looked down at the paper and then around again at the street signs. At one of the busiest intersections, in the heart of Berlin’s financial and technocratic hub, I was just a block or two away from three separate independent bookshops. Making my way to the closest one, I ran my eyes over the shelves near the front, dancing around three other patrons as we crossed paths. A man behind an old wooden desk leapt to his feet, and adjusted his glasses. Introducing himself, he asked what brought me to Berlin. “I want to learn how Indian poetry came to Germany,” I told him, my first project as an anthropologist. “Oh, wait here, just here, I have something for you, you will love this.” He put his hand on my shoulder and a wide smile opened across his face. He dashed

behind a bookshelf and into a back room before returning moments later carrying an impossibly large stack of books in yellowing dust jackets, all evidently from one series. “These are from August Schegel. I have just sold these to a friend, but you see, this would be very interesting for you. If you want to come back, I will phone some friends, and we can see what else there is for you, it’s quite a lot I’m sure. Just call, anytime, anytime, and we will look at things together.” He mumbled and jotted down his information on a scrap of paper before hurrying over to two other patrons, who were shopping for a gift.

When I first began visiting Germany it was the bookshops that caught my attention. I made a method of visiting as many as I could, drawing a mental map of their specialties, owners, neighborhoods, histories and clientele. Every week I received, and still receive, emails to personal lists. These communiqués typically began, “Dear friends...” often followed by a message or dedication. “We are dedicating June to women who have shown their husbands what is what.” Or, “The summer was friendly earlier, the plums juicier, and there was more free parking. But such is not our lament – whoever would agree with that would be missing a lot!” A list of happenings, pictures and news come next, “Unfortunately, Frau Magnot is ill these days, and cannot visit Berlin to join us [to celebrate a book in her honor]. We wish her a speedy recovery! Your everlasting spirit is an example to us!” They conclude, “we hope to see you soon, your bookseller.” Throughout the city, thousands of small bookshops regularly send mails to their dedicated patrons; personal touches the norm of an industry that is nevertheless one of the most lively in the world, generating nearly ten billion Euro’s in trade annually and two billion in exports, comprising more than 22,000 enterprises (nearly 7,000 separate

retailers), and an enormous translation machine (importing almost 12,000⁴² titles annually).

Berlin has thousands of independent bookshops, some with clearly defined specialties – architecture, political philosophy, English literature, and others, across a huge number of genres. By and large they are physically small structures, seldom more than a few rooms, but their ubiquity and quality are striking. As I explored, I spoke to customers and owners, snapping pictures of shelves – I wanted to know who came in for what, and why this shop and not one of the countless others. An exhausting undertaking, I ultimately frequented a handful of operations across the city, some in the former West, some in the en vogue East. Certain names recurred often in conversations: young Germans told me about *Die Gute Seite*, *Dorotheenstädtischer*, *Stadtlichter*, *Büchertisch* or any of the other small shops in Neuköln and Kreuzberg (occasionally a more self-consciously avante-garde institution in Mitte), older Germans always mentioned *Marge Schoeller*, older Ossies (East Germans) might recommend *Bei Saavedra*; expats loved *Shakespeare & Sons*, *St. George's*, and *Another County*.

For the large community of non-Germans who make up much of central Berlin's population, bookshops were in many cases important gathering points. In early 2014, for example, I had become friends with a young Taiwanese-German student, Yang, at a

⁴² This figure is increasingly dominated by English, as high as 64% market share, followed distantly by French (~11%). These data according to the Frankfurter Buchmesse, one of the most important institutions in the German book trade landscape, and a member of the Börserverein, which I will describe further on. Through this Chapter, I rely on the Börserverein's calculations, from internal documents, and conversations with staff to determine these figures, though there is some discrepancy. In the same year, the United States – the largest publishing industry in the world – produced fewer than 30 billion in trade total (with stagnated growth over the past several years). Among the most important points of comparison: e-books in the United States market for the past several years account for a quarter of all sales and less than one percent of sales in the German market. The relative composition of the market is also distinct, in terms, for example, of total market share of literary fiction as compared to young adult serials and self-help products, back catalogue as a percentage of revenue, best-sellers.

reading group meeting (a mix of expatriates and Germans, and highly educated consumers of international literatures). One evening, Yang mentioned that every Friday *Another Country* opened its basement, and its owner cooked homemade food for whoever wanted to come (and offer a few Euro to defray costs). When we arrived at the dinner event the following week, the shop owner, Marta – an older woman with long, very straight hair and a gentle smile – was perched behind a long and low table. The line was growing but she welcomed each of us personally, asking where some had been the past few weeks, about family members and new jobs. One by one we left a few Euro, a few more if we took a beer from the fridge behind where we stood, and then made our way down an old staircase behind a bookshelf halfway into the shop.

The basement room was large but already getting crowded. A line formed in the back to fill plates with dishes Marta had spent all day preparing. Yang and I talked to each other, but after chatting with a young French couple on line, joined them at their table near the back, tucked into a corner filled with old science fiction. Sitting in a crowded table in the back of the basement, a musty collection occasionally spilling out onto the table, we debated the merits of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s poetry, the best new films, and Edith Piaf. We drank and laughed for a few hours as people left into the night, until only our table and one other besides us remained, and our host announced it was time for her to go to bed. Touring the neighborhood around the shop at the end of the night, trading stories about travels and new films, we stopped at a red light – “we should do this everything week or two, let’s meet here no?” Margaritte, a French expat in her late twenties offered, turning to her boyfriend, “Matthias take everyone’s information

down and send a reminder next week!” The group met twice more but then went their own ways.

Such experiences were rather typical in central and eastern Berlin during the time I worked there. That a bookstore should be the scene of these kinds of encounters may seem anachronistic against the backdrop of a global industry that finds itself increasingly under attack by other media, mass-consumption mentalities, the dominance of internet sales and growing e-book market. But in Germany, and especially in Berlin, social networks across all demographics regularly ground hyper-local socialities in the physical space of the bookshop. As we have seen already in this dissertation, Berlin has grown over the past two decades into a city that imagines itself as a world capital, a cosmopolitan center of transregional and transnational cultural production. Yet at the same time, social life in the city is organized into units that friends sometimes called, half-jokingly, *villages*, seemingly at odds with the spirit of a modern public. The same culture that Berlin proudly markets itself as fostering, of welcoming people from the world over (and especially artists and other voracious consumers and producers of culture), appears in paradoxical opposition to the need to remain in a close, socially bounded space. The local bookshop, I will suggest, is a crucial site of this interchange.

Locals arrange Berlin, or at least the major central zones, into twenty or so Kiez-areas; a north German (and originally Slavic) term for a small community or area within the city. While the word has different connotations throughout Germany, even among relatively nearby major cities and the outskirts of the state of Berlin-Brandenburg, *Kiez* in Berlin is conventional language for emergent, local social bodies without regard for official, administrative boundaries - though the city bureaucracy increasingly takes these

designations into account for districting. One writer I knew well explained the seeming contradiction, between the aspiration to making Berlin what he called a “city of the world,” and the pride the youth take in such a designation, on the one hand, and the desire to never leave their Kiez on the other.⁴³

There is this thing where you always want to be the big city, the multicultural place, but at the same time you really want to be in the Kiez against the sell-out. You want to sell what you are, and you want to be appreciated ... they are proud of being a desirable place. At the same time there is this, “we really want to stay in our villages,” because the Kiez is nothing else than the former village culture, there’s the church, there’s the market and the houses around it and some things you need, they’re all little villages...and I think that’s a big problem if you want to be a city of the world.

As an example, Carla, an older woman and herself a trained ethnologist, emphasized an ethical dimension of the continued patronage of local independent shops. “I only go for my books in my Kiez, I know the owner well, and those online sellers, they run labor camps out there on the other side of Europe in deplorable conditions. I’m not in a hurry, if I need something and they don’t have it in stock where I go, he will order it for me; they have their own databases, some kinds of software, he will just have it sent directly to the shop for me.” The system she mentioned links local retail shops to

⁴³ The more general economic situation in Berlin is one of the conditions of this structure. While housing prices have risen, they are still considerably cheaper than any other major European capital, cost of living amount for as little as half of comparable localities. As of 2015, basic utilities cost roughly 180 Euro on average (for a 900 square foot apartment), rent is approximately 400 Euro (880 in Paris; 715 in Munich) ; average monthly salary is more than 1,700 Euro (after tax). A gallon of milk costs 2, 60 Euro (3,67 in Paris) – a carton of eggs 1,50 Euro. (This data is from *Numbeo*’s registry of user/resident submitted data.). My friend Liza was a prime example of the ramifications of this economic context for a literary life; she and her partner each worked a few days a week, mostly translating between English and German – together they spent roughly 60 Euros a month on food, and another few hundred on shared rent. The rest of Liza’ time was dedicated to a small literary journal where they published mainly writing (translating themselves or, occasionally, with the help of others) of a group of friends they had made in the city. They sold the journal out of the back of a member’s car, to local establishments, at events for friends, launch parties, and occasionally online (especially for new readers interested in back catalogues). The prices were calculated with the intention of recuperating investment – sales were never intended to do more than break even, to provide just enough revenue to reproduce itself in a subsequent issue. As their financial manager put it, “we need just enough to keep going.”

wholesalers who generally fill orders within twenty-four hours, and often the same day. This trope of political resistance was as common as aesthetic judgments – patrons I spoke with often told me they wanted to resist the impersonal, mechanistic experience of books as mediated through computer screens, as well as the dominance of global capitalism. This was as important as the quality of the books and the selection on offer.

In what follows, I first provide two pictures of a Kiez bookshop, in which there appears a conscious effort to resist the encroachment of global capital and its associated forms of social organization. Rhetorically, at least, two aims seem distinct – on the one hand, to preserve the boundaries of a social body, as my friend tells me, “the village in the world city,” and on the other, the defense of the authentic art-work against commoditization. Second, I will try to flesh out some of the economic context that makes these scenes possible, by appeal to the peculiar mode of book production adopted by law in the German state. I suggest that the history of regulating the book trade lays bare the material conditions of the ideologies of art we encounter in the first part of the Chapter. Following the language used by most of the people I knew who were involved in the production and sales of books, I trace how these political and economic policies make possible a form of life predicated on the value of art itself.

Ultimately, the interpretation I want to pursue is that the bookshop is, neither in daily life nor in discourse, simply a site of economic transaction, though it is this too. More importantly, strict commodity exchange is displaced by an economic logic that grounds and simultaneously is grounded in a social network of the neighborhood, the Kiez, through an alignment with judgments of aesthetic value. The value of social relations, and the value of the artwork thus become merged in an oblique relation to the

commodity value. The figure of the bookseller, like the Flaneur (Chapter 1) and the exile (Chapter 2), reveals much about what it means to live a literary life. But where the previous two chapters explored particular aesthetic operations⁴⁴, the second half of this dissertation shifts to an examination of how the idea of value in general accumulates force in the world. It also tries to show how the conventional association with the literary life as a bourgeois affair⁴⁵, something only for those in power as an activity of leisure as well as profit, is troubled by the system. As Chapter 4 will focus on the various ways in which multiple forms of intimacy are engendered by literary acts, I map in this chapter how aesthetic effects intersect other social aspects of the production, circulation and consumption of art.

To this end, I argue that the bookseller brings together and mediates these two aspects of the economic conditions of such a life in Berlin. The function of the bookshop as a node in the determination of this dual-value condition, is not just a matter of individual wills, but of structures. This chapter then asks what are the conditions of possibility for such aesthetic-economic judgments in relation to the law and the structure of cultural economics? If booksellers are more than simply places to buy books, what kinds of textual affiliations do they manifest? What is the texture of the relations that move through them? And how might aesthetic taste be taken seriously within political economic analysis? This special mode of production, or perhaps condition of production, distinct from and yet within a world otherwise dominated by the bourgeois regime challenges us, I argue, to rethink the ideal types of classical market studies while nuancing political economic understanding of literature that have been dominated by the

⁴⁴ In the recasting of relationships with history, and the making of space for an alternative politics.

⁴⁵ Epitomized by the Baudelairean dandy we encountered in Chapter 1.

hegemonic picture of life under European modernity. The meaning of aesthetic value, and of its judgment in gatekeeping functions, is as a hinge between different registers of circulation and exchange, and their respective forms of relating. It is itself a shifting relation, a play between regions of sociality that are neither fully intelligible nor collapsible into one another.

Regulating the Book Trade

The particularity of the Berlin bookshop is possible in large part because of the special and cordoned off mode of production enacted by federal and regional laws in Germany. The central institution of the system is the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (Association of the German Book Trade), a single membership body that regulates both wholesale distribution and retail sales across the industry, for nearly seven thousand publishers and booksellers, and around one hundred wholesalers. Founded in 1825 (as the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhändler, “book traders”) the Börsenverein operates on a three-tiered representative government system - publishing, wholesale and retail each maintain representation at an annual members meeting during the summer in Berlin, distributed between regional branches. Among its collective bargaining achievements have been special VAT categorization (approximately half of other commodities) and reduced postal rates for shipments of books.

Two legal regulations are especially relevant, each of which has been subject of considerable collective action. The *Gesetz über Urheberrecht und verwandte Schutzrechte*, federal copyright law, was relatively late (compared to France and the

Great Britain, where it emerged in 1710 in its application (1837 in Prussia, the end of 1965 in Germany), and has, since its inception, been extraordinarily open. Two features are particularly noteworthy. For one, very low thresholds are required for the claim of author's rights over fine art, while applied arts standards are much higher (except, however, for typeface setting and design patterns, which constitute a legal exception). Second, the law itself, in contrast to many other European states, emphasizes the inalienable right of the producer, and denies, *de jure*, the possibility of both corporate copyright of any kind and the transference (except by inheritance) of the right of authorship. The period of time that must elapse before the rights over the artwork enter the public domain has in the past century been the longest of any member nation in the European Union, and this continues today. In theory, this places limits on market forces, i.e. dampening competition among publishers for popular printings, settling prices, and offering resistance to the condensation of capital.

One well-known historical divergence, however, is worth mentioning, which emerged as a result of a several century long German market preoccupation with Shakespeare (see Brandl 1913; Jones 1923) – the product of this event is so ubiquitous it is often taken for granted by German readers. Shakespeare's plays first crossed the channel in the 18th century; thanks in great part to its influence on the Sturm and Drung authors, his complete works were already translated by the 1780s, and by the early 19th century, many of Germany's most prominent literary figures were producing translated editions. At the same time, access to quality literary books was for the first time beginning to open up with the expansion of the middle classes – Shakespeare's work, however, like Goethe's, was under the control of powerful houses who artificially drove

up prices, preventing their circulation from matching step with demand. The convergence of these forces drove the German Confederation to begin shifting policies on author-rights. In 1867, the Deutsche Bundesversammlung became law, opening texts to the public domain thirty years after the death of the author. The day after the new regulation came into effect, the Reclam publishing house began printing its *Universal-Bibliothek* - familiar, cheaply printed, little books sold for pennies and guaranteed by the publisher to remain in print in perpetuity. The desire to put personal, home libraries within reach of all social classes lead to such a marked shift in German culture that historians have called the book policy, “the turning point of the century.” (Wittman 1991: 247)

In 1888, the nascent Börsenverein introduced a mandatory fixed-pricing agreement to be enforced for all member groups. Despite opposition, the policy remained in effect and dominant throughout the book industry until the partition of Germany following the Second World War. In 1958, newly established anti-trust legislation included special dispensation for a book-trade fixed pricing scheme, in the form of mutual price maintenance contracts (with the stipulation that all such contracts had to be extensive, including all potential sellers), leading, seven years later, to a novel incarnation of the Börserverein’s initial scheme. In order to streamline implementation, the Börsverein introduced the Sammelrevers, a special contract form that functioned as an umbrella agreement for all parties of a book’s production and circulation, often signed by a joint legal representative of all parties involved. This opt-in fixed pricing scheme remained in place until 2002 (and in any event, already covered the near entirety of the book market, as much as 90% of all titles). Following the formation of the European Union in 1993, trade agreements covering the Deutsche Sprachraum – Germany, Austria

and Switzerland – were signed to prevent the disruption of fixed-prices through international trade and reentry, but EU law quickly superseded the agreement and declared it invalid. In response, the reunified German government re-nationalized fixed-prices for the book trade in 2000 (the other former members of the three party agreement quickly followed suit).

In 2002, the European Union government reversed its decision on the constitutionality of contractually based fixed-pricing for books, only to see the German parliament enshrine the fixed-pricing scheme as law, eliminating the possibility of opting-out, and punishing violations by a fine of several thousand Euro. By the standards of contemporary neoliberal governance, fixed-pricing laws are an important aberration. The official rationale (and one repeated by the vast majority of participants in the market whom I knew) was that books have a dual and conflictual character as commodity (*Ware*) and cultural good or asset (*Kulturgut*). The Börsenverein positions itself, on this basis, as promoting the welfare of the book as an asset to culture, to diversity (*Vielfalt*) and freedom of expression (*Meinungsfreiheit*). According to a representative of the institution I met in Berlin, the Börsenverein operates under the assumption that books are an inalienable feature of the development of culture, and that a network of booksellers and goods with greater variety is essential to the effective distribution of that culture, a reality secured economically by the fixed-pricing structure.

Many point to the 100,000 books published annually in Germany (several times greater per capita than similar countries), as one of the benefits of the system. These laws level the field (increasing diversity) by insuring (comparatively) small profit margins on best sellers, and leading backlists now to typically account for only very small

percentages of total sales (as low as 3%). German economic analyses (Backhaus and Hansen 2000) of the impacts of the current laws have, following official languages, assessed regulations on two axes, “cultural diversity” and price, across six stages of book production: authoring, copyright, wholesale, licensed retail, consumption, regulatory environment (for the promotion of “cultural diversity”). In each case, economists found that the current structure had either negligible or indeterminate effects on price for each category, and positive effects across the board for cultural diversity. Yet officially, even an undesirable fluctuation in price or net revenue would be tolerable in the name of variety and circulation. European nations where fixed-pricing agreements have been lifted – as German booksellers often point out – have seen rapid concentration of capital, closure of huge numbers of smaller and independent sellers, and an increase in prices for all books besides best-sellers. Sweden, which opened its book industry to the free market in 1970, has had to enact subsidies to keep publishers afloat; the United Kingdom has seen prices as high as 10% over the consumer price index (CPI), but an increase in sales among the poor for best sellers (because prices have dropped).

Between the 1880s and 1920s, Berlin emerged as the center of the industry, until the Nazi propaganda machine dismantled it in the 1930s. The isolation of Berlin during the period of division (and its position, along with the other traditional publishing capital, Leipzig, in the East) simultaneously dislodged it from the activity of major players, while allowing it to grow as a hub for small establishments – a fact that drew many writers and artists to the city as DDR surveillance and restriction loosened in the last two to three decades of the Soviet Union. Over the past twenty-five years (since the fall of the Wall), Berlin rapidly rose again, overtaking all other German cities for the production of new

works, accounting for 14% of all first editions by 2006, and housing more than 300 independent publishers, including seven of the top 100 grossing nationally⁴⁶. The relationship between the rest of the industry and the bookshops is crucial to the life of this system – the small retailers account for 55% of sales in the city and 5% of total national sales. The city officers I spoke with (as well as their official literatures) suggest that the success of the industry in these terms is built on the strong network – “An infrastructure of literary institutions has been developed in Berlin, starting prior to but accelerating since reunification, which is without equal worldwide,” the city’s *ProjektZukunft* suggests. “Berlin is Germany’s capital of authors” a document⁴⁷ boasts, 186 of 661 national PEN members live in Berlin, 500 of the 4,000 members of the German author’s association, the *Verband Deutscher Schriftsteller*. “Authors from Berlin,” it continues, “do not just have the weight of numbers on their side; they are also influential and the defining factor for the image of contemporary German literature. This is particularly true of the middle-aged and younger generation.” Berlin’s state government also specifically targets special subsidies for book production and circulation (up to 35% on investments for both domestic and foreign companies).⁴⁸ Payroll and loans can also be subsidized at the state level, and tax-rates on books is the lowest of all large German cities – the government additionally provides considerable grants to literary institutions, and to authors and translators to encourage new works.

In practice, this system has ensured the active role of the author and their networks in the promotion and circulation of their work. Rather than corporate marketing

⁴⁶ All told, the industry generates 1.4 billion Euro in revenue annually, according to the city promotions office.

⁴⁷ “Berlin – Eine Stadt für Verlage.” *Project Zukunft*, Senate Department of Economics, Technology and Research for ICT, Media, and Creative Industries in Berlin.

⁴⁸ On the condition that the business guarantees jobs for a minimum of five years.

schemes controlled by publishers and marketing professionals, most authors, even celebrated ones, are reliant on spending considerable time reading their books out loud to the public and meeting their readers for lengthy interchanges. Instead of book signings or large-scale events, these exchanges take the form of visits to local shops and book fairs, often arranged through friendships with local proprietors or regular clients at the shop. A well-connected shop like the Autorenbuchhandlung will have several such events a month, each with attendance from twenty-five to fifty or even a hundred local patrons, depending on the prominence of the author. Over the course of my fieldwork between 2011 and 2014, I heard several hundred readings throughout Berlin. Nearly without fail, a sizeable crowd of locals would make an appearance, generally about three quarters of which were regulars, the remaining guests in attendance to meet a particular author of interest. They charged as little as one or two Euro for entrance, and as much as fifteen or twenty. Often wine and beer were sold as well. The author would read from their new book or poem, and speak with the audience, moderated by the proprietor and often another guest, either a translator, literary critic, or friend. When the event ended, the crowd nearly always stayed to smoke, talk and drink with the speaker.

The Two Faces of a Bookshop

On the Corner

I had been to the Autorenbuchhandlung, many times before I spoke to the proprietor, but it quickly became one of my favorites, along with the nearby Marga

Schoeller Bücherstube – a well-known hub of leftist intellectual life. Founded in the 1920s, the latter, a neighborhood institution specializing in European literature, had survived Nazi sanctions while selling banned books from its basement (and refusing to sell Nazi publications). After the war, the shop was the first to be awarded a license to sell English language publications. This marked a crucial turning point - today many shops boast at least small English collections, catering both to long-standing German interests in English literature, and the international community that makes up a greater (and rising) portion of sales. During the period of division, Frau Schoeller's circle included many of the most celebrated authors of the West German literary scene, from Herman Hesse and Thomas Mann to the invitation-only Gruppe 47 literary association (one of the central organizations in the formation of post-war German literature, known for its powerful political criticism). Her story was legend for anyone interested in literary culture in the city. A few years before she died, the shop (now operated by her son and business partner) moved to its current location, a few blocks from the Autorenbuchhandlung.

Neither shop was in the neighborhood where I lived; I switched three times on the transit system and rode across the city every week just to spend afternoons among their stacks. The Autorenbuchhandlung opened every day at ten in the morning except Sundays. One could easily get lost exiting the S-bahn station. Coming from the east where I had been living, if you turned around you would end up behind the square, one block down the road. You would then have to walk out to the main intersection and come around fully through the square and back down the small alley where it had two entrances – one to the café and the other to the store itself. I made this mistake regularly despite having

frequented this particular shop since my first week in Berlin. The Autorenbuchhandlung was just a few steps from the train stop, past a juice stand on the right and an Italian restaurant on the left. The front door opened up to the cashier and a large, central room with a wide selection of contemporary books laid flat across several square tables and tucked neatly into shelves that covered the walls. Often a poster out front listed which author was coming that week to read from their latest work, and sheets of white paper propped up with plastic displays announced developments of late, lists of finalists for important local, national or even international literary awards, or worthwhile events in Berlin. Two small golden-haired dogs would sneak out from the back room to greet me, barely half the height of the tables but respectful of their surroundings, calm and endearing.

A small hallway at the back of the room was lined with Reclam books, small yellow reprints of classic texts often sold for a handful of Euro. It led to the left to another slightly smaller room, on its back wall boasting important works of the 20th century, Thomas Mann, Rainer Rilke and their ilk, and occasionally display-editions of Goethe or Hölderlin. Opposite this impressive selection stood a wall of English language printings, some original, others translations, but many popular books. Back through the main room on the side was the literature café – a plain room with a glass case of cakes and a coffee machine, scattered neat tables for one or two, clean prints on the walls. During the afternoon, one or two people might sit alone, reading and sipping tea – at night, a few times a month, when an author came to read from their new work and spend an evening with patrons, the room was regularly filled to capacity.

I might take a cue from anthropologists who have been interested in the daily rhythms, or what Julie Livingston (2012) calls the cyclical time of clinical spaces, through which singular forms of habitus come to be embodied. (see also Mulla 2014) It may be illustrative to examine the patterns of punctuating events and stillness that occupy a single day from my fieldwork, where the “conflictual character” of the book is expressed as a feature of life in the shop.

At 9:05, I arrived at the shop and Christoph welcomed me from the main desk at the entrance. He asked me about Samantha, an opera singer friend I had brought the week earlier, and with whom he had discussed careers in the theatre at length. He remembered all the friends I brought by, and asked about them in turn. In his forties, with close-cropped hair, nearly bald, Christoph was tall and thin, and had a manner that seemed somehow both serious and calming. He was young to wield as much influence as he did in a shop like this, and his unusual energy and enthusiasm were proof of it. His eyes were full of life and he was animated when he spoke. He had shifted to the more intimate “du” and “Lieber Andrew” as we had become acquainted, and he was quick to ask about my friends, and my fieldwork. What have you discovered? How much longer will you stay? What will you do when you return?

By 10:30, Christoph was telling me more about how he came to run the shop – “They had noticed a need to bring publishers and authors together,” he tells me “when we came in 2007, 2008, we bought a share and took over the catalogue, you know some of the original authors were no longer there, some had died, but we started the events, every seven-fourteen days, and brought in ‘English books’ [he says in English], and books for young people, and we started this – pointing to *Geistesblüten* – the first customer-

magazine [Kunde-magazine] in Germany, the only, the only [das einzige, das einzige],” he repeats. “Yes I have the book version,” I reminded him, “Oh yes, yes, that anthology, for the anniversary celebration.” When two women walk in, some fifteen minutes later, he nearly jumps the counter to grab something from a front table – “Oh I have to work!” he says to me. Christoph greeted the women who entered, touching their arms warmly, both women in their thirties and holding bags. He ran back to me, “We were talking about how we had the idea for the shop right?” As I opened my field book to make a note, he jumped off again, back to the women who were now flipping through a pristine blue and white novel near halfway into the room,

“Wait, I must show you, these just came in and you will love them, remember you wanted those other two recently? I was thinking of you, here, here.” He reached across one of the tables in the front.

“Oh, they look exciting, you’re right,” one woman remarked to the other.
“I’ll get this one then. You’re sure I’ll like it?”
“Will I see you tonight? We’re starting at 5.”
“Who is it again? Who is reading?”
“Ange Berthoff.”
“Then, yes, we’re having a coffee nearby, but then later, see you at 5. We will have to leave before long for dinner though.”
“Where will you eat?”
“Marthe Restaurant.”
“It’s quite good, I was there just a few weeks ago..., ok let us have a good time tonight. Come to the front, let’s ring you up.”

Christoph apologized to me when he finished with the women, smiling as he returned to the counter and opening the register. He rang them up quickly, his hands flying around and offering them bags and magazines to take with them.

At noon, a relative calm had settled over the store. Christoph has been at the desk most of late morning. Uwe, who worked in the back, has been unpacking several books in

the back room, new editions of some classics with fine beige bindings. I wouldn't get to see them that day, I jotted in my notebook. I went out to find a sandwich and offered to bring back coffee, but there was plenty already at hand in the café. A slow day is interrupted when a grey-haired man, maybe mid-sixties enters, wearing a casual suit, with a younger dark-haired man. Christoph is excited. Taking the man's hand and embracing him, he turns halfway to me, "Do you know this gentleman – this is Gustav Erendht, we're selling his book just here," – he pointed behind the two men – "It's really exceptional you should buy it," he said to me. "You're coming to his reading Saturday right?" He turns back away from me to the two men. "How was your trip? Italy you said? The book looks great. What brings you here?" They chat another few minutes but the two men seem in a hurry (the younger says relatively little, perhaps he's not from Berlin? I thought to myself) Shaking hands, Gustav arranges to meet Christoph later in the week for lunch, and then turns to me and offers a smile – "I want to hear about your project too, this is a great place to be studying, you can read all their books! I'll see you at the reading?" Christoph was excited, he'd been working on bringing Gustav to the shop for months, and though they were friends, the writer had been busy. His past two novels had met with huge success, so he'd been inundated with engagements. They were tiring, he mentioned, it was not like in other countries. Here, it was a whole day affair to meet with your readers, "But you come to know them, really – it makes quite a difference."

5:30 things are quiet again. I started making plans to abscond, fleeing the neighborhood to find a cheap dinner before returning for the event that night. In the winter, I came regularly to the literature café to hear authors present their work and to catch up with friends who frequented such readings. Sometimes the works themselves

appealed to my tastes, more often here than some other places. The flyer for this week announced that the reading and conversation would play in multiple mediums, resting especially between poetry and music, so I entreated Samantha to join me again, and made our way back early.

Though the reading was set to begin at 7:00, it started closer to 7:30. I found I knew half or so of the crowd well. Everyone from the shop was there - Dieter and Anna were at the front taking tickets when we arrived, Christoph was mingling toward the front of the room where the chairs were set for the speaker. Others I knew, or at least recognized from my work elsewhere. One writer who I had interviewed, Micah, was already sitting off to the side – I didn't think he lived in this area. I asked– “No, no, I live in Kreuzberg actually but I like to come here for books and the readings, I gave a reading here myself a few years ago. It's a very good crowd here – have you been coming? I missed the last few.” Nodding and shaking his hand, we took our seats next to Kari, who runs an editing service and a regular writers' workshop. We'd spoken a few times at different events, but her answers to my questions were always somewhat curt. She greeted me warmly in this instance, however; “Very nice to see you here! How has your research been going with your tribe?” I managed a smile, “Have you been getting everything you need?” I tell her things have gone smoothly, everywhere I go people seem happy to talk to me - “This is a perfect place you know, every knows each other here, it's a nice community. You see, there, that couple, those are friends of mine - this guy behind us a few rows, Otto, comes to my workshops, and that one with the hat, we actually met here, it *is* something like a tribe I suppose.” Christoph wandered over, “Great you know each other? – we will start in just a moment, you have to come up at the end however so I

can introduce you to the speakers.” Kari turned to me “Take some notes, here we are in the village market, sitting and waiting to see the local theatre.”

After the event, around 9:05, Samantha and I walked outside where the smokers had already gathered. A man about our age asked us for a light for a cigarette, but when we had none to offer remained anyway to chat. Christoph makes the introduction official, “Adi, Andrew is an ethnologist, and Samantha sings in the opera. Tell us what you have been doing?” But before he can respond Christoph excused himself to tend to others. Offering us a warm “Prost” and clinging our beers together, Adi told us he’d just returned from a trip to China. “You see at first I started to lose faith in a Christian god, so I went there to learn about Buddhism, you know it’s very hard you have to really focus your mind and meditate.” As he tells the story, Adi becomes emotional. “My mother had gotten very sick, you know, and I couldn’t see, why does this happen? ... I started to drink, you know, too much.” I had grown accustomed to such utterances that marked an emergent intimate space, though they were not always in the confessional mode. These include simple expressions of friendship (like those we saw in the first section at Another Country), gestures of romance and of care, as well as aesthetic collaborations. I will draw these out more fully in the following chapter.

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This brief example illustrates how the bookseller mediates a series of relations (between himself, patrons, and authors) through two media (the book and the literary event) but in face to face encounters. The intimacy of those relations is maintained by

(and at times producing or else produced by) transient literary encounters. The importance of the intimacy of these relations, however, is not simply a market tactic (though it does also function as one – Christoph says, “I have to go to work,” and he is all too happy to have made a sale). The value accumulated in these transactions also relates to the establishment of trust, not in a diffuse sense, but specifically with regards to the stewardship of taste. Patrons like the women above trust Christoph’s recommendations (which also rely on a knowledge of their preferences), and as we’ll see below, the bookshop is very intentional in its desire only to support worthwhile texts. Such aesthetic determinations matter, in turn, because they come to be enduring features of life in a community, as cultural forms. Further, the bookseller has relationships with authors, which appeals to patrons. They can meet and discuss texts with their favorite writers, or learn about new authors from a trusted source. Similarly, the relationship with the authors is enduring; for reasons that will be clear in subsequent sections, authors are reliant on the bookseller to put them face to face with their public. In short, authors value the bookseller for the intimacy of their relationship with the public, and the patrons, in like fashion, appreciate the aesthetic acumen proximity to authors brings.

Autonomy in a Literary World

If the social determination of taste has been a classical trope in the analysis of aesthetic forms, its appearance in the stories people tell about the histories of local bookshops – as sites that serve as gatekeepers of such judgments – challenge our assumptions about the rigidity of and relationships between positions in circulation. By

focusing on how the story of a bookshop is told, my interest is in revealing how the imagination of the role of the bookshop by participants in its social life, and its emergence in a particular milieu, complicate our understanding of sites of economic exchange through which cultural objects move. The story of the founding of the Autorenbuchhandlung and its rise to prominence in the Kiez was told to me many times, by Christoph and colleagues, at events, in magazines, and in the anthology put together for its anniversary, *Geistesblüten*, spirit blossoms, also the name of its Kundemagazine. The versions are remarkably consistent in the narrative style, but the one I present here should be considered an amalgamation of minor variations.

“In 1976 we were still children,” Christoph begins. The Palace of the Republic had just opened in East Berlin. Romy Schneider starred in the adaptation of Heinrich Böll’s novel *Gruppenbild mit Dame*. Wolf Biermann *spoke loudly* of an, “escape from the Republic of Death [*Republikflucht in den Tod*].” “The Pulitzer and Nobel Prize in Literature went to Saul Bellow. Rainer Fassbinder finds himself suspected of Anti-Semitism, owing to the representation of Jewish protagonists in his theatre piece, *Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod*....Surkhamp (one the most important German publishers) stopped extraditions.” These contextual moments, often lists including events of broader political consequence (the US launch of Viking-I, or bipartisan nuclear disarmament talks) alongside literary ones (as recounted here, or the emergence of Christa Wolf’s socialist but anti-DDR circle), always frame the story.

Then a shift to a tighter frame. “The station title of the Berliner U-bahnhof at Friedrichstraße had been stripped. Here there was a pedestrian overpass from the West to the East of the divided city, and at the same time, the only place in West Berlin where

one could buy toll-free cigarettes and alcohol... There on Charlottenburg's Carmerstraße, tens of men and women met, who yet had nothing to do with our childhood lives, but who later would mean the world to us." The group grows – when spoken a few names are mentioned, but in print the list is extensive. It includes Heinrich Böll himself, Uwe Johnson, Marianne Frisch, Allen Ginsberg, Brigitte Kronauer, Wolf Lepenies, Martin Walser, Ernst Jandl, and other giants of German literature. They decided, after seventy years (since the Confederation), it was time to somehow oppose the trend of large bookstores and batch-commodities (*Stapelware*). The formation of an artist's society (*Künstlersozietät*) was well underway; their aim was to combat the *general flattening* of the book trade, and to stand up for the strengthening of the special and the essential – to give literature as art a protected space, and world literature a new, unconditional home.⁴⁹ So these writers founded branches in Munich, Frankfurt and Berlin. In his opening speech on the "famous, green tile stove," Günther Grass stressed not just literary but mercantile⁵⁰ acumen. The text version adds - "The fox knew already then that the hunt begins in the construction, and advocated the *City* [originally in English] as a location." In the words of well wishes from two booksellers, to the Autorenbuchhandlung and their customers, as readers, the shop was to enable, "that concentrated pleasure that only literature can provide." Christoph comments, "they showed that the Literati are real writers of history."

Autonomy in a literary world allowed the shop to emerge as a site for face-to-face discussion, of not just literary texts but political events and daily turmoil. Portraits were presented, of authors, publishers and critics; nights were a time of literary play. Another

⁴⁹ *Für die Stärkung des Besonderen und Essentiellen stark machen, Literatur als Kunst einen geschützten Raum, Weltliterature eine neue, unbedingte Heimat geben.*

⁵⁰ *Kaufmännlich*, lit. salesmen-ly

list, of presentations, is added: Günther Grass *Die Rättin* (1986); Hans Sahl *Das Exil im Exil* (1990); Oskar Pastior *Ingwer und Jedoch* (1985); Susan Sontag *Ich, etc.* (1988). This list continues for half a page in *Geistesblüten*. In the 35 years since its founding, participation has been the lifeblood (*Herzblut*) of the Autorenbuchhandlung, “Care for an engagement with literary understanding of our time.” The authors associated with the shop donated their back catalogues and came to speak regularly with patrons. Many of them wrote letters and short works for the *Geistesblüten* anthology, what Christoph called a bouquet for a birthday. The ending of Günther Grass’ contribution from “Transatlantic Elegy,” reads like this:

Hear the legend from over yonder
There was a thousandfold librarian
Who preserved the literary legacies

The metaphor is clear – the bookstore is a sanctuary for books and for people, to save them both from the pyre, as a famous plaque bears witness in the public square at Bebelplatz in Mitte, where not long ago Nazi student groups threw books into the street and burned them and a few years later, did the same with people. The plaques carried an inscription of Heinrich Heine’s famous and haunting premonition: *Dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen* – where people burn books, in the end people also burn. The threat to literature and to life tarry along hand in hand, so must our protection of them. When booksellers talk about freedom of expression and the necessity of culture – cornerstones, as we shall see, of the discourses they produce - they do so in a way that gestures to a recent history of oppression, at the hands of the Gestapo and Staßi police, and violence against both words and flesh. The bodies of books and

their aesthetic value, the bodies of people and their social value, are not just metaphorically borne together, but substantively – the walls we erect protect the speech carried on our breath that is our life. More than once in recent history the city has moved to hide books and people side by side in hidden corners and crevices, beneath baseboards, or away in attics.

“We succeeded the founders in 2008,” Christoph says. Many, as we said earlier, had grown too old, or passed away, as had many authors who comprised the society through their friendships with early leadership. The political moment had also changed, and new conversations were taking over in Berlin. In Joachim Fürst and Marc Iven, erstwhile members of the Academy of the Arts, were found to be suitable successors as leaders of the new group by the bookshops founders. The new collective took over fully aware, as they say, that literature now found itself in competition with a growing number of media, a short-lived-consumer praxis (*kurzlebiger Konsumentenpraxis*) that replaced enduring and personal relationships and globally booming internet sales. “We author-booksellers (*autorenbuchhändler*) want to face that challenge by including book titles we believe are essential, even decades after they appeared, because they form the topsoil of our culture. Reading is no fad, it is an attitude [toward the world, a posture].” The new leadership believes literature is, or perhaps ought to be, treated as a, “curious, but also critical – benevolent, but also evaluative – universal hostess (*universelle Gastgeberin*),” one that invites the other arts for a, “fruitful exchange of thoughts in its pages.” Here the alignment of literature as artwork and the community is given clearest expression – literature invites an exchange of thoughts, much the same as the shop, both are spaces in

which intimate interchanges take place. Literature is their “model”; we join others, they say, on “literary expeditions (*literarische Entdeckungsreisen*, voyages of discovery).”

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Imbedded in their description of the bookshop in the dissemination of culture is a related though additional function, as gatekeepers of taste, guarantors of the quality of the culture that enters circulation. Thus, while a diverse and substantial body of literary works in regular circulation is essential to the culture (its “topsoil”), determining that a work has *aesthetic* value is not simply a matter of exchange, as in the circulation of the commodity. Bourdieu⁵¹ famously defined cultural production in terms of action within a field, as struggle over who has access to participation in the determination of what counts as literature – a space, that is, of objective relations between structural positions, for instance, avant-garde and celebrated artist. These positions in space, he suggested, correspond to a space of homologous formal aesthetic positions. A more restricted field grants the author greater symbolic power to wield against the bourgeois order; symbolic power, however, can also, in the long run, yield economic returns.

We might offer a series of preliminary provocations then, already here, to which I will return in the final sections, on the basis of the view from the bookshop, rather than the perspective of the author and the desire to place the charismatic ideology of creation in the context of the accumulation of other forms of capital (cultural, symbolic) in a field. As we shall see below, the industry as a whole works to limit, on the one hand, access to

⁵¹ I owe my thinking on these points to a series of intensive conversations with Clara Han on Bourdieu’s distinction and the literary field.

symbolic capital in defense of the author against the more encompassing, global bourgeois regime – on the other, the concentration of these alternative forms of capital is also limited, creating or reflecting a more even distribution of power in the field. For one, this seems to beg questions about a position like Bourdieu’s Flaubert in relation to the whole of the field and the extent to which a perspective of “all positions” seems tenable in a city marked simultaneously by a general heterogeneity of publics and intense fragmentation (as wholes in themselves). Relatedly, what happens when the mode of production and its relations of power shift? If the aim of the German system is the maximization of heterogeneity as an aesthetic, cultural value in itself, as members of book trade commonly suggest, would this not seriously complicate our understanding of a field in the first place? Would a system devised from the ground up to increase diversity of aesthetic forms not have to undermine any homology with structural positions of power by definition, which, in any event, are far closer together even at the points of relatively extreme tension, than in the strictly late-capitalist mode of production? This is especially complex because, in Germany, all positions in the field are represented through a single interest organization, and in the case we’ve followed here, the author and the retailer are collapsed into a single body – the *autorenbuchhandler*. In this way, the distance between positions in a field has been quite literally erased. Rather than think of fields organized hierarchically, might a shape better capture the mutual imbrication of these multiple vectors of exchange?

The power to determine whether or not a work is of quality then, it seems, is still related to various social arrangements, though the relationship between those positions and between symbolic and economic capital is different. As I will show, taking aesthetic

value more seriously in itself, and in relation to the social body and not through relations between individual positions in a field, but rather as a relation to another set of relations, nuances our understanding of the situation. The system appears in reverse – a determination of aesthetic value is a central mode of determining the general value of the culture object.⁵² By aesthetic value, I mean to follow a sociological sensibility that Janet Wolff (1993) famously set out, that walks a line between the essential reduction of aesthetic value to political terms on the one hand, and the solipsistic extreme of “self-reflexive” aesthetics on the other. Aesthetic value, moreover, is inextricably linked to but not supervenient upon aesthetic experience.

The Social Lives of the Artwork

At the outset of this chapter, I suggested a threefold interpretation of this situation. First, the circulation of the book has classically been associated with the stranger sociality of modern forms of life – in the city, and the national imaginary engendered by (global) print capitalism. To this picture, the ethnography and history of book production in Berlin indicate, our analyses must add the intimate, face-to-face relations similarly grounded in the same circulation of print objects.⁵³ It is in the intersection of these multiple regions of circulation, between the imaginary and the

⁵² This move is reminiscent of an older debate among Marxists historians of Germany, over whether a primacy of politics (Mason 1995) must supersede the primacy of economics. (Eichholtz; Grossweiler; c.f. Kershaw 2000) This division fell largely across the Berlin Wall, with Western Marxists like Timothy Mason famously on the former side, and DDR political economists on the latter. For my purposes, the politics in question is very particularly a politics of art. (see Ch. 2)

⁵³ Sociologist Christopher Swader (2013) suggests that while some discourses in so-called “post-socialist” societies blame the contemporary degradation of face-to-face relations on their communist pasts, there is little difference borne out in this respect between the experiences of those living in the former DDR or former Soviet territories, and those who have always lived under market rule, and that it is in the nature of capitalist ideology (and what he calls the “capitalist personality”) generally to undermine intimate relationships.

concrete, that the structure of social life emerges, at least in Berlin. Second, the intimacy of the second region of circulation is effected through the partial dislocation of the economic value of the book (as commodity, which is the principle of the other form of circulation) in favor of its aesthetic value, itself having been merged with social value in the form of intimate relations – a possibility tied to the material conditions of book production in Germany broadly. Finally, I want to suggest that the work of the bookseller facilitates these circulations simultaneously under the logics of aesthetic and economic exchange (by standing partially⁵⁴ outside of bourgeois political economy). At last then, I want to dwell on the nature of this relationship that allows the same material circulation of a book to have two distinct social lives, by arguing that the ethnographic situation described above teaches us that this essential duality inheres in the nature of the literary artwork itself.

Let me begin by elaborating the first point. The imagination of the global city as command point of transnational financial networks, as hub for the acceleration of both capital and hi-tech informational flows (Sassen 2001, 2005) gestures to the accumulation of contradictions of capital itself (Althusser 1962; 1969) and to new thresholds of alienation (*Entäusserung*).⁵⁵ Both the canonical scholarship on the modern city and the analysis of national imaginaries grounded in print capitalism (beginning with Benedict Anderson), have privileged a picture of strange sociality as characteristic of such cultural

⁵⁴ Limited, that is, because of the specialness of the field of book production in the context of an otherwise bourgeois political order.

⁵⁵ For Appadurai (1996), globalizing forces mean that localities always already contain aspects of other worlds – in this context then, culture workers face a double threat in being true to the local of the burden of repetition (the feeling that one has to be modern again) while at the same time not overwriting local historical genius. Such agents, it has been suggested, are connected trans-locally, where each node is grounded in local systems. If translocality denotes the “sum” of outcomes from the movements/circulations of, “people, goods, ideas and symbols,” my interest is in highlighting the surprising diversity of effects of such connections. (Freitag and Oppen 2010)

forms. Michael Warner (1990, 2002), among the best-known examples, eloquently defines the reading public first in its self-organization, as imaginary in so far as it remains, vis-à-vis the movement of the text itself as address, open-ended. Such a fantasy, he clarifies, is nevertheless social, and remains ever in “excess” of its known social basis. (Warner 2002:54) Second, this self-organization through discourse implies that, to some extent, the relations that compose it are among strangers. The form of the stranger relation, moreover, takes on a particular shape in modernity, as “some of our most prized ways of being...strangerhood is the necessary medium of commonality.” (Ibid: 56) He continues, “A nation, market, or public in which everyone could be known personally would be no nation, market, or public at all. This constitutive and normative environment of strangerhood is more, too, than an objectively describable *gesellschaft* [sic]; it requires our constant imagining.” This stranger sociality moreover marks, in the wake of Benedict Anderson, the becoming organism through “self-recursive mediation.” (Cheah 2004) Francis Cody (2011:47) has marked the shift between two registers in which claims about publics have been made, from collective action against normative trends in impersonal address to the particular technologies that shape the organization of intimacy in counterpublics. But this language too re-inscribes certain assumptions about the relationship between forms of mediation, intimacy, and textuality, that this dissertation wants to trouble.

While literary circulations, not unlike the Kula, point always to a social institution too large to know on concrete terms, the same movements can simultaneously ground local and definitively knowable networks, as in the marketplace.⁵⁶ I will explore the

⁵⁶ Yet the circulation of books in Berlin cannot be accounted for in terms simply of a merger between village economies and the liberal market. Nor can it be explained solely through appeal to concepts like

particular mechanism of the formation and texture of this intimacy in Berlin in greater detail in Chapter 4, but it should suffice for now to say that the nature of these relationships is not so diffuse as in the spirit of the giver entering the material of the gift. In Berlin, a resistance to the logic of the late-capitalist mode of production has been part and parcel of a rejection of the anonymity of the city in favor of the intimacy of life in the village market. Yet the situation is not a simple matter of one or the other. For one, the purity of such ideal types does not bear out in ordinary life. Whereas it is often tacitly assumed that a relative degree of cultural homogeneity stands over and between “Western” market economies as a category (the U.S. being the archetype of this system of disciplined exchange), this is of course not even the case within the borders of nation-states. The book market is a prime example, as is the preponderance of cash relative to credit transactions between the U.S. and Western/Northern Europe. But more importantly, the boundary between two modes of exchange is not merely porous – instead, I want to suggest, the essential play between these realms is constitutive of the life of the artwork.

We might instead be tempted to understand the Berlin book trade to be a special form of economy, one that stands on a spectrum between the models of its urban liberal counterparts on the one hand, and the intimate village marketplaces known to economic anthropology elsewhere in the world. In this one sense, the situation is not unlike Clifford

affective labor, which contribute a sense of the community-work done in late capitalist societies (and distinct from the “primitive communism,” of Marx, Engels, and Morgan’s analyses of peasant economy). Hardt and Negri’s (2000) account of affective labor in “post-modernity,” for example, does provide a sense in which economic labor might also produce or modify affects, not merely as a side-effect (as in the feeling of alienation among the proletariat), but as a special aim of an independent form of labor itself. Certainly, if a degree of affective labor is enacted here, it can explain neither labor of this kind not in service of generating revenue, nor generally the primacy of aesthetic rather than economic value. These agnotological conditions of immaterial labor (Proctor & Scheibinger 2008), in the context of late capitalism, seem everywhere aimed at covering up alienation, as an essential function of maintaining cultural hegemony in the face of mounting tensions – not in service of some “genuine” intimacy or cultural value itself.

Geertz's (1978) description of the bazaar economy in the Moroccan countryside, where a structural (and *known*) scarcity of information transforms otherwise conventional market principles into a complex system not of comparing options, but of discovering them. In Sefrou's bazaars, such known unknowns lead to an economy based on thick social relations, Geertz says, marked by reciprocal and competitive clientalization, in haggling on the basis of relative knowledge rather than between sellers competing for market share. The segmented heterogeneity of the bazaar's offerings, the specialization and distribution of goods, contrary to the liberal industrial market, entails the acquisition of clients on the basis of a principle of accumulation, a system that, in terms of the value (for the buyer) of repetitive purchases and the benefit of specialization (among sellers) mirrors what we find in Berlin - even while the knowledge of relevant information (relative to price) is exactly the opposite.

This picture was developed by Alfred Gell, (1982) who argued that the organization of social life could be arranged spatially with the marketplace at the center, which in turn served as a microcosmic spatial map of more general relations. These arrangements in life in concentric circles, not unlike his own model of the *limbum palms*, (1975) also mirrors the classical sociology of the city – an unsurprising corollary given the effort among anthropologists in the 1970s and 80s to level the implied moral hierarchies of differing modes of exchange (e.g. the altruism of tribal modes of commercial or barter exchange). Nevertheless, while Berlin indeed emerged historically in rings readily noted on any map and some distinctions among zones on socioeconomic and demographic terms do continue to visibly mark the city⁵⁷ (Park, Burgess and

⁵⁷ The most obvious and common example is the density of Turkish immigrant populations in low-income regions, many of which have been displaced by gentrification over the past two decades. The rapid

McKenzie 1925), my experiences indicated a resistance to such easy isomorphisms. But this is not just because the city is “polycentric” or because such zones readily ebb and flow with the waves of gentrification, or because of a diffuse sense of “globalization,” (cites) but also because, as we saw in the ethnographic scenes above, the social bodies organized around these markets are not bounded to spatial analogues. People easily move in and out of regions, across conventional neighborhood markings, and forge relations that persist across such boundaries to find a marketplace that does function as a “center” but which cannot be located in conventional urban geography. We might understand this incongruity, it is my contention, as the effect of the simultaneous influence of the two vectors of forces exerted on the book, much the way gravity’s downward pull on a projectile and its horizontal acceleration combine to determine its arc.⁵⁸

By the same token, the commoditization of the artwork under late neo-liberalism enacts a rather extreme contradiction of capital.⁵⁹ From the perspective of the producer, this is because the concrete labor required to produce the artwork cannot be rendered in units of abstract human labor without producing a dizzying alienation. For Marx and

gentrification of Berlin over the past decade especially has left only the Wedding district as a true remnant of these boundaries.

⁵⁸ One thinks of political economics since Lenin (1913) and Gramsci (2011), and economic anthropologists like Eric Wolf and Sidney W. Mintz, each of whom focused on the interactions between economic systems – in particular between peasant communities on the one hand, and proletarian labor under bourgeois authority on the other. Precedence for the marketplace (here again a special and restricted kind) as a site of this interaction is of course also present in the anthropological record. Wolf (1966) for example, revealed how the periodic encounters in the markets of both India and Europe served to link communities not only arranged spatially, but by economic systems. Nevertheless, the function of these sites was an exchange of goods produced specially within a community for those of another. In a vague sense, a similar translation between economic systems is attained here (money for culture), except that participants are simultaneously members of both communities and modes of production.

⁵⁹ In part, I am suggesting that this difficulty arises from the nature of the labor itself. What the mode of literary production in Berlin reveals is, I would argue, that removed from the bourgeois order, art reveals itself to be neither determinable by what Cassirer calls essentialism, nor purely by relations of structural positions in a field of force, as per Bourdieu. It matters, that is to say, *who* indexically labors, with what, and with whom, because the struggle over who counts as a writer has been displaced. It is distinguished thereby from the pure site of the accumulation of symbolic capital.

Engels, the artist's labor under the capitalist regime is huddled under more general categories (for example, as "higher grade" work in the *Theories of Productive and Unproductive Labor*). This is because, though art, like science and morality, is engendered by particular modes of production, it nevertheless falls under general laws determined by material conditions.⁶⁰ Marx writes,

We see how the history of industry and the established objective existence of industry are the open book of man's essential powers, the perceptibly existing human psychology. Hitherto this was not conceived in its connection with man's essential being, but only in an external relation of utility, because, moving in the realm of estrangement, people could only think of man's general mode of being – religion or history in its abstract-general character as politics, art, literature, etc. – as the reality of man's essential powers and man's species-activity. We have before us the objectified essential powers of man in the form of sensuous, alien, useful objects, in the form of estrangement, displayed in ordinary material industry.

In bourgeois political economy, the product of artistic creation circulates in an interval between production and consumption *as commodities*, because the object of immanence of the artwork is, "distinct from the actual performance of the executant artist." Thus the relationship between the bookseller and the artist, "constitutes merely a form transitional to *a mode of production capitalist only in form*. The fact that it is precisely in these transitional forms that the exploitation of labor reaches its highest level does not alter the situation at all." (Marx 1988)⁶¹ In classless society, art would be removed from its concentration in a class of artists: "In communist society there are no

⁶⁰ See Marx's "Private Property and Communism" in the Paris Manuscripts.

⁶¹ Marx is extending his comments made initially in the *Theory of Surplus Value* on bourgeois political economics, in particular with respect to relative surplus value. Interestingly, for our purposes here, Marx distinguishes the situation of the self-employed artisan from the artist who produces books or paintings. In the first case, the consumer purchases the commodity for money - thus there is no relevant distinction between productive and unproductive labor. In the case of the writer, the artist works primarily for capital (i.e. the bookseller) – hence the limited sense in which capitalist production is relevant. The situation described in my ethnography, of a collective of author-booksellers, is in this sense, a strange amalgamation.

painters, but at most people who among other things also paint.” (Marx and Engels 1961: 379) Thus freed from the confines of the state and class society, and thereby from traditions of taste, artistic endeavor can pursue universal aesthetics.⁶² (Ibid. 30) Christopher Caudwell (1938), in his well-known study of D.H. Lawrence, clarifies that social function of art is dependent on the nature of the society in which it circulates because of its necessary reliance on symbolic structures. In bourgeois society, relations between people are replaced by relations of individuals to things, a “dominating” property relation that in liberal discourse frees us from bondage, but, which in reality, merely covers a relation of exploitation (between people) through the commodity fetish.

Art undergoes a similar erasure, whereby the relation between the artist and their product, as well as with the buyer, is dissolved into the market – hence the alienation produced by bourgeois art. In such a predicament even the sincere artist, who wishes to revolt, can do so only under the confines of bourgeois culture, turning his back on the market, and thus on the social life of the art-object which makes it what it is.⁶³ This problem is indicative of the dialectical tension at the heart of art production, between the *form*, given by social formations, and the emergent individual experience. For, “art to become art again,” Caudwell writes, is, “an inevitable step if...society [is] to become happy and free.” – art under communism, therefore, will be more, “conscious of itself as a part of a whole social process.” Art is manifest in the synthesis of social and individual forces, in the creativity of the artist and the social body together (as it was between

⁶² In these terms, it is unsurprising that the specific form of the literary mode of production in Berlin should require its own terms appropriate to the contemporary condition. Nevertheless, such thinking has, as of yet, tended to be caught as either a transitional state or else as a descendent of the Freiburg School, unique to “post”-socialism and European social democracy. In Germany, this language has been promoted by the center-right CDU for more than 60 years, as well as by their main moderate opponents, the SPD, after they receded from the radical politics of the interwar left.

⁶³ This is what gives rise to the myth of the “pure artist” who makes “art for art’s sake” at the center of so many debates in Marxist aesthetics in the 20th century.

mechanistic nature and the purposive subject in Kant). As we have seen, for the book industry in Berlin, neither the autonomous (the accumulation of symbolic capital by the “pure artist”) nor heteronomous (bourgeois art) principles⁶⁴ of hierarchization, to use Bourdieu’s terms, can serve to determine the “field” of the production because both are defined by play within a system of ultimately bourgeois logic. Instead, this system I found in bookshops through the city requires we develop a new analytical language that privileges the human relations that were masked by the commodity as constitutive (not merely byproducts) of artistic labor.

Marx subtly clues us in to the range of ways in which artistic creation might be associated with various kinds of social organization. Implied in his formulation of the universal aesthetic, as with the future universal language, is not an erasure of taste or criticism (which would descend into solipsistic artistic relativism), but rather a sense in which the aesthetic function might be freed from the primacy of the social order. In the picture of life under the socialist mode of production artistic endeavor is stretched across society because structural differences in power have been eliminated – nonetheless, talent and desire are not suddenly evenly distributed, just as not all works of art are Beautiful. Thus, art produced under these material conditions cannot eliminate the difference in standing between individuals nor between the products of their artistic labor, it merely inverts the axes (art and the social order) of this relationship. Moreover, the rule of art for itself means that such positions are constantly in flux, at the whim of sudden eruptions of genius and Beauty, much as social positions in a class-society tend toward limited mobility.

⁶⁴ the accumulation of symbolic capital through the principle of art for itself in the first case, and bourgeois art in the second.

Nevertheless, the dislocation of the commodity-nature of the book object in Berlin cannot, as I have noted, simply be treated as a distinct and separable region of economic activity; instead it is shot through, in its very nature, with the features of other sets of relations, by the wider circulations of print to reading publics, by the money economy and the encompassing bourgeois order, and by failures of its own. Perhaps the most obvious of these are the other forms of structural domination beyond class that remain ever present (as we saw in Chapter 2) and which nevertheless intersect class interests at different angles from other contexts, for example in the United States. At the same time, we have seen that art is not *only* the handmaiden of the social order⁶⁵, mirroring and reifying positions against one another in a field of power, but instead moves at least partially, incompletely, toward intimate community where power is distributed homogeneously.⁶⁶ The distinction between these ideal types – the modern, bourgeois form of life on the one hand, and the “post-modern” socialist on the other – is unsurprisingly inadequate. Our theories of modernity and of economic systems seem to assume social life tends imperfectly toward Weber’s ideal types like things in the material world to Forms, or else as a hybrid of pure modes. Even Marx, who recognizes the dual nature of the artwork between its real (material) and ideal substrates, regards this character as somehow out of place between modes of production. My ethnography indicates to me

⁶⁵ Whether or not we accept the proposition that art in bourgeois society can never be anything but such a reflection is another matter. Indeed, I would suggest in fact that it is not, and that Beauty makes itself known at times under even the darkest conditions – despite the laments of Adorno or Celan to the counter-effect, in the wake of the horrors at Auschwitz.

⁶⁶ While aesthetic judgments make appeal to universal taste, as Kant makes clear, the Beautiful as an object of universal delight (free of the tyranny of concepts) remains something about which we might disagree. Nevertheless, it requires the force of the universal. When we encounter a book we judge to be Beautiful, we feel others should share that sense. Even in a society where class has been eliminated, not everyone will be able to produce Beautiful art, and not all books will ignite a free play of the faculties. As I suggested earlier with Bourdieu, this requires we reimagine the relationship between the aesthetic function and social positions. Even if we eliminate the notion of the social field, for reasons cited above, and replace it with a heterogeneity of publics, the appeal to the universal brings us back in the other direction.

another alternative: that the circulation of literature neither transcends opposed systems, nor worlds, nor scales. Instead, the two modes of relating which produce and are entailed by the movement of books are two inalienable aspects of the nature of the book itself. The stranger sociality of reading publics and the modern city and the intimate face-to-face relations of the bookshop and the Kiez, like the exchange and aesthetic values of the book, are not radically opposed realms of action caught by chance congealed in the same matter, or a stop-over in the transition from one to the other, but form the dialectical being of the book. Across every axis, we are pulled in two directions at once.

A similar set of arguments might be levied with respect to the problem of value. The recent (re)turn to an anthropological theory of value, predicated as it has tended to be on readings of Marx's theory of surplus value, and Malinowski and Mauss on gift economies, as well as Dumont and Piaget on structures of transformation, has tried to suggest that something like a general discourse on value is not just tenable, but desirable.⁶⁷ David Graeber's work (2001; 2013), likely the best-known contemporary example of such efforts, draws on Marx's early emphasis on production as simultaneously production of things and relations, but reads this argument as a commentary of symbol, in the sense Victor Turner developed throughout the 1980s. Thus the new anthropology of value centers on an analysis of the "becoming real" to us of the value of our labors, as they become recognized socially (2013: 225). Only in the eyes of others – a view made possible by work of imagination – is value realized. Value,

⁶⁷ George Marcus (2013) has proposed related genealogy for the anthropology of value through the language of experimental forms. For Marcus, the trend toward concern with value as an object of analysis contributes new pressures to the ways in which the forms anthropological methods take are enmeshed with normative concerns. This trend then marks too a shift from the textual to the expressive dimensions, he argues, of anthropological research: "the so-called 'reflexive'" turn now becoming a "recursive" turn—are the grounds on which value in the contemporary is discussed, negotiated, debated, analyzed, and become puzzles before they become data or the subjects of scholarly discussion and argument." (198)

moreover, Graeber argues, clues us in to the ways in which various different *wholes*, “total universe[s],” are traversed in individual lives, because it is the imaginary, “as-if,” quality of the social forms that recognize the value of my labor that count (229). It does not matter whether we believe in the truth of the totality of such universes, “in the ultimate sense,” he writes, but only that we remained committed to the, “achievement of certain forms of value” – thereby naturalizing ideology. For Graeber, the problem of the relation between this, “potentially endless series of little worlds,” need not be simply addressed through a system of metavalue, value of values (as he says, in good Dumontian fashion), but is better understood through a system of interior values he calls *infravalue*; they are the means by which one pursues values within a particular register.

This trope of the *reality* of value is, for reasons I have explored throughout this dissertation, deeply complicated by an expanded and nuanced sense of the ways in which life and art are intertwined in Berlin. While indeed the circulation of books grounds multiple registers of sociality, each with its own character and logic of exchange, I want to retain the idea that the play between these regions of value does not represent a movement between otherwise monadic little worlds, but also in a single world constantly being remade. The political and ethical stakes in play here imply, to me, a way in which both extremes – one world and many - seem manifest at the same time, neither wholly distinct nor separate. Graeber uses the example, “it’s difficult to pursue truth or beauty if one does not have reliable access to food.” Food security, like cooperation, he suggests, are infravalues because they are not regarded ends in themselves. It is not clear to me how sharp such a distinction can be maintained from either end; it is not so immediately evident to me that eating is not an end, or that Beauty is not only a means. Moreover, it is

not clear to me whether value is simply a matter of means and ends in the first place – the debates in aesthetics over the last half century are prime examples of such limitations. My own tendency is instead to veer toward the middle way.

My sense is that the aim of the Berliner bookseller is not to impose judgment about the aesthetic value of an art object as mere reflection of a structural position⁶⁸, nor to labor in service of maintaining the hegemony of the dominant order (as also in Adorno's critique of the culture industry). Rather, the bookseller's work facilitates what Jacques Rancière (2006) calls a community of sense, or an aesthetic community (of the disidentified proletariat). Unlike Rancière's picture of an emancipatory politics of literature, however, effected by a rupture between the sensorium of the artistic production and that of enjoyment, between stage and audience⁶⁹, the Berliner bookshop seems to imply unity, which both makes possible and is remade by creativity, ergo difference.

⁶⁸ I am resistant to subsuming interlocutors into the categories of an unfolding anthropology of experts or aesthetic professionals (Boyer 2008, 2013; Mazzarella 2003; Hannerz 2004), primarily because many, if not most, of the people I worked with fought against inclusion (at least of their literary efforts) into bourgeois regimes of control. But I am also resistant, however, to leftist identifications of the intellectuals as a class apart. Left Hegelian analysts like Alvin Gouldner (1979), for example, have traced the emergence of the "New Class" in detail from the breakdown of the feudal system of control (wherein it was aligned with the church) to the privatization of patronage that arrived alongside multi-national structures of power on the European continent as part and parcel of the more general bourgeois revolution. While this allows Gouldner to refute older theories of the New Class as benign technocrats (as in Galbraith 1967), a repetition of other master classes through new means of control (Bakunin 1872), an ally of the old class (Parsons 1954, 1951) or as servants of power (Chomsky 1977), they remain marked out as a social group. Instead, my focus is on what Antonio Gramsci imagined in terms of hegemony, and Karl Mannheim in cultural renewal. With Giuseppe Vacca (1982) I read Gramsci's contribution as a shift from thinking of the state (as Marx and Engels themselves did) merely as instrument of control, and toward a complex web of relationships – and it is this nexus of relationality therefore which the intellectuals are called upon to undo through the realignment of the organization of knowledge to fit control by the people. The analysis of intellectuals thereby turns on an inquiry into the nature of the interchange between relations of force and relations of hegemony, transforming Marx's definition of the mode of production in terms of forces and relations. Gavin Smith (2014) has called this an attention to 'intellectuals' as collective praxis, a kind of work, though distinct from practical labor and marked by critical reflection. In rereading Gramsci after Bourdieu, Smith has suggested a return to the language of organic links, which on the one hand pertain to conditions of possibility of conjecture, and on the other to the promotion of tactics for "effective praxis." The distance between these two efforts – one which ties creativity to the present cultural condition or structure and the other which serves to cohere what Durkheim called collectivity through formal culture – is maintained both by figures like Bourdieu and like Raymond Williams.

⁶⁹ That is, a difference that makes possible an identity, and vice versa.

More plainly, the community and the art make each other in a process of give and take, rather than one arising as an effect of the other. As has been the argument of this dissertation in general, literature gives birth to resources for reality, but is itself born from that soil in the first place. For one, as Marx also points out, the consumption of art works is unlike the consumption of any perishable good.⁷⁰ The bookseller is not served economically by peddling aesthetic judgments, but rather facilitating encounters in the service of diversity, by the very nature of the goods in which she deals. To check the quality of the culture that enters circulation, as the Berliner booktraders indicate, means ensuring as many possible encounters with Beautiful art as possible, without allowing a structural order to settle in, and thereby limit further encounters – a trajectory we might associate with the conventional economic function of the book (e.g. in print capitalism). Thus the aesthetic function of the commodity is set up to constantly upend the analogous social relations that might be settled between particular authors, their texts, and the public, just as the social order seeks to determine its vibrations.⁷¹

In Nelson Goodman's (1976) typology, the literary work falls into the category of allographic art – a designation Gérard Genette (1991) associates with the work's identification with its ideal, rather than material, content. Yet, Genette continues, the

⁷⁰ Its consumption does not satiate and preclude the desire for its use value in different products (if I have a blue shirt, I might not want a red one; or else, if I smoke this cigarette, I don't buy the other brand).

⁷¹ Brady Bowman (2014) has levied to my mind a similar "defense of literary value." Skepticism about the relevance of the literary has been part and parcel of the refutation of Romanticism and the modern victory of scientific ideologies of pragmatism. I read this too as the origin of competing trajectories of writing on value – on the one hand, a kind of tacitly scientist economic reductionism, and on the other, a lopsided inheritance of Romantic literarity by poststructuralism that offers no positive account of literary value. Instead, Bowman argues for a version of Manfred Frank's complementarity thesis, but through Cavell's notion of acknowledgment. (154) The value of literature is not in a simple alternative to philosophical (or perhaps metaphysical) knowledge, but in its capacity to open up a space to confront experience at a conceptual loss. Following Cora Diamond's (1988) famous formulation, Bowman argues that literary value makes available for expression or acknowledgment a space that we have previously inhabited but for which we have now a depleted vocabulary. A compliment to modern knowledge, aesthetic value is essential to the unfolding of life and to thought, by affording us, in acknowledgment, a relation to the world and to others from which we are otherwise cut off.

distinction collapses, because the work resides more soundly in the relations between or beyond forms, as for Lévi-Strauss between masks and myths (1988), between recombinations of elements within a mythic set (1961), or, as Jakobson (1971) says, between things (as opposed to objects in-themselves). Or else, the artwork might present itself in an incomplete state (like the Venus de Milo, or Kafka's *Das Schloß*) but with which we can still have a relation as if it were whole. Thus the art work transcends the material in which it resides, its *immanent object* (Genette 1999: 21), but is also not, of course, entirely detached from this incarnation; rather a play exists between the work itself and the object of immanence, which encompasses the, "entire life of the work." That is, not as an independent or inherent existence but in a set of relations, to us, and in history, all of which are incessantly changing. Such works are distinguished moreover from other human products by the aesthetic function, which Genette defines in terms of attention, a relation he identifies with Kant's *feeling* of the Beautiful, and as an extension of Goodman's *symptoms*. The difference, Genette contends, is that one emphasizes the subjective aspects of the relation, while the other assumes them to be properties of the object. As I have argued elsewhere (Brandel 2016), I would add that such transcendental conditions might also be social in nature; they might well be, in many cases, grounded between subjects *a posteriori*. Nevertheless, the point of the matter is a desire to bring together, as Genette says, the work as *action* and the work as *object*, through an attention to (as Marilyn Strathern would also say), relations of relations, to reuniting the level of Saussurian semiology with Austin's theory of speech acts, to dwell in the interstices of the various lives of the work as it circulates.

It is this play, I want to argue, that we find the structural analog to the relationship between systems of exchange and their respective modes of organizing social life described above. Recall that in Christoph's story of the *Autorenbuchhandlung*, the bookshop community is based on the model of literature itself, a universal hostess. Or else, how the body of the book stands in for the human body as a portent in the pyre. This distinction, I would put forward, challenges us to rethink the art work in terms of its imbrication in a series of relations (without dissolving it into them). Thinking of the circulation of the artwork as a relational play between various registers of other relations helps us to understand how the bookshop functions simultaneously under multiple logics without hierarchizing one or the other. This picture explains thereby how functioning in service of aesthetic value - which is predicated on emergent difference - comes to be equated with the social value of concrete relations.

Finally, we can turn then to an analytical language first devised in response to the inadequacy of political economic models to the situation of Equatorial Africa. Jane I. Guyer and Samuel M. Eno Belinga's (1995) emendation to the wealth-in-people concept, in terms of wealth-in-knowledge,⁷² sought to provide a model through which to understand on economic terms the position of social relations as the ultimate unit of the measure of value in many African systems of exchange. What Guyer and Belinga so innovatively point out, is that categories like "knowledge" can be as important for understanding these systems as social organizations like kinship or material culture - knowledge, they write, "in a sense...defines the human endeavor in general," as a, "key 'resource.'" (117) The struggle, however, was that as an object of analysis, knowledge

⁷² This model seems especially fertile, also as an opposing ideal system to the one conventionally understood to pervade European societies - see also Guyer (2004).

was neither diffuse like “culture” nor strictly specialist, as a closed system controlled by Meillassoux’s esoteric expert. Instead it functioned as an, “open repertoire and an unbounded vista,” (1995: 93) dispersed throughout the collective body but distributed on the basis of individual capacities. As with the problem of (literary) art in the European context, “social mobilization,” was determined by differential mobilization of bodies at knowledge, situated at the intersection of individual talents and collective reservoirs of material. The benefit of the model, Guyer and Beglina argue, is that it accounts for the simultaneous accumulation of more elements and composition of different elements, two axes which account respectively for the features like clientalization on one hand, and the shifting spatial shapes of social networks on the other. (118)

Thus while on the one hand, some dynamics of wealth as knowledge specifically in the genre of art are structured by logics of control, others are marked by their fluidity. This picture also gives a vocabulary through which to critique the sociology of literature that continues to caricature aesthetic gatekeepers as functionaries of the dying bourgeois state struggling to adapt to shifts in the field of production. On the one hand, the role of cultural intermediaries – and here too Bourdieu’s language remains the dominant paradigm⁷³ – has increasingly been described as negotiating cultural and market values in the region between production and consumption. On the other, even critical scholarship seems to fall back on a conception of literary production as inextricably tied to positions in social fields, even if now gatekeepers are treated as mediating agents first and structural positions second. (Pareschi 2015) Moreover, while contemporary scholarship has tried to find ways to grapple with the changing role and nature of literary circulation

⁷³ Though important critiques of the term’s looseness do exist – for example, Nixon and Du Gay (2002), Du Gay (2004) and Negus (2002).

in 21st century Europe, it continues to insist that, “literature is the art form of the nation-state,” and as such of, “little consequence to elites...an object of cultural consumption, for dwindling and aging publics.” (Franssen and Kuipers 2015)

The situation I found in Berlin was quite different. Indeed, like the liberal state, the bookshop functions as a site of control in which circulation is determined, of both the commodity and art work, as they are located in the same object of immanence. Yet the role of taste seems to be to pertain instead to the mediation of two modes of relating, the stranger and the intimate, each entailed by the circulation of the same object at different levels. Most importantly, such determinations, because they function within a “universal” field of criticism, are no longer entailed by social organizations – instead they provide a resource for social realities to be reordered. The bookshop functions at the intersection of these two very different social bodies, contributing to how far and with what affect the trajectory of a particular book might travel. Implicit in this conception is a socialization of the faculty of (aesthetic) judgment that in the structure I’ve traced appeals to aesthetic value as the highest principle of production, and offers resistance to the formations of national literatures that such circulations are understood to effect. I have not been suggesting that literature *does not* serve that function, but rather that alternative vectors of force likewise pervade books, often reverberating on perpendicular planes.

For Bourdieu, “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier,” it makes distinctions, in the field of artistic production between the beautiful and the ugly for example, which enable social subjects to mark themselves out on the basis of the distinctions they make. As Wolff (2008) suggests, as a certain crisis in value, brought on by discourses of globalizations, postcoloniality, and postmodernism, have all supported

the dislocation of certainty – a motif which seems especially relevant to contemporary debates in aesthetics. Her own position regarding a so-called aesthetics of uncertainty is developed through the language of “community,” a way of avoiding both an unthinking return to universalist categories of aesthetic value as well as the move to abandon therefore any principled notion of judgment.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Poet

The Sounds of Words and the Intimacy of Fleeting Moments

Verweilung, auch am Vertrautesten nicht/ ist uns gegeben; aus den erfüllten / Bildern stürzt der Geist zu plötzlich zu füllenden; Seen /sind erst in Ewigen. Hier ist Fallen /das Tüchtigste. Aus dem gekonnten Gefühl / überfallen hinab ins geahndete, weiter.

We are not permitted to linger, even with what is most / intimate. From images that are full, the spirit / plunges on to others that suddenly must be filled; / there are no lakes till eternity. Here, falling/ is best. To fall from the mastered emotion / into the guessed-at, and onward.

-R. Rilke, *An Hölderlin*

At the collapse of the DDR, as two German governments prepared to shift administrative control over Berlin and the larger territories of the future German Republic to a unified system of governance, thousands of formerly state-operated businesses were poised for collapse, leaving several million jobs and countless millions in assets at risk. By summer of 1990, many of these Volkseigener Betrieben would be privatized by the newly formed Treuhandanstalt (lit. “trust agency,” later administered by the Treuhandliegenschaftsgesellschaft, or TLG⁷⁴), and passed over to the new regime. Today, the TLG continues to support the conversion of former assets for public and private use, including a large factory in former East Berlin, which since 1998/9 has been repurposed for the support of local cultural enterprises.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Two additional agencies, Bundesanstalt für vereinigungsbedingte Sonderaufgaben (BVS) and the Bodenverwertungsundverwaltung, are responsible for state-owned assets and forest/agricultural land properties respectively. To date, the privatization of these industries has totaled several billion Euros in return – however, with the global economic downturn in 2008/9, the planned full privatization of control was postponed.

⁷⁵ The TLG provided 100 million Deutschmark for renovations in 2008.

Among these were several I frequented during my time in Berlin. In the spring of every year since 2011,⁷⁶ thousands of Berliner have crowded the corridors of the old facility to hear readings from authors, discuss trends, get autographs, and talk to publishers. The building is several stories tall and occupies several square blocks like a fortress blotting out views of anything else, including the sound from the nearby urban thoroughfare. Whichever entrance you used, the pathway opened onto a massive open space, a courtyard between the outer buildings lined with white tents and packed with people bending over glaring at books. Somehow the walls seemed shorter from the inside. Performers walked by on stilts, and you could smell food cooking on an open fire in a pit near the middle of the mass. Publishers had their names written on the backs of sheets in the tents, and books were sprawled across a clean table as writers and readers asked what they might like and handed cash across. Beer and wine was poured into large drafts, and people talked in the middle loudly while people near the edges leaned over one another to hear what was happening. On one side, a black box had been set up, inside which, behind a glass screen, a young man sat with a book in his hands reading into a microphone. Passersby, three or four at a time, stopped to put on headphones outside the box and listened to the reading. A small white sheet of paper outside listed upcoming readers and the selections they chose.

As I sat on a bench, a middle-aged man next to me tried to get my attention. “Have you heard him before?” He pointed to the stage. “They have his book there, what

⁷⁶ The event began in 2009 as an outgrowth of the Buchtage (“book days”) event throughout the city, but found a permanent home here two years later. Buchtage is sponsored by Börsenverein, and lasts three days in cities like Leipzig and Berlin on a yearly basis. The motto of the most recent Buchtage event in Berlin was, “For the Word and Freedom” [Für das Wort und die Freiheit) – like many of these larger, more professionalized events, the program was organized around global political discursive themes, like the role of the digital media in society, or communication in the age of globalization, in particular as something in which the book or culture industries might intervene.

do you think?” Around the corner from the box a wide but short stage was set up with a black couch and two men sitting talking into a microphone. The younger of the two has just finished a novel, and he reclined back into his seat as the silver haired interviewer told the audience that he will be reading from his new book later in the evening in a nearby salon. The speakers crackled as drops of rain fell, but the crowd filled in the benches set up in front of the food station anyway; many huddled under a *Berliner Pilsner* umbrella, others simply ignored it. Behind the crowd, two small theaters have been converted for readings, and, across the way, a large auditorium has been packed as one of the headliners took the stage to promote their new work.

Sounds filled the space, competing for attention amidst the cacophony, but each was carefully attended to by those caught by its fragrance. People walked through such spaces as if through a garden or museum taking in the landscape before something called for closer inspection. Berlin Buchnacht is a literary festival like many others that dominate the cultural landscape of the city, many of which are better known or better attended. But its structure marks a shift in the affect of participation in such events that has been part and parcel, I would suggest, of Berlin’s growth in the past ten or fifteen years as a city made of increasingly new, “foreign” and younger faces. Rather than the spectacle of the major festivals – some of which have appeared in passing glances throughout this dissertation – large auditoriums, quiet and respectful audiences, well-dressed and wearing name tags, holding waxy brochures, university emblems, often cordoned off in commercial sites in bourgeois institutions funded by foreign governments or corporate sponsors, events like these spill out into life on the streets.

In Berlin, as I have tried to show, literature seeps into and emerges from within everyday life. And one of the major ciphers of this mutuality of the literary and the ordinary, I will argue in this chapter, is the sound of the human voice. As several chapters have already explored in different ways, this has included the ways in which literature is performed, read out loud, created, and shared in such a way as to force a re-imagination of the space of the “salon.” As the example of Buchnacht makes clear, one has to concretely rethink where one might hold a reading, with whom, and how one might participate, for how long, with what intensity, and with what aim, if any, in mind. The questions remain, why has the live performance of texts remained at the center of literary culture in Berlin, and how does it relate to the shape of everyday life in the city?

One sees this alternative participation in literature in the ways books pour out of their stores to be browsed as one walks by on the way to pick up groceries. It is clear in the ways, as we saw in Chapter Three, people come to local stores to hear writers speak, to meet with the authors of their books face to face before buying them, to hear their voices, or seek advice from a trusted shopkeeper. The (re)emergence and preponderance of what is often called “live literature” takes many forms. In the western part of the city, libraries and older salons are more common stages for its performance. Elsewhere, literary cafés have become a mainstay, alongside the rise of Slam poetry, new genres of live literature and experiments in multiple media. Such efforts have also increasingly turned toward the virtual space of the city to record and circulate their sounds. Websites dedicated to publishing the events, video, audio, and textual artifacts, as well as interviews and commentary have become a very popular part of the literary scene.

Around the corner from the main courtyard of the old factory, down another stone-paved walkway between yellow brick buildings is a salon I frequented during my fieldwork that made this relationship between the sound of human voices and literature its particular focus. Here, far from the old West Berlin stages crowded today by older and more homogenous demographic, young poets and acknowledged masters share works in progress, collaborate, translate, improvise and record their proceedings for an archive of texts, translations and voices. For twenty years, this werkstatt (workshop), has tried to center dialogue about poetry, and create a space for the return to the place of voice in not just literary arts, but in allied practices as well. Through hosting public events, competitions, performances, and discussions, the werkstatt aims at what their director calls the sharing of poetic experiences. In what follows, I want to think alongside the theories of human voice posited by these new forms of literary practice, taking seriously their challenge to the ways in which the relationship between orality and sociality has been imagined by scholarship.

The Privileging of Durability

Historians of the book have developed a considerable armature for understanding how the political was restructured by the introduction of writing in Western antiquity, in particular as it relates to the Thamusian distinction between the “dead” memory of *grammata* and the living memory of *anamnesis*. (See Detienne and Camassa 1988; Derchaneux 2004) Such interventions, to varying degrees influenced by anthropological sensibilities, have tended toward either the codification of the law, or the scene of poetic

pedagogy, as the principal sites through which to think this relation. (See, for example, Martin 1988)⁷⁷ Their tacit assumptions, however, about what kinds of spaces are important for creative language work, and about what constitutes memory, have led to antimonies in the structure of the relation of voice to text.

Much the same can be said of the structures of language presumed by literary theory in the last century, especially with regard to semantics. Take, for example, the influential statements of the Prague linguistic circle on the stratum of sound-effects in works of art (even for the minimally diaphanous novel where phonemes remain as a “precondition of meaning”) If we agree that a performance amounts to the addition of, at minimum, some element(s) to the realized pattern of speech (which may even distort or ignore the pattern prescribed by the text), then no “real science” of rhythm could be based upon parole. (Wellek and Warren 1956: 158-9; See also Majetka and Titunik 1984) At the same time, sound patterns cannot be wholly divorced from meaning if we assert the integrity of the work of art, as Wellek and Warren famously do, such that even when we hear a language we do not speak aloud, some measure of semantic effect is produced in us purely through intonation. Adorno too would agree, that music’s *Sprachlichkeit* presumes the signification of sounds – that these are not *mere* sounds (though in distinction, he would say, music refuses paraphrasing). And what the Russian formalists called sound-patterns (or figures), could be linked into more or less meaningful units of repetition, or else to structural oppositions, but which can have variable, if characteristic,

⁷⁷ One important exception might be Dimitrios Yatromanolakis’ (2007) reading of the reception of Sappho in classical Greece. By shifting our attention to the everyday hermeneutics of poetry, Yatromanolakis reveals how much of the work of analyzing aesthetic practices has reified, rather than critiqued, habitual reenactments of indigenous discourses (37) – for example when the analyst speaks of the intention of the poet. Thus, in a move familiar to anthropology but highly original with respect to the history of literary practices, the “real” object of analysis for Yatromanolakis pertains to the evaluation of “hegemonic hermeneutics premises” inhering in the circulation of poetry.

relationships with meaning. But if such Gestalt theories of the place of sound in literary praxis have come and gone, they remain illustrative of the challenges facing a scientific study of literature practices – namely that the security of our assumptions return to us as their double.⁷⁸

Rather than work toward a general theory of the role of sound in language, or even in poetry, the burden of this chapter is more modest – it is to show how a set of poetic practices in Berlin today challenges these assumptions. While much work has recently gone into troubling the rigidity of the distinctions between oral and written literature, the endurance of certain other distinctions is revealed by recurrent concerns regarding literary forms. First, the supposed primacy of meaning in dominant Western theories of language use has drawn attention to the relative durability of semantic content qua memory (and its fragility). Second, there has been a marked shift in thinking not just of the sociality of literature, but of the intimacy of those forms of relating. The force of literature (and the genuineness of intimacy), scholars seem to venture, can be measured through the endurance of relations. Classical research has long understood the persistence of public memory (and the threat to its stability inherent in oral media) as implicitly standing in for, or at least referring to, the endurance of social relations in their institutional guises.

⁷⁸ If the epistemic limits of a foundationalist picture of science are well known to ethnographers, they have been seldom, if ever, applied in the context of European literature. This has been the problem of the anthropology of art more broadly since Alfred Gell's (1998) attempt to wrest the problem from the false dichotomy of a critical aesthetics on the one hand, and a narrow concern with the "social context" of art production/circulation/reception on the other. They do represent, however, a great advancement from an earlier moment in the science of literature that declared that, "words or arrangements of words evoke attitudes ... directly as sounds...the effects of words due directly (i.e. physiologically) to their sound qualities are probably slight and only become important through such cumulative and hypnotic effects as are produced through rhythm and rhyme." (Ogden and Richards 1986: 236)

My fieldwork suggests that in each case – for memory, intimacy, and the relationship between them – durability is not necessarily what is at stake. Instead, my aim here is to take seriously both non-semantic forms of memory and the intimacy of little moments. This reversal is predicated, I argue, on a re-imagination of the relation between truth and fiction in ordinary life, a shift which allows us to take ephemeral social relations not as a degraded or failed form of enduring ones, but as forms of communion that are borne out in the everyday, even while they intersect the more familiar stranger socialites of the reading public and the nation in the era of print capitalism.

Live Literature in Berlin: From Language Societies to Literary Media

The period following the end of the Thirty Years' War (1648) marked a shift not just in the relative power of Hapsburg and French aligned political actors and the establishment of the Westfälisches System, but also in the organization of social life within the Holy Roman Empire. As I noted in the Introduction, the economic and political situation on the continent, and the relationship between peasants and landed estates, created the conditions under which the cultural bourgeoisie could effect their own uprising in the ordering of social life, inspired in part by the political philosophy of the French Revolution. Shifting regulations on who could live where forced internal migrations in and out of cities, rapidly upending demographic patterns while also requiring the development of new politics of belonging. At the same time, the attempt to unify an increasingly disparately politically aligned population into a nation of Germany was run through attempts to reestablish the German language, canonizing a literature

around classical and later Romantic mythological motifs, as well as coalescing a conception of Kultur around figures like Goethe, Lessing and Schiller, and in distinction to the French Zivilization. This desire also led to the emergence of *Sprachgesellschaften* (language societies) and *Dichterorden* (orders of poets). Such language societies began in the monasteries as monks dedicated to translating religious texts into the vernacular, but, by the 17th century, were radically reimagined as organizations dedicated to *Spracharbeit*, language work, which also advocated for the formation of new schools to educate the population in vernacular forms of literacy (and in distinction to the Latin and Greek emphasis that held sway over better institutions until that point).

The birth of Romantic constructions of a national imaginary and its canon marked a break from Weimar neo-classical appropriation of textual practices from a continental antiquity. The return to, or rather elevation of, a vernacular and everyday mode of symbolic communication meant that such Spracharbeit was contingent not only on the mass circulation of printed texts but also on renewed attention to, use and cultivation of oral language. It was in this context that the Enlightenment salon made its way from France. It was in Berlin that particular German transformations began to emerge in the end of the 18th century, largely through the work of assimilated Jews. One of the best known and earliest of the German salon was founded by Henriette Herz, in parallel to the academic gatherings orchestrated by her husband.⁷⁹ This effort led others to the opening of similar salons in the homes of other aristocratic patrons – for example, Dorothea Veit's in the 1790s. (see Hertz 1979) Rahel Levin, about whom Hannah Arendt (1958) wrote an

⁷⁹ Born Henriette de Lamos (1711-1789), Herz was a Jewish educator who later converted to Protestantism and was a major influence on Alexander von Humboldt, Friedrich Schleiermacher and the contemporary Romantic movement. Her husband Marcus ran a parallel salon for scientists after completing his training in the medical faculty at Königsberg, where he was one of Kant's examiners for his habilitation.

account, opened a salon in her home that included not only women and men, but a range of poets from all classes, as well as many of the most important writers of the day. Many had sympathies with the project of the Jena circle forming around the brothers Schlegel, Humboldt, Novalis, Tieck, and Schleiermacher, and many of the latter in turn attended her salon in Berlin. In Romantic fashion, the events at Levin's salon – quickly one of the most famous in the German kingdoms – were marked by the sociality of their performances; reading and writing were cooperative, involved bodily enactments, singing, acting, and collaborative oratory. While similar in a number of structural features to the Berlin salons, the salons that arose in Weimar enjoyed the presence of J.W. Goethe (notably one organized by Anne Amalia), which, while lending clout, also undermined the democratic exchange that marked their ideal form. (Köhler 2003: 986-7)

The spirit of mutuality – what the Jena Romantics called *Symposie* and *Symphilosophie* – worked against the rising cult of the singular author (whose symbol in Germany was Goethe), as both a political and aesthetic imperative. Such efforts were epitomized by the publication of hundreds of fragments in the *Athenäum* in Jena without attribution of authorship. Fragment §125 identifies this imagination with the establishment of a, “whole new era of the sciences and arts,” if only these practices of face-to-face literary work, “became so universal and heartfelt that it would no longer be anything extraordinary for several complementary minds to create communal works of art.” They continue, “One is often struck by the the idea that two minds really belong together, like divided halves that can realize their full potential only when joined.” (Schlegel 1798) Their presence to one another was central to the, “art of amalgamating individuals,” what Schleiermacher described as, “interactional Being,” a, “constant

dialogue,” that made social life into a work of art. (1799: 170) The subsequent decline of the salon by the middle of the nineteenth century was, by the same token, “bound up with a process of increasing institutionalization and formalization,” that traded the semi-public space for the demonstrative public sphere (Köhler) and the simultaneous emergence of what Bourdieu called autonomous principles of hierarchization in the field of cultural capital.

The best-known image of collectivity in literary field during the Cold War, at least in the West Germany, came in the figure of the emergent Gruppe 47. What began as an, “apolitical association,” in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War came to be associated with the literary left, forging an identity through contestations of “collective” memory. (Gajdosava 2009) But if the ‘triumph’ of the BRD’s market liberalism combined with the shadow of the Holocaust produced a niche role and public for intellectuals, their position viz. the state in the DDR was both more determined and subtly subversive. The East German state imagined a literary class that could stabilize a counter-hegemony to the West and legitimate its position in the world. In the absence of an independent press, readers turned to literature for a semblance of criticism, though, by and large, authors accepted their indentured service to the state as cultural professionals. (Hallberg 1996) This fact has led to recurrent claims by critics of “complacency” on the part of DDR writers, mostly famously around the celebrations of Christ Wolf, who died the year I first arrived in Germany as a fieldworker. The swell of recognition she’d achieved was quickly contested by charges that, as a result of their willingness to work within the ideological constraints of the state, DDR writers were of no literary merit (a view which while less dominant now, still holds sway in many parts of Germany). By the

same logic, the late-DDR literature of 1980s-1990s Berlin, especially those works circulated through the Prenzlauer Berg neighborhood of Berlin, have been long considered the most subversive and literarily significant of the era. The economic downturn of the later 1970s coupled with loosening of surveillance regimes lead to a youth counter-movement in this district of Berlin, effected through secret meetings and “unofficial” publications run through small-batch printers, and mirroring the rise of anarchistic politics in the West. (Anold and Wolf 1990; Berbig et al 2001; Dahlke 1997; Dahlke et. al. 2001) The introduction of theoretical literatures from French post-structuralists like Lyotard and Foucault helped foster a sense not only of the possibilities of leftist anti-statist literary forms, but also the kinds of sociality such a project demanded. (Boyer 2001b)

In the decades since the fall of the Wall and the realignment of the German literary field in and around Berlin, there has been a resurgence of interest in the salon form. As a Deutsche Welle article reports, the possibility of a, “personal connection,” through the, “free exchange of ideas,” has been central to its re-emergence. “Sometimes a small smile will creep across the faces of the audience members, otherwise everyone is quiet – they just listen. That is the precise idea of the living room concerts.” (von der Au 2006) In the words of one organizer they interviewed, “that in Berlin the salon culture has blossomed again certainly has very much to do with the history of this city, besides that it's also the capital now. There's always something going on, but still there's the need to step back and to find this precious room of intimacy and the new.”

As other chapters have shown, the renewed emphasis on oral and face-to-face aspects of literary praxis has moved beyond living rooms and taken hold in bookshops,

literary cafes, and NGO offices. Martin Scharfe began one such experiment in 2008, volkslesen.tv, which records people throughout Berlin reading from books of their choosing and shares them with others. “A book in itself is something very beautiful,” Scharfe said in a 2010 interview at the Goethe Institut, but “to have it read to you by another person to whom it’s important is the optimum bonding.” In 2009, Südwestrundfunk(SWR), Radio Bremen and ARD began producing the largest radio and audiobook project in Germany’s history, *Lauter Lyrik*, with Kölner Goethe scholar Karl Otto Conrady, amassing recordings of more than two thousand poems, under the conviction that lyrical poetry must be heard and not simply read. Conrady suggested in the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine* that new media made it possible for more people to connect to poetry. If it has been assumed that the rising popularity of film, television and radio undermines the power of textual literature, in Berlin and in much of new German poetry, new medias have been regarded as crucial sites for reimagining those practices rather than overcoming them.

In the 1990s, spoken-word and slam poetry made its way to Berlin from the United States, catching a wave of interest from Köln by 1992. By the end of that year, the Schöneberger bar “Ex’n’Pop” ushered in the cultural movement through the work of the American expatriate artists Priscilla Be and Rik Maverik, coordinating the English-language *Open mikes* contest. By 1995, Wolfgang Hoge took over the organization of the nascent group. (Westmayr 2010) Poetry found a home in smoke-filled rooms at lounges and music clubs throughout the city, combining dance and participation with the more formalized, rules-, moderator- and jury-structured forms of slam. If the audience played the role of democratizing the event-judgment in poetry contests, for groups like

the popular Surfpoeten, they were there more to participate in the emotional exuberance of the reading. When Thomas Wohlfahrt founded the Werkstatt in May of 1995 in Berlin, slam poetry began to move out from what Hoge Kamp liked to call the dark *Kiffkeller* (a room for smoking pot), with the help of the New Yorker Magazine and the Goethe Institute. In the years that followed, poetry stages began to proliferate, changing form and adopting various multi-mediatic techniques, from film clips to live music. In the 2000s, Hoge Kamp, along with Bas Böttcher (a “poetry-activist”) and Rolf Wolkenstein (a filmmaker), started working on a project to push this element of spoken-word to larger and more diverse audiences. Unsatisfied with either text or audio reproductions of spoken-word poems, they began producing “Poetry Clips” of video-texts, staged readings and explorations that they suggest better reflect the “lyrical moment” of the day – a hybrid form which rapidly rose to prominence in the underground literary scene.

The poet-activist and literary scholar Sulaiman Masomi (2012) has articulated an understanding of the rise of live literature forms through their relation to the shifting organization of social life. Drawing on McLuhan and Havelock, he suggests that the interactional, dialogical form of poetry re-enlivens the centrality of didactic criticism from Greek antiquity, but rerouted through the new-mediatic recalibration of the relationship between acts of writing and acts of speaking. For Masomi, the technological shift of the 1990s was fertile ground for not only reuniting artificially disjointed forms of literarity, but, more importantly, it allowed for a re-centering of literature on the event of interaction, such that the, “authenticity of the art work in the age of mechanical reproduction is secured through the performance, accompanied by an intimate co-presence.” (62) The event-ization of society (*Eventisierung der Gesellschaft*) was part

and parcel, he suggests, of the processes of modernity with which social critics have been concerned for some time.

While Berlin is indeed a city where the modes of relating have shifted with the demographic and political realignment of the post-wall period, the relationship between intimacy and the temporality of the event, I would argue, cannot be thought without complicating our picture of these terms in their own right. To this end, let me draw a parallel with Andrew Piper's (2009) discussion of the "whisper" in E.T.A Hoffmann, as a drama of the move from the artist's control of the subject from, "immediacy to semiotic and technological mediacy." (76) As an inaudible utterance, the content of the whisper is both diegetic and heterodiegetic; it communicates incommunicability. On the side of audibility, the utterance is rather, "extraordinarily available." Thus, the whisper is significant as a mode of communication not only because it points out to the audience a particular uncanny moment of interpretation, but also, "such interpretive necessities are framed as a function of the increasing mobility...of narrative information." (77) The embodiment of the channel by the speaker stands in stark refrain against Hoffmann's larger economy of sound, wherein noise confounds the audience, leading them to identify its source. The uncanniness [*unheimlichkeit*] of sound in Hoffmann then comes from incapacity of words to find a home, what Piper calls guestness, or the instability of reference. The *moment* of the utterance (or the sound) is both hyper available and, Piper says following Meredith McGill, dislocates the reference, such that the (literary) material is made moveable (as I will describe later, the defining feature of textuality in the classical literature) – the uncanniness of speech reveals that the utterance *can be moved*.

In live literature events I attended in Berlin, the moment of intimacy worked in a related if inverted manner - not in whispers, but in public orator, which signaled an intimacy otherwise inaccessible. The speaker, or more precisely the speaker's co-presence with the addressee, is likewise the channel but through, rather than against, the sounds that fill the space. Such an intimacy is not just between two partners in speech, but between the crowd, in opposite to some other public not present. As Yuri Lotman (2009) argues, poetry is not intended as message, but the transformation of message to embodiment.⁸⁰

The Intimacy of Voice: Scenes from a Literary Workshop

Shifting then back to the ethnographic register, I want to put pressure on the theories of human voice proffered by the experiences of a literary life in Berlin.

⁸⁰ The hierarchies implicit in these structurations have also been troubled by scholars in a number of fields. The relationship between sound, the crowd, and power is, of course, differently aligned in poetic soundscapes – one thinks of Elias Canetti's (1960) descriptions of the energy moving through the group as emotional attention shifts. An interesting set of inversions occur as we move from the power structures inherent in the sounds of the crowd to the bourgeois (re)invention of silence (e.g. in the quiet of the study). Literary historians like John Picker have argued that the disenchantment of modernity has been extended through the commoditization of sound for middle-class listeners. In the example of George Eliot, we discover a tacit theory of, "hearing...[as] nothing less than a bodily form of sympathetic vibration," in which a, "telephone discourse," of simultaneous intimacy and distance is reinforced. (Picker 2003: 87) Between these registers, the mediation of the soundscape has been a site of colonial control (Peake 2012), perhaps in response to, among other things, the kinds of subversion made possible through poetic speech. In Mladen Dolar's (2006) interpretation of Lacan's insistence on voice as *objet a*. As the object of the scopophilic drive, the voice appears also with an excess of jouissance, thus leveling thought. Within philosophy, attention to the sonority of Being, Nancy (2007) argues, seems better equipped to capture truth, "as transitivity," the, "incessant transition of a continual coming and going." Ethnographic accounts of sound likewise situate the anthropological observer within fields of power. Ghassan Hage (2014) for example, has described his ethnographic predilection for eavesdropping in relation to an onset of progressive deafness, to the loss of aural language, but, fascinatingly, a withdrawal from symbolic clutter – not a loss of language, but a transition then from symbolic exchange to intensity. From another angle, namely the circulation of cassette sermons in Cairo, Charles Hirschkind (2009) has shown how our comportment to sounds contributes to ethical self-formation.

Several events stick in my mind from the countless I attended at the workshop Thomas had built in that corner of the old factory, and several of its distinctive features are worth recounting. The first, a cool night in early 2014, brought one of China's great poets of the era after the Cultural Revolution, Yang Lian. One of the "Misty Poets" (Ménglóng Shīrén)⁸¹ who fought against the oppression of the arts during the height of tensions in the PRC in the 1970s, Yang had become a popular poet in Berlin, regularly visiting the city to read his poems or deliver talks on a range of topics from the political history of China to the types of poems one writes in exile. His long black hair and playful smile settled a lightness over the atmosphere in the room. People chatted as they collected their belongings into tightly packed seats; a few lingered at the ticket counter where pamphlets and translations were spread out and two young women took coats, offering water, and greeted guests. I took a seat near the middle, just as Thomas walked out from the back and along the far wall to whisper something to one of the two Germans on the stage with Yang – a translator, and a professor from a local university. He welcomed everyone from a microphone off stage right before turning over the event to the two conversation partners on the stage, who introduced Yang's biography, and the theme of the readings and discussion, the poetry of the Cultural Revolution. Yang bounded to the podium to begin the reading. "Tǎ zhōng de yīyè"⁸², he said smiling out to the crowd, in one smooth breath. His voice was youthful, energetic, but experienced, confident. Few in the audience understood Chinese.

⁸¹ A group of poets who fought against the restrictions placed on cultural production under Mao's Cultural Revolution and his struggle against autonomous principles of art – their work was defined by a "misty" realism.

⁸² I am grateful to Victor Kumar for his help in converting Chinese characters to pinyin. I made this choice in order that the reader unfamiliar with Chinese – as I and most of the audience were – could follow along with the sounds. By the same logic, I have included both the original German and my own translations.

Hēi'àn cái shì wǒmen xúnzhǎo de -- ér chuānghù
wú yī bùshì xuàn mùdì xiōngměng dòngwù
kànguò de xuě gé kāi cóng yǎnjīng dào yǎnjīng de jùlí

The first two notes of the poem hit hard, and he took a moment before completing the thought. I noticed it crash into people's bodies as they sat up right with a start. There's a lingering break between *de* and *ér* in the first line. The next two lines came quickly as Yang's arms stirred. By then, though, the bodies were poised in anticipation, rigid and alert, during the break in rhythm.

niǎo -- bùzhì cāngbái luǒtǐ shàng de línguāng
shítou xuánzhuǎn chéng fǎnsuǒ zìjǐ de jiǎoluò
ràng wǒmen de ròu hùxiāng bèi fǎnsuǒ
yè cái shì bìxū de -- yīkuài pífū de
yīyè -- língtīng sìmiàn xuányá xià zǒng bùgòu jìjìng de fēngbào...

A momentary breath after the first syllable and Yang returned to the pacing he'd acquired just a moment earlier. The woman seated next to me leans over slightly and whispers that, "one falls into the rhythm, like one falls into the patterns of a story," not by meaning or tones, but in timber, breathes, intensities. By the second set of breaks, Yang's speed has picked up, his arms opening up widely outstretched. He moved his chest upwards like a wave, occasionally pushing his face past the microphone, allowing his voice to usher forth unmediated by speakers. He darts to the side, dancing on his toes as the translator, taller, more mild in manner, leans over the podium in his place and unfolds a white piece of paper. His voice is softer. There is less movement in the words – the tonality that structures Chinese seems to demand more be done expressively with

other features of voice. The German breaks around punctuations, it sounded rounder I thought, and I noticed myself hardly attending to the meaning of the words. The breaths are longer, steadier, slower, more subdued.

Nur die Finsternis ist, was wir suchen. Fenster aber
sind wilde Tiere mit grellem Blick.
Ein Schnee, einmal geschaut, teilt die Ferne von Auge zu Auge.
Vögel breiten Irrlicht auf bleichen blanken Leibern aus,
und Steine wirbeln, bis sie, selbst umschlossen, zum Winkel werden,
damit auch unser Fleisch selbst umschlossen ist.
Nur die Nacht ist notwendig, eine Nacht aus Haut,
ganz Ohr für den Sturm, nie still genug unter dem Fels.

*[The darkness is all that we seek. Window however
are wild animals with a glaring glance.
A snow, once seen, divides the distance from eye to eye.
Birds wide wisp on pale naked bodies,
and stones swirling until they enclose themselves, become the angle,
thus our flesh is enclosed unto itself.
Only the night is necessary, a night of skin,
all ears for the storm, never quiet enough under the rock.]*

The sounds of certain German words stuck out to me. I liked the way *wilde Tier* [wild animals] felt moving from the front to the back of the mouth. *Ferne von Auge zu Auge*, the distance from eye to eye, has two or three natural cadences that fall at the close of the sentence. The four places where sentences break don't surprise the audience, we know where they will land.

The second event followed not long after the first. Since 1998, the *open mike* (generally written in this casing) competition has become one of the premier outlets for young (under thirty-five) poets in Germany. While judges from the national landscape are brought together to administer the competition, it is the performance in front of an audience that often has garnered more attention, as listeners vote and announce their

selection in the popular leftist Berlin newspaper, *der Tageszeitung*. The winners tour German-speaking countries in Europe reading their work and discussing their experiences. A key node in the network that supports open mike and the efforts to encourage young people to explore poetry, the workshop invited participants and officials from the competition to the salon to experiment together one evening.

I arrived early. Only two or three others had come before me, one sitting with a coat in his lap and the other talking to the women near the front who sold tickets and handed out pamphlets. They had rearranged the room since the week before. Now, along the walls, were large photographs each supported by two red wooden planks and just below them a small white placard. I pushed the chairs around the edges of the room off to the side to look closer. Each centered on a lone figure, their face wrapped by a red scarf, mouth hidden, holding a cardboard sign with a phrase, a loose word, a stanza. The white papers translated from Turkish, Russian, French.

One young woman, a new poet, asked us to rearrange the room, and we pushed our chairs into a circle with a large space in the middle. Taking off her jacket, she took her place in the center of the circle and began to move her body up and down on her ankles. For two or three minutes she repeated this motion before picking up speed, beginning to breathe heavily and throwing her hair from her face with a quick whip of her neck. The audience looked around, waiting for a change in her movement, but she continued until at once she broke off her motion and stood still, panting but not seeming to catch her breath. Slowly, she started walking in circles about the space we made between our chairs, reciting, casually, seemingly spontaneously, a poem on the process of writing, about searching for her words, or a topic that fit the situation. As her breath came

back to her the poem wound down and she stopped, bowed, and took her place back amongst the crowd.

Two new figures took a place on the stage, another woman, older than the first, sat in a metal folding chair toward the front of the stage and a strange device was placed on a tall desk in front of her. As she read her poem aloud she cranked the machine, unspooling a thin white strip of paper that began to fall beside her and piled up on the floor. On one side was a series of numbers – 10944, 10945, 10946 – as if counting the beats not of the text but of the crank. On the reverse, the words she spoke aloud written in an old-fashioned type setting and printed in black ink. She read each meter meticulously, deliberately. When she finished, the poem lay on the ground, unwound and garbled, and in silence she rose and took her place back within the crowd.

Some weeks later I arranged to meet Thomas in his office upstairs and around the corner from the Werkstatt stage. I rang the bell and a part-time employee in her forties, Frau Samland, invited me upstairs. The narrow stairway through the near-hidden door to the offices lead to an open room where the mostly younger volunteers worked alongside two older women, including Frau Samland, who served as administrative secretaries. Five workstations stood around the room, but most of the time three went unused. Large, low tables were spread out with paperwork, flyers, magazines, and local periodicals scattered about. Boxes lined the walls with copies of older announcements; some were framed like movie posters on the walls. Frau Samland answered calls, asking about upcoming events and scheduling interviews. Occasionally, Thomas came darting through hardly noticing anyone in the room, unless he needed something from one of them – a date he'd forgotten, an e-mail sent, a letter copied. By three, mostly everyone had gone home. The

pace was slow but steady until he called me into his office around the corner to chat. He wanted to talk about the recent events and had found himself without much to do for an hour – an increasingly rare occurrence for him as his events and Werkstatt had gotten more and more attention in the past year, especially while open mike was in town.

“So, you know, we have the whole of German history in this house,” he tells me, reminding me of how many houses they had known before. A Jewish family had owned one in Pankow before the war. During the DDR, many of the great writers from a range of political tastes had taken up residence there. Since its founding after the wall came down, and relocation in 1994, the Werkstatt was now exclusively thinking about poetic forms and their relation to other media. “Before we were here, however, there was no central point for poets in Germany. Certainly there was no voice for our poets internationally, it had hardly a place.” I asked him about an interview he’d recently done where he had called for a, “reorganization of the memory of poetry into a kind of library.” [*in einer Art Mediathek das Gedächtnis von Dichtung reorganisieren*] He’s deeply nationalistic in his replies, as always. “I’ve traveled a lot around the world, you know, and really the German poet and poetess really has something to say, it’s some of the best out there.” The interviewer had asked him whether he agreed that poetry was something fragile, something that needed small gatherings, and whether that small circle stood opposed to the larger ambition of a center for poetic voice. And then, like now, he replied by appeal to the experiences of poets elsewhere. “Look at how big our events are, it is both. As you know, in the Arab world, the poet stands next to the Prophet...in Latin American, hundreds of thousands of people come out. It is about access to poetry.” There was something remarkable about the statement that any branch of German literature had

not found a place in international literary traffic. Yet the absurdity of the claim falls away as we attend to what he really meant when he spoke of poetry. This journalist had it backwards – for Thomas, the language of “fragility” did not register what was at stake in poetry, as opposed to say in the novel form. “What makes a poem a poem is sound lines, rhythms and the sensuousness of spoken language,” Thomas liked to say, “This is our primal engagement with the world, there is something very reassuring in it. Every child likes to hear it. Let us think of poetry as an event of voice, breath, body and the senses. Whether the listener understands everything at once isn’t always so important.”

“Poetry has different needs to be encountered. If it has to be heard, sharing it takes something else – how do you describe that then? I think that’s what he meant to ask.” I pressed him, expecting the sort of academic response to which I had grown accustomed. Born in 1950s in the DDR, Thomas has been formally trained in German literature and musicology in Halle and Wittenberg, earning a doctorate in 1985. For years he worked as a researcher in an institute for literary history in the Akademie der Wissenschaften in the DDR, before moving to the West and playing a major role in a local theater house and in literary prizes until he founded the Werkstatt. A tall man with a broad chest, he was ever in well-fitted suits and kept the top buttons of his shirt open, a kind of professional persona that stretched as well to the calculated ways in which he spoke. I had heard these snippets repeated often, about the human voice, the lack of a “center” for poets in Germany, the shift in the place of memory. But they belie a subtlety of thought that requires unpacking.

“It is about this re-organization.” He doubled down. “How do we share poetry when it can be so hard to find, you can go to a library and look for even some very

important things and they are not there – look at Berlin where each neighborhood is as big as a city. If you want to change [the situation, to make poetry more available everywhere], it is a two-way street. So sharing is very important.”

“This is the crucial point for you then, that the sharing of poetry needs this intimacy?” He replied with a small lesson on oral culture.

Poetry is one of the oldest cultural techniques. There was always this combination with music, dance, and it had an element of meaning, a cultic act [*kultischen Handlung*], and later a religious act. There are other theories of the emergence of poetry, that it came from the “stop-function” – like that, tak, tak – but that’s the first thing that it is one of the oldest and most beautiful cultural techniques of humanity [*Kulturtechnik der Menschheit*]. Poetry, poetic arts, lyric – we have many synonyms for it, but it was always linked to the voice. With book printing came [important changes], you could read it along and give it density like that, but it had given up the social place, the market place – you know because the poet would go to the market or have a gathering of people and declare, in a sense, what they were composing. So memory-techniques were linked that way, in sounds, rhythm, rhyme, the movement, the sharing came from this kind of memory. Say a famous poem like the *Odyssey*, the oldest poems, you too could own them [in your body].

But this was removed from poetry by chirographic techniques. There was a shift, what Thomas called a “functional change” in the techniques of memory to the “purely aesthetic.” Now, “[poetry] is perceived as beautiful.” But it is not a semantic memory that is encoded by such experiences, nor is there a desire for the perdurance of the poem itself, but rather for the routes of its sharing. This distinction is crucial for understanding Thomas’ desire for a “center” for poetry, and for his claims about the multiple scales at which poetic sharing takes place. As poetry had left the “social place,” the gathering of community, he would also say, it had deteriorated. The public he imagined, however, far from the sterile space of rational exchange, looked more like what scholars have called the private or domestic sphere, a region of intimacy. The move, “from the civil public

space, or else from the living room,” he told me that afternoon, led to a distancing from the inner-space-situation [*Innenraumsituation*] and the transformation of the, “hermetic, the sensitive, the sentimental, if you will the heart-pain-stories. [*Herz-Schmerz-Geschichten*].”

Whenever it is heard, the poem works and goes via the body into the body. And if you take this seriously, then what is in between? What is in between is actually something that the book alone does not provide, but which is made available through [is at the disposal of] the performance of the poet, namely the instrument. And that instrument is the human voice.

This is the rise of the human voice. So therefore we might compare the poem to a score. Few people can from the notation alone translate for themselves sounds and rhythms. Thus we need the symphony, the orchestra, the band, the pianist, the guitarist, the tuba player. The instrument lifts it, *awakens it to life*.

This notion of the awakening of words to life points us to a very different relation to language than might be anticipated. It is a striking turn of phrase, first for the sense of intimacy it marks between participants in a poetic exchange. Such a sharing is, for Thomas, utterly *bodily*. This corporeal presence distinguishes the poem from other literary expressions; the text moves from one body to the next, through the medium of the breath and the vibrations the poet’s body impresses onto it. This is a remarkably complex exchange made up of two distinct though essentially interconnected moments of poetic creation – one in the production of the score, and another in its performance. Here neither is subservient to the other. While the latter indeed indexes a necessary and defining feature of the poetic form, we should not be misled into thinking Thomas is suggesting the words themselves do not matter. Rather there are two vectors of performative action contained within the poetic work which need to be tracked.

It is produced and because it is produced, it is *there* [present]. It functions like a community, they listen and are there [*dabei*]. And we produce something even when hours earlier we did not understand the language in which the poem was written. Even thousands of people can sit and listen and understand. So I am very sure that voice is the essential element of poetry. Not for all, but at least for many poems. Playing with the alphabet [chirographical] pulls out meaning...but it is fundamentally different. So for me the poem is always best when it has a double appearance [*Doppelauftritt*], to read and to listen.

This doubling occurs at multiple registers. For one, I would suggest that the forms of sociality engendered through each register are distinct. They also manifest themselves through different modes of intimacy. Third, and most surprisingly for anthropology I believe, I want to argue that neither the semantic content, nor the intimacy of the community awoken by such poetic performances is burdened by concern with its temporal fragility. It begins and ends in a kind of enlivened present. To speak then of the reorganization of memory for the poet, as I understand it, is to think with the memory of the body, of the breath, rather than the text conventionally understood, or with a picture of intimacy that requires, for its authenticity, endurance. Or perhaps it would be better to say, this reorganization is akin to a recognition of the multiple vectors that traverse the poem and the relations it posits between words and bodies.

In 1999, the Werkstatt began a project trying to imagine transactions between these forms of memory, intimacy, and community. It came in the form of a web archive, LyrikLine, which explored the ramifications of new media technology for this politics of poetic voice. Beginning as a project to document the ‘melodies’ of different poets and their traditions that came through the Werkstatt network, their digital presence paired translations with recordings of performances in sixty-eight languages. It began, moreover, from the awareness of a general decline in the publishing industry’s interest in

poetry and the contemporaneous rise of the “event-character” of the German poetry landscape. Once again, they say, we can hear, “a tangle of voices,” [*Stimmengewirr*] as the “primordial elements” of sound and rhythm, “whose real terrain is song and dance,” have been revived. Their archive thereby, Thomas says, “counteracts the falling apart of writing and sound which leaves the poetic field in an unhealthy state.”

Orality, Endurance, Fantasy

My sense is that these scenes of poetic performance challenge us to nuance the terms of debates that have dominated thinking about the social forms literature engenders. For one, anthropological approaches to the division of oral and written literature have established the durability of the semantic content of the code in memory (internal in the first case, external in the second) as a reflection of concerns about the stability of social organization. Such efforts have been, in my view, part and parcel of the re-definition of “text” through the separability of sign clusters from the context of their utterance. Second, a number of literary theorists have turned to the language of “stranger sociality” to describe the mode of relating germane to encounters with texts, a notion which seems to suggest that literary intimacies are mere fantasies.

Below, I want to argue that in each case, the performance stages of Berlin reveal a vector of inversion. My argument is not that such arguments are irrelevant to the nature of literary life in the German capital. Rather, as I argued in Chapter 3 for the value of books, I want to suggest that they demand we recognize the heterogeneity of these forces.

Dislocation and Textuality of Exchange

Beginning with Walter J. Ong's (1971; 1982) expansion of the Eric Havelock's concerns with the technology of writing, social scientific inquiry has been dominated by the assumption of a transitional moment in the development of societies from oral to chirographic culture. Such genealogical accounts of the shifts in language use as a function of emergent media for its conveyance posited that stages in the production of communication technologies also restructure the nature of human thinking itself. The emblematic case of such a break was the shift in Greek tradition from Homeric to Platonic poetics. (Parry 1971; Lord 1960) For Ong (1971), these included the agonistic relationship between the bodiliness of language use, manifest in the breath and gesture, and the stability of memory arts, the additive rather than subordinate preference for clauses, and aggregative rather than analytical bunching of association of terms. Part and parcel of this classificatory scheme was the assumption of the relative fragility of memory not preserved externally to the body, a fact seemingly confirmed by a particularly European story of the emergence of writing, and by a fascination with Greek oratory and memory arts in the spirit of Cicero's *de Oratore*. This emphasis on the memory function drew as well on emergent debates within anthropology, especially between Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss' theories of mythology, to suggest that in "nonliterate" societies (that is, within what Ong would call primary oral cultures) various kinds of mythic mnemonics were developed in order to defend against changes in the organization of society by, among other things, restricting its influence to particular institutions. (see Harwood 1976)

This institutionally conservative bias in oral culture, Ong suggested, placed language closer to interpersonal experience which is disengaged by writing - an argument that foreshadows, as I will suggest further on, many of the tendencies in thinking about literary culture after print capitalism. The participatory bent of oral literature, he argued, was a function of the need to ensure the endurance of memory, but also to expand, even if only slightly, the maximum memory load bearable by language before writing. "Earlier ages...structured knowledge for memory," (1971: 104) a memory especially for *things* rather than *words*, a thematic *art*. This sensibility was extended and transformed by anthropologists like Jack Goody (1986), who tracked the impact of this shift in both the religious practice from Eurasia to West Africa, but also to argue later (2006) that the distinctions between the real and the fictive are intrinsic functions of language. For Goody, this feature of assessment was maintained across the shift from the time of *mythos* to time of *historia* and *logos*, but there was as well a rigidity and endurance of the structures available in a given repertoire of myths, such that the concern with narrativity might only arise out of writing cultures. Histories, he claimed, even personal histories, organized narratively are, "rare, and without documents, fragmentary." (2006: 18). Longer recitations would require particular ritual settings to meet the demands of attention; the triviality of fiction means long narratives might, like short fairy tales, be better fit for children. A narrative is a *lie* in the Platonic sense, Goody felt, as all arts are, but at another level it adds a layer to the story. That doubts arise around language is, "inherent in the human situation...[as] animals facing their environment," but they are expanded by the introduction of fiction. (33-4) The memory practices of oral cultures, therefore, are not attuned to the verbatim repetition of a string of signs, but to creative

internalization. Oral memory appears as “experience reworked” - “performance is transmission” not exact forms, but through innovation. (Goody 2010: 152; See also 1987)

Secondary orality, in Ong’s schema, like that manifest in Berlin, generates a sense of belonging to a group larger than that established by primary orality. The former cultures were more “group-minded” because, “no feasible alternative had presented itself,” whereas we today are, “groupminded self-consciously and pragmatically.” (1982: 134) This self-aware and pragmatic group-mindedness Ong thought explained the sort of “global village” Marshall McLuhan imagined. The latter, for his part, saw the “languages of the heart” expressed by oral cultures suppressed and doubled by its archetypical formation in print culture, as cliché. (McLuhan 1970) At its extreme, with the emergence of the satellite medium, subsumed all earlier forms and thereby relegated past to past in ways previously unimagined.

Drawing on developments in literary criticism and inspired by historically minded writers on language like Gadamer, Vico and Volosinov, Karin Barber (2007) has tried to push an anthropology of texts back toward an emphasis on the stitching together of disparate elements into a, “recognizable existence as a form.” For Barber, the material images deployed by minstrels of antiquity (from Greece to the Sahel) point to an imagination of the texts as having presence that outlasts even time, a testimony to histories otherwise subject to death. Texts as such are marked by their double-existence as tethered to the context of and yet potentially separable from the instance and condition of their utterance. They are, in her estimation, social facts as action,⁸³ marked by their production in the hands of humans, and as such, enterable into by others – an approach

⁸³ This shift toward *action* in literary and performative contexts is one likewise developed recently by Kirsten Hastrup, (2004)

she identifies as intentionalist. As such, she argues, an anthropological approach must not bypass the routes through which texts makes claims on, or constitute of, their textuality. What joins them then, rather than a particular form, or set of forms, begins for Barber with their interpretable coherence, as a cluster of signs that can, through what Silverstein and Urban (1996) call entextualization, detach itself from the immediate context. This detachability, developed and expanded by Greg Urban qua metaculture, returns Barber to the question of endurance, however now avoiding the assumptive division of oral and writing culture.

In a very different context – namely the Dravidian aesthetics of Tamil political speech – Bernard Bate (2009) has drawn on similar set of influences to shift the paradigm of division from Ferguson’s (1959) diglossia, to Bahktinian heterglossia, to register the ways in which hierarchies of speech genres, including those considered predominantly oral or chirographic, have corresponded to the distributions of power within society. I want to return to this figuration of multiple simultaneous registers at which speech genres are ordered further on, but want to mark here the importance for anthropology of being sensitive to the multiple vectors of what Barber calls intentionality within an at least superficially unitary cluster of signs. For Barber, the analytic wedge is transformed into a question of the routes through which durability of textual forms is maintained – the problem for an anthropology of texts, it would seem, is an interrogation of the various intentions and efforts afforded different texts (or genres) within an economy. Thus for Barber, we ask not only *how* textual forms endure, but how and why they are selected for effort that is required to make them durable. What I want to suggest ultimately is that we attend to the heterogeneity of intentions as a problem not of the relative durability of texts

but in terms of the forms of intimacy they engender. Put more simply, my effort is to trouble our assumptions about the relationship between social groups and the textualities they produce, by suggesting that endurance is not *necessarily* the mark of investment in an institution. My work in Berlin, however, seems to require we extend or transform some of these principles in order to account for the lived realities of literary life.

What would it mean to take seriously the kinds of effort exerted in relatively fleeting intimacies, and thereby in only ephemerally detachable utterances? Or to make matters more complex, might we register heteroglossia under these terms, not as multiple vectors of relatively greater or lesser effort (or as only mirroring distributions of power), but also, simply, with different trajectories? It is telling how these differences map onto the relationship between oral and writing practices in so-called “secondary” contexts. Moreover, these practices suggest we have to dislodge the notion that the semantic content of poetic speech is the root of our determination of its relative value (the effort it demands). Repetition of the speech-event is not the ambition. Rather, it is what Thomas calls the “sharing” of poetry that such performances seem to proliferate. If there is a “text” here as defined above, then it is not to be found either in signs or the manner in which they are uttered, but rather the exchange itself. The units of that exchange seem to be mobile even if the “text” is not. Not indexical relations, but their structural elements. This is a critical inversion – the ephemerality of the text grounds the mobility of the relation, where in the classical picture it was the dislocability of the text-element from the pragmatic conditions of its utterance that mattered. To be clear, there are also conventional texts in these scenes. It is the dynamics of the relationship between them that I hope this chapter reveals.

Intimate Strangers and the Fantasy of Communion

Let me shift then briefly to what I see as a related set of problems developed within literary theory.

While historians of the book have argued that the “immense dislocation” of the 19th century that followed from the rise of the market, urban migration and the “great uprooting” during industrialization served as a great impetus to the popularization of the book, (Silverman 2012) the contemporary moment is one that tends to be rendered in global public discourse as a time when hyper-connectivity through mass-mediation threatens everywhere to re-inscribe a new kind of social fragmentation. Suggestions abound that the “fantasy of communion” (Ibid) across social divisions in literature does not bear out in actual experience – a sense that has been attached in critical literature to older views of the autonomous, liberal subjects in political communities, in which reading is an activity that reifies difference and distance. (Felski 2008) Within the paradigm of cultural studies, audience reception theory likewise turned on the text as a fulcrum of analysis around “opposition.” (Hall 1973; Radway 1991)

Much of this language likewise has roots in the distinction between the intimate private sphere and the stranger sociality of a public inhabited by disinterested rational actors. (Habermas 1981) This concern with the emergent forms of alienation has been a central feature of much writing on modernity and its aftereffects, whether in the rapidity of images that whirl past us in the city, (from Simmel 1903 to Auge 2002; see also Chapter One) or with the “imagined communities” (Anderson 2006; Appadurai 1996)

grounded in the era of print capitalism by the proliferation of texts or other cultural objects in vernacular registers. In one of the best known and most eloquent statements in this genealogy, Michael Warner (2002a, 2002b) describes a *public* that might refer to a third category of social body between or beyond its definition as bounded space of the audience of the address on the one hand, and as social totality on the other. This alterative sense, he suggests, is known to us intuitively within the confines of modern culture. It is defined by a series of characteristic features. It self-organized, “a space for discourse organized by nothing other than the discourse itself,” appearing not as a sum of existent persons but as a body who receives the address. (2002a: 50) It is a body moreover, constituted in relations among strangers, not as exotic others but as Heidegger would also say, those among whom one is *too*. As a space of transition between the outside of the public and its joining by way of engaging the text, a public is simultaneously personal and impersonal. In our participation in a public, we are identified as the addressee not in virtue of individual identity, but rather through our participation in the indefinite body of the discourse, “in common with strangers.” (58) Since it is constituted merely in virtue of address, a public exists not enduringly, but only, at least minimally, in attention. As constituted by what Warner calls the, “reflexive circulation of the discourse,” a public also constitutes a social space (participation is neither merely passive or active). The temporality then of this circulation gives the historical rhythm to the life of the public.

For Warner, it is Fraser’s “counterpublic” form that makes, “expressive corporeality the material for the elaboration of intimate life among publics of strangers.” (2002a: 57) When Fraser (1992) first coined this language, it was used to define alternative social spaces held against the dominant discourse and its public, a tactic of

subaltern lives. Warner widens its usage however to refer to a public founded by the particularity of its address, “not just anybody,” but a subset with perhaps transformation ambition for public life more broadly, but which recognizes itself as a subset.

Lauren Berlant (1991), in her celebrated reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne and the national fantasy of “America,” points to the assumed sets of relations, “an explication of ongoing collective practices, and also an occasion for exploring what it means that national subjects already share not just a history, or a political allegiance, but a set of forms and the affect that makes these forms meaningful.” (4) Participation in such a totality, unlike Warner’s reading publics, are prior to attention to a text like Hawthorne’s novel. As a picture of citizenship unfolds throughout her essay, we are confronted ultimately by the figure of everyday life in America in opposition to the national fantasy, as an alternative route to utopian dreams of the modern state. Berlant’s Hawthorne insists on the productivity of fractured publics – the everyday is thus for her the site of the counter-hegemony that reveals the absence of a national social totality. It is the “fantasy of communion” she writes elsewhere, (1989:30) that, “informs...the story of collective life.” Such fantasies are sought through the body, leading to a tension in both history and the narratives that operate within it, between the individual, subjective experience and the collective, the tragic and the utopian. Two possibilities moreover twisted around each other such that they cannot be lived simultaneously. The everyday, to put it another way, is the source of its own fantasies, and the distancing of the living body from those fantasies of social totalities have been the tactic of domination, as well as a mode of hope. (See Berlant 1991: 193) The work of the National Symbolic draws us out, enchants us to shed the identities of everyday life in favor of fantasy of boundless identification, a

fantasy-object to which one is attracted erotically and which remains abstract only through the repression of its conditions of production. (217)

For Gillian Silverman, however, the fantasy of communion was marked by Romantic mutuality, rather than the abstracted community. Following Herman Melville's reply to Hawthorne, and the descriptions of reading in Luella Case and Margaret Fuller, Silverman uses the language of comingling bodies, mutual existences, and merged subjectivities that was especially marked as fantasy in the 19th century American literary intimacy. Rather than read such fantasies as inferior forms of intimacy in the face of growing restrictions to face-to-face relations in the burgeoning liberal public sphere, and in tightening proscriptions of behavior⁸⁴, Silverman argues that literature might provide an "alternative route" to intimacy. As such, she suggests, literature offers, "a different mode of *being* in the world," full of, "potentially more vital relations," and enabling, "unfamiliar or illicit forms of social intercourse." (2012:6) Nevertheless, situated in the context of private reading rooms in the, "insular setting of the bourgeois home," these forms of intimacies, she suggests, point to a paradox of the book that does not seem present in the kinds of literary events I have here described.

It is worth pointing out also that Stephen Greenblatt's (1989) effort to effect a return to the collectivity of texts, wresting literary analysis from the monolithic picture of power and its relation to representation, takes its cue precisely from live performances of literature. For Greenblatt the, "moment of inscription is a social moment," and it is one that occurs in direct address to the listener as collective and present – there is, "no dimming of the lights." (5) The trace, thereby, is not an inscription of authority but of

⁸⁴ Silverman cites book historians like Ronald Zboray and Richard Brown as popularizing this line of argumentation.

contingent sociality, he argues, which renders the search for a grounding center (of speech or discourse) fruitless. Through reclaiming the Greek rhetorical language of *energia*, Greenblatt suggests we follow on the capacity of textual traces (in whatever medium and to whichever sense) to, “produce, shape and organize collective physical and mental experiences.” It also requires a range, a minimal predictability and adaptability, but here too, such a capacity is in service of enable[ing] them to survive at least some of the constant changes in social circumstance and cultural value that make ordinary utterances evanescent.” (7-8) But survivability is not the durability of a structure, but instead its transformation, like Hamlet’s mirror, instantaneous. Thus the exchange in social energy replaces the holding over of semantic content.

On the one hand, energetics seems a useful language through which to understand the performances I was present for in Berlin. The reactions of audience members in the readings and Thomas’ description of the voice as the medium of exchange between bodies, seems to come close to such a circulation of energy. The bodily presence of participants to one another, and the transactions between them through the rhythms of breath, confound the distinctions of private and public. We might recall too the descriptions of public spaces of poetic performances as living rooms, to a shared or open private sphere. When Thomas speaks of a reorganization of the memory then, I understand him to indexing not bodily techniques as mnemonics as in ritual or in Cicero’s rhetoric, but where the bodily effect is the end itself. Thus conceived, memory takes a very different form and undermines the primacy of meaning in language. This is evidenced moreover in the importance of listening to poems whose languages we do not understand. Notice that throughout the scenes above, my interlocutors do speak of a

moment of understanding, but not of the semantic content of the signs. It is a kind of bodily acknowledgment, an exchange of the breath that lies at the heart of poetic performances.

The Intimate Moment

In his essay on globalectics, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2012) traces a genealogy of thinking about oral literature to Plato's *Phaedrus*, and Socrates' (and Aristotle's claims to the animacy of speech) in order to subvert the "aesthetic feudalism" inherent in the privileging of written language. He extends this criticism, following Gabriele Schwab, to chide Lévi-Strauss for not recognizing himself, as a master of writing, as the subject of play in the hands of the Nambikwara chief, the master of oratory. The encounter stages for Thiong'o a drama of postcolonial power; my own interest is, however, in its playfulness. It is a play that mirrors, in Thiong'o's own language, the fluidity of the relation between prosaic and poetic logics. Its aesthetic, moreover, derives its relation to "social function" by means of, "intimate relationship(s) and involvement with society." (73) Reviewing his own work, and Bekederemo's writing on the Ijaw epic *Ozidi*, he says, succinctly:

Drawing from the, "spontaneity and liberty of communication inherent in oral transmission – openness to sounds, sights, rhythms, tones, in life and the environment" – could lead to a mindset, "characterized by the willingness to experiment with new forms," in short, a willingness to connect.

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to make a series of suggestions, beginning from the assertion that the reality of intimacy need not be opposed necessarily to the

realm of the imaginary or the fictive. I have argued that this premise of a literary life in Berlin goes hand in hand with a form of intimacy not marked by its reliance on endurance, but with ephemeral and corporeal connections. By the same logic, I have suggested that this fleetingness or event-character is also not a reflection of the fragility of memory, as many scholars have assumed, but rather a shift in its substance. Rather than look for the performance (both its channel and its effects) within the conventionally understood “text” of poetry, it is the mode of sharing that becomes mobile. Finally, I have tried to maintain that we understand such avenues for literary action not in opposition to those accrued around writing forms, but rather that they exist in a state of heteroglossic play. The dual nature of these performances attests to those simultaneously possibilities for poetry.

It might be worthwhile to say something then, in conclusion, about the shape of this intimate moment. “Poetry,” Gaston Bachelard wrote, “is the metaphysics of moment...it must deliver, all at once...the secret of a soul.” (2013 [1936]: 58) Poetry, therefore, rejects the temporality of the scaffold, of preambles and principles, by marching against doubt – “at most, it calls for a prelude of silence.” It comes in the wake of echoes of prosaic thought. Its time, Bachelard, remarks, is vertical as everyday time is horizontal. That is to say, by accepting the poetic instant, “prosody allows its reinsertion into prose...social life, ordinary life.” (ibid) It abides in the inversion of antitheses, both, “astonishing and familiar,” a harmony; if masculine time thrusts back and forth and “conquers” the submissive, weepy and regretful time of the other, poetry is androgynous.

To put it more simply, the time of poetry, for Bachelard, contains, “a multitude of contradictory events enclosed within a single instant.” (59) It imposes an order among

these simultaneities, but one that runs perpendicular to the time of prose, and in so doing gathers up depth. In the example of reading Mallarmé – a “direct” assailant of horizontal time - Bachelard uses the metaphor of pebbles cast into streams, whose ripples shatter and distort images and reflections. Baudelaire on the other hand, seizes on the instant more tranquilly. Baudelaire writes, “when I was a child, my heart used to be haunted by two contradictory feelings: the horror of life, and the ecstasy of life.” In an instant they are brought together, leading Bachelard to the shocking pronouncement that *all morality is instantaneous*. This is not to say that it arrives from a singular event of judgment, however. His opposition to Bergson’s *la durée* is, to be precise, a challenge to continuity. It is an endeavor to think of the intimate ambivalence of the moment without falling into a melancholic longing for the past, or a foolish desire for the future. The smile and the regret remain in free play, neither overcoming the other. Hence, Bachelard’s claim that poetry does not unfold, but is rather knit. As Richard Kearney (2008: 41) says of Bachelard’s epiphanic instant, it is the coming together of the event and eternity which is itself a reflection of the material encounter of two people. Kearney quotes from an earlier Bachelard, writing on Martin Buber,

Someone exists in the world, unknown to you, then, suddenly, in a single encounter, before knowing him, you recognize him. A dialogue begins in the night, a dialogue, which, through a certain tone, completely involves the persons. “Michel, is that?” And the voice answers, “Jeanne, is that you?” Neither one needs an answer, “Yes it is I.” For if the questioned person were to transcend the questioning, and forego the infinite grace of the encounter, he would then descend into monologue or confession...into the dull narrative of wishes and woes.

This is an essentially auditory imagination. I agree too with Kearney’s reading of the poetic instant, as metaphysical instant, as one of radical empathy, freedom, and attention, not between subjects, but as a playful dynamism. In Berlin, a literary form of

life inverts the relationship between the everyday and the event. If, as Veena Das (2007) shows the critical event of violence, “attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself back into the recess of the ordinary,” here the complication of the real by the fantastic seems to place the (poetic) event in the place we might expect to find the everyday.

CONCLUSION
An Ordinary Aesthetics

Das Schreiben in Gesellschaft ist ein interessantes Symptom – das noch eine große Ausbildung der Schriftstelleri ahnen last. Man wird vielleicht einmal in Masse schreiben, denken und handeln. Ganze Gemeinden, selbst Nationen werden ein Werk unternehmen.

Writing in society is an interesting symptom – that points to a major development of writing itself. One day people may well write, think, and act en masse. Whole communities, even nations will undertake a work.

-Novalis

At the end of *Claim of Reason*, Cavell asks whether philosophy can accept Othello and Desdemona, “back at the hands of poetry,” when it has continued to, “demand banishment of poetry from its republic” – “Perhaps,” he answers, “it could if it could itself become literature.” But can philosophy become literature and still know itself? (1988: 496) This dissertation has been an attempt to ask a similar question of anthropology. If we accept the Romantic imperative with which we began, that all things should become poetry, including the human sciences, how would anthropology still know itself? Would such a reintroduction of the literary into our republic occlude our knowledge of ourselves? If we recognize that life itself cannot be divided into separate countries, is there no difference anymore, between literature and anything else, between anthropology and other sciences?

For Cavell, the human is not open to, “ocular truth,” like a stone. Or, as Heidegger says, only Dasein can touch and be touched.⁸⁵ Rather, the bodies of Desdemona and Othello on their bridal sheets are testament to the truth of skepticism, to human separation. For Cavell, the skepticism that resides in ordinary life is not so much epistemological doubts about existence of the external world as much as inability to acknowledge the flesh and blood character of the concrete other. If philosophy’s

⁸⁵ However, for Heidegger (2006), the openness to the world is existentially given in Dasein’s Sein as in-der-Welt-sein, and thus Dasein’s pre-theoretical understanding of Being makes possible such sensibility.

tendency has been to banish the human voice (that gives life to words), giving rise to an attitude of unnatural doubt, literature stages the threat of the unknowability of the self, as Cavell and Das say, “in the *ordinary*.” (Das 2007) At the same time, the humane sciences fundamental weakness, Lévi-Strauss (2015:248) writes, is its greatest strength, that, “problems pertaining *to* humankind are ultimately problems *for* humankind,” and as such we should not, “pretend to reach truth, but more modestly some amount of wisdom.” The general truth of the sciences is thus the fact of their incompleteness, the double of the skepticism that shadows everyday life. If the truth of skepticism in the ordinary is the possibility that our words might fail us, that we might not be acknowledged, such doubts are familiar to ethnographers whose principle worry has been the acknowledgement of those with whom she works. If, as Wittgenstein says, to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life, then perhaps literary invention within a form of life might also remake that agreement. It has the potential then, as we have seen across the ethnographic and textual scenes above, to both open up possibilities for inclusion within the human, and exclusion from it.

For anthropology to *know* itself in literature then requires first an acknowledgment of this very different sort of knowledge, more akin to Emerson’s self-reliance than Descartes’ *cogito*. This, I have argued, means understanding literature for itself, not as a separate domain of social life, but as emergent often in small acts and oblique glances. I have suggested that if anthropology were to be made poetic, it would require first learning to recognize the literary as the *literary* and not simply as a means to reach some other domain of live, a task I have tried to move toward through my ethnography and in my encounters with texts. Our task cannot begin by presuming to

know what is literature right from the start, or to know what it does, where it appears, in what form and in what material. For anthropology, the method and the discovery cannot be dissociated, they are learned together.

In this way, the scenes in this dissertation are pedagogical, not in the sense of acquiring concepts or skills, but as an attunement to the recognition of literature in the waxing and waning of life. (Singh 2015) Encountering the literary ethnographically moreover does not mean simply taking on its practices or the ideas it offers. Rather, these encounters, our openness to literary understandings and differences, point to an agreement in a literary form of life, which is the substance of ethnographic exchange. The figures I met throughout left traces on my being that I described in the introduction as occurring in the region of the impersonal, and which also produce in me a kind of method. In learning to walk through the city with the Flaneur, I found myself needing increasingly to wander, to find poetical ways of “churning up ghosts.” In so doing, I recognized my own emplacement within the field, my own literary work here apart of broader contestations over German-ness and the inheritance of violence of the 20th century.

My work with *Salon Exil*, moreover, revealed to me routes through which a politics of literature, or perhaps a literary politics, is articulable not only through linguistic expression, but through silence. The acknowledgment of Najet’s resistance of a knowing penetration thus also makes possible an important challenge to certain pictures of anthropological knowledge. If the politics of literature resides in the distribution of the sensible, it is not simply, as the German public discourse and philosophical aesthetics both claim, in making the invisible visible, but also in allowing it to remain invisible.

This distinction is especially salient in the context of acknowledging others' pain. If, as Wittgenstein famously showed, it is given in the language game of pain that pain might be simulated, that one might doubt the expressions of the pain of the other, the demand to make it "known" with complete certainty is shadowed by the double of such an ordinary skepticism. The belief that the literary might serve as a cipher of transcendence to the other and their pain (as in the political desire to make it and them visible) theatrically stages its inversion. Such scenes might, moreover, give us pause to reconsider the potential violence of anthropology as literature through exposure, while making available other routes through literarity including what is not written.⁸⁶

If a political future (and thereby also a history) might be written through literature, the physiognomy of words takes on the pressure of awakening them to life. Literary acts of giving life, I have tried to show, are also dangerous acts. While invention within the form of life, within language, might also lead to a (social) death (through exclusion) – as we saw in the official discourses of literary cosmopolitanism and the realities of everyday life for some writers in exile – it is dangerous too for the writers who breathe them into existence. The gesture of writing, or speaking, or withholding one's words, perform different modes of intimacy and vulnerability, and are also predicated in these very discourses, as we saw in Christa's desire for Salon Exil to circumvent the violence of other modes of literary acknowledgment, or in Fabian's experience of hearing Tauber's voice. I have also tried to show how such acts move through multiple registers at once, as in the multiple trajectories of circulation one discovers in the rhythms of poetry performed and read throughout the city.

⁸⁶ See Bernard Harcourt's (2015) argument about freedom and its limit in the era of pervasiveness of the desire for exposure.

I have tried to trace how the literary is not limited to the determination or production of the true or fictive, but rather in the given. If, as we have said, the truth and the fictive are determinations of agreements themselves, within forms of life, we find them written ethnographically into the ambiguities and surprises of urban existence. In concluding then, I want to draw out two related binaries the dissertation argues, by returning back to the notion of agreement behind what makes possible criterial distinctions in the real and the fictive, as well as how these boundaries shift and work to remake the grounds from which they emerge. In the Introduction, I maintained that anthropology's relationship to literature has often been structured by a commitment, ethical, political and epistemic, to the real, even where it has acknowledged its separation from the true. An ethnography of the literary, however, takes this proposition further by unsettling our assumptions about the *reality* of everyday life. Between the fictive and the real, Wolfgang Iser proposed a third, the imaginary (from *Vorstellen*) through which fiction realizes something in the world, or the world itself, that does not exist prior. The literary crosses back and forth across such boundaries; "By transforming reality into something which is not part of the world reproduced, reality's determinacy is outstripped; by endowing the imaginary with a determinate gestalt, its diffuseness is transformed." (1986: 5) The literary's, "anthropological function is in the staging of new realities, new worlds and new selves." (Iser 1991)

In everyday life, it is production of and projection into a future and a past in which new possibilities for life come about that occupies fictionalization. It is not that when Fabian looks at the apartment near the train station and suggests Nabokov lived there that it becomes a historical fact. Instead, it is the slow movement toward a Berlin in

which history can be open to critique and invention, not levelled down by the rhetoric of guilt. It is the work Christa does to establish a space in which Najet's words can be received on her own terms, the making, "somewhat more bearable." She images a form of life in which her poems can circulate outside the masculine discourse, where others can be acknowledged as writers (and humans) beyond structures of anticipation (and thus domination). In the Werkstatt, it is not the promise of a future for *this* relation or *this* text verbatim, but of one in which intimacies proliferate. Similarly, Thomas imagines a, "reconfiguration of the library," not concrete and alternative details made *real* by the details of their utterance. At the bookstore in the Kiez, and in the offices of the Börsverein, the concern with aesthetic value and with gatekeeping is a means of assuring the quality of what enters into circulation for a cultural future. If anthropology is concerned with real life, in Fassin's sense, then an ethnography of the literary reveals how that reality is always in the making, in encounters with ghostly memories of historical events, in chasing a present always slipping away from us, and in hoping for a different future. The reality of everyday life is created through fiction, not through contestations over what is true and what is false, but what Gadamer (2010 [1960])⁸⁷ calls, "that which is evident," and Wittgenstein, "the given." The transformation of the given is the place of the literary in life.

⁸⁷ Gadamer writes, following Vico, that this is the meaning of the *sensus communalis*. "No longer simply the product of becoming, Bildung, as arising to the universal [*Erhebung zur Allgemeinheit*] requires the sacrifice of particularity, which (through the Hegelian propaedeutic) leads us to the recognition of oneself in another, from the limitation of the self thereby to the overcoming of limitation in freedom. This universal is not that of the reasoned truth, however, but, "the concrete universality represented by the solidarity of a group, a people, a nation, or the whole human race. Hence developing this communal sense is of decisive importance for life." (2010 [1960]: 26)

The Mundane and the Fantastic

Throughout each of the chapters, I tracked how Berlin emerges as a literary city today through concrete practices that marry the durable structures of the law and the market to the effervescence of literary jouissance, as manifest in the fleeting and transitory experience of savoring artistic forms. My interlocutors enabled me to find these scenes of invention in the art of moving through the topography of memory, writing words onto the concrete landscape, turning trees into book repositories, filling space with the sounds of poetry, and fashioning texts by picking up the material traces of urban life. I began the dissertation with scenes in which literature was written on to the material landscape, verses written into concrete structures, forests of books built into the trees, in towering monuments to great writers, and in names of streets. As I noted, drawing on Theresa Caldeira's (2012) powerful articulation, artistic marking of the urban landscape simultaneously births a new form of the political through the fracturing, or making heterogeneous of publics, an instantiation of a new democratic practice.

As I have also noted, however, the literary remaking of urban space is not merely cast through transformation in the material of the street. Rather, as the Flaneur made clear, it is the poetic remaking of relations to that materiality that is of interest. While Fabian does leave traces – for example when he cleans the stumbling stones – the practice of “directing with elements” as much as the walking tour, teach us a technique of inhabitation that realigns a relation to the street, and thus to the memories we find it expresses or buries. We recall Fabian's reading of Franz Hessel's “textbook” of an art of

walking in which one reads the city, or the disjunctions that occur when one carries an umbrella in Berlin because it is raining in Paris. For Wittgenstein, the familiar physiognomy of the word, is a semblance of its meaning, like the face of a painting that seem to look at us. When we refer to an expression of material, we say the expression belongs to the object, as in, “the face *has* an expression.” Against this illusion of separation of the relation, Wittgenstein (1954: §229) points us toward the fragile and shared ways in which sense is made. “Just think of the expression,” he writes, “‘I heard a plaintive melody!’ And now the question is: ‘Does he *hear* the plaint?’”⁸⁸ When we sense meaning, we feel we have discerned it from the word. The physiognomy of words indicates our participation in a form of life, and in a world, thus we sense it *as if* the property *belonged* to the material. In his encounter with Baudelaire, Benjamin indicates how this physiognomic aspect of the word invests it with an aura, such that the object seems to look back at us.⁸⁹ But if in Benjamin’s Berlin the aura was being loosed from the work through the technology of reproduction, commoditization, and the aestheticization of politics, for Fabian there is a sense in which one can reinvest ordinary objects with a literary aura, not through material manipulation, but by working on the ways the city, like words, are received. In this way the Flaneur opens up a space for reading Wittgenstein and Benjamin together on the physiognomy of language (even if art and life pertain to separate domains for the latter), precisely through the authenticity of the literary work on the given. We thereby also learn to take Hessel’s call to “read” the city seriously – the literary production is a practice of receiving the street.

⁸⁸ Denk nur an den Ausdruck “Ich hörte eine klagende Melodie”! Und nun die Frage: “*Hört er das Klagen?*”

⁸⁹ He writes on Baudelaire, “die Aura einer Erscheinung erfahren, heißt, sie mit dem Vermögen belehnen, den Blick aufzuschlagen.”

It is not only the concrete environment, and our relation to it, that can be remade through literature but also the institutions of the law and economic exchange which we begin to read as holding within them the capacity to become literary. As I argued through the logics of the book trade, the law itself and the conditions of production enshrine what the discourse presents as the conflictual dual nature of the book, as containing both aesthetic and commodity values. Rather than think of these, however, as separable elements conglomerated, I suggested following Gerard Genette, that we instead locate them as immanent to one another in the object, that we look to the, “whole life of the art work.” We might here take this idea a step further. In light of this broader framework, to think the whole, “life of the art work,” is to think it with respect to the form of life, in language, in which it comes to be received as simultaneously of aesthetic and economic value (like truth and fiction). Unlike the street that becomes literary through the comportment of the Flaneur who receives it as such, the book has already congealed that semblance. It is only now, however, upon inspection that we find that the statement, “The book has value,” expresses something not about some object from which the qualities of value can be distinguished, but rather within a system of making-sense in Germany in general and in Berlin in particular. In part, such an understanding can be gleaned from the picture of relational wealth I borrowed from other systems of economics. By the same token, that concrete institutions are not always already literary is registered through the very different legal regime that welcomed exiled writers into the city. Christa’s Salon thus appears as an exception, among a landscape of institutions in which the determination of literary value or material need are exclusions from the categories of the human and the writer.

The Beautiful and the Good

Until this point, I have been arguing that the literary inheres in a form of life, even as it remakes the form of life in which it inheres. If this reworking opens up different potentials for participation within social life, then I have also tried to follow how this orientation carries within it an ethical proposition. That is to say, tracing the literary means following what life is and can be, but also ought to be not as an ideal but as a picture of the transcendental that is within everyday life rather than acquired in moments of escape. How then, in the end, might we understand the relation between the literary fashioning of/within a form of life with respect to this demand? Already from the beginning, I have suggested that this question has a particular salience in Germany,⁹⁰ where it has been to the region of aesthetics broadly conceived, at least since the 18th century, that Germans have recurrently turned in the face of deep ethical tensions. But

⁹⁰ As early as 1735, Baumgarten suggested a distinct discipline of aesthetics within the general rationalist metaphysical program of the Leibniz-Wolf school, in particular as the internal principle of sensible ideation. For Baumgarten the aesthetic conception of sensibility was as productive faculty; formally, “the art of beautiful thinking and as the art of thinking analogous to reason...the science of sensuous cognition.” Such a science, moreover, aimed to position the aesthetic in service of the proper exercise of logic. Its role – to borrow anachronistically from Kant’s language – was to mediate between the relatively blind and the relatively empty cognitive functions (a role later ascribed to the Imagination, though these poles are never truly distinct as they appear in this early work). Baumgarten’s own distinction is cognition free of concepts and rationale on the one hand, and the conceptually complete on the other. The truth of the aesthetic faculty thus likewise mediates error and certainty. The basis for this picture is, unsurprisingly, the quasi-Aristotelian art of rhetoric, the truth of which resides in the more or less convincing use of words, neither purely false nor purely true. (See Hammermeister 2002) For Baumgarten, abstraction under the application of the logical faculty, constituted a loss from the richness and life of the sensuous word, recoverable without falling into unstructured chaos through sensuous cognition, or the operation of the aesthetic faculty.

how then to understand it, not as a matter of public discourse or simply symbolic language, but within the weave of everyday life?

In his monumental study of patterns of visual art in the Pacific North West, Franz Boas asserted that “esthetic pleasure” was common to all mankind, regardless of the material conditions of their existence.⁹¹ “All human activities may assume forms,” he pressed, “that give them esthetic value” (1927: 9), but that value is contained not in the object or the word. Rather it is located in the pursuit of technical perfection as marked by a relative fixity of form determined socially under the logic of Beauty. Whereas this mastery of technique may prove elevating for the mind, its principle function, for Boas, rested in the pleasure it engendered. Among “primitive people” he writes, “Goodness and beauty are the same,” but we all share the same, “keenness of appreciation.” (1927:356)

In a related vein, “there is a clear sense,” D.W. Prall wrote in 1929, “in which aesthetic value is final and ultimate, since possession of it is the possession of what is good in itself.” Art is not just a means to an end, but a necessary constituent of the good life. This must be the case, he reasons, because a means could only be valuable in any

⁹¹ Alfred Gell’s (1998) now famous reply to Boas built upon Sally Price’s (1989) challenge to the “concomitant ghettoization” of primitive art, while rejecting the claim that the decolonization of aesthetic theories by non-western systems would amount to an anthropology of art. For Gell, aesthetic judgment pertained to internal mental acts whereas art objects circulated in the external world of concrete and symbolic relations. Gell had already argued (1995) against Boas that it was not clear whether all cultures did in fact possess what we might call an aesthetic slot in their systems of ideation. That is, Gell’s commitment to thinking of social relations rather than culture (as Boas and Price do) deflects the problem of the “art world.” “The responses of the indigenous art ‘public’ to indigenous art,” Gell argues (1998:5), “is hardly exhausted by the enumeration of those contexts in which something like an evaluative aesthetic scheme is deployed in ‘appreciating’ art,” - that is, by aesthetics. Thus he advocates centering anthropological analysis on the “art object” by shifting from Boas’ language of art, to a theory of networks of agency - more precisely, a theory of, “social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency.” (1998:7) Into this slot, Gell describes the art-nexus, which defined the art-object as those material indexes which permit an “abduction of agency.” (14). Thus defined, art enables a synthetic inference which by means of induction produces a principle by affirming an antecedent of signification without knowing it - Gell says following Eco (1976), “semiotic inference (of meanings from signs) merges with hypothetical inferences of a non-semiotic (or not conventionally semiotic) kind.” (ibid.) The art-object specifically permits the abduction of social agency, such that intentional or directional action is ascribed to a person or thing in the network.

case, insofar as it leads to the actual value of its ultimate end, testimony of which can only be logically given in direct and immediate experience. Since any such experience would necessarily imply some sensuous or imaginative surface (the felt quality of any intuitional field), they must by definition implicate either, at a minimum, what he calls an aesthetic element, or else some more encompassing aesthetic structure in the broadest sense. The Beautiful, however, is just one form of aesthetic value, which is the form of value in general. If life is to be understood at all, he continues, it must be viewed in aesthetic terms, since experience is sensuous or else empty. And life, he argues, includes our dreams as the actual whole of our world contains within it all our ideal worlds.⁹² What art brings to life then is Beauty, which while dismissible on vulgar terms as mere expense, carries with it the best of all possibilities for all human experience and endeavor.⁹³

Throughout the dissertation, the relationship between ethical action and aesthetical action has remained very near the heart of experiences of the literary life. Anthropology and philosophy often take recourse to arguments from the relationship between them, as if as they remain separable, i.e. that aesthetic value might become identical with the ethical, that aesthetics might be the form of value in general, or one might produce the other. In Germany in particular, the relationship between aesthetics and ethics, particularly in relation to truth and freedom, has been a defining motif of

⁹² Given this picture, even our higher motives must be at bottom encountered in terms of the relative success or failure of the aesthetic surface. That is, whether it proves Beautiful or not, for the good or for bad.

⁹³ This involution of value met critique, however, from within American philosophical circles by views of aesthetic objects as having “effects” which could be called “ethical” and thus of secondary order, for example, among Marxists and aestheticisms. (see Beardsley 1958)

professional philosophy.⁹⁴ It also has a life in the register of the everyday, as a set of discourses, which is referenced and indexed often in a highly philosophically literate society. By the same token, Dilthey remarks, it is only in Germany that such procedures would be necessary for the analysis of these problems.

We might extend the mutuality of aesthetics and ethics then in at least two directions with respect to my ethnography. At a minimum, it is clear that aesthetical acts cannot be simply understood as an intentional instrument of ethical ones, nor can we approach them as distinct domains of life. Literary work has appeared throughout as ethical work, even if those connections are not made explicit. If they cannot be considered distinct domains of social life, they also cannot be treated as singular and evented moments of judgment. Rather, they demand being performed (in Austin's sense) again and again. We find this in the kind of work that is required to acknowledge Najet's pain (rather than to *know* it), or in her repetition of the refusal of that penetration. We hear it in the ways in which painful memories in Germany require a constant work – if confrontations with that history were resolved they could be repeated.⁹⁵ As Fabian

⁹⁴ The relationship between freedom and aesthetic judgment in German thought is worth noting. If for Kant, the experience of the Beautiful was an experience of freedom, and for Schiller, an appearance of freedom made sensuous, for Hegel it was freedom itself congealed in matter. For Hegel, art, like religion and philosophy, pertains to the self-understanding of Geist, only here through the art-object, produced explicitly by humans for that purpose. These objects make manifest Geist's freedom to the sense, the experience of which he calls beauty; the Beautiful thus becomes, as it is for Schiller, a property of the object, rather than in a particular relation of the faculties in response to an object. With the Romantic reformulation of this principle, freedom becomes the ground of a desire for the highest ethical principle, that is cultivation (*Bildung*) as a poetic. No longer simply the product of becoming, *Bildung*, as arising to the universal [*Erhebung zur Allgemeinheit*] requires the sacrifice of particularity, which (through the Hegelian propaedeutic) leads us to the recognition of oneself in another, from the limitation of the self thereby to the overcoming of limitation in freedom.

⁹⁵ These tensions were made explicit in the Historikerstreit of the 1980s and 1990s, in which German historians contested the politics of memory work in national newspapers for a future Germany. For Adorno (1959), "processing the past" (*Vergangheitsbewältigung*) has to be distinguished from, "working through the past," (*Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*) which carries a double burden of a public and psychodynamic consciousness. Working-through moves *towards* painful awareness and confronts it. This attitude of confrontation, he argues, inheres in a theory of self-cultivation handed down from the "Enlightenment" – indeed the structure of the essay is meant as a kind of parallel to Kant's essay on the meaning of

indicates, these repetitions also mandate creativity, lest they become empty rhetoric. The transformation of relations to the street in ethical in ways left unsaid, and yet require constant return, as in his weekly tours. In this way, it is not only that ethics is not made explicit, but also cannot to remain what it is.

In bookshops, I argued, the gatekeeper function served an unexpected form of value, namely that encounters proliferate in the region of aesthetics. This weighty burden of the “bearers of culture” to circulate difference reveals how such performances must also be internally differentiated. But if in the Kiez the possibility of this proliferation rested on the intimacy of enduring relations between the purveyor and the reader, or the former and the author, in live literature we saw how the relation itself demands a dislocability. Here the repetition of the performance of the aesthetical acts, given certain conditions, proliferates (rather than secures) relations. In this way, the organization of this mutuality seems inverted. As I argued for truth and fiction, the ordinary and the fantastic, we might approach this range of appearances through appeal to the dissembling nature of expression, by thinking ethics and aesthetics united within the form of life.

In the past several years, a sustained anthropological conversation has emerged around the category of an ordinary ethics. This language, Michael Lambek (2010) has

Aufklärung. He goes on to argue that the term also offers a critique of processing the past, that is, its dialectical antithesis. This antithesis suggests a, "wishing to turn the page, and, if possible, wiping it from memory." The aspiration is for a victim's forgiveness through forgetting. Yet this forgetting allows the past to live onward, even intensely – its life in the present is not an apparition of violence that is no longer with us, but a living presence, one that is manifest not just in the corners of society but everywhere. Where working-through is conscious, critical (in the technical sense), self-reflexive, direct, and an act of *public* Enlightenment, processing is the disavowal or deflection of guilt, the willful denial or forgetting, a misguided universalism. It is in this register of the disavowal of guilt that Adorno assess the, “psychopathology,” of the, “general social situation.” Thus he writes, “the idiocy of all this really does testify to a lack of psychic mastery and an unhealed wound - although the thought of wounds is more appropriate to the victims.” Adorno's diagnosis is not of a guilt complex, but rather of repression. He wants to, “point out one of the tendencies covered up by the slick facade of everyday life before it overflows the institutional dams that formerly contained it... Enlightenment about what happened in the past must work, above all, against a forgetfulness that too easily goes along with and justifies what is forgotten.” (Adorno 1959)

argued, signals that being subject to ethics is inherent in the human condition, and, “intrinsic to speech and action.” To speak of ordinary ethics, moreover, is to refer to an agreement in what we have been calling a form of life, and not to a rule, or system of rules.⁹⁶ When rules are transgressed, Lambek argues, ethics becomes explicit, but they are lived most often in tacit ways. As he expresses elegantly,

Ordinary ethics recognizes human finitude but also hope. Ordinary experience encompasses the inevitable cracks and ruptures in the actual [live as lived for itself] and the ubiquity of responses to the ever-present limits of criteria and paradoxes of the human condition, hence the attempts in everyday practice and thought to inhabit and persevere in light of uncertainty, suffering, injustice, incompleteness, inconsistency, the unsayable, the unforgivable, the irresolvable, and the limits of voice and reason. (Lambek 2010: 4)

In a series of recent essays, Veena Das (2012; 2015) asks how to understand the paradox that the same action contains the potential to move from the ethical to the unethical in the register of the everyday. As she convincingly argues, the moral life (which is elsewhere defined through appeal to the moral image of the world⁹⁷) must be understood in the flux of everyday, and not simply as rule-following, or solely through categories like freedom and choice. Her particular interest has been in how life is renewed, or how everyday life is a particular achievement, in the face of catastrophic violence. Thus she moves us toward thinking of ethics as an, “expression of whole life,” what Cora Diamond marked out as the *world*. The ordinary, then, she shows, is not purely the site of routine (though it might appear as the acceptance of repetition), but also as a mode of re-inhabitation. Might art, as Heidegger (2012) says, disclose a whole

⁹⁶ Wittgenstein in particular suggests that rule-following is experienced as the possession of the quality by the object of sense.

⁹⁷ I borrowed this question from Dieter Heinrich’s (1992) reading of the transition to Kant’s mature ethics qua respect for the law from the worthiness of happiness, in the pivot around the third Kritik, in which the moral image of the world has to accommodate a good will’s pursuance of purposes (thus a specie of the reflexive judgments of which the Beautiful and the sublime are also a part, and which may affirm moral ideals).

world, which understood this way, would mean the disclosure of ethics too? Certainly the kind of imagination it takes to produce ordinary life is considerable. But what such a perspective also reveals, is that as an expression of this imagination, the literary has the potential to remake the whole world, and to destroy it. By that alone, the literary pertains to ethics. In calling for attention to the ordinariness of aesthetics, I mean to highlight the embeddedness of the literary within the achievement of everyday life.

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- Zukin, S. 1995. "Whose Culture? Whose City?" In *The Urban Sociology Reader*, eds. J. Lin and C. Mele. New York: Routledge.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Andrew Orvieto Brandel
Born: May 12, 1987 (New York City, New York)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

2016-2017 Visiting Fellow, Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Vienna

EDUCATION

2016 **PhD Anthropology**
Expected The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

2013 **MA Anthropology**
The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

2009 **BA Anthropology (Honors), Philosophy**
The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Honors Thesis: Toward a 'Practical' Understanding of the Elementary
Forms: Reading Durkheim's Kantian Language

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Regional: Germany/Europe *Thematic:* aesthetics and politics, anthropology of intellectuals, reading and writing practices, mediation and narration, cultures of knowledge, urban life, 19th-century intellectual history, Romanticism, politics of language, philosophical anthropology

FIELDWORK

2013-2014 Berlin: dissertation research on literary life in the city

2012 (Summer) Berlin: local book markets, antiquarians
2011 (Summer) Berlin/Heidelberg: archival work on the reception of Sanskrit poetry

PUBLICATIONS

Books

Through the Eyes of the Child: Violence, Memory and Inheritance. Monograph with Clara Han (In review)

Texts in Practice: From Mediation to Action. Edited volume with Anouk Cohen (In review)

Articles and Chapters

“An Unknown Writer in Berlin: Voice, Art and the Politics of Exile” in review with *Anthropological Theory*

“In the Footsteps of Memory.” In review with *Anthropology & Humanism*

“The Art of Conviviality.” For a Special Issue on the Joyous History of Anthropology, Bhrigupati Singh and Jane I. Guyer, eds. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. (special issue proposal accepted)

“Triste Romantik: Ruminations on an Ethnographic Encounter with Philosophy.” 2014. in *Wording the World*. Roma Chatterji, ed. Fordham University Press. 300-318

Edited

“Claude Lévi-Strauss. Anthropology and the ‘True Sciences.’” 2013. Edited and prefaced with Sidney W. Mintz. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. Vol. 3(1): 241-48

Reviews

Forthcoming. *A Far Corner of Life: Life and Art with the Open Circle Tribe*. S. Ezell ed. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*

2014. German Text Crimes: Writers Accused from the 1950s to the 2000s. T. Cheeseman, ed. *H-SAE (Society for the Anthropology of Europe) H-Net Reviews*

INVITED TALKS

2015 “An Unknown Writer in Berlin: Reflections on a Politics of Art in Exile”
Department of Anthropology, Brown University, Providence, RI

2015 “Aesthetics and Exile: A Literary Life Under Threat”
Department of Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

2014 “Walking in Berlin: Poetics of the Streets”
Institut für Ethnologie, Universität Leipzig. Leipzig, Germany

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & PANELS

- 2016 “The Problem of Europe: Crisis, Resilience, and Conditional Welcome.” With M. Banahi International Conference of Europeanists, Philadelphia, PA
- 2016 “The Child Witness: Genres of Inheriting Violence.” With C. Han Futures & Ruins: Workshop on Crisis and Possibility, Duke Uni., Durham, NC
- 2015 Discussant, “The Constitution of Religious Materialities by Sacred Texts” American Anthropological Association Meeting, Denver, CO
- 2015 “Through the Eyes of the Child: Familiarity, Anticipation, Inheritance” With C. Han American Anthropological Association Meeting, Denver, CO
- 2015 “Ordinary Aesthetics: Art and Life in Berlin” Texts in Practice: From Mediation to Action. Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
- 2014 “How to Talk about a Street: Lessons on the Poetics of Urban Life” American Anthropological Association Meeting, Washington, D.C
- 2014 “Ordinary Fragments of a Literary Life” Mediated Futures 2.0, SSRC & Institute for Public Knowledge (NYU) New York, NY
- 2014 “The Production of Berlin as Global Capital: Notes on Cosmopolitics of Literature” German Studies Association Meeting. Kansas City, MO
- 2013 “Reading Muslim Becoming in Berlin: Some Notes on Method” American Anthropological Association Meeting. Chicago, IL
- 2012 “Anthropological Lives: Scholarly Communities and the Making of Knowledge” American Anthropological Association Meeting. San Francisco, CA
- 2011 “Archaeological Practice and the Entanglement of Tools.” With V. Kumar Stanford Archaeology Center Graduate Student Conference. Stanford, CA

ORGANIZED CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND PANELS

- 2015 Roundtable Ethically Disconnected: Removal as Contemporary Form of Engagement
American Anthropological Association, Denver, CO (with Y. Stainova and E. Hirsch)
- 2015 Conference Texts in Practice: From Mediation to Action
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD (with A. Cohen)
- 2014 Panel Ethnography Beyond: Creativity and Politics in the Life of Art
American Anthropological Association. Washington, DC (with Y. Stainova)
- 2013 Panel Roundtable Discussion on Naveeda Khan’s *Muslim Becoming*
American Anthropological Association, Chicago, IL (with V. Das)
- 2013 Conference Reclaiming Truth: Obligations, Methodologies, Implications
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
with V. Kumar and D. Platzer

2012 Workshop Living Names: Encountering Naming Ethnographically
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
with V. Kumar and D. Platzer

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Department of Anthropology, The Johns Hopkins University

Principal Instructor (original courses)

The Romantic Legacy of Anthropology, co-taught with N. Khan (Spring 2016)
The Production of European Culture (Fall 2015)
A Science of the Concrete: Claude Lévi-Strauss (Int 2015)

Teaching Assistant

On Secrets – Their Concealment, Revelation & Beyond (Spring 2012)
Social Networks (Fall 2011)
Invitation to Anthropology (Spring 2011)

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2015 Dean's Teaching Fellowship, JHU KSAS
2014 J. Brien Key Award for research travel
2013 JHU-GRO Travel Grant
2012 DPDF, Andrew Mellon Foundation/Social Science Research Council
2011 University Archives Fellowship, Winston Tabb Center and Ferdinand Hamburger
Archives. Special Collections of the Sheridan Libraries
2011 Research Travel Grant, Institute for Global Studies in Culture, History and Power
2010 Graduate Training Fellowship, Anthropology, JHU

ACADEMIC SERVICE

2015 (Fall) Graduate Liaison, Faculty Search Committee, Anthropology
2014-2015 Assistant to the Director of Graduate Studies (Anthropology), Programs
and Professionalization (JHU)
2010-2015 Research and Editorial Assistant to Veena Das, Krieger-Eisenhower
Professor of Humanities and Anthropology (JHU)
2011-2013 Archivist, Papers of Sidney W. Mintz, Hamburger University Archives
2008-2009 Member, Excellence in Teach Awards Committee (JHU)

AFFILIATIONS

American Anthropological Association
American Ethnological Society
Society for Cultural Anthropology
Society for the Anthropology of Europe
German Studies Association

Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing
Council for European Studies

LANGUAGES

English, German (C2), French (A1/2)