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Thomas Kling: A Poet in the Late Bonn Republic – Short Abstract

This dissertation will look at Thomas Kling's poetry in the context of the late Bonn Republic. While several studies have already investigated how Kling created history in his poetry, they rarely discussed how he himself was exposed to it. Thus, one of the main objectives of the following dissertation will be to scrutinise Kling's own historicisations and to expose the underlying assumptions of his version of the past and their rootedness in the current cultural climate. While many studies have echoed the opposition that Kling himself created between his poetry and that of the 1970s, this dissertation will focus on continuities instead. For this purpose, it will look at the history of the late Bonn Republic and West German poetry after 1945 in terms of changing emotional styles. The dissertation will show how Kling's early poetry in the late 1970s was rooted in the emotional practices of the alternative Left (part I) and how their political and ecological concerns continued to resonate with his poetry in the following decade (part II). The question will be how Kling went beyond the narrow concept of authenticity imposed by the alternative scene's emotional style and which role models were available for his new self-stylisation (part III). While Kling's poetry in the 1980s revealed authenticity and history as fundamentally unstable concepts that resulted from a set of culturally and historically determined practices (part IV), his poetry in the 1990s returned to more conservative and hierarchical models of history and authenticity characterised by modernist nostalgia (part V). Kling's investment in an idealised version of the avant-garde and European modernity thus led to a limited version of the past that erased memories of German colonialism and its continuities with the First World War and the Holocaust.

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Thomas Kling: A Poet in the Late Bonn Republic – Long Abstract

While several studies have investigated how Kling created history in his poetry, they rarely discussed how he himself was exposed to it. It seems that so far, researchers have omitted to historicise Kling's own self-historicisations. Thus, they have neglected to ask the question how Kling's way of looking at the past and creating historical narratives was informed by his own specific cultural and historical situatedness. By investigating how Kling's rootedness in the heartland of the Bonn Republic informed the version of the past he chose to tell in his poetry, this dissertation intends to fill a blind spot. For this purpose, the West German perspective is not treated as a conceptual framework, but as a case in point. The dissertation thus intends to contribute to a better comprehension of the specific cultural context of poetry in the late Bonn Republic, which continues to inform our understanding of poetry until today.

Due to poetry's outstanding role in West Germany after the Second World War and the Holocaust as both a moral authority on the past and a medium of coming to terms with the past, histories of German poetry after 1945 are often distinguished by false dichotomies. Kling has thus often been seen as the antidote of 1970s subjectivity and the redeemer of the avant-garde. In order to overcome such contrived oppositions, this study will conceive of poetry as an emotional practice and situate Kling's poetry and other contemporary tendencies in West German poetry within shifting emotional styles. As we will see, these styles often revolved around different concepts of authenticity.

The dissertation will begin by pointing out how Kling's early poetry in the late 1970s was rooted in the emotional practices of the alternative Left and look at his

involvement in *Zwiebelzwerg*, both an alternative magazine and a publishing collective where Kling printed his first collection *der zustand vor dem untergang* in 1977 (part I). So far, research on Kling has not yet acknowledged the impact that the alternative scene had on his development as a poet. But even though Kling apparently disavowed his beginnings during the course of his career, understanding where he started from will allow a better understanding of his project over time. While the narrow concept of authenticity imposed by the alternative scene's emotional style soon seemed limiting, their political and ecological concerns continued to resonate with Kling's poetry over the following decade (part II). As close readings of three poems and their precursors will demonstrate, lyrical subjectivity in need of authentic experience and a meaningful connection to the world was not erased in Kling's poetry in the 1980s, but refashioned in a new, complex poetic style. In this context, Kling's work as a film critic for *Rheinische Post* between 1984 and 1985 must be seen as a decisive influence in reconfiguring the narrative situation of his poems.

Along with his new poetic style went a re-fashioning of Kling's public persona. In order to investigate which role models were available for his self-stylisation from the mid-1980s onwards, this dissertation will shed light on two events that set the course for Kling's poetic career: his first public performance with Joe Berger on 23 January and his meeting with Friederike Mayröcker on 24 January 1983 (part III). While Joe Berger's playful performances resonated with Kling's own background in the alternative scene, Mayröcker envisioned a more serious role for the poet within a larger cultural project, which would regain importance for Kling's self-stylisation from the 1990s onwards.

In contrast to his later project, Kling's poetry in the 1980s revealed authenticity and history as fundamentally unstable concepts that resulted from a set of culturally and historically determined practices (part IV). In this context, punk as a topical movement that re-appropriated, subverted and re-defined conventional meanings and presented authenticity as fundamentally unstable proved inspirational for Kling's poetry. Just like

early West German punks, Kling's provocative self-stylisation in the 1980s retrieved tabooed aspects of the German past as he returned to an emotive style of speech in his performances that was still associated with National Socialism. Kling's self-stylisation cannot be separated from issues of gender, which have not been discussed in this context so far. Thus, this dissertation will contextualise Kling's self-stylisation within practices of masculinity in West Germany in the 1980s. A comparison with Eckhart Schmidt's rape-revenge film *Loft*, which Kling reviewed as a freelance writer for *Rheinische Post* in 1985, will help to establish the wider framework of gender relations in West Germany after 1945.

Responding to a larger shift in the cultural and intellectual climate of the late Bonn Republic, Kling's poetry in the 1990s turned towards a larger cultural project that evolved around the First World War in particular (part V). As part of this, Kling returned to more conservative and hierarchical modes of accessing the past and creating authenticity that were characterised by modernist nostalgia. Close readings will demonstrate how the First and the Second World War, the Holocaust and German colonialism emerged in different constellations and served different functions in Kling's late poetry. As will turn out, Kling's investment in an idealised version of the avant-garde and European modernity led to a limited version of the past that erased memories of German colonialism and its continuities with the First World War and the Holocaust. Thus, Kling's poetry reproduced patterns of ethnocentric ideology deeply rooted in the history of European modernity.

In order to contextualise and historicise Kling's poetic project, this dissertation will make extensive use of archival material and historical sources. This material will not only establish a new context, but also enable a better textual understanding of Kling's poetry and its multi-layered biographical, historical and cultural references.

THOMAS KLING:

A POET IN THE LATE BONN REPUBLIC

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For my Dad

(1957-2017)

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List of abbreviations

The following abbreviations will be used in this dissertation. Full bibliographical information for the volumes listed below is given in the bibliography.

ZU Thomas Kling, *der zustand vor dem untergang*, Düsseldorf 1977

ER Thomas Kling, *erprobung herzstärkender mittel*, Düsseldorf 1986

GV Thomas Kling, *geschmacksverstärker*, Frankfurt am Main 1989

BR Thomas Kling, *brennstabm*, Frankfurt am Main 1991

NA Thomas Kling, *nacht.sicht.gerät*, Frankfurt am Main 1993

MO Thomas Kling, *morsch*, Frankfurt am Main 1996

IT Thomas Kling, *Itinerar*, Frankfurt am Main 1997

GC Thomas Kling and Ute Langanky, *GELÄNDE camouflage*, Münster 1998

FH Thomas Kling, *Fernhandel*, Cologne 1999

BO Thomas Kling, *Botenstoffe*, Cologne 2001

SO Thomas Kling, *Sondagen*, Cologne 2002

FD Thomas Kling, *Auswertung der Flugdaten*, Cologne 2005

GG Thomas Kling, *Gesammelte Gedichte*, Cologne 2006

BA Thomas Kling, *Das brennende Archiv*, Berlin 2012

Introduction

At the start of this project, looking at Thomas Kling's poetry in the context of the history of the late Bonn Republic seemed promising for two main reasons. First of all, while several studies have investigated how Kling created history in his poetry, they rarely discussed how he himself was exposed to it.[1] Simply put, researchers have so far omitted to historicise Kling's own historicisations. Thus, they have neglected to ask how Kling's way of looking at the past and creating historical narratives was informed by his own specific cultural and historical situatedness. Accordingly, exposing the underlying assumptions of Kling's way of accessing the past is one of the main objectives of the following dissertation. Secondly, this neglect seemed even more remarkable because of the significance that has been ascribed to Kling's regional identity in the Rhineland.[2] Born in Bingen in 1957, Kling spent most of his life in the area around Düsseldorf and Cologne, apart from two longer stays in Vienna in 1979/80 and Finland in 1986/87. In 1995, he famously moved to the former NATO-base 'Raketenstation Hombroich' near Neuss, which art collector Karl-Heinrich Müller had turned into an exhibition and studio space, in what has often been interpreted as a 'poetische Standortbestimmung'.[3] While living there, Kling reminded visitors of the foundation's website 'die auf der Insel existent gebliebene

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1 See above all the extensive study by Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen. Das geschichtslyrische Werk Thomas Klings*, PhD thesis (University of Göttingen, 2012).

2 See Helene Jessula Wczesniak, 'Flußbandarbeit. Thomas Klings Niederrhein', *schliff. Literaturzeitschrift* 3 (2015), 127-37; Norbert Hummelt, 'Bucheckern: regionale Bezüge in der Dichtung Thomas Klings' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte. Zum Werk Thomas Klings* (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2012), pp. 113-36; idem, 'Kleiner Grenzverkehr. Thomas Kling als Dichter des Rheinlands', *text + kritik* 147 (2000), 24-37.

3 Johann Reißer, *Archäologie und Sampling. Die Neuordnung der Lyrik bei Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, Thomas Kling und Barbara Köhler* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2014), p. 104. See also Kunststiftung NRW (ed.), *Energien – Synergien. Thomas Kling – Karl-Heinrich Müller*, vol. III (Cologne: DuMont, 2004).

"Geschichte der alten Bundesrepublik" nicht aus den Augen zu verlieren'.[4] By investigating how Kling's rootedness in the heartland of the Bonn Republic informed the version of the past he chose to tell in his poetry, this study thus intends to fill a blind spot. As will become clear, this question is relevant not only for a better understanding of the beginning of Kling's career, but also with regards to how his poetic project developed over time.

Even though it can be said with some certainty that the history of the Bonn Republic began with the foundation of a West German state with Bonn as its capital in 1949, it is more difficult to determine when exactly it stopped existing. Unlike its East German counterpart, the German Democratic Republic, which officially came to an end in 1990, the Bonn Republic's federal institutions and even its constitution continue until the present day. It can be argued with good reason that the reunification of the two German states with Berlin as their capital on 3 October 1990 marked the end of the Bonn and the beginning of the Berlin Republic.[5] However, federal administration only moved to Berlin almost a decade later, in 1999. While now, thirty years after German reunification, the Berlin Republic has certainly become reality, it was only a future ideal in 1990.[6] Thus, the scope of this dissertation goes beyond the year that marked German reunification and continues until the late 1990s. This approach is guided by Alexander von Bormann's claim that 'die Vereinigung der beiden Deutschlands […] kaum eine Wende in der Literatur

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4 Thomas Kling and Gabriele Weingartner, 'Spracharchäologie, diesen Ausdruck habe ich erfunden' in Gabriele Weingartner and Volker Heinle (eds.), *Schreibtisch.Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2004), pp. 48-57: 49.

5 See for instance Anthony J. Nicholls, *The Bonn Republic: West German Democracy, 1945-1990* (London: Longman, 1997).

6 See Joannah Caborn, *Schleichende Wende: Diskurse von Nation und Erinnerung bei der Konstituierung der Berliner Republik* (Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2006).

[markiert], jedenfalls nicht in der westlichen'.[7] In the past, such continuities have often masked the degree to which the West German perspective dominated our understanding of German poetry after 1945. In this dissertation, however, the West German perspective is not treated as a conceptual framework, but as a case in point. This way, I hope to shed light on the way in which it continues to inform our understanding of what poetry is and what poetry can do until the present day. While the context of GDR poetry has already been the focus of several publications, this dissertation intends to contribute to a better understanding of the specific cultural context of poetry in the late Bonn Republic.[8]

Poetry seems to offer fertile ground for making the specific cultural context of the Bonn Republic accessible due to its outstanding role after the Second World War and the Holocaust as both a moral authority on the past and a medium of coming to terms with the past, which was condensed in Adorno's seminal (and often misinterpreted) claim that 'writing a poem after Auschwitz' was 'barbaric'.[9] While these and other poetic discourses of the immediate post-war period will be touched upon where necessary, the main focus of this dissertation lies between the late 1970s and the late 1980s. In order to overcome the dichotomies that still determine our general understanding of the poetry of this time – after all, Kling is often seen as the poet marking 'den Abstand zur Neuen Subjektivität der

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7 Alexander von Bormann, 'Die Lyrik der neunziger Jahre' in Wilfried Barner (ed.), *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, 2nd edition (Munich: Beck, 2006), pp. 1025-64: 1025.

8 See Nadine J. Schmidt (ed.), *Lyrik der DDR* (Munich: text + kritik, 2017); Gerrit-Jan Berendse, 'The politics of dialogue. Poetry in the GDR' in Karen Leeder (ed.), *Rereading East Germany. The Literature and Film of the GDR* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 143-59; Karen Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries. A New Generation of Poets in the GDR* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

9 See Theodor W. Adorno, 'Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft' in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), vol. X.i, p. 30. See also Adorno's revision in *Negative Dialektik* (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. V), p. 355. For an overview of its reception, see Wolfang Johann, *Das Diktum Adornos. Adaptionen und Poetiken: Rekonstruktion einer Debatte* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2018); Peter Stein, '"Darum mag falsch gewesen sein, nach Auschwitz ließe kein Gedicht mehr sich schreiben." (Adorno). Widerruf eines Verdikts? Ein Zitat und seine Verkürzung', *Weimarer Beiträge* 42.4 (1996), 485-508.

siebziger und achtziger Jahre'[10] – I will look at the poetic tendencies of these decades in the context of shifting emotional styles.[11]

Historians have increasingly integrated the events that shaped West German society after the Second World War into a history of emotion.[12] These works largely follow the approach of historian of emotions William M. Reddy, who argued that human thoughts and actions are determined by shifting emotional regimes. In *The Navigation of Feeling* (2001), Reddy developed a 'conceptual framework that acknowledges the importance of management […] of emotion, that allows political distinctions among different management styles on the basis of a concept of emotional liberty, and that permits the narration of significant historical shifts in such management styles.'[13] Reddy called the dominant emotional management style at any given time and place an 'emotional regime'. As historian Joachim C. Häberlen explained, 'an emotional regime not only shapes how, when, and where we can express our emotions, but the very emotions we can experience.'[14] However, Reddy's definition of the term 'emotional regime' is not unambiguous and the distinction between a political and an emotional regime is not always

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10 Heribert Tommek, *Der lange Weg in die Gegenwartsliteratur: Studien zur Geschichte des literarischen Feldes in Deutschland von 1960 bis 2000* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 485.

11 For a detailed study of West German poetry in the 1970s, see Juliane Kreppel, *"In Ermangelung eines Besseren"? Poetik und Politik in bundesrepublikanischen Gedichten der 1970er Jahre* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009).

12 See Frank Biess, *Republik der Angst. Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2019); Joachim C. Häberlen, *The Emotional Politics of the Alternative Left: West Germany, 1968-1984* (Cambridge University Press, 2018); Joachim C. Häberlen and Maik Tändler, 'Spaces for Feeling Differently: Emotional Experiments in the Alternative Left in West Germany During the 1970s', *Emotion, Space and Society* 25 (2017), 103-10; Joachim C. Häberlen and Jake P. Smith, 'Struggling for Feelings: The Politics of Emotions in the Radical New Left in West Germany, c. 1968-84', *Contemporary European History* 23.4 (2014), 615-37.

13 William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 119.

14 Joachim C. Häberlen, *The Emotional Politics of the Alternative Left*, p. 25.

clear.[15] Thus, rather than using the term 'regime', I will refer to the sets of shared rules that determine the experience and expression of emotions within a community or group as an 'emotional style', a term which Reddy also used.[16] However, this term does necessarily imply a greater freedom. The emotional style shared within a particular community can be just as normative as an emotional regime, and just as forcefully imposed.

Another difficulty with Reddy's framework is his analytical focus on 'emotives' (i.e. emotional utterances), a concept that builds heavily on J. L. Austin's language philosophy and puts an exaggerated emphasis on speech acts, thus neglecting the role that the situated body plays in these acts and ignoring non-verbal practices in general.[17] Therefore, Monique Scheer has expanded Reddy's conceptual framework by drawing on practice theory and Pierre Bourdieu in particular, emphasising 'the mutual embeddedness of minds, bodies, and social relations in order to historicize the body and its contributions to the learned experience of emotion.'[18] Her definition of emotional practices presents a useful addition to Reddy's framework in that it can explain in more detail how certain emotional styles are performed in practice. According to Scheer, emotional practices are learned and shared 'habits, rituals, and everyday pastimes' of the situated, mindful body that aid us in achieving, expressing, communicating and regulating certain emotional states.[19] Thus, reading and writing poetry – just like listening to music, visiting a museum, watching a film or playing a video game (all examples given by Scheer) – can be

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15 In *The Navigation of Feeling*, Reddy defines an 'emotional regime' as 'a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime' and 'the set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them' (p. 129), but also as 'the emotional styles' that communities (as much as states) 'impose on their members' (p. 332).

16 See ibid.

17 For Reddy's definition of emotives, see *The Navigation of Feeling*, p. 111.

18 Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History?) A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory* 51 (2012), 193-220: 199.

19 Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice', esp. p. 209, 212, 214-15, 218.

understood as emotional practices, which means that poems are read and written to mobilise, express, communicate and regulate emotional states.[20] As poetry is shared, read and discussed collectively, it reflects, comments on and contributes to the norms expressed in different emotional management styles. This of course does not imply that poetry is only about emotion. As Reddy pointed out, emotions are highly goal-relevant.[21] Emotional identification with a poem does not require it to discuss emotion explicitly, as writing and reading it might answer to other deeply integrated goals. As Reddy explained, these goals 'are themselves sustained by overlearned cognitive habits which the individual has little or no capacity to change, at least in the short run'.[22] In addition to the issues discussed in individual poems, their goal-relevance might also have to do with the lager concept of poetry within a community. For instance, the schemata 'education' and 'culture' might have a great motivational force (i.e. emotional significance) in the Western tradition of reading and writing poetry. The specific case of 1970s and 1980s 'Ökolyrik', which I will discuss in part II, might respond to different goal-relevant schemata like 'justice' or 'being a good person'. The close reading of a poem on animal rights in the same section will demonstrate how the issue gained extremely high emotional valence at that time.

Of course, writing successful poetry – i.e. poems that resonate with a larger group of people – is also a matter of technical accomplishment and adhering to prevailing criteria of aesthetic judgement. According to practice theory, writing poetry that is considered 'good' by a group requires a learned repertoire of knowledge about what constitutes 'good' poetry within this specific community.[23] The expectations of the group inform the individual's learned habits. However, as Reddy's discussion of the rise and fall of French

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20 See ibid., p. 210.
21 See William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, pp. 21-5.
22 Ibid., p. 25.
23 On this 'practical sense', see Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice', p. 202.

sentimentalism and the associated aesthetic regime demonstrates, aesthetic judgements are also influenced by emotional norms.[24] Looking at changing aesthetic regimes in the context of a history of emotion alongside changes in technology and the history of ideas might give a more complete picture of what motivated groups or individuals to abandon certain styles in favour of different ones.

A focus on poetry and emotion goes along with recent studies arguing for an updated understanding of 'Stimmungslyrik' in the German context.[25] But while these studies aim to understand the relationship between poetry and emotion from within the conceptual framework of poetics, my aim is to historicise these poetics and to expose their underlying assumptions in order to be able to criticise them. As Scheer explained, 'a definition of emotions based on practice theory […] does not reproduce assumptions in the sources, confirming their "truth", but provides an analytical perspective from the outside, allowing for a critique of past theories of emotion, especially their strategies of naturalization and interiorization as well as their implications in power relations and social hierarchies.'[26] Thus, understanding poetry as an emotional practice allows comparing different emotional styles and their associated aesthetic regimes without deeming one necessarily more authentic than the other. It will, however, be possible to point out the conceptual limits of different styles and their entanglement in social power relations.

Different emotional styles are vital in the production of subjectivities. As Scheer pointed out, 'thinking of emotions as practices means integrating the history of feeling into

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24 See William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, pp. 161-6.

25 See Friederike Reents and Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek (eds.), *Stimmung und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek, *Lyrisches Gespür: vom geheimen Sensorium moderner Poesie* (Munich: Fink, 2012); Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek, 'Über das Gespür. Neuphänomenologische Überlegungen zum Begriff der "Stimmungslyrik"' in Anna-Katharina Gisbertz (ed.), *Stimmung. Zur Wiederkehr einer ästhetischen Kategorie* (Munich: Fink, 2011), pp. 45-61.

26 Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice', p. 217.

the study of socially produced subjectivities.'[27] Thus, it might not be surprising that the emotional stakes in the discussion of different emotional styles are high, even for critics. Keeping this aspect in mind while looking at Kling's poetic project will be insightful. Any emotional style and its associated aesthetic – regardless of how sober or objective its performance appears within a specific cultural and historical context – is involved in producing subjectivity. Thus, the difference between Kling's poetry and that of the 1970s is not that Kling's poetry did not produce subjectivity – it just produced it differently.

With regards to Kling, integrating his poetic project into a history of shifting emotional styles after the Second World War allows us to expose hitherto overlooked continuities and connections and to overcome the dichotomies that still determine our understanding of poetry after 1945. Rather than reproducing Kling's polemic against 1970s poetry, it will be possible to assess different styles from a place of more critical distance and less personal involvement. This way, we can compare different styles according to what they offered to their followers and where their limitations were, without assuming that one style is better, more authentic or more objective than the other.

So far, research on Kling has not yet acknowledged the impact that the cultural milieu of the new social movements had on his development as a poet. But even though Kling apparently disavowed his beginnings during the course of his career, understanding where he started from will allow a better understanding of his project over time. Kling's earliest writings in the late 1970s were rooted in the emotional style of the alternative Left and their practices of creating authenticity, as a discussion of *Zwiebelzwerg*, both an alternative magazine and a publishing collective where Kling printed his first collection *der zustand vor dem untergang* in 1977, will demonstrate (part I). This background will help to understand how environmental and political issues continued to resonate with

[27] Ibid., p. 206.

Kling's poetry, as close readings of three poems and their precursors will show (part II). The poems in this section were selected for the continuities they reveal between Kling's poetry and topical trends in West German poetry in the 1970s, namely 'Neue Subjektivität' and 'Ökolyrik'. Besides, these poems' archival records will make it possible to observe how Kling's poetic style developed at a decisive point of his career. While the narrow concept of authenticity imposed by the alternative scene's emotional style soon seemed limiting, lyrical subjectivity in need of authentic experience and a meaningful connection to the world was not erased in Kling's poetry in the 1980s, but refashioned in a new, complex poetic style. Along with this new poetic style went a re-fashioning of Kling's public persona. Two events in Vienna set the course for Kling's entire poetic career: his first public performance with Joe Berger on 23 January and his meeting with Friederike Mayröcker on 24 January 1983 (part III). While Joe Berger's playful performances resonated with Kling's own background in the alternative scene, Mayröcker envisioned a more serious role for the poet within a larger cultural project, which would regain importance for Kling's self-stylisation from the 1990s onwards. Close readings of two poems that Mayröcker dedicated to Kling in 1986 and 1992 will give insight into Mayröcker's understanding of their friendship at that time.

In contrast to his later project, Kling's poetry in the 1980s revealed authenticity and history as fundamentally unstable concepts that resulted from a set of culturally and historically determined practices (part IV). In this context, punk as a topical movement that re-appropriated, subverted and re-defined conventional meanings and presented authenticity as fundamentally unstable proved inspirational for Kling's poetry. Just like early West German punks, Kling's provocative self-stylisation in the 1980s retrieved tabooed aspects of the German past as he returned to an emotive style of speech in his performances that in the West German mind was still associated with National Socialism.

This section will present close readings of the earlier two poems of Kling's 'ratinger hof' series, which were included not only for their references to punk but also because, as Kling himself later acknowledged, they lay the ground for his entire career.[28]

Kling's self-stylisation especially at the beginning of his career cannot be separated from issues of gender, which have not been discussed in this context so far. Thus, this dissertation will contextualise Kling's self-stylisation within practices of masculinity in West Germany in the 1980s. A comparison with Eckhart Schmidt's rape-revenge film *Loft*, which Kling reviewed as a freelance writer for *Rheinische Post* in 1985, will help to establish the wider framework of gender relations in West Germany after 1945. While Kling wrote twenty-six film reviews overall, his review of *Loft* is particularly significant with regards to his relationship to the alternative emotional style of the 1970s.

Responding to a larger shift in the cultural and intellectual climate of the late Bonn Republic, Kling's poetry in the 1990s then turned towards a larger cultural project that evolved around the First World War in particular (part V). As part of this, Kling returned to more conservative and hierarchical modes of accessing the past and creating authenticity in his poetry that were characterised by modernist nostalgia. Close readings will demonstrate how the First and the Second World War, the Holocaust and German colonialism emerged in different constellations and served different functions in Kling's late poetry. While the series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' can be considered the central work of Kling's later poetic project, the poem 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer' and the essay 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien' with the poem 'Larven' will not only allow us to situate the First World War within Kling's larger historical project but also contextualise it with his engagement with the Holocaust and German colonialism. As will become apparent, Kling's investment in an idealised version of the avant-garde and European modernity led to a limited version

[28] See Heribert Brinkmann's interview with Kling, 'Wie man auf den Alltag zoomt', *Rheinische Post*, 17 August 2001.

of the past that erased memories of German colonialism and its continuities with the First World War and the Holocaust. Thus, Kling's poetic project reproduced biases and patterns of ethnocentric ideology deeply rooted in the history of European modernity.

For understandable reasons, much of the early scholarship after Kling's premature death has been concerned with securing and defending the attention he undoubtedly deserves as one of the most important German-speaking poets of the last decades. In doing so, scholars might sometimes have tended to be less critical than one would usually expect. As Gerd Schäfer has put it poignantly: 'Man hätte Thomas Kling zu Lebzeiten entschiedener widersprechen sollen. Er hätte es verdient gehabt.'[29] As the canonisation of Kling can be considered done, scholarship now needs to ensure that research opens up new perspectives on Kling's work and its position within the 20th century, so that it continues to receive the attention it deserves in the future. It is with this intention that this dissertation scrutinises some common interpretations of Kling's work, many of which were established by Kling himself and repeated by his critics, and, where it deems necessary, completes or corrects them based on archival material and historical sources.

[29] Gerd Schäfer, 'Germanistennacht oder: Chor und Echo. Das Werk Thomas Klings als deutscher Sprachspeicher', *Schreibheft* 65 (2005), 201-5: 202.

PART I

Utopian Visions

Let's take our minds back to the year 1977 and to a city called Düsseldorf in the Rhineland, the heartland of the late Bonn Republic, where Thomas Kling was just about to graduate from school. An aspiring young poet came of age that summer, and so did the Federal Republic of Germany. Thirty years after the Second World War, the immediate post-war era was coming to an end, but still it was not clear where West German society as a whole was heading. The 1960s and 1970s were shaped by political struggle and violence that peaked in the terrorist actions of *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF) and the *Deutscher Herbst* of 1977.[1] As big ideologies became delegitimised by Leftist terror, the 1970s saw the emergence of various grassroots movements concerned with peace and the environment.[2] Already, a new political player was looming on the horizon: *Die Grünen*, a party that would change West Germany's political landscape deeply and permanently.[3]

The history of these events has been told many times, which is why I will not repeat its details here.[4] Instead, I will follow recent approaches of scholars who have looked at the growing alternative scene in the 1970s in terms of changing emotional

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1 See Karrin Hanshew, *Terror and Democracy in West Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); Leith Passmore, *Ulrike Meinhof and the Red Army Faction: Performing Terrorism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Sarah Colvin, *Ulrike Meinhof and West German Terrorism: Language, Violence, and Identity* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009).

2 See Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft: linksalternatives Leben in den siebziger und frühen achtziger Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014); Cordia Baumann, Stefan Gehrig and Nicolas Büchse (eds.), *Linksalternative Milieus und Neue Soziale Bewegungen in den 1970er Jahren* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2011).

3 See Markus Klein and Jürgen W. Falter, *Der lange Weg der Grünen* (Munich: Beck, 2003).

4 For a recent account, see Timothy S. Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Antiauthoritarian Revolt, 1962-1978* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

styles.[5] Joachim C. Häberlen in particular has interpreted the alternative practices of the 1970s – their political actions but also their lifestyle (e.g. work collectives and flat shares) and social activities (e.g. study groups) – as 'emotional experiments, that is, as attempts to produce specific feelings'.[6] In particular, he emphasised the experimental character of these practices that, 'as it happens with experiments, […] could succeed or fail'.[7]

Such an approach indeed makes a lot of sense when looking at Thomas Kling's early literary ambitions in the 1970s, which are characterised by the same playful experimentation and idealism. From 1977 onwards, he was involved in the collective *Zwiebelzwerg*, who ran both an alternative magazine and an independent press in Düsseldorf. It was with *Zwiebelzwerg* (then still Verlag Schell-Scheerenberg) that Kling published his first collection *der zustand vor dem untergang* (1977). As both the collective's participatory and democratic organisation and the beliefs expressed in their magazine attest, *Zwiebelzwerg* shared many ideals with the new social movements, which I will describe in more detail in the first chapter of this section. The following chapter will then discuss the publication Kling's first collection *der zustand vor dem untergang* and its current reception. To conclude this section, I will suggest how a visit to *Gegenbuchmesse* with *Zwiebelzwerg* in 1979 might have inspired the reinvention of Kling's poetic persona.

Research on Kling has not yet acknowledged the impact that the cultural milieu of the new social movements had on his development as a poet. There are various reasons for this. First of all, events of the recent past are not easily historicised. But more importantly, Kling's attitude towards his early writings and the alternative scene of the 1970s became rather unfavourable later on in his life. Nevertheless, this section intends to fill a gap. Even though Kling himself later disavowed his beginnings, understanding where he started from

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5 See introduction, footnote 12.
6 Joachim C. Häberlen, *The Emotional Politics of the Alternative Left*, p. 4.
7 Ibid.

will certainly allow us a better comprehension of his later career. The experimental character of his early practices need not discredit them as a focus of research, as they allow a more complex understanding of how Kling came to be the poet known today.

1

Alternative Press

Zwiebelzwerg

It is not a coincidence that as part of the 1972 'May Offensive' that marked the beginning of their terrorism, the RAF bombed the headquarters of the Springer press empire in Hamburg.[8] Mass media and Springer in particular had already been a target of the revolting students in the 1960s, who considered such journalism to be mere propaganda for the establishment.[9] Most critics preferred a more peaceful route, however. From the 1970s onwards, members of the alternative scene started numerous independent magazines and newspapers with the intention of establishing an alternative press that could represent their own interests and give them a voice.[10] In 1980, up to 390 alternative magazines existed in West Germany with a total circulation of 1.6 million copies and a market share of eight per cent.[11] In 1981, Petra Dorsch even estimated the number of alternative newspapers to be as high as 700 in an assessment report for the West German government.[12] This wide array of

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8 See Andreas Elter, *Propaganda der Tat. Die RAF und die Medien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008).

9 See Timothy S. Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties*, pp. 122-3; Christina von Hodenberg, 'Mass Media and the Generation of Conflict: West Germany's Long Sixties and the Formation of a Critical Public Sphere', *Contemporary European History* 15 (2006), 367-95: 385-94.

10 See Nadja Büteführ, *Zwischen Anspruch und Kommerz. Lokale Alternativpresse 1970-1993* (Münster: Waxmann, 1995), p. 12.

11 Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 241.

12 Petra E. Dorsch, *Neue Medien im sublokalen Kommunikationsraum. Die sogenannte Alternativpresse im sozialen Umfeld* (Munich: Institut für Kommunikationswissenschaft, 1981), p. 34.

journals, magazines and newspapers constituted 'a sphere of communication' that, as Joachim C. Häberlen has argued, 'was essential for the constitution of the alternative milieu'.[13] Likewise, Sven Reichardt has defined the role of the alternative press as 'Ort der politischen Selbstverständigung und kulturellen Identitätsstiftung'.[14] Even though individual magazines had a limited circulation and were often short-lived, together they established the foundation for a growing alternative identity and were indispensible

> […] für die Struktur und das Selbstverständnis des Milieus […], da sie die Vorstellung einer Gemeinschaft und eines Milieuzusammenhangs imaginierten. Die alternativen Zeitungen und Zeitschriften waren […] Stützpfeiler und Korsettstangen eines kommunikativ geprägten Alternativmilieus. […] Sie beschworen Erfahrungszusammenhänge, beeinflussten die Sprache der Leser, vermittelten Symbole, gestalteten den Geschmack und transportierten Moralvorstellungen und Normen, bildeten eine gemeinsame Sprache und Artikulationsweise aus, steckten Interessensfelder ab, stärkten die kommunikative Kompetenz.[15]

Kling's involvement in *Zwiebelzwerg* collective from 1977 to 1981 needs to be understood in this context. As Petra Dorsch concluded in 1981, 'Zeitungsmachen ist zum Hobby der sich der Alternativszene nahefühlenden Jugendlichen in der ganzen Bundesrepublik geworden.'[16] Even though the alternative scene of the late 1970s was, according to Häberlen, 'a minority phenomenon', 'it was anything but a small and marginal minority that joined this milieu'.[17] In fact, it was a milieu that was rooted right in the centre of society, as it proved particularly popular 'amongst students and educated young adults'.[18] As such, its impact on society as a whole should not be underestimated.

Zwiebelzwerg was, according to its subtitle, a *Zeitung für Kunst und Soziales*. Twelve issues of the magazines were published between 1977 and 1981. During these years, Kling was a member of the editorial team and a regular contributor with twenty-six

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13 Joachim C. Häberlen, *The Emotional Politics of the Alternative Left*, p. 12.
14 Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 237.
15 Ibid., p. 277.
16 Petra E. Dorsch, *Neue Medien im sublokalen Kommunikationsraum*, p. 37.
17 Joachim C. Häberlen, *The Emotional Politics of the Alternative Left*, p. 13.
18 Ibid.

poems and six essays overall.[19] *Zwiebelzwerg*'s circulation was certainly small: the second issue listed seventeen bookstores and two pubs where it was sold, most of them in the area of Düsseldorf.[20] Its editorial focus resembled that of a 'Stadtmagazin', a type of alternative magazine that emerged in West German cities in the late 1970s and whose coverage of alternative events and activities met the demands of a growing leisure society.[21] In addition to a literary section featuring poems, essays and reviews, *Zwiebelzwerg* regularly printed graphics, drawings and other artwork, mostly by local artists or students of Düsseldorf's *Kunstakademie*. However, its main feature was a calendar of cultural events in Düsseldorf and surroundings. In addition, do-it-yourself instructions for handicrafts such as pottery and weaving and reports on lifestyle practices such as yoga encouraged readers to take up alternative activities. In comparison, the coverage of political and social issues occupied a less significant place. Overall, the range of topics discussed in *Zwiebelzwerg* reflected the diversity of the alternative scene as such.

This was not the only characteristic that *Zwiebelzwerg* shared with other alternative magazines. The following comparison will rely on Reichardt's extensive survey of alternative magazines in his groundbreaking study of West Germany's alternative scene in the 1970s and 1980s.[22] According to Reichardt's definition, alternative magazines were distinguished by four aspects: (1) their news coverage presented an alternative to the established press, (2) they encouraged communication between the editorial team and their readers, (3) their organisation was transparent and democratic and (4) they were non-profit.[23] *Zwiebelzwerg* met all of these criteria. In the first issue, the editors explained:

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19 For a list see appendix, pp. 216-17. This list only includes texts that can be attributed to Kling with complete certainty. It is however possible that Kling published additional texts under a pseudonym.

20 *Zwiebelzwerg* 2 (1978), no page number.

21 See Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, pp. 253-7.

22 Ibid., chapter 3, 'Eine imaginäre Gemeinschaft: Die Alternativpresse', pp. 223-315.

23 Ibid., pp. 237-41.

> Ihr Lieben!
>
> Dies ist die erste Ausgabe einer neuen Zeitung für Kunst und Soziales mit dem merkwürdig klingenden Titel "Zwiebelzwerg". Wir wenden uns mit dieser Zeitschrift an alle diejenigen, die Interesse an den oben aufgeführten Themenkreisen haben. Herausgegeben wird diese Zeitung von einem sehr kleinen und jungen Verlag in Düsseldorf. Wie man sich aber bei einem kleinen Verlag vorstellen kann, haben wir auch nur einen kleinen Geldbeutel. Daher ist es uns leider nicht möglich, diese Zeitschrift in der Qualität ähnlicher Zeitschriften erscheinen zu lassen. "Zwiebelzwerg" wird von einigen jungen Menschen voller Idealismus hergestellt und das in mühevoller Kleinarbeit mit alten Maschinen und unzureichendem Material. Wir bitten um Euer Verständnis wenn die Qualität manchmal zu wünschen übrigläßt. Wir glauben jedoch an den Satz "Inhalt geht vor Aussehen!" Wir geben unbekannten Künstlern die Möglichkeit, sich mit Artikeln, Grafiken, Cartoons oder Fotos der Öffentlichkeit zu präsentieren. Daher freuen wir uns über jede Zuschrift in dieser Richtung.
>
> Nun können wir nur noch hoffen, daß Euch der Inhalt dieser Zeitung 2,80 DM wert ist, und Ihr uns vielleicht einmal Euere [sic] Meinung über den "Zwiebelzwerg" schreibt.
>
> Eure Redaktion[24]

The most striking feature of this passage is what Reichardt has described as the alternative scene's 'Authentizitätsanspruch'.[25] According to Reichardt, performing authenticity was a central emotional practice within the alternative scene, and alternative magazines created authenticity with their style, language and layout.[26] Thus, the intimate tone in which *Zwiebelzwerg* addressed their readers – 'Ihr Lieben' and the informal 'Euch' – served to create a sense of familiarity that was typical of the communication within alternative circles. According to Reichardt 'kollektive Identität entstand durch solcherlei vorgeblich dialogische Kommunikation und erschuf eine vorgestellte Gemeinschaft.'[27] This collective identity was reinforced by a shared sense of social marginalisation. *Zwiebelzwerg* presented themselves as 'kleiner und junger Verlag' '[mit] einem kleinen Geldbeutel'.

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[24] *Zwiebelzwerg* 1 (1977), no page number.
[25] Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 279.
[26] Ibid., pp. 278-312.
[27] Ibid., p. 281.

This certainly resonated with the alternative magazines' typical readers, of whom 85 per cent were between fourteen and thirty years old, most of them with a low income.[28] But considering their middle class background, the experience of social marginalisation was probably only subjectively true.[29] Nevertheless, sharing problems and difficulties – financial or otherwise – was a central technique of creating authenticity:

> Die Gemeinschaft wurde dabei durch die Beteiligung des Publikums am Innenleben der Redaktion gestärkt – die Redakteure unterstrichen das Familiengefühl, indem sie die Leser […] an ihren Problemen teilhaben ließen. […] Dieser Blick ins Verborgene und Diskrete stellte eine imaginäre Nähe und Intimität her, die milieukonstituierend und gemeinschaftsstiftend wirkte.[30]

Zwiebelzwerg used the same strategy with their readers and regularly drew attention to the magazine's dire financial situation and other difficulties.[31] The impression of amateurism that resulted from these structural and financial problems was not entirely unwanted, however. Like most other alternative magazines, *Zwiebelzwerg* changed their layout, paper and colour design with almost every issue. But these imperfections only reinforced the impression of authenticity, as *Zwiebelzwerg*'s credo 'Inhalt geht vor Aussehen!' attested.[32]

Another common strategy to engage with their readership was the call for submissions. *Zwiebelzwerg* addressed their readers and encouraged them to send in their opinions in almost every issue, even printing their private phone numbers and inviting their readers to pub nights to this end. But even though *Zwiebelzerg* published a letter to the editor on one occasion, which I will return to in the following, it is unclear how much response these calls usually received.[33] Nevertheless, participation was a central ideal of

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28 Ibid., p. 271.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., p. 284.
31 For instance, they published a final demand from a paper wholesale supplier in *Zwiebelzwerg* 8 (1979), no page number.
32 Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 301-2.
33 See the letter by Dieter F. in *Zwiebelzwerg* 4 (1978), no page number.

alternative journalism which made, according to Stamm, 'de[n] Betroffenenbericht […] [zum] Idealtypus alternativer Berichterstattung'.[34]

While the initial success of alternative magazines indicated an existing demand in society, Reichardt has pointed out the dangers of the uncritical concept of authenticity that these magazines propagated. In particular, he criticised how alternative magazines ignored the limitedness of their own claims to representation and masked how their authenticity was the result of performance strategies. According to him '[wurde] [d]as Eingeständnis eines Eingriffs in die wechselseitige Kommunikation […] schlichtweg übergangen.'[35] Thus, he argued, alternative magazines yielded a considerable normative power:

> In der Alternativpresse bezeichnet Authentizität […] kein bloß individuelles, sondern ein kollektives und politisches Prinzip. Authentisch zu sein wurde in Absetzung von der "etablierten" Gesellschaft verstanden und diente keinem ökonomischen Zweck, sondern dem der politischen Selbstbestimmung. Die Sehnsucht nach authentischer Selbstoffenbarung betrachtete man nicht als Produkt der Medientechnik. Vielmehr begriff man umgekehrt die alternativen Medien als Organ und Ausdruck dieser Selbstverwirklichungswünsche. Damit einher ging eine massive Unterschätzung der gouvernementalen Kraft und der medialen Eigenlogiken in der alternativen Presse.[36]

That *Zwiebelzwerg* pursued a similar concept of authenticity became particularly clear in the magazine's third issue, where editor Gregor Schell explained:

> Was jedoch das Wichtigste ist, am Zwiebelzwerg arbeiten nur Leute mit, die wirklich hinter dem stehen, was hier geschieht, am Zwiebelzwerg verdient keiner, hier ist jede Arbeit freiwillig. Und so glaube ich daß der Zwiebelzwerg eine ehrliche Zeitung ist.[37]

According to Schell, the fact that *Zwiebelzwerg* was not-for-profit meant that it was an 'honest' magazine, a characterisation that put it in opposition to the established (thus, 'dishonest') media, even though this was not spelled out. What exactly constituted this

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[34] Karl-Heinz Stamm, *Alternative Öffentlichkeit. Die Erfahrungsproduktion neuer sozialer Bewegungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1988), p. 145.
[35] Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 282.
[36] Ibid., p. 280.
[37] Gregor Schell, 'In eigener Sache', *Zwiebelzwerg* 3 (1978), no page number.

'honesty' and whether it really enabled a more 'honest' coverage was not brought into question. Even for some of their readers, this seemed to require further explanation. In the next issue, *Zwiebelzwerg* printed a three-page letter they had received in response to Schell's statement, in which one of their readers, Dieter F., encouraged them to be more specific about the magazine's purpose and target group:

> Zu folgenden Aspekten möchte ich u.a. mehr wissen: Wen wollt Ihr mit dem "Zwiebelzwerg" ansprechen, wen könnt Ihr überhaupt erreichen? Künstler oder Kunstinteressierte? Studenten? Arbeiter und Lehrlinge? Hausfrauen…? Die Beantwortung dieser Fragen führt sicherlich zu weitreichenden Konsequenzen hinsichtlich der Gestaltung der Zeitschrift. Oder: Wie seht Ihr die Rolle der Kunst in unserer Gesellschaft? Kunst – Mittel und Medium zur Veränderung gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse? Freizeitbeschäftigung? Kunst als Ware? Oder: Welche Ansichten habt Ihr zur Art und Weise, wie Kunst in der Öffentlichkeit verbreitet wird?[38]

Zwiebelzwerg's response in the same issue, which was signed by Thomas Kling, Dieter Herff and Gregor Schell, tried to answer some of these questions. While they did not question their own role in the media system, Kling, Herff and Schell came to surprising conclusions about the role of art in society. 'Man würde die Rolle der Kunst sicherlich überschätzen', they explained, 'nimmt man an, Kunst könne die Gesellschaft verändern.'[39] 'Wird der Versuch von und durch die Kunst zu leben […] unternommen, so nimmt die Kunst zwangsläufig den Charakter einer Ware an. Dies ist nicht negativ zu bewerten […].'[40] Instead, art had to resist the urge of becoming 'Fingerzeig-Pädagogik' and 'künstlerische Nabelschau'.[41] This passage seems to foreshadow central aspects of Kling's later poetics, in particular his rejection of a narrow concept of subjectivity and his refusal to be didactic (see BO, 53). However, the letter also reveals that Kling and his coauthors were still caught up in an uncritical concept of authenticity that the alternative scene of the

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38 Letter by Dieter F. in *Zwiebelzwerg* 4 (1978), no page number

39 Thomas Kling, Dieter Herff and Gregor Schell in *Zwiebelzwerg* 4 (1978), no page number.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

late 1970s pursued in their emotional style. In fact, it remains to be asked whether Kling's outspoken criticism of the so-called 'Bauchnabelbetracher' (IT, 21) of 1970s poetry was not at least partly a result of his own experiences with the alternative scene and its emotional style. Nevertheless, overcoming the narrow sense of authenticity and subjectivity expressed in 1970s poetry is generally considered to be the main achievement of Kling's poetry, a conclusion that will be scrutinised in the following chapters.[42]

Zwiebelzwerg's last issue was published in 1981. By 1980, the boom of the alternative press was over and most alternative magazines either closed or turned more commercial.[43] As established media opened up to the ideas of the alternative scene, the independent magazines were no longer needed. However, the dogma of authenticity still loomed large over Thomas Kling's collection *der zustand vor dem untergang*, as the next chapter will show.

2

Alternative Publishing

der zustand vor dem untergang

Just like their magazine, *Zwiebelzwerg*'s independent press was non-profit and relied on voluntary work.[44] Alternative magazines and publishing houses had evolved in West Germany since the late 1960s to establish independent channels of communication for the growing alternative scene.[45] However, while independent publishers of the 1960s had printed Leftist political theory and manifestos, *Zwiebelzwerg* printed poetry.[46] According

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42 See Heribert Tommek, *Der lange Weg in die Gegenwartsliteratur*, p. 476.
43 Nadja Büteführ, *Zwischen Anspruch und Kommerz*, p. 201.
44 'Werbezettel', *Zwiebelzwerg*, 9 (1980), no page number.
45 See Timothy S. Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties*, p. 128.
46 Ibid.

to Thomas Daum, a focus on poetry was common in the alternative book market of the 1970s, as writing poetry 'stand und steht an der Spitze "alternativen Schreibens"'.[47]

Thomas Kling's *der zustand vor dem untergang* was one of the first books to be published by *Zwiebelzwerg*. In fact, a handwritten advert called it *Zwiebelzwerg*'s very first undertaking, even before they started their magazine.[48] Thus, the release of Kling's first collection of poems also marked the foundation of *Zwiebelzwerg*'s independent press. The opportunity to have his poetry published, first as a booklet and later in their magazine, was probably one of the main reasons why Kling joined *Zwiebelzwerg*. He shared this incentive with many others who were involed in the alternative media of his time, as Petra Dorsch attested. According to her, alternative magazines were 'für die schriftstellerisch Interessierten und Begabten […] eine Experimentierbühne, auf der sie ihre Werke erstmals einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit präsentieren können'.[49] 'Alle "Dichter"', she explained

> wollen etwas mit der Zeitung erreichen – vor allem für sich selbst. Sie wollen Zustimmung, Bestätigung und Kritik. Sie machen aber immer wieder die Erfahrung, daß der redaktionelle Konsens im Hinblick auf den Abdruck schriftstellerischer Produkte als Kehrseite die Verweigerung der Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Produkten hat. Auf Erfolgserlebnisse in der Redaktion darf dieser Typ von Wortschöpfer nicht hoffen. Auch die Leser verharren in anonymer Passivität. Einen Glückwunsch zu einem Gedicht oder einer Kurzgeschichte oder auch Kritik haben die Autoren kaum je erhalten.[50]

Thus, it remains questionable whether Kling's publications with *Zwiebelzwerg* granted him the kind of attention he was hoping for. On the other hand, being discovered by one of the established publishers seemed almost impossible. In 1981, Thomas Daum concluded: 'Die literarische Alternativpresse stellt für junge Autoren heute fast die einzige Möglichkeit dar, Geschriebenes zu veröffentlichen, denn in den großen Verlagen haben

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47 Thomas Daum, *Die 2. Kultur. Alternativliteratur in der Bundesrepublik* (Mainz: NewLit, 1981), p. 126.
48 'Unsere ureigene Seite', *Zwiebelzwerg*, 5 (1978), no page number.
49 Petra E. Dorsch, *Neue Medien im sublokalen Kommunikationsraum*, pp. 205-6.
50 Ibid., p. 206.

unbekannte Autoren keine Chance.'[51] Thus, alternative publishers like *Zwiebelzwerg* had an important corrective function for a highly competitive and inaccessible book market.

Zwiebelzwerg published Kling's *der zustand vor dem untergang* as part of a 'Neue Lyrik'-series together with Michael Kraus' collection *Gedichte* and Bernd Kersting's *BilderbuchFerien*. In an advert for the series, they explained:

> Unsere Bücher erscheinen anfangs in besonders kleinen Auflagen. Sie sind auf einer kleinen Offsetmaschine gedruckt und auch von Hand weiterverarbeitet worden. Sie sind speziell für den Lyrik-Leser gearbeitet, der für sein Geld gute Lyrik haben will, dafür aber über einen nicht immer perfekten Druck hinwegsieht. Sie sind in einfache Kartons gebunden, wirken also schlicht und einfach. Sollten Sie ein Buch kaufen, in dem eine Seite doppelt ist, freuen sie [sic] sich darüber, denn Sie bekommen mehr für ihr [sic] Geld.
>
> Sollte eine (Ihre) Buchhandlung unsere Bücher nicht auf Lager haben, sollte die Buchhandlung auch unsere Adresse nicht kennen, was durchaus möglich ist, teilen Sie ihr doch bitte unsere Adresse mit. Sie kennen Sie ja aus dem Impressum dieser Zeitung. Oder wenden Sie sich direkt an den Verlag. Vielen Dank![52]

The tone of this advert is strikingly different from *Zwiebelzwerg*'s usual colloquial style. The use of the more formal 'Sie' in contrast to the usual 'Euch' and the emphasis on the series' high literary value attempt to convey an image of professionalism that is subverted by the passage's weak orthograpy and the hint at the series' poor printing quality. As a poet and as a publisher of his own work, Thomas Kling still had experience to gain on how to position himself in the literary market and to relate to the public.

The layout of *der zustand vor dem untergang* was indeed simple. The blue paperback notebook contained thirty-five poems alongside six abstract photographs by Ulrich Heid.[53] The poems, combining a wide variety of styles and genres, are obviously the work of a young poet still trying to find his own voice. However, they already reveal continuities with Kling's later work. For instance, the collection includes several poems

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51 Thomas Daum, *Die 2. Kultur*, p. 91.
52 *Zwiebelzwerg*, 2 (1978), 30.
53 For a complete list see appendix, p. 218.

based on folk tales and oral history ('die ballade vom kaiser rotbart', 'märchen'), ekphrastic poems ('die versuchung des hl. antonius'), and travel poems ('ende märz im tessin', 'von einer reise'), themes that continued to inform Kling's later poetry. Peer Trilcke has called *der zustand vor dem untergang* 'ein zuweilen durchaus kreatives, dennoch aber augenfälliges Epigonentum' of Expressionist poetry in particular.[54] But Expressionism is certainly not the only influence. Poems like 'winter bei uns', 'das lied der nachtigall', 'das märchen vom robbenpelz' and 'ölpest' clearly articulate ecological and political concerns and seem to be influenced by more topical 'Ökolyrik'.[55] 'das märchen vom robbenpelz', for instance, voices outspoken criticism of seal hunt and the fur industry.

Several strategies of 'das märchen vom robbenpelz' can also be found in Kling's later poetry, in particular the combination of cultural history (the Brothers Grimms' tale of 'The Frog Prince') with topical issues (seal hunt). In fact, Kling used similar references in his renowned poem 'ratinger hof, zb 2'.[56] But in comparison to this or other later poems, the style of 'das märchen vom robbenpelz' seems clumsy. Partly, this seems to be down to the fact that in contrast to Kling's later writing, its plain and straightforward language does not allow for much semantic ambiguity. When Kling criticised the Düsseldorf high society wearing 'hautkot | ürfummel' in his poem 'düsseldorfer kölemik' just a few years later (GG, 73), he did so in a distinctly different poetic voice than when he wrote about '[den] kadaver einer dame' wearing fur in 'das märchen vom robbenpelz'. In the next chapters, close readings of the poems 'öl', 'fragliche fabrik' and 'obst und gemüse-martel' and their

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54 Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 34, footnote 13.

55 See Axel Goodbody, 'Deutsche Ökolyrik: Comparative observations on the emergence and expression of environmental consciousness in West and East German poetry' in Arthur Williams, Stuart Parkes and Roland Smith (eds.), *German Literature at a Time of Change* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 373-400; Jürgen Egyptien, 'Die Naturlyrik im Zeichen der Krise. Themen und Formen des ökologische Gedichts seit 1970' in Axel Goodbody (ed.), *Literatur und Ökologie* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 41-68.

56 See Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof. Thomas Klings tiefschürfende "nachtperformance"' in Frieder von Ammon und Rüdiger Zymner (eds.), *Gedichte von Thomas Kling* (Paderborn: mentis, 2019), pp. 15-36: 29.

precursors will investigate continuities between Kling's early and later poetry in more detail and attempt to reconstruct how Kling developed his recognisable style.

This is of course only a beginning, and more research on possible continuities between Kling's early and late poetry would be desirable. However, scholarship on *der zustand vor dem untergang* has been slow. One reason for this is the lack of an edition making these poems available for research, as it was not included in Kling's *Gesammelte Gedichte* published by Marcel Beyer in 2006. In an editorial note, Beyer explained:

> Seine erste Buchveröffentlichung, den 1977 erschienenen, fünfunddreißig Gedichte umfassenden Band "der zustand vor dem untergang" […] hat Thomas Kling lange Zeit selbst Freunden gegenüber nur unter Vorbehalt erwähnt. Dem Ansinnen einer Neuausgabe stand er immer ablehnend gegenüber. Bezeichnend auch, daß sich im – von der Stiftung Insel Hombroich betreuten – Nachlaß kein Exemplar dieser Publikation findet. (GG, 933)

Beyer's decision not to include *der zustand vor dem untergang* in his *Gesammelte Gedichte* just one year after Kling's untimely death is certainly understandable. But it remains to be hoped that a new edition of Kling's poetry would fill this gap, especially since Beyer's conclusion is not entirely accurate.[57] Trilcke has pointed out that Kling indeed kept a copy of *der zustand vor dem untergang* in his library.[58] However, Beyer was right that the main reason why research until now has ignored the collection was Kling's own attitude towards it. In a conversation with Beyer in 1991, Kling explained:

> Ich habe 1977 meinen ersten Gedichtband gemacht, *der zustand vor dem untergang*, in einem Düsseldorfer Kleinverlag. Der ist aber verschollen, ich habe davon kein Exemplar mehr. Dann habe ich aber nach meinem ersten Gedichtband, der 35 Gedichte umfaßte, die zwischen 74 und 77 entstanden sind, quasi mein Atelier zugemauert, für mehrere Jahre. Und dann gabs 83 den Privatdruck *amptate*, von dem bis auf 'gasberg. für konrad bayer' alles in *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* eingegangen ist. (BA, 43)

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[57] After completing this manuscript, it came to my knowledge that a new edition of Kling's collected works, including his early poems in *Zwiebelzerg* and *der zustand vor dem untergang*, is currently being prepared by Frieder von Ammon and Marcel Beyer in cooperation with the Suhrkamp Verlag and expected for publication in late 2020.

[58] Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 34, footnote 13.

Nevertheless, Kling regularly listed *der zustand vor dem untergang* in applications for literary prizes and competitions throughout the 1980s. In 1989, when he was awarded the 'Förderpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen', it appears in his list of publications, even though Kling had already published *geschmacksverstärker* with the prestigious Suhrkamp Verlag by then.[59] Thus, Kling's attitude towards *der zustand vor dem untergang* is hardly unambiguous. The more important question is, however, whether this should even matter.

Even though the poems in *der zustand vor dem untergang* are not as refined as his later work, they give us an insight into the development of Kling's poetic style and how its early themes might have continued to resonate with his later writings. Research on Kling's early poetry will thus allow us a more complex understanding of his later poetic project, as my close readings in the following section will demonstrate. But before that, a discussion of *Zwiebelzwerg*'s participation in *Gegenbuchmesse* in 1979 will show how Kling learned to position himself on the literary market and take control of his public image in ways that differed from the alternative scene's practices of authenticity.

3

Alternative Market

Gegenbuchmesse

From 8 to 14 October 1979, *Arbeitsgemeinschaft alternativer Verlage und Autoren* (*AGAV*) hosted a so-called *Gegenbuchmesse* in Frankfurt for the third time. The event took place in opposition to the established Frankfurt book fair happening simultaneously, which

[59] Kultusministerium Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.), *Förderungspreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen für junge Künstler '89* (Frechen: Ritterbach, 1990), p. 16.

the organisers of *Gegenbuchmesse* criticised for its commercialism.[60] The world's biggest and most long-standing book fair indeed faced structural difficulties in the late 1970s, at a time when it had lost its central significance as a place to close business deals and tried to reinvent itself as a marketing arena.[61] According to Sabine Niemeier, *Gegenbuchmesse* thus revealed structural faults in the organisation of Frankfurt book fair and met an alternative demand.[62] At the same time, the established fair's almost iconic character still ensured its protesters a high degree of publicity.[63] The Frankfurt book fair had been a target of student protests since the 1960s, and student groups organised an alternative get-together of independent magazines and publishers for the first time in 1968.[64] From 1977 onwards, *Gegenbuchmesse* combined these individual efforts and gave them an institutional framework that proved highly successful at the beginning, as it attracted growing numbers of exhibitors and visitors.[65] In contrast to the established book fair, the organisers of *Gegenbuchmesse* wanted to encourage 'eine wertorientierte, inhaltliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem Kulturgut Buch'.[66] This was also what motivated *Zwiebelzwerg* to participate at *Gegenbuchmesse* in 1979. In the following issue of their magazine, Gregor Schell explained that 'die Gegenbuchmesse in Frankfurt kleineren Verlagen die Möglichkeit bietet, in der Öffentlichkeit zu Wort zu kommen, um ein Gleichgewicht zu den großen und etablierten Verlagen zu bilden' whereas '[die] Buchmesse des Börsenvereins das Buch rein als Verkaufsobjekt behandelt […], wodurch

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60 Stephan Füssel, '"Gegen die Geschäftemacherei des Bestsellerbetriebs": Die kurze Phase der Gegen-Buchmesse 1977 bis 1984' in idem, *50 Jahre Frankfurter Buchmesse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), pp. 115-19: 116.

61 Sabine Niemeier, *Funktionen der Frankfurter Buchmesse im Wandel – von den Anfängen bis heute* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001), p. 49. See also Matthias N. Lorenz, 'Literatur und Betrieb nach dem "Tod der Literatur"' in Werner Faulstich (ed.), *Die Kultur der 70er Jahre* (Munich: Fink, 2004), pp. 147-64: 147.

62 Sabine Niemeier, *Funktionen der Frankfurter Buchmesse im Wandel*, p. 51.

63 Ibid., p. 48.

64 See Timothy S. Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties*, pp. 116-22.

65 Sabine Niemeier, *Funktionen der Frankfurter Buchmesse im Wandel*, p. 51.

66 Ibid., p. 46.

dort keine Auseinandersetzungen über Inhalte von Büchern und Zeitschriften zustande kommen […]'.[67] At the same time, Schell critically pointed out of the event's poor organisation and unclear focus. *Zwiebelzwerg* wittily concluded that

> die Besucher [sich] von den meisten Angeboten nicht besonders angeregt [fühlten] aber im Gegensatz zur traditionellen Buchmesse wurde vor allen Ständen angeregt gelesen und über die angebotenen Bücher geredet. Leider waren die Aussteller in diese Gespräche kaum einbezogen (das lag sicher auch an den Ausstellern). Trotz des enormen Schmutzes (ist das alternativ?) war die Atmosphäre innerhalb des Publikums und unter den Ausstellern (bestehende Grenzen wurden nicht gesprengt) gut.[68]

As this passage shows, the organisers of *Gegenbuchmesse* were facing considerable difficulties in presenting themselves as a real alternative to the Frankfurt book fair. Some visitors even expressed their dismay at the fact that everything seemed 'genau wie auf dem Messegelände. Nur erheblich preiswerter.'[69] Only Fritz J. Raddatz, head of the literature section at *Die Zeit*, concluded favourably: 'Das ist schon eine sympathische Alternative – nix Sekt, nix Lachsbrötchen, nix Kissinger, dafür ein Hauch von Hasch…'.[70] As charming as Raddatz thought the exhibitors' 'Offenheit für alle denkbaren Ideen' and 'Spielfreude' were, he did not consider them to be a serious alternative to the established book fair. In the end it remained, as he called it, 'ein großes Spielzeug für Büchernarren'.[71]

Zwiebelzwerg's approach was different, however. They soon realised that 'ein Stand alleine reicht nicht' and came up with the idea to organise a 'Kunst-Supermarkt' instead, a performance that would caricature 'die Art und Weise, in der Kunst vermarktet und

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67 Interview with Gregor Schell, *Zwiebelzwerg* 9 (1980), no page number.
68 'Zeit zum Lesen. Gegenbuchmesse 79', *Zwiebelzwerg* 9 (1980), no page number.
69 Jutta W. Thomasius, 'Vom "Zwiebelzwerg" zum Büchergulasch. 200 Verlage stellen bei der Gegen-Buchmesse aus', *Neue Presse*, 15 October 1979.
70 Fritz J. Raddatz, 'Habichtskraut und Himmelsschiff. Momentaufnahme der Gegenbuchmesse', *Die Zeit*, 19 October 1979.
71 Ibid.

verramscht wird' and provoke thoughts about how 'Kunst als Bereich des Alltäglichen gezeigt werden kann'.[72] During their performance on 14 October 1979, they sold

> Originalreliquien mit Echtheitszertifikat für DM 2.98, unter anderem: 38xGoethes Zähne, jeder Zahn aufgezogen auf geschmackvolle Papptellerchen / Holzsplitter eines Apfelbaums aus Schillers Garten / Zigarettenkippen von Heinrich Böll / Bierdosen von Bukowski […] Büchergulasch (kleingehackte Bücher) 500gr zu DM 1.57 und Bücherschinken (Bücher nach Gewicht angeboten, auch teilweise geschnitten), 100gr zu DM 1.57.[73]

Both visitors and the attending press met the performance with enthusiasm. *Neue Presse*, a daily social democratic newspaper from Hanover, announced that 'Aufmachung und Ton im "Kunstsupermarkt" [...] sind perfekt [...]. Was die zwölf von Zwiebelzwerg arrangierten, stimmt.'[74] In contrast, the concept of *Gegenbuchmesse* proved less and less successful with the public, and their programme of 'Lesungen, Liederabende, Pantomimen, Kabarett und Diskussionsveranstaltungen' attracted ever smaller number of visitors.[75] According to Füssel 'es fehlte an neuen, Aussteller und Publikum motivierenden Themen, auch an Reibungspunkten mit Diskussionen oder Lesungen.'[76] When, in 1983, the Frankfurt book fair began to accommodate smaller and independent publishers, the short phase of *Gegenbuchmesse* came to an end.[77]

Working outside the limitations of the established book market had proven more difficult than expected. As *Zwiebelzwerg*'s performance had demonstrated, engaging with the public was crucial in order to gain success, and the failure of *Gegenbuchmesse* to do so had marked its demise. In a conversation in 1998, Kling highlighted how contemporary poets had to learn 'wie sie sich selbst zu managen haben […] Marketing zu machen, seine

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72 'Wie die Idee unseres Supermarktes entstand', *Zwiebelzwerg* 9 (1980), no page number.
73 Ibid.
74 Jutta W. Thomasius, 'Vom "Zwiebelzwerg" zum Büchergulasch'.
75 Stephan Füssel, 'Die kurze Phase der Gegen-Buchmesse', p. 116.
76 Ibid., p. 118.
77 Sabine Niemeier, *Funktionen der Frankfurter Buchmesse im Wandel*, p. 51.

Preise zu bekommen, die man verlangt'.[78] For Kling, the experience at *Gegenbuchmesse* certainly was as an important part of this process. The provocative gesture of *Zwiebelzwerg*'s 'Kunst-Supermarkt' remained part of his self-stylisation especially during the early years of his career, an issue that I will return to later. But before that, the next chapters will shed light on the way in which he reinvented his poetic style after 1979. In doing so, Kling increasingly left alternative practices of authenticity behind and started to use poetic language in new ways. In the meantime, *der zustand vor dem untergang* was chopped and sold as 'Büchergulasch'.[79] But this does not mean that Kling's beginnings did not continue to inform his writings, as the next chapters will make clear.

[78] Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz 'Das Gedicht unter Dampf halten. Gespräch mit Thomas Kling – 13. November 1998' in *LebensBeschreibungen: Zwanzig Gespräche mit Schriftstellern* (Munich: text + kritik, 2000), pp. 172-82: 172.

[79] Andreas F. Kelletat, 'Amptat, Ach je', *wespennest* 176 (2019), 10-15: 10.

PART II

Shades of Green

In a letter to his publisher Friedolin Reske at *Eremiten-Presse* on 15 May 1985, Kling explained the title of his forthcoming collection, *erprobung herzstärkender mittel*. Among other reasons, he pointed out its topicality with regards to the current discussion of animal testing. But he added: 'grün-kämpferisch beziehe ich allerdings keine Stellung'.[1] This statement is remarkable. As this section will show, so-called 'green' topics – animal testing, but also environmental and social issues – feature consistently in Kling's poetry from that time and later on. The next chapters will present close readings of three poems and, in two cases, their precursors that span more than a decade and range from his earliest writings in 1978 to the publication of *geschmacksverstärker* in 1989. They show how Kling returned to these issues and reworked poems over a considerable period of time, which seems to hint at their significance. In the light of these findings, how are we to understand the above statement? Rather than interpreting it as an outright rejection of 'grün-kämpferisch' issues as such, as Friederike Reents has suggested, I would like to argue that Kling wanted to distance himself from a certain understanding of what 'grün-kämpferisch' poetry supposedly looked like in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[2]

It is a common misconception in the German context that political poetry is somehow unsophisticated, whereas sophisticated poetry unfolds its political relevance through its supposed autonomy. The argument dates back to Schiller's *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795) at least, but in the post-war context it is

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1 Letter to Friedolin Reske on 15 May 1985. From the correspondence between Kling and *Eremiten-Presse* at Heinrich-Heine-Institut, Düsseldorf. Object number HHI.2012.7831-124216.

2 See Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 19.

sufficient to go back to Theodor W. Adorno's seminal essay 'Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft', which was first delivered as a radio lecture for RIAS in Berlin in 1951 and subsequently published as a revised and extended version in the journal *Akzente* (1957) and *Noten zur Literatur I* (Suhrkamp, 1958). In this essay, Adorno once again reinforced a supposed opposition between poetry and its social function by defining poetry as 'ein der Gesellschaft Entgegengesetztes, durchaus Individuelles' that was free 'vom Zwang der herrschenden Praxis, der Nützlichkeit, vom Druck der sturen Selbsterhaltung'.[3] Of course, the understanding of poetry expressed here is deeply rooted in 18th century autonomy aesthetics and a historical concept of lyric poetry. Adorno, however, did not make the historical limitation of his argument very clear. As a result, a specific historical concept of lyric poetry came to represent all of poetry throughout time.[4] Echoing Schiller, Adorno concluded: 'Diese Forderung an die Lyrik jedoch, die des jungfräulichen Wortes, ist in sich selbst gesellschaftlich.'[5] This had profound consequences for the understanding of poetry and its social function in West Germany in the following decades.

While Hans Magnus Enzensberger's 'Poesie und Politik' (1962) drew heavily on Adorno's 'Lyrik und Gesellschaft', the title of his essay indicated two significant changes. First of all, Enzensberger replaced the ambiguous term 'Lyrik' with 'Poesie', thus seemingly ridding himself of the historical concept of lyric poetry.[6] But secondly and more importantly, he explicitly applied Adorno's argument to poetry's political function, not to its social function in a broader sense. According to Enzensberger, the political function of

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3 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft' in *Noten zur Literatur*, vol. I (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1958), pp. 73-104: 77-8.

4 Of course, this imprecision has a long tradition in the German context. See Dieter Lamping, *Das lyrische Gedicht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1989); Dieter Burdorf, 'Lyrisch' in Klaus Weimar (ed.) *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft* vol. II, 3rd edition (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), pp. 505-9.

5 Theodor W. Adorno, 'Rede über Lyrik und Gesellschaft', pp. 77-8.

6 On the term 'Poesie' and its usage, see Klaus Weimar, 'Poesie' in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft* vol. III, pp. 96-100.

poetry was 'sich jedem politischen Auftrag zu verweigern und für alle zu sprechen noch dort, wo es von keinem spricht'.[7] Thus, Enzensberger effectively turned Adorno's argument upside down and made it a rule: Poetry must not be political.[8]

For Adorno as much as for Enzensberger, it was through language that poetry would fulfil its social and political function. In two essays, 'Von den Grenzen politischer Lyrik' (1971) and 'Probleme politischer Lyrik heute' (1973), Walter Hinderer thus took the next logical step: he tied each function back to a specific use of language. If poetry effected its social function through language, then certainly the political use of poetic language was limited, he argued.[9] As a result of this intellectual shortcut, something like a political poem became a paradox:

> Ein Gedicht, das politische Intentionen verfolgt, relativiert diese, sobald es ästhetisch gelingt, und diskreditiert sie, wenn es mißglückt. Man könnte auch sagen: Das gelungene politische Gedicht ist im Grunde nur noch Gedicht, während das mißlungene eigentlich schon kein Gedicht mehr ist, sondern nur noch schlechte Politik.[10]

Ever since then, a chasm has run through German poetry, with unsophisticated political poetry on one side, and sophisticated autonomous poetry on the other.[11] In his account of German literature after 1945, Wilfried Barner has held the intellectual climate of the Cold War responsible for this misconception. According to him, it was 'auch dem kalten Krieg

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7 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Poesie und Politik' in *Einzelheiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962), pp. 334-53: 353.

8 Whether this applied to Enzensberger's own poetry is an issue that cannot be discussed here. See Gunter E. Grimm, '"diese gedichte sind gebrauchsgegenstände". Zu Hans Magnus Enzensbergers politischer Lyrik' in idem (ed.), *Benutzte Lyrik* (Munich: text + kritik, 2007), pp. 105-15.

9 Walter Hinderer, 'Von den Grenzen politischer Lyrik: Einige theoretische Überlegungen' in *Akzente* 18 (1971), 505-19: 514.

10 Walter Hinderer, 'Probleme politischer Lyrik heute' in Wolfgang Kuttenkeuler (ed.), *Poesie und Politik. Zur Situation der Literatur in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973), pp. 91-135: 91.

11 For a recent version of this argument, see Walter Hinderer, 'Versuch über Begriff und Theorie politischer Lyrik' in idem (ed.), *Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in Deutschland* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), pp. 11-45: 13.

und den dazugehörigen Forderungen und Verdächtigungen geschuldet'.[12] Nevertheless, it proved powerful until the present day, and contemporary readings of Kling are heavily influenced by it. Hermann Korte, for instance, has argued that 'Kling […] keine Liebes-, Natur-, Kriegs-, Freundschafts-, Erlebnis-, Reise- und Alltagsylrik [schreibt].'[13] Instead, 'die Sprache selbst' became 'der eigentliche Gegenstand poetischer Praxis' in his poetry.[14] Similarly, Kerstin Stüssel has come to the paradoxical conclusion that Kling was 'kein engagierter Autor', 'kein Autor der politischen Debatte, aber ein Mann engagierten Sprechens'.[15] In contrast to this tradition, Dieter Lamping has argued in *Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in Deutschland* that political poems are not defined by any kind of poetic speech.[16] As such, he has highlighted, 'ist es nicht zwingend, politische Dichtung auf Referentialität, also auf möglichst objektive Darstellung von Sachverhalten festzulegen'.[17] Instead, he explained that political poems could 'als lyrische Rede fast alle allgemeinen sprachlichen Funktionen erfüllen'.[18] In accordance with Lamping's definition, I argue that many of Kling's poems from the 1970s and 1980s are indeed political. As this section will show, many of the issues he discussed – environmental concerns, animal testing, consumerism – closely aligned him with 'Ökolyrik' of his time, of which Hermann Korte has critically concluded that

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12 Wilfried Barner, 'Die fünfziger Jahre. Gedichte zwischen Hermetik und Öffentlichkeit' in *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, pp. 194-243: 222.

13 Hermann Korte, *Deutschsprachige Lyrik seit 1945*, 2nd edition (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), p. 260.

14 Ibid.

15 Kerstin Stüssel, 'Engagierte Literatur? Gegenwartsliteratur? Gegenwartsliteratur-wissenschaft? Auch eine Fallstudie zu Thomas Kling' in Jürgen Brokoff, Ursula Geitner and Kerstin Stüssel (eds.), *Engagement. Konzepte von Gegenwart und Gegenwartsliteratur* (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2016), pp. 389-414: 402-3.

16 Dieter Lamping, 'Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von 1945 bis zur Wiedervereinigung' in Walter Hinderer (ed.), *Geschichte der politischen Lyrik in Deutschland*, pp. 327-62: 329.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

> [d]as Öko-, Umwelt- und Anti-Atomkraft-Gedicht […] sich von Anfang an wie eine in Verse gebrachte Fernsehnachricht [las], deren Botschaft alle längst empfangen hatten und die nun durch ein Gedicht eine Art höhere poetische Beglaubigung erfuhr.[19]

As will become apparent, some of Kling's poems from the 1980s quite literally are, in Korte's words, 'eine in Verse gebrachte Fernsehnachricht'. However, Kling's achievement was to write about these topical issues in a new poetic language, a language that went beyond the petrified ideological discourse of his time. Thus, Kling's poems are indeed political, but they are not political at the expense of complexity and a sophisticated language.

4

Environment

'ölpest' (1977) and 'öl' (1986)

The case of 'ölpest' (1977) is remarkable as Kling returned to the poem and reworked it over the course of several years, a process which eventually resulted in another poem about the same issue almost one decade later: 'öl' (1986). Both poems treat the ecological disaster of an oil spill at sea, yet they do so in completely different ways. The archival record for 'ölpest' presents one of the rare cases in which Kling seems to have kept most notes of his revisions, thus making it possible to observe how his poetic style developed at a decisive point of his career, a few years before the publication of *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* (1986). At the same time, his manuscripts reveal continuities between his earliest and his later writings, which have thus far been neglected by research. Thus, the case of 'ölpest' makes a strong argument for including *der zustand vor dem untergang* and other early, individually published poems in future editions of Kling's

[19] Hermann Korte, *Deutschsprachige Lyrik seit 1945*, p. 220.

collected poems. This chapter will start with an overview of the archival records and publishing history of both poems before turning to their close readings.

'ölpest' was published in *der zustand vor dem untergang* in 1977 (ZU, 71).[20] The archival record for the poem at Thomas-Kling-Archiv shows that Kling completed the first version of it on 24 December 1976.[21] He then reworked it on three different occasions over the next two and a half years: between January and April 1978, between September and November 1978, and again in June 1979.[22] After June 1979, he seems to have ceased working on the poem. A possible reason for this interruption might have been his first visit to Vienna in autumn the same year, where he spent the academic year 1979/80 (IT, 22).

According to the dating on two typescripts for 'öl', the poem was written around 14 and 15 May 1985. The archival record at Thomas-Kling-Archiv contains five typescripts – one final version and four drafts with editing comments – and a handwritten manuscript.[23] It was published in 1986 in the poetry collection *Heimat und Geschwindigkeit*, to which Kling contributed ten poems and a prose text ('für padlt noidlt').[24] Five poems from the collection were later included in *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* and *geschmacksverstärker* (1989).[25] The other half, including 'öl', was not republished.[26]

The first version of 'ölpest' describes the oil spill in a rather plain language. If line breaks did not divide it into two sets of tercets and couplets, it would be almost

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20 For a transcript see appendix, p. 219.

21 Thomas Kling, 'ölpest (2)'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object Number HHI.2008.D.KLING.2294.

22 For a description and transcripts of the manuscripts see appendix, pp. 220-23.

23 Thomas Kling, 'ÖL'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object Number HHI.2008.D.KLING.2292/3.

24 Wolfgang Schiffer (ed.), *Heimat und Geschwindigkeit* (Munich: Schneider, 1986). For Kling, see pp. 82-97. For a transcript of 'öl' see appendix, p. 224.

25 The poem 'zuleiberücken' (GG, 16) in *erprobung herzstärkender mittel*, the poems 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)' (GG, 67-8) 'verkehrsfunk' (GG, 97-8), 'eins von goyas protokollen' (GG, 103) and 'terraingewinne' (GG, 104-5) in *geschmacksverstärker*.

26 The other poems are 'in landesfarben', 'fallstudie („nichts mehr zu machen")', 'augenverstärkung' and 'evokation („keine beschönigungen")'.

undistinguishable from a prose text. The line breaks, however, do not impose strong caesuras on the poem, as they run parallel to the semantic units. Overall, the poem's stylistic devices are simple. There are no syntactic irregularities apart from a hyperbaton in the first two lines, which gives dramatic emphasis to the adverbial phrase describing the dying oily seabirds: 'stumm oder schreiend angenagelt | das sind die seevögel im öl' (line 1-2). Besides, Kling worked with frequent alliterations such as 'schwarzglänzende skulpturen' (line 8). In the last line of the poem, the image of the dying seabirds is contrasted with human indifference to the ecological disaster, as tourists reschedule their holidays (line 10). Thus, the poem's ecological concern is outspoken. Indeed, it strikes a very similar tone to 'Ökolyrik' of the 1970s and 1980s. In her poem 'Schwarze Schuhe' (1989), Sarah Kirsch observed the consequences of an oil spill in a similar note:

> Es ist ein leichtes Leben hier am
> Rande des Wassers wenn nicht die
> Ölpest den Anblick verdirbt Vogelkadaver
> Ein- und ausgeatmet von grünen so
> Grünen Meer im Dezember.[27]

However, Kling's repeated revisions of 'ölpest' indicate that he was not entirely satisfied with his poetic rendering of the theme. In the first revision, written between January and April 1978, he used ellipses and varying line breaks in order to develop a more complex poetic language. For instance, he changed the beginning of the poem from 'stumm oder schreiend angenagelt | das sind die seevögel in öl' to 'stumm oder | schreiend angenagelt | vögel in öl' (line 1-3). In addition, he also rewrote the poem's last lines. Instead of the contrast between the ecological disaster and human indifference in the original version, the poem now ended with a comparison of the dead seabirds with sculptures and a personification of death as an artist: 'dann | schafft der tod | die schwärzlichen | skulpturen' (line 11-14). In contrast to the original version, the revised poem did not comment on the

[27] Sarah Kirsch, 'Schwarze Schuhe' in *Schneewärme* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1989), p. 35.

event of the oil spill, but rather presented it in an aestheticised way. Overall, Kling's revision undermined the pathos of the original version by omitting the outspoken political message and using more poetic foregrounding effects, such as ellipses.

Surprisingly, Kling did not continue this approach in the second revision of 'ölpest', written between September and November 1978. Instead of elaborating on the poetic foregrounding effects, he returned to a more prosaic, everyday language. In addition, he now used the reference to the oil spill figuratively, as a metaphor for the speaker's emotional state. Thus, the oil spill did not take place 'an der ostküste Englands | in der Bretagne oder sonstwo' (line 2-3), but 'im hirn | im herz' (line 5-6). Even though the poem shows some linguistic experiments, such as the onomatopoetic line '[wenn] schmieriger schwarzglanz flügelschlag schlappmacht' (line 9), the lyrical subjectivity of this version aligns it with 'Neue Subjektivität' rather than more experimental poetic styles.

In the third version, written in June 1979, Kling returned to the poetic foregrounding effects he had already used in the first revision – ellipses and enjambments, which he used even more frequently. In addition, the neologisms and images now reveal a greater ingenuity, such as the reference to 'löschpapier strand' (line 6). But despite these developments, 'pest' does not strike the reader as a particularly remarkable poem. Rather than as poems in their own right, 'ölpest' and its revisions are exceptional for the insight they allow into the development of Kling's distinctive poetic voice. They show that Kling did not exclusively draw on the modernist tradition in his early writings, but how he experimented with diverse styles instead, some of which were influenced by more contemporary tendencies in German poetry such as 'Ökolyrik' and 'Neue Subjektivität'. However, when Kling returned to the theme of the oil spill about six years later, his poetic style had changed entirely. As will become clear in the following close reading, this was mostly due to a complete reconfiguration of the narrative situation of his poetry.

'öl' begins with what could be called an establishing shot of the shoreline: 'ausflockende, gedrosselte sonne | schrumpfende gischt, leicht | gebeugt; winzige spaziergänger, pompeigelb' (line 1-4). The first three lines already show a much more creative use of language in comparison with 'ölpest'. On the semantic level, phrases like 'gedrosselte sonne' and 'schrumpfende gischt' reveal a greater poetic resourcefulness in their unusual combination of attributes and nouns. Syntactically, a greater complexity is achieved with phrases like 'leicht | gebeugt; winzige spaziergänger, | pompeigelb'. Here, the participial attribute is separated from the noun through word order and an enjambment, thus creating a dynamic that seems to emphasise the forward-bent posture of the walkers on the beach. Philipp Böttcher has already alluded to the affinities between Kling's poetry and film, which makes the reader of his poems 'zugleich zum Zuschauer eines "Films in Worten"'.[28] Indeed, comparisons with film turn out to be helpful in grasping the narrative situation created in poems like 'öl'. While at first sight the polyphony of this and other poems might seem chaotic or even overwhelming, a carefully constructed narrator becomes recognisable when re-reading them.[29] It is a narrator who, like a film director, guides the reader through the poem and directs their attention. After the establishing shot of the first lines, the perspective shifts to a series of close-ups drawing attention to detail: the yellow colour of what can be assumed are the walkers' rain jackets and their poking wellington boots in the flotsam. As in the opening lines, Kling virtuosically used line breaks in order to visualise the dynamics of the poem: 'stiefelspitzen drehen weg | sackendes aas um' (line 8-9). This presents a notable change in comparison with 'ölpest', where he still used line breaks rather schematically. One of the most remarkable developments, however, is the use of staged direct speech, Kling's so-called 'inszenierte

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[28] See Philipp Böttcher, 'Fake und narrative Struktur. Zu Thomas Klings Gedichten "geschrebertes idyll, für mike feser" und "weegee's finger"' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 349-62: 350.

[29] Ibid., p. 350.

O-Töne', bits of vox pops that are set off from the rest of the poem with brackets and quotation marks, thus adding to the sensual, cinematic experience of the poem.[30] Thus, phrases like '(„nicht anfassen", „schon | verendet")' (line 6-7) appear to be direct quotes from the walkers commenting on the scene that is described in the poem.

Even though 'öl' is less outspoken in its ecological concern, criticism is still discernable. The hint at 'stornierte flüge' (line 10) may be subtler than in 'ölpest', but in the following lines, the dead seabirds are depicted in a grim memento mori with their 'totenschnäbel | aufgesperrt ihre | u n w i d e r r u f l i c h e n | flügelpaare, hingestreckt' (line 11-14), with an increased letter spacing emphasising the irrevocability of this ecological disaster. 'seitliche köpfe' (line 10) seems to be a description of both the dead seabirds' twisted posture and the public's reaction to the catastrophe (as 'stornierte flüge' in the line before suggests), thus unmasking the insufficiency of human response.

However, the poem does not linger over its political message, but instead returns to its carefully constructed narrative situation. In the following lines, the poem captures a film crew in oilskins handling their equipment on the beach. Metapoetically, the poem thus draws attention to the way in which it is constructed. As Philipp Böttcher has put it, 'Thomas Kling erzählt nicht einfach Geschichten, er teilt zugleich mit, wie diese Geschichten erzählt werden.'[31] As a result, 'öl' is not just a poem about an oil spill and its consequences for nature and wildlife on the shore, but also about the way in which the idea of oil spills in the public mind is always mediated through television and other forms of mass communication, including the poem itself.

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30 On 'O-Töne' in Kling's poetry, see BS, 212 and Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz, 'Das Gedicht unter Dampf halten', p. 177. See also Katharina Grätz, 'Ton. Bild. Schnitt. Thomas Klings intermediale "Sprachinstallationen"', *literatur für leser* 28 (2005), 127-45; Andreas Anglet, 'Sekundäre Oralität und simulierte Medialität in Thomas Klings Gedichten', *Wirkendes Wort* 51 (2001), 79-92.

31 Philipp Böttcher, 'Fake und narrative Struktur', p. 353.

In the final shot, the poem's perspective shifts to an ice cream parlour on the beach, thus establishing a powerful contrast between the image of 'buntbedruckte | schirmchen' (line 17-18) on sticky ice cream and the black, sticky crude oil in the lines before. The poem does not resolve this contrast or offer any comment on it. Instead, it ends by fading out 'im lichtembargo' (line 20), thus leaving it to the reader to make sense of the scene.

As has become clear, the poetic devices Kling used in 'öl' are much more sophisticated than the ones he had used in the earlier 'ölpest'. While Kling's visit to Vienna in 1979/80 has often been seen as the decisive factor in the recreation of his poetic style (BA, 47), it seems that film must be seen as an equally important influence in creating an entirely new narrative situation in his poems. While Philipp Böttcher has already pointed out the affinities between Kling's poetry and film, he did not draw a connection to Kling's work as a film critic for *Rheinische Post* between March 1984 and August 1985 (see chapter 9). In an interview with Alexander Müller on 30 May 2003, Kling explained how he adopted 'die Technik der schnellen Bildschnitte aus dem schnell werdenden Film der frühen 80er Jahre'.[32] Thus, film must be seen as an equally important factor in the refiguration of Kling's poetic style in the early 1980s alongside his stays in Vienna, which turned out to be a decisive turning point for his professional career (see chapters 7 and 8).[33]

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[32] 'A: Deine neues Buch nennt sich "Sondagen", das als Begriff aus der Archäologie die'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.3017. See also BS, 209 and 215.

[33] Doubts about the immediate refiguration of Kling's poetic style during his first stay in Vienna in 1979/80 are also supported by the fact that he republished a poem from 1979, 'fußgängerpassagen' (see *Zwiebelzwerg* 8), in an exhibition catalogue in Vienna in 1980 without changes. See Gabriele Wix, '"hirnschlindernder *herzdolmetsch*, / merkur in etwa". Kunst, Künstler und Atelier im Werk Thomas Klings von 1977 bis 1994' in idem and Kerstin Stüssel (eds.), *Thomas Kling. double exposure* (Cologne: Kunst- und Museumsbibliothek der Stadt Köln, 2017), pp. 19-34: 20.

In creating narrative situations in his poems that drew attention to their own mediatedness, Thomas Kling overcame the narrow concept of authenticity that had still determined much of the poetry in the late 1970s, as Philipp Böttcher rightly pointed out:

> Der für die Lyrik der Neuen Subjektivität konstitutive Gegensatz zwischen einer medial vermittelten und einer authentischen Wirklichkeit wird bei Kling aufgehoben. Ihre letztlich romantische Suche nach "wahren" und "authentischen" Bildern oder einer Vermittlung erlebnislyrischer Authentizität außerhalb der Sprache lehnt Kling ab, weil es keinen Zugriff auf Wirklichkeit gibt, der deren medialer Vermitteltheit entkommt. Die eigentliche Kunst, wie Kling Gedichte erzählt, besteht demnach darin, dass sich solche Überlegungen nahtlos in seine welthaltigen Geschichten fügen.[34]

As a result, Kling's poems have often been attributed a high degree of objectivity by critics. For instance, Hubert Winkels has remarked that Kling's poetry 'nicht den Ort des Beobachters preis[gibt], [sondern] es […] sich selbst als Beobachtungsmittel bei der Arbeit [zeigt].'[35] However, the case is probably more complex than both Böttcher and Winkels suggest. While their observations seem to be accurate in the case of a poem like 'öl', a close reading of 'fragliche fabrik' in the next chapter will show that lyrical subjectivity in need of authentic experience and a meaningful connection to the world was not at all erased in Kling's poetry – even though it was refashioned in a new poetic style.

5

Animal Rights

'fragliche fabrik' (1986)

Kling published 'fragliche fabrik' in his collection *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* with Eremiten-Presse in 1986, which he wrote between August 1981 and February 1985 (GG, 935). The archival record for 'fragliche fabrik' at Thomas-Kling-Archiv includes five

[34] Philipp Böttcher, 'Fake und narrative Struktur', p. 360-61.
[35] Hubert Winkels, 'Stimmung und O-Ton' in *Der Stimmen Ordnung. Über Thomas Kling* (Cologne: DuMont, 2005), pp. 51-61: 54.

typescripts, two of which are dated on 5 and 6 December, and a handwritten manuscript, all with editing comments.[36] On the verso of the handwritten manuscript is the copy of a promotional flyer for one of Kling's performances in 1984, 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne' (see chapter 8). This indicates that Kling finished 'fragliche fabrik' in December 1984, a dating that is also supported by historical context, as the following close reading will show.

In the already discussed letter to his publisher Friedolin Reske on 15 May 1985, Kling explained that, among other reasons, he had chosen the title *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* for his forthcoming collection because of the way in which it resonated with the topical issue of animal testing, which was, as he explained, 'sehr wohl ein Thema'.[37] However, he added: 'grün-kämpferisch beziehe ich […] keine Stellung: die mißbrauchten Tiere stehen in diesem Text – siehe auch FRAGLICHE FABRIK – als Chiffre für (...; bitte selber schaun!)'.[38] In the introduction to this section, I argued that the narrow understanding of political poetry that prevailed in West Germany after the Second World War can be seen as one reason why Kling felt that he had to distance himself so decidedly from 'grün-kämpferisch' issues in his letter to Reske. The frequency with which Kling returned to the issue of animal abuse in his writings gives rise to some well-grounded doubts about the claim that connections between his poetry and contemporary discourses on animal testing were, as Friederike Reents has suggested, entirely superficial. Reents argued that 'Klings Labor Szenario […] nur vordergründig an einen in seiner ethischen Vertretbarkeit in den 1980er Jahren viel diskutierten Tierversuch [erinnert]'. Instead it needed to be seen, she explained, as 'eine künstlerische Installation'.[39]

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36 Thomas Kling, 'fragliche fabrik'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object Number HHI.2008.D.KLING.1354.

37 Letter to Friedolin Reske on 15 May 1985. From the correspondence between Kling and *Eremiten-Presse* at Heinrich-Heine-Institut, Düsseldorf. Object number HHI.2012.7831-124216.

38 Ibid.

39 Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 19.

Of course, a poem is by definition an artistic representation of whatever issue it deals with. The question remains what exactly it is that 'fragliche fabrik' represents and how. It thus seems that Reents too easily dismissed the significance of contemporary discourses on animal testing for Kling's poetry. Even if the reference to lab animals should turn out to be entirely figurative, historical background can tell us why it might have resonated with Kling in the way it did, as he not only used it in 'fragliche fabrik', but also in the later poem 'animalische animation' in *geschmacksverstärker*.

In the letter to Reske, Kling explained that the lab animals in 'fragliche fabrik' were a cipher, even though he did not spell out what for. In any case, his word choice seems suspicious. As Otto Lorenz has pointed out, the term 'cipher' has frequently been used in the German context '[a]ls Negativkategorie zur Bestimmung und Abgrenzung der modernen Lyrik gegenüber der klassischen Dichtung […] im Kontext der Erläuterung der schwer verständlichen Lyrik der europäischen Moderne'.[40] Going back to my initial argument about the prevailing understanding of political poetry in West Germany after the Second World War, the point that Kling seems to have wanted to make in his letter to Reske by calling the lab animals in 'fragliche fabrik' a 'cipher' is that, following the modernist poetic tradition, he wrote about them in a sophisticated language that differed from contemporary poems on similar issues. Thus, Kling's statement needs to be understood in the context of contemporary poetic politics. As the following close reading will make clear, the lab animals in 'fragliche fabrik' are not a poetic cipher in the strict sense – after all, their meaning is not impossible to translate. They are, however, an ambiguous poetic symbol for the understanding of which literal and figurative meanings will turn out to be equally important. To properly register this ambiguity, we need to explore debates on animal testing in 1980s West Germany in more detail.

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[40] See Otto Lorenz, 'Chiffre' in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft* vol. I, pp. 299-301: 301.

From the 1970s onwards, media use fundamentally changed the way in which campaigners for animal rights organised their activism and engaged with the public. Christophe Traïni has elaborated how '[a]udio-visual communication enabled the opponents of animal experiments to find support more easily' and how '[t]he dissemination of photos and films too horrible – and controversial – for publication in traditional media successfully aroused the sort of intense emotions that were likely to rally a potentially much larger audience to the cause'.[41] Animal Liberation Front (ALF) in particular, a group founded in Great Britain in 1976, made use of the possibilities that new technologies offered. In 1984, members of ALF took video footage of appalling experiments that were undertaken on baboons at the University of Pennsylvania, which was used by People for the Ethic Treatment of Animals (PETA) to produce the film *Unnecessary Fuss* (1984).[42] As a result of this and other highly effective campaigns, the newly emerging discourse on the ethics of animal testing succeeded in reaching a broad public. In 1985, more than two million West Germans signed a petition to abandon animal testing forever, which prompted *Der Spiegel* to run a special issue on the matter.[43] As the remarks in his letter to Reske attest, this discourse did not go unnoticed by Kling. Whether or not he actually saw PETA's *Unnecessary Fuss* is unknown. However, its release clearly coincided with the writing of 'fragliche fabrik' and the images of abused baboons in the film show a striking similarity with the ones evoked in the poem. The multimedia approach that Kling adopted in 'fragliche fabrik' also makes it likely that he was inspired by this or similar footage of animal testings. According to Aiyana Rosen, animal rights

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41 Christophe Traïni, 'Opposing Scientific Cruelty: The Emotions and Sensitivities of Protestors against Experiments on Animals', *Contemporary European History* 23.4 (2014), 523-43: 535.

42 Ibid.

43 See the issue 'Tierversuche. Folter für den Fortschritt', *Der Spiegel*, 1 April 1985.

activist began showing video material of animal testings as part of their campaigns in various West German cities from the 1980s onwards.[44]

Another historical point of reference certainly was the case of Stephanie 'Baby Fae' Beauclair, an infant who was transplanted the heart of a baboon by Dr Leonard L. Bailey at the Loma Linda University Medical Center in California on 26 October 1984, which received wide attention at the time.[45] The baby passed away shortly after the surgergy and was dead by the time that Kling wrote his poem.[46]

'fragliche fabrik' confronts the reader with a polyphony of voices. The images in the poem are mediated through diverse channels and different meanings seem to overlap. The baboons on whom scientists 'hinterm mundschutz' (line 6) undertake their experiments are not only separated from the reader by the glass of the 'temperierten kästchen' (line 5) in which they are kept. Gradually, the glass of their incubators seems to transform into television screens on which the same image is '»übern ticker geschickt«' (line 16). 'fragliche fabrik' is a criticism of modern media coverage as much as of animal abuse as such. It denounces a press coverage in which the 'DRUCKERSCHWÄRZE' (line 19) of the latest news story has not yet dried before the next one is already on the ticker.

It seems noteworthy to point out that PETA used very similar aesthetics to Kling in their film *Unnecessary Fuss*. According to Traïni, 'multiple visual and sound elements […] acted together [in the film] to intensify the shock effect: pictures of experiments on monkeys; the noise of machines and tools in use; experimenters talking among themselves;

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[44] See Aiyana Rosen, 'Vom moralischen Aufschrei gegen Tierversuche zu radikaler Gesellschaftskritik – Zur Bedeutung von Framing-Prozessen in der entstehenden Tierrechtsbewegung der BRD 1980-1995' in Chimaira Arbeitskreis für Human-Animal Studies (ed.), *Human-Animal-Studies. Über die gesellschaftliche Natur von Mensch-Tier-Verhältnissen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011), pp. 279-334: 320.

[45] See 'Rosig und gesund: Amerikanische Ärzte haben einem Baby ein Affenherz eingepflanzt', *Der Spiegel*, 5 November 1984.

[46] See 'Gestorben: Baby Fae', *Der Spiegel*, 19 November 1984.

voice-overs by PETA activists; accusing texts at the beginning and end of the film.'[47] Again, the fact that Kling described all of these details in his poem – the sounds of screaming monkeys and scientists talking behind surgical masks (line 6, 13), the light of the machines (line 4), and so on – suggests that he had seen similar footage.

Thus far, 'fragliche fabrik' seems to be a poem about animal abuse and its media coverage in a literal sense. But the high level of emotional identification with the monkeys that is expressed in lines such as 'ach, dein tiefes haar wird nicht | berührt, dein schöndunkler schopf' (line 13-14) hints at an additional, more symbolic layer of meaning. In this context, it is striking that one of the experiments undertaken on the baboons seems to be a heart transplant, as the words 'pflanzer' and 'trophäe' (line 7), referring to a surgeon implanting the organ, suggest. Gabriele Wix has stressed '[die] zentrale Bedeutung der Metapher "Herz" für das literarische Schaffen Klings'.[48] That 'Herz […] ein wichtiges Wort bei Kling [ist]' was already recognised in 1989 by the jury of the 'Förderpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen', who also unmasked Kling as a 'desillusionierter Romantiker'.[49] Friederike Reents argued similarly when she attested that the heart did not represent 'neoromantische Liebe' for Kling, but its failure.[50] This reading seems useful for understanding the symbolic layer of 'fragliche fabrik'.

In this context, the beginning of the poem is striking as the first lines seem to be the only instance when it offers a subjective perspective: 'kurzzuckendes transplantat, ein | weiteres dezemberresümee' (line 1-2). Clearly, it is a thinking and feeling subject who does an end-of-the-year-résumé here, and if we are to read 'kurzzuckendes transplantat' as a reference to their heart, they are clearly in emotional pain. In Kling's first draft of the

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47 Christophe Traïni, 'Opposing Scientific Cruelty', p. 535.
48 Gabriele Wix, '"hirnschlindernder *herzdolmetsch*, / merkur in etwa"', p. 30.
49 Kultusministerium Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.), *Förderungspreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, p. 17.
50 Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 19.

poem, the opening lines went: 'gebrütet; ein weiteres dezemberresümee | geheucheltes klarschiff, vorgezogner | sylvesternebel'.[51] Here, the subjective experience in which the poem is grounded becomes even more evident. The two lines are separated from the rest of the poem with an indentation, after which the perspective seems to continue almost impersonally. But in fact, the images of the abused animals are not only mediated through their news coverage, but also through the emotional response of the poem's subject. Even though the subjective perspective is masked in the poem, it is the key to understanding the references to abused animals in 'fragliche fabrik', which beyond their literal meaning also offer a foil for emotional identification.

In order to understand the cultural and historical implications of this emotional identification with lab animals in Kling's poem, we need to return once again to the particular background of animal testing in West Germany in the 1980s. As Christophe Traïni has argued, the history of political mobilisation against animal abuse is also a history of shifting emotions and sensitivities. For the second part of the 20th century, he has identified a growing 'identification with vulnerable, unjustly persecuted creatures' among animal rights activists, a dimension that earlier activism had still lacked.[52] Various factors seem to be responsible for this change, but a remodelled relationship to animals in general and a more expressive emotional style seem to have been two main aspects.[53]

Another reason why video footage of abused animals resonated as profoundly with the West German audience in particular was the high popularity of animal films. In West Germany, the genre had enjoyed a huge success after the Second World War especially

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51 Thomas Kling, 'fragliche fabrik'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object Number HHI.2008.D.KLING.1354.

52 Christophe Traïni, 'Opposing Scientific Cruelty', p. 541.

53 Ibid., p. 542.

due to Bernhard Grzimek's television programme *Ein Platz für Tiere* (1956-1987).[54] In 1960, Grzimek's documentary film *Serengeti darf nicht sterben* was nominated as the German entry for the Academy Award and became the first German film to win the trophy after the Second World War. As Thomas Lekan has argued, Grzimek's wildlife films were a decisive cultural factor that 'paved the way for Germany's green movement' as

> West Germans who grew up between the 1950s and 1980s remember Grzimek fondly as the avuncular 'animal whisperer' whose extemporaneous, professorial style and passion for animal protection helped to transform many straight-laced boys and girls of the Adenauer era into the firebrand ecological activists of the Brandt years.[55]

Lekan also stressed that the postcolonial dimension of Grzimek's work and the way in which it resonated with 'West Germany's forgotten green imperialist past, repressed World War II memories, and anxieties about American-style modernization' has long been left out of consideration.[56] In Kling's poem, this dimension seems to be present in the references to the baboons as 'kolonialware' (line 9) and the scientists as 'pflanzer' (line 7), which not only alludes to implants but also to colonial plantations. The pharmaceutical colonialism that Kling seems to expose here was an issue that indeed occupied the West German public in the 1980s. For instance, in 1983 *Der Spiegel* ran a story about 'westliche Pharmakonzerne [die in großem Umfang] in der Dritten Welt Medikamente [vermarkten], die dort überflüssig sind oder eher Schaden stiften'.[57]

While the poem picks up on these and other contemporary issues, their function as emotional triggers seems to be more important than their political dimension. Thus, 'fragliche fabrik' needs to be understood in the context of shifting patterns of emotional expression. While issues like animal abuse and organ donation are not completely

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54 Thomas Lekan, '*Serengeti Shall Not Die*: Bernhard Grzimek, Wildlife Film, and the Making of a Tourist Landscape in East Africa', *German History* 29.2 (2011), 224-64.
55 Ibid., p. 225.
56 Ibid., pp. 228-9, 230.
57 'Pillen statt Brot', *Der Spiegel*, 17 January 1983.

detached from their political meaning, they are more important as foils for subjective emotional states – feelings of pain, loss, separation and alienation. That is why the pain that is inflicted on the baboons in 'fragliche fabrik' resonates with the poem's subject in such an immediate, sensory way. As a result, the poem amounts to more than a criticism of animal abuse – at its core lies a feeling of suffering from the modern world that was typical for the alternative scene of the 1980s, a feeling that Joachim C. Häberlen has pointedly called the 'emotional misery of capitalism'.[58] Accordingly, 'fragliche fabrik' finishes with the successful transplant of a heart, represented by the figure of 'MR. SCHROEDER MIT DEM ZWEITEN DEM | EISERN HERZN' (line 24-5), as an iron heart like that of Iron Henry in the Grimms' tale of 'The Frog Prince' seems to be the only possible way of dealing with the world's misery.[59]

To conclude, while 'fragliche fabrik' uses a sophisticated poetic language and creates a complex narrative situation that draws attention to the role that media plays in our experience of the world, its lyrical subjectivity still aligns it with earlier tendencies in West German poetry such as 'Neue Subjektivität'. While the lyrical subject in 'fragliche fabrik' seems to be aware of the impossibility of an unmediated, authentic experience, they still suffer from the lack of such an experience. Thus, the issue of animal testing not only gives rise to political criticism, but provides a foil for the perceived 'emotional misery of capitalism'. The achievement of Kling's poetry was to develop a new poetic language to express the shared mind-set of his generation, a language that combined lyrical subjectivity and a political concern with a highly sophisticated poetic style, as the jury for the 'Förderpreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen' recognised in 1989 when they argued

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58 Joachim C. Häberlen, *The Emotional Politics of the Alternative Left*, pp. 123-66.

59 Again, Kling refered to an actual case: William J. Schroeder was transplanted an artificial heart at the Humana Heart Institute International in Louisville, Kentucky on 25 November 1984. See 'Show mit Herz', *Der Spiegel*, 3 December 1984. The article also mentions how, just twenty days after the surgery, Schroeder 'trank im Bett das erste Bier'.

that '[wenn] Kling trotz dieser unbegreiflich gleichgültigen Katastrophenwelt das lyrische Ich hier und da gerne überhöht, macht ihn zum modernen Zeitgenossen. Kling trifft genau den Seelenton einer jüngeren Generation.'[60]

However, the fact that for Kling's generation 'Emotion und Erfahrung […] vor Theoriebildung [rangierten]', was not without problems.[61] For the generation before them, history had provided the 'analytical tools' of their anti-authoritarian revolt and 'the material for the analysis of the present'.[62] For Kling's generation, history provided the backdrop for their personal experiences. As a result of their search for an authentic and meaningful existence, their 'conception of time shifted away from past and future and towards an ever-changing present'.[63] In the long run, such an approach to history can lead to historical relativism, an issue that I will touch upon in the next chapter and discuss in more detail in part V.

6

Consumerism

'frevel' (1979) and 'obst und gemüse-marterl' (1989)

'obst und gemüse-marterl' was first printed in *Luchterhand Jahrbuch der Lyrik* in 1986 and then included in Kling's collection *geschmacksverstärker*, published with Suhrkamp in 1989.[64] It is thus probably one of the earliest poems in *geschmacksverstärker*, which was written between 1985 and 1988. The poem's history, however, dates back even longer. 'obst und gemüse-marterl' deals, among other things, with the overproduction of

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60 Kultusministerium Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.), *Förderungspreis des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, p. 17.
61 Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 204.
62 See Timothy S. Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties*, pp. 81, 83.
63 Joachim C. Häberlen, *The Emotional Politics of the Alternative Left*, p. 59.
64 Christoph Buchwald and Elke Erb (eds.), *Jetzt, in unserer Lage. Luchterhand Jahrbuch der Lyrik 1986* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1986), pp. 52-3.

food and resulting disposal as waste. Already in 1979, Kling had written a poem dealing with the same issue and published it in *Zwiebelzwerg* under the title 'frevel'.[65] Unlike the stages of 'ölpest', which I have discussed in chapter 4, the archival records for 'frevel' and 'obst und gemüse-marterl' do not give evidence that Kling reworked the poems over any considerable period of time. However, the similarities between both poems are unmistakeable, and Kling might not have kept the notes of his revisions. The archival record for 'frevel' only includes the poem's final edition on an undated typescript, which also indicates that Kling might not have kept earlier and later versions.[66] The archival record for 'obst und gemüse-marterl' contains a two-page typescript of the final poem and a one-page typescript of an earlier version including editing comments, both undated.[67] But for the purpose of this close reading, the question whether or not Kling continuously reworked 'frevel' or not can be neglected, as the fact that he returned to the issue of overproduction and food waste five years later seems remarkable enough. In the following, I will point out how Kling's treatment of the issue changed over time.

Let us have a closer look at 'frevel' first. The poem begins descriptively, by depicting different settings in which food is disposed of: an entire harvest of apples is dumped and a whole crop of wheat is discharged into the ocean (line 1-8). The following lines stress the pervasiveness of the issue by pointing out that the given examples are generic: 'setz für apfel | aprikose ein für weizen | gerste' (line 8-10). The frequent alliterations, assonances and anaphora of the first lines in combination with an irregular trochaic rhythm give the poem a solemn impression, which is intensified by the voice of

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65 Thomas Kling, 'frevel', *Zwiebelzwerg* 8 (1979), no page number. For a transcript see appendix, p. 225.

66 Thomas Kling, 'frevel'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.1360.

67 Thomas Kling, 'obst und gemüse-marterl'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.2278.

the first-person speaker addressing the reader directly. There is an obvious tension in the poem between the prosaicness of what is described – waste disposal – and the speaker's pathos-infused tone. The following lines, 'ich sag dir | mir sind geschichten | bekannt in denen menschen | für geringere frevel geisten | umgehn spuken müssen bis | an den jüngsten tag' (line 10-15), introduce the speaker as the representative of an ancient moral code through their religious diction and associations of Judgement Day. Wasting food is described as a 'frevel', a transgression against divine law. A strong hierarchy between the speaker's authoritative voice and the reader marks the communicative setting. In the following lines, the poem leaves the biblical context behind and turns to a frame of reference evoking folk beliefs: 'hast du der sage entsagt | murmelspruch enthext | mythen umdekoriert' (line 16-18). 'sprich!', the speaker then asks the reader in a commanding tone that is emphasised by the interjection's prominent position comprising an entire line, and the first use of punctuation (line 19). 'und keine ausflüchte: | buchstabier das wort | frevel | bis in deinen | gekalkten schlaf' (line 20-24), the speaker inflicts on the reader, once again emphasising the religious transgression of their actions. Again, the poem tries to create authority through its solemn style, its hierarchical communicative setting and its moral cultural framework of both biblical and folk beliefs. The purpose of these strategies is apparent: they are meant to evoke shame in the reader or, in keeping with the religious jargon, repentance. But treating the issue of food waste in such a high poetic style seems disconcertingly comic. The slightly awkward impression is intensified in the last line, 'gekalkter schlaf', which evokes a frame of reference that differs from the religious resonances of the previous lines. Burnt lime is a common disinfectant used to cover mass graves. Thus, the poem recalls familiar images of war crimes and, in the German context, the Holocaust. Comparisons between environmental destruction and the Holocaust were frequent in the ecologically engaged literature of the 1970s and 1980s, and Kling seems to

be no exception.[68] Of course, they need to be seen in the context of a collective discourse on German history and identity. Frank Biess has pointed out how central memories of the Holocaust were for the imagination of an impending ecological catastrophe in the 1980s.[69] With regards to the widespread fear of 'Waldsterben', he argued:

> Die Vorstellung des Waldsterbens in der Rhetorik von Holocaust und Vernichtungskrieg unterstreicht die Bedeutung der Holocaust-Erinnerung für die Zukunftsimagination in den achtziger Jahren. Dass der deutsche Wald mit seiner traditionell tief verankerten Bedeutung für die deutsche nationale Identität nun zum Opfer dieses neuen Vernichtungskrieges werden sollte, war durchaus eine Variante des Opfermythos, über den die vermeintliche Zerstörungskraft des Zweiten Weltkriegs gegen die Deutschen selbst gekehrt wurde.[70]

The repercussions of this discourse not only manifested in Kling's poem, they are also clearly discernible in a recent monograph on Kling, where Johann Reißer concluded that '[s]o wie Celans Werk zutiefst von der Auseinandersetzung mit Holocaust und Faschismus geprägt ist, […] ist für Klings Werk die Auseinandersetzung mit Praktiken der Zerstörung und Unterwerfung von Natur zentral'.[71] Both instances raise concerns about historical relativism, a matter that I will discuss in more detail with regards to Kling's poetry in chapter 12. Leaving this question open for now, it still seems debatable whether Kling's poem succeeds in what it tries to do. Rather than confronting the reader with the issue of overproduction, the simple morality evoked in 'frevel' seems to mask the real complexity of the matter and inhibit the reader from thoroughly engaging with it by evoking shame instead. The poem denies the entanglement of our globalised world by implying a direct connection between food crises and individual actions, thus obscuring the fact that we are part of a complex, global context that is much more difficult to address.

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68 See Axel Goodbody, 'Literatur und Ökologie: Zur Einführung' in idem (ed.), *Literatur und Ökologie*, pp. 11-40: 24.
69 Frank Biess, *Republik der Angst*, p. 386.
70 Ibid.
71 Johann Reißer, *Archäologie und Sampling*, p. 146.

Five years later, however, Kling found a very different poetic language to address the issue of food waste. Just like in 'frevel', the first image in 'obst und gemüse-marterl' is that of plantations, a symbol for mass-agriculture. However, narrative perspective is created quite differently this time. Instead of the authoritarian first-person speaker in 'frevel', the speaker in 'obst und gemüse-marterl' again behaves like a film director. From a view of the plantations, the poem cuts to a dumping ground, zooms in on the 'teeth' of what might be a bulldozer's shovel filled with food waste, slides over different piles of fruit, vividly describing how they burst under the weight of the heavy machine. 'obst und gemüse-marterl' is a distinctly visual poem. As I have argued before, the frequent shifts of perspective mimic camera shots and might be inspired by the films that Kling reviewed for *Rheinische Post* at the same time (see chapter 9). In addition, a sophisticated use of punctuation serves to provide further perspective and create different layers of speech. For instance, '(»folgen sie?«)' (line 4). Parentheses serve to comment on what is happening in the poem. '(maulaff die | -sperre)' (line 14-15), a mix of the expressions 'Maulaffen feilhalten' and 'sperrangelweit', seems to refer to a gawking spectator of the scene portrayed in the previous lines with whom the reader is able to identify. 'obst und gemüse-marterl' interacts with the reader in a less hierarchical way than 'frevel'. Instead of addressing them in the accusing second person, a collective 'wir' in the first lines acts out what seems like a childhood dream – playing with heavy machinery and food: 'als erstes | planieren wir die kirschen! reifn- | knirschn, wegspritzende fontänchen | und gurgelnd verschwindet der apfel' (line 5-8). Instead of painting an image of biblical wrath, 'obst und gemüse-marterl' uses humour to engage with its readers.

Colloquialisms and orthographic echoes of spoken German offer further points of identification. The poem's title situates the reader in Southern Germany or Austria: a 'marterl' is a wayside shrine or cross that is typically found in these regions. 'Marter'

refers to the passion of Christ, which would often be depicted on these monuments, urging self-examination and repentance from the passers-by. Thus, the poem maintains some of the religious context that was so ostensible in 'frevel', but it undercuts the latter's pathos through humour and the distancing use of dialect and poetic foregrounding effects.

In the second part of the poem, the dumping ground gradually transforms into an alpine landscape. 'kar' (line 13) is a dialectal expression describing a mountain valley used for pasture, but here it denotes a ravine of tomatoes. The 'birnberge' and 'pflaumenberge' begin to form an alpine setting as known from postcards (line 16-17). From line 19 onwards, references to the cultural history of the Alps prevail. As Daniela Strigl has pointed out, 'kasersage' (line 20) refers to the legend of a cheese maker, '[dem] Tiroler Kasermandl, einem Senner, der zur Strafe für seinen verschwenderischen Umgang mit Butter (er hatte Butterkugeln zum Kegeln verwendet) verwünscht wurde'.[72] Of course, another 'kaser' from Tyrol that Kling might have had in mind is the poet Norbert C. Kaser (n. c. kaser) from Brixen, to whom Kling dedicated a performance in Lana in 1992.[73] Individual words in 'obst und gemüse-marterl' trigger an avalanche of possible readings. Instead of the vague allusions to folk beliefs in 'frevel', Kling re-created a far-reaching network of cultural history in 'obst und gemüse-marterl'. In some cases, such as the legend of the cheese maker, the connection to the issue of food waste seems obvious. In other cases, it is less evident. For instance, it is not entirely clear what the phrase 'bleiberg | im brustfeuer' (line 21-22) refers to. Bad Bleiberg is a spa town in the multicultural region of Carinthia on the Austrian border to Slovenia. The town's history dates back to the 14th century, when resources of lead and zinc made it an important site of early industrialisation. Over the course of hundreds of years, the local miners developed a

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72 Daniela Strigl, 'Kling in Wien. Zu einem literarischen Myzel' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 81-112: 107.

73 According to a postcard to Christian Döring on 16 June 1992. From the correspondence between Kling and Suhrkamp at Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach.

distinct culture and language, which might have been of interest for Kling. ‘brustfeuer’ is listed in the Grimms’ dictionary with the explanation ‘von wacholdern, nägelein, zimmet’ – ‘juniper, cloves, cinnamon’. Although Jean Paul once used ‘brustfeuer’ to describe a crossbow, the Grimms’ explanation makes it more likely that ‘brustfeuer’ referred to some sort of ointment – an ancient kind of Vicks VapoRub for the treatment of respiratory diseases, a common illness among miners. As this example shows, it is often impossible to explain Kling’s historical and cultural references with complete certainty. This ambiguity is intentional, however. Instead of receiving ready-made answers, the reader needs to use their own decoding skills in order to establish meaning, thus creating a more engaging reading experience than ‘frevel’. Is there a connection between early industrialisation in the Alps and our industrialised present leading to overproduction and food waste? The poem makes this connection possible, but the final answer is left open to the reader.

As these overlapping layers of meaning suggest, ‘obst und gemüse-marterl’ is a poem that is heavily invested in montage technique. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it thus pays tribute to one of the early pioneers of this art form: Raoul Hausmann. The lines ‘ […] ZUNGENLUMPEN, | ZISCHN DEN ZÄHN DAS ABC, GEBLECKTES | HAUSMANN’SCHES GEBISS’ (line 25-7) describe Hausmann’s photo collage ‘ABCD’, a self-portrait in montage-style. Again, the reference does not seem to have any apparent connection to the issue of food waste, but it resumes the imagery of mouths and teeth that runs through the entire poem and gives it coherence: the bulldozer’s ‘teeth’ (line 4), the gawking spectator (line 14-5), and finally, Hausmann’s mouth. The earlier typescript suggests that Kling created ‘obst und gemüse-marterl’ just like a paper collage, by layering different semantic units step-by-step. For instance, the working text of the poem does not yet include the lines describing Raoul Hausmann’s self-portrait, which seem to have been

added at a later point.[74] Again, this montage-style serves to engage the reader, by prompting them to develop their own readings.

The poem's final lines describe the ascent to a mountain summit leading over apricot-scree, a peach-moraine and a rockfall of red-cheeked apples and take the reader back to an alpine landscape of fruit. Once more, Kling's interest in jargon and dialect becomes apparent. For instance, 'führe' (line 33) is not a verb, but refers to a climbing route in mountaineering jargon. As we know from Marcel Beyer, Kling himself was an enthusiastic mountaineer from a young age.[75] As he finalised the manuscript for *geschmacksverstärker*, he retreated to the alpine town of Schruns in Vorarlberg for some time in December 1988. 'nach 13 jahren wieder kniebundhosen, wenn auch nicht mehr hochalpin', he wrote to his editor Christian Döring at Suhrkamp.[76] Certainly, these and other travels left their marks on his writing.

In the poem's final scene, idyllic mountain scenery echoing images of German Bergfilm is juxtaposed with the sight of lorries discharging their load of wine into the sea. The tension between these two images is intensified by the direct speech in parentheses, one of Kling's typical 'O-Töne', which seems to be a quote of a tourist at the sight of the glowing mountain peaks: '(»so vorgeglühte alpen«, | »einfach maa-le- | risch«)' (line 36-7). However, nothing about this setting seems consistent. The apparent peacefulness of the mountain range conflicts with the image of the lorries 'slashing horse piss' into the sea, while the tourist's sentimentality is undermined by their shaky grammar indicating some level of intoxication, as the wordplay 'vorglühen' ('to pre-drink') suggests.

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74 Thomas Kling, 'obst und gemüse-marterl'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.2278.

75 Marcel Beyer, 'Thomas Kling: Herz', BA, 175-187: 177-8.

76 Postcard to Christian Döring on 14 December 1988. From the correspondence between Kling and Suhrkamp at Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach.

To conclude, ‘obst und gemüse-marterl’ reveals the inconsistencies and contradictions of our modern lives instead of trying to conceal or resolve them, which makes it a much more powerful poem on the issue of overproduction and food waste. Unlike the earlier ‘frevel’, the poem does not explain or moralise, but it does not simplify either. Instead, it establishes a far-reaching network of cultural references, in which the reader themselves needs to navigate and create meaning. They are thus engaged and challenged on various different levels. On a sensory level, the poem combines onomatopoeic sounds with film-like visual qualities. On an intellectual level, the poem’s cultural references and poetic foregrounding effects need active decoding. Kling used montage technique as a tool in ‘obst und gemüse-marterl’ in order to present the complexity of our confusing present without masking its inherent contradictions. While ‘frevel’ constructed communication as a one-way road, ‘obst und gemüse-marterl’ requires the reader to make sense of the world presented to them, thus turning communication into a multidirectional conversation.

Of course, one of the strengths of Kling’s poems lies in the poetic soundscapes they create, which allows them to be experienced on a more visceral level as well. Thus, when Kling read ‘obst und gemüse-marterl’ at a prize reading in Düsseldorf in 1986, Norbert Hummelt concluded that it was ‘eins von Klings besten Gedichten’.[77] Kling’s performance, which I will discuss in chapter 11, turned the reading of ‘obst und gemüse-marterl’ into a multisensory event for the audience. With great virtuosity, he realised the poem’s polyphonic and rhythmic qualities, thus transforming different layers of meaning into sound. As a result, the audience in Düsseldorf did not necessarily need to understand what the poem was about in order to be entertained by it. Quite possibly, they did not even realise that they were listening to a political poem, as Kling’s poetic language was so

[77] Norbert Hummelt, ‘erprobung herzstärkender mittel’, *StadtRevue. Kölns Stadtillustrierte* 12.2 (1987), 80.

fundamentally different from what 'grün-kämpferisch' poetry supposedly sounded like in the 1980s. Performance was an essential element of Kling's self-marketing from the 1980s onwards, and while his visit to *Gegenbuchmesse* in Frankfurt in 1979 had already demonstrated the necessity of engaging with his audience, it was in Vienna in 1983 where he found the credentials required for his self-stylisation as a serious poet.

PART III

A New Start

Vienna occupies a significant place in Thomas Kling's poetic career as his 'literarische Wahlheimat'.[1] In Daniela Strigl's analysis of the various references to Vienna in Kling's writing, she comes to the conclusion that the Austrian capital was 'Konzentrationspunkt seiner künstlerischen Genealogie'.[2] While it might be more accurate to say that Vienna was one concentration point among others within Kling's far-reaching poetic network, which included more than just one centre, the city's impact on Kling's making as a poet was certainly singular, as the following chapters will show.

Two events in Vienna set the course for Kling's entire poetic career: his first public performance with Joe Berger and his meeting with Friederike Mayröcker, which took place on two consecutive days: 23 and 24 January 1983.[3] The first event marked his initiation as a performer, and Kling gave a detailed description of this defining moment in his poetic roadmap *Itinerar* (IT, 12-13). The second event marked his initiation as a poet, as Mayröcker became an important patron who vouched for Kling's next collection of poetry (ER, 5). This section will look at both constellations from a new angle. The first chapter will investigate how Mayröcker presented her friendship with Kling in the two poems 'für einen Dichter' in *Winterglück* (1986) and 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver / Lilien auf die Brust gemalt / für Thomas Kling' in *Das besessene Alter* (1992). The poems give us an insight into Mayröcker's understanding of their friendship and thus

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1 Frieder von Ammon and Peer Trilcke, 'Einleitung' in Frieder von Ammon, et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 9-22: 21

2 Daniela Strigl, 'Kling in Wien. Zu einem literarischen Myzel', p. 81.

3 Thomas Kling and Marcel Beyer, 'Das Eingemachte – Smalltalk 91', *Konzepte. Magazin für eine junge Literatur* 10 (1991), 53-61: 55.

present a perspective that has not yet been discussed by research. In the next chapter, the focus will shift to the similarly neglected figure of Joe Berger, one of Kling's 'ältesten Gewährsleute in Wien'.[4] While members of the so-called *Wiener Gruppe* are frequently named in the context of Kling, the analysis of Joe Berger's work and its possible impact on Kling will show that the literary scene in Vienna was in fact a lot more diverse and extensive than the focus on *Wiener Gruppe* references suggest. The comparison with Joe Berger will shed new light on Kling's early performance strategies, which differed significantly from the 'Sprachinstallationen' that established his fame in the late 1980s.

Friederike Mayröcker and Joe Berger were two distinct role models for the young Kling at the beginning of his career: on the one hand, a distinguished poetess carrying forward a cultural project, aware of her own responsibility within the poetic tradition; on the other, a politically astute but playful and virtually unknown performer in Austria's alternative cultural underground. As diametrically opposed as these two roles may be, both of them resonated with Kling's project in their own way.

7

Finding a Patron

Thomas Kling and Friederike Mayröcker

Recalling a phone call with Thomas Kling, Friederike Mayröcker wrote in *Die Zeit*: 'Ich glaube, er sagt dann noch: zu den glücklichsten Konstellationen der letzten zwanzig Jahre gehört es, dasz FM und ThK einander wahrnehmen konnten.'[5] In the same article, Mayröcker remembered how she and Kling had met for the first time at Café Museum in Vienna in 1983. Ten years later, it was the publication of Kling's third collection of poetry

4 Thomas Kling and Marcel Beyer, 'Das Eingemachte', p. 55.
5 Friederike Mayröcker, 'Löschblattlosigkeit', *Die Zeit*, 12 November 1993.

nachtsichtgerät (1993) that prompted her flashback. Looking back today, one might feel inclined to agree that Monday 24 January 1983 was indeed a fortunate day, as it marked the beginning of an inspiring exchange between two of the most influential German-speaking poets of the late 20th century.[6] But Kling's success in the following years can easily mask the fact that he was still a virtual nobody in 1983. In order to convince Mayröcker to meet him, he claimed to be a journalist doing a story on Konrad Bayer:

> Mit Friederike Mayröcker telefonierend, die ihn noch nicht kannte, gab er [Kling] sich als Journalist mit Interesse an dem verdrängten Schicksal von Konrad Bayer aus. Aus einer kurzen, zunächst mehr wunschlosen Begegnung seitens der Autorin im Café Museum wurde eine fruchtbare Freundschaft.[7]

The following chapter will investigate some aspects of the early friendship between Kling and Mayröcker, which laid important foundations for Kling's upcoming career. Close readings of two poems from Mayröcker's collections *Winterglück* (1986) and *Das besessene Alter* (1992) – 'für einen Dichter' and 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver / Lilien auf die Brust gemalt / für Thomas Kling' – will be at the centre of my argument.[8] Besides being documents of their friendship, they also show what it meant to write poetry in the 1980s – both in the context of the Cold War and within a deeply gendered literary network. After all, the reason why Mayröcker's vital role in establishing Kling as a poet has been underestimated until the present day is probably because she is a woman.[9] While it is well known that Kling's first collection *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* (1986) was

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6 In 'Löschblattlosigkeit', Friederike Mayröcker dated their first meeting on 25 January and Kling's performance in 'Margaretensäle' on 24 January 1983. However, as the event took place on 23 January, it is more likely that the two met on 24 January 1983.

7 Alex Hilbert and Heinz-Norbert Jocks, 'Das Genie. Wunderbare Sprachvermehrung in der Lyrik von Thomas Kling', *Düsseldorf's Überblick* 10/11 (1986), 36-8: 37.

8 In the following, I will use the short title 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver'.

9 On the gendered public image of Mayröcker and other female poets, see Doris Moser, 'Die Bachmann, die Aichinger, die Mayröcker. Zur Konstruktion von Autorinnen-Images in journalistischen Medien' in Brigitte E. Jirku and Marion Schulz (eds.), *Fiktionen und Realitäten. Schriftstellerinnen im deutschsprachigen Literaturbetrieb* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 101-23.

published with a preface by Mayröcker ('Zuschreibung'), the fact that it only came into existence because Mayröcker recommended it for publication with *Eremiten-Presse* has not been acknowledged so far.[10] If Kling became the acclaimed poet we know today, it was not least thanks to Mayröcker's patronage.

Before I turn to the close readings, a few words need to be said about the project of *Winterglück*. The collection resonated with the shared political and intellectual context of its time, as Mayröcker explored the role of the poet facing a daunting reality. 'wie sieht | meine Welt? hält sie noch | stand? und wie lange?', Mayröcker wrote in 'Furor: Klage Anklage Ohnmacht', whose ecological awareness makes it the most obviously topical poem in the collection.[11] Despite this clear hint at the current zeitgeist, *Winterglück* was generally received as another example for Mayröcker's so-called 'hermeticism' after its publication.[12] The widely held belief that Mayröcker's poetry serves no purpose outside of language itself has been hard to dispel, even though she herself has distanced herself from

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[10] According to a letter Kling sent to Friedolin Reske on 13 February 1985. From the correspondence between Kling and *Eremiten-Presse* at Heinrich-Heine-Institut, Düsseldorf. Object number HHI.2012.7831-124216.

[11] Friederike Mayröcker, 'Furor: Klage Anklage Ohnmacht' in *Gesammelte Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), pp. 459-60. First published in *Winterglück: Gedichte 1981-1985* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), pp. 42-3. Aurélie Le Née has analysed this and other nature poems for their political message in *La poésie de Friederike Mayröcker – une «œvre ouverte»* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), pp. 192-9.

[12] See e.g. Gert Ueding's review of *Winterglück* in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: 'Wer diese Gedichte verstehen will, darf nicht nach ihrem außersprachlichen Sinn fragen (auch wenn Sinn-Rudimente erhalten bleiben, sich immer wieder vordrängen), sondern muß sich auf ihre Gebrauchsweise einstellen, darf die Bedeutung der Einzelelemente nicht in einer Entsprechung zur äußeren Welt suchen, sondern allein in ihrem Platz im Gedicht. […] Das Ideal, auf das hin sich Friederike Mayröckers Gedichte unaufhaltsam zubewegen, ist nicht die Vermittlung der sprachlosen mit der menschlichen Welt, sondern die autonome künstlerische Ausdrucksform, die in sich selbst ihr Genüge findet und Bedeutung mit Funktion zusammenfallen läßt. Ein Weg, der ins Leere führt, auch ins bloß Private, Abseitige, in die Maschinerie von Sprachfunktionen, die sich von der Alltagsrede nur dadurch unterscheidet, daß die pragmatische Zwecksetzung wegfällt und an ihrer Stelle die formalästhetische Instrumentalisierung des Wortes tritt.' Gert Ueding, 'Wort im Schatzhaus der Wirklichkeit', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 9 December 1986.

such an understanding.[13] Even amongst contemporary critics, there still seems to be a consensus that 'Politisches' remains 'weitgehend ausgespart' from Mayröcker's writing.[14] In contrast to this, Aurélie Le Née has recently argued for a more political understanding of Mayröcker's poetry and concluded that:

> La poétesse s'y positionne par rapport à l'Histoire, à l'évolution de la littérature au regard des événements historiques, et donc à l'impact de la littérature sur la société et de la société sur la littérature. Indéniablement, une dimension politique se dessine, malgré toute la réticence que Friederike Mayröcker éprouve vis-à-vis d'un tel concept.[15]

As the following close readings will show, Mayröcker's poems are indeed anything but unpolitical. However, hers is a political project that does not bother with day-to-day politics, but follows a tradition of political aesthetics that aligns her with poets like Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Schiller. As Mayröcker asserted in an interview in 1994: 'Ich glaube, daß das, was als rein poetisch gewertet wird, sehr politisch wirkt.'[16]

This is certainly true for *Winterglück*. Unlike most critics, a younger generation of poets immediately sensed the topicality of Mayröcker's collection. For them, *Winterglück* struck a nerve. According to Thomas Kling, 'wurde [*Winterglück*] von einer jungen Dichtergeneration als der vielleicht wichtigste Gedichtband der achtziger Jahre erkannt. Es

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13 See the following statement: 'Ich möchte keine individuelle Sprache sprechen. Ich möchte Deutsch schreiben und diese Vorstellung des Deutschschreibens sollten vielleicht, wenn du dieses Bild willst, glühende Drähte des Individuellen durchziehen. […] Ich habe zur Sprache ganz andere Vorstellungen als noch vor 20 oder 30 Jahren; damals hatte ich die Vorstellung von der experimentellen Sprachwelt. Die habe ich nicht mehr. Sie ist abgelöst. Ich habe vor allem *Wahrnehmungsvorstellungen*, die sich in Sprache verwandeln müssen. Und dann hab ich Lebensirritationsvorstellungen, die sich in Sprache verwandeln. Vor allem diese *Irritationsvorstellungen*.' Siegfried J. Schmidt, '"Lebensirritationsvorstellungen". Gespräch mit Friederike Mayröcker am 16. April 1986 in Wien' in *Fuszstapfen des Kopfes. Friederike Mayröckers Prosa aus konstruktivistischer Sicht* (Münster: Kleinheinrich, 1986), pp. 121-42: 142.

14 Ulrike Basse, 'Ich schreibe meine eigene Poesie', *Mittelbayerische Zeitung*, 17 February 1984.

15 Aurélie Le Née, *La poésie de Friederike Mayröcker*, p. 205; see also her article 'Engagement poétique, engagement politique. La poésie de Friederike Mayröcker des années 1950 à aujourd'hui', *Études Germaniques*, 258 (2010/12), 349-68.

16 Michael Cerha, 'Man schwimmt ja jetzt nicht im Glück', *Der Standard*, 17 December 1994.

sind Mayröckers Gedichte, die in der deutschen Literatur der Gegenwart deutlich lesbare Spuren hinterlassen haben.'[17] In a postscript to the selected poems *Benachbarte Metalle* Kling edited in 1998, which features various poems from *Winterglück*, he underlined the lasting significance of the collection:

> Marcel Duchamp sprach einmal von "Benachbarten Metallen", als ihm nicht mehr einfiel (einfallen wollte), welche Werkstoffe er zu einer bestimmten Arbeit verwandt hatte. Auch bei vielen hundert Mayröckergedichten ist es das Ähnliche, das Unterschiedene, ist das Scheidbare verschmolzen. Ihr Gedicht ist aus benachbarten Metallen gemacht. Gerade ihr Band *Winterglück,* der die Gedichte der frühen bis mittleren achtziger Jahre enthält, ist Schwermetall und scheint eine besonders lange Zerfallszeit zu haben, weswegen ich bei meiner Anordnung besonderen Wert auf diese benachbarten Metalle gelegt habe.[18]

Let us take a closer look at the imagery of this passage. The image of molten metal that likens the poet to an alchemist is of course an established modernist metaphor that Kling used to emphasise both poets' avant-gardist heritage in this context.[19] But the second metaphor, the poems' 'half-life', makes reference to an event that took place in the year of *Winterglück*'s publication: the nuclear disaster of Chernobyl in April 1986. By combining the topical with the poetical, Kling's metaphor demonstrates how Mayröcker's poetry itself is grounded in the historical context of her time. This will become more evident in the following close readings.

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17 Thomas Kling, 'Friederike Mayröcker: Das Abscannen der Gesichtsdaten. Laudatio', *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung* (2001), 173-9: 178.

18 Thomas Kling, 'Benachbarte Metalle' in Friederike Mayröcker, *Benachbarte Metalle. Ausgewählte Gedichte. Anordnung und Nachwort Thomas Kling* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), pp. 157-8: 157.

19 The alchemist is a motif that Kling borrowed from Hugo Ball, see BO, 18. For a list of Kling's readings on alchemy, see Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, pp. 74-5. Ball himself adopted the image from Arthur Rimbaud, whose prose poem *Une Saison en Enfer* (1873) features a section with the title 'Délires II: Alchimie du verbe'. See Olivier Bivort, 'Remarques sur l'alchimie du verbe', *Littératures* 54 (2006), 133-46.

Mayröcker wrote 'für einen Dichter' in April 1985, at about the same time as her 'Zuschreibung' for *erprobung herzstärkender mittel*.[20] The dedication in the poem's title is striking. Many of Mayröcker's poems have addressees, but they usually name the person for whom they have been written. Here, the reader is first left uncertain about the poet's identity, and only the bracketed two-line quote that follows the title makes it clear that the poem is dedicated to Kling.[21] At first glance, the purpose of Mayröcker's poem seems similar to her preface: a gesture of appreciation between an established writer and a young, aspiring poet. In 'Zuschreibung', Mayröcker famously wrote: 'manche dieser Gedichte hätte ich selbst gerne geschrieben'.[22] This confession not only served to open doors for Kling and endowed him with the necessary credentials to be published, but it acknowledged Kling as a poet in his own right. 'Zuschreibung' means 'attribution', and what Mayröcker attributed to Kling in this performative act of speech was his being a poet.[23] If 'Zuschreibung' opened the space for Kling to be a poet, 'für einen dichter' demonstrated how to fulfil this role. The poem raises questions about the poet's place within a poetic tradition that reaches back to Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Schiller, as will become clear in the following.

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20 Friederike Mayröcker, 'für einen Dichter' in *Gesammelte Gedichte*, pp. 432-3 and *Winterglück*, p. 102.

21 The quotation is taken from the last line of the poem 'landmaschinen' in *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* (GG, 59-60).

22 Friederike Mayröcker, 'Zuschreibung' (ER, 5).

23 On performative strategies in Mayröcker's texts see Alexandra Strohmaier, '"Bekenntnisse haben nichts mit der Wahrheit zu tun". Zur Performativität der Prosa Friederike Mayröckers. Punktuelle Anmerkungen' in Françoise Lartillot, Aurélie Le Née, Alfred Pfabigan (eds.), *"Einzelteilchen aller Menschengehirne". Subjekt und Subjektivität in Friederike Mayröckers (Spät-)Werk* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2012), pp. 115-30; Alexandra Strohmaier 'Prosa und/als Performanz. Zur performativen Ästhetik Friederike Mayröckers' in *Buchstabendelirien. Zur Literatur Friederike Mayröckers* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2009), pp. 121-40.

The poem begins with a scenic description: a flying flock of swans in the sky.[24] The phrase 'persische Pulks' is misleading – it recalls Thomas Kling's poem 'persisches pärchen' – but instead of a human couple, it refers to a group of birds. The swans have to be whoopers, a migrating species that is distinguished by their bright yellow beak ('Mangofarbe', line 3) and their distinctive song ('Gefiepe', line 2). Whoopers are natural to the Tundra, but they spend the winters in milder regions around the Aegean Sea, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea – hence 'persische Pulks'. Besides, the reference establishes a connection to classical Greece that is further explored in the following lines.

The unusual set of metaphors used to describe the flock of swans can only be deciphered with the help of the poem itself. Different voices, which are set off with brackets or italic letters, serve as comments or even explanations.[25] For example, the bracketed comment '(Schwäne)' helps us to understand that both 'persische Pulks' (line 1) and 'Kreppfingerlinge | am Himmel' (line 3-4) refer to the swans, who crowd the sky in a delicate, lace-like pattern, thus turning into '(*seine* [des Himmels] | *Dessous*!)' (line 4-5). Because of their recognisable song, a variety of folk stories and myths evolve around the whooper swan, including the story of Cygnus and Phaeton told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: after Phaeton died in the attempt to ride his father Apollo's chariot across the sky, Apollo turned Phaeton's grief-stricken lover Cygnus into a swan. Mayröcker seems to refer to this story in line 7-9: 'ist dann für immer | verschwunden Spielfreund und | abgekippt […] | mit schnee- | weiszem Überwurf', thus transferring the scene described in the first lines into

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[24] See Friederike Mayröcker, 'für einen Dichter' in *Gesammelte Gedichte*, pp. 432-3.

[25] See Friederike Mayröcker: 'Kursivschreibungen sind für mich nach wie vor sehr wichtig, weil ich damit etwas akustisch hervorheben will. Ich stell mir immer vor, daß das, was ich kursiv schreibe, irgendwie geschrien wird. Ich denke oft beim Schreiben daran, daß ich auch selber vorlese, und dann ist es unumgänglich für mich, auch wirklich nicht außer acht zu lassen, daß ich diese Kursivierungen mache. Ich stell mir dann immer vor, daß ich das mit besonders hervorgehobener oder lauter Stimme spreche.' Siegfried J. Schmidt, '"Es schießt sich zusammen." Gespräch mit Friederike Mayröcker (März 1983)' in *Friederike Mayröcker* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 260-83: 281.

the literary realm. The transition takes place in line 6-7: 'wächst dann herunter, die Nagel- | probe'. The downward movement described in this line can be understood in various ways. It is not only the swans who 'wächst […] herunter', while they are descending for landing, not only Phaeton trying to steer the chariot of the sun, but it is the process of combining the two, turning the instant into a poem and connecting it to the poetic tradition.[26] 'Nagelprobe' thus not only refers to the controlled landing of the chariot, but also to the attempt of writing a poem about it.

This attempt, however, is at the constant risk of failing. 'abgekippt' (line 9) not only describes how Phaeton loses control of the chariot, but on a self-reflexive level it also stresses how the poem itself is at the constant risk of failing and losing meaning. The sharp enjambment before and the blank space immediately after 'abgekippt' visualise how meaning is lost and leads to speechlessness. '(»ist alles | zu viel..!«)' another voice then adds, speaking into the void (line 9-10), which seems to be a comment on the seeming impossibility of the poetic process, of creating different layers of meaning without slipping into meaninglessness. Is this voice attributed to Kling? The typography is the same as that of the initial quotation: bracketed direct speech, signalled with inverted guillemets. And indeed, one of the most important features Kling seems to have taken from Mayröcker's poetry is the layering of meaning achieved through typography and montage.[27]

The picture that Mayröcker paints of ancient Greece in the following lines is nostalgic: 'mit schnee- | weiszem Überwurf, damals, an der Küste von | Marathon, Kustos

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[26] Wings – of birds or butterflies – are a common symbol for poetic inspiration in Mayröcker's writing. See Inge Arteel, 'Geflügelte Inspiration' in *gefaltet, entfaltet. Strategien der Subjektwerdung in Friederike Mayröckers Prosa 1988-1998* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2007), pp. 150-56.

[27] Aurélie Le Née has examined some stylistic similarities between Mayröcker and Kling, 'Le dialogue poétique entre Friederike Mayröcker et Thomas Kling', *Études Germaniques*, 262 (2011/2), 431-46. On polyphony in Mayröcker's texts, see Helga Kasper, 'Polyphone Aussagestruktur im Werk Friederike Mayröckers', *Cahiers D'Études Germaniques* 37.2 (1999), 163-72.

(Hüter) des | dieses einzigen | Paradieses' (line 11-14). Like actual snow, the 'schneeweiszer Überwurf' (line 11) covers the lingering gap of meaninglessness in the poem. Whether it refers to Cygnus' transformation into a swan or to the *chiton* that the 'Kustos' might wear is unclear, but the imagery serves to restore meaning in the poem and ties it back to a previous, harmonious state located at the Greek coast, 'damals, an der Küste von | Griechenland' (line 11-12). The once harmonious state is past, however, and the line breaks emphasise the irretrievability of the 'paradise lost'. The deictic 'damals' seems to refer to the ancient Greek *poleis* at the time of the Greco-Persian Wars ('Marathon', line 12), between 499 BC and 449 BC. To understand the function of this reference in Mayröcker's poem, we need to read it in the context of the reception of Greek antiquity in German cultural history. On the one hand, an obvious point of reference is Friedrich Schiller, who in *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795) contrasted the supposed wholeness of the Greek *polis* with the fragmentation of modern society.[28] But in the case of 'für einen dichter', Friedrich Hölderlin seems to be of even greater interest than Schiller.

The symbol of the swan in the context of Greek antiquity not only recalls the story of Phaeton, but also serves as a cipher for the poet Pindar, whom Horace dubbed the 'Dircean swan' in ode IV carmina II.[29] Of course, the poet who is known for the most extensive reception of Pindar in the German language is Hölderlin, who is an important poetic role model for Mayröcker.[30] The impact of Pindar on Hölderlin is recognisable in his poetics, especially his theories about the relationship between time, memory, and language. The question of how historical experience could be expressed through language

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[28] Friedrich Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, 6th Letter, ed. by Wolfgang Düsing (Munich: Hanser, 1981), p. 24.

[29] Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 'Carm. IV.2' in *Opera*, ed. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1985), p. 112.

[30] In 2009, Mayröcker published a collection with the title of Hölderlin's alter ego *Scardanelli* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009).

became pressing for Hölderlin after the disappointing experience of the French Revolution and the resulting loss of political hope. In two fragments from around 1800, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig' (also known as 'Über die Verfahrensweise des poetischen Geistes') and 'Das untergehende Vaterland' (also known as 'Werden und Vergehen'), Hölderlin developed his idea of poetry as 'ein Akt der Sprachfindung der Erinnerung'.[31] Memory, Hölderlin thought, would open up the space in which historical change could be imagined, because its reflexive distance could reveal the conditions for the constitution of our reality. In contrast to the subjective 'Gedächtnis', he thought of 'Erinnerung' as a universal power. 'Erinnerung', to him, was an on-going performative process in which different moments in time could be connected through language in their transient state. Thus, historical experience could be made accessible through an on-going engagement with language.[32]

This idea obviously resonates with Mayröcker's poetic project. The apparent contradiction between her insistence on 'Biographielosigkeit' on the one hand and the massive presence of memory in her writing on the other can only be understood if we keep Hölderlin's differentiation between 'Gedächtnis' and 'Erinnerung' in mind. According to Mayröcker, her books are the only place where memory gains reality:

> Das mit der Erinnerung, mit dem eingeschränkten Erinnerungsvermögen, ist eigentlich schon immer da gewesen. Ich konnte mich auch mit 20 nicht so sehr an irgendwelche Kindheitssachen erinnern. Ich kann mich auch jetzt nicht, im Alter, an die Kindheit erinnern, das ist überhaupt nicht der Fall. Es sind da gewisse weiße Stellen der Erinnerung, wo ich über Jahre hinweg mich nicht erinnern kann, was eigentlich los war. Ich muß dann anhand der Erscheinungsdaten verschiedener Bücher rekonstruieren, was unter Umständen in diesen Jahren gewesen ist.[33]

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31 Johann Kreuzer, 'Zeit, Sprache, Erinnerung: Die Zeitlogik der Dichtung' in *Hölderlin Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2011), pp. 147-61: 147.

32 Johann Christian Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist' in *Theoretische Schriften*, ed. by Johann Kreuzer (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998), pp. 39-62: 61

33 Siegfried J. Schmidt, '"Lebensirritationsvorstellungen"', p. 132.

While Mayröcker's personal 'Gedächtnis' might be limited, her writing demonstrates how 'Erinnerung' and 'Sprachfindung' depend on each other in an on-going performative process. This is the historical space that Mayröcker tried to create in 'für einen dichter'. By tying the present moment (a flock of swans in the sky) back to a historical past (ancient Greece) and connecting both to our shared cultural knowledge (e.g. the meaning of the swan in cultural history), she created 'Erinnerung' in Hölderlin's sense.

But historical awareness is not the only lesson to be taken from 'für einen Dichter'. The term 'Nagelprobe' gives us a further hint. It is a term originally used in printing jargon, where it describes a test that is done to see whether the colours of the print sheet have dried or not. At the same time when Mayröcker wrote both 'Zuschreibung' and 'für einen Dichter', she was preoccupied with Picasso's *Vollard Suite* etchings that illustrate scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Eventually, the etchings inspired her to write the radio play *die Umarmung, nach Picasso* (1986).[34] One of the myths illustrated by Picasso, the story of Phaeton, seems to have left an impression on 'für einen Dichter'.

The myth of Phaeton is of course a conspicuous choice for a poem dedicated to a young poet. Phaeton tells the story of a son seeking recognition and approval from his father and dying in the attempt to gain it. An additional layer of self-referentiality comes into play if we know about an incident that took place between Hölderlin and Schiller in 1795. The older Schiller had initially become a supportive mentor of the young Hölderlin after the two had met in 1793, but soon after, their relationship started to oscillate between admiration and rivalry.[35] The conflict escalated when Schiller asked Hölderlin to translate Ovid's *Phaeton* for his *Musenalmanach* in 1795, in what has often been understood as an

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[34] See Inge Arteel, 'Nach dem Bilder- und Berührungsverbot. Kunst und Erotik in *die Umarmung, nach Picasso*' in Alexandra Strohmaier (ed.), *Buchstabendelirien*, pp. 97-120.

[35] See Ulrich Gaier, 'Friedrich Schiller' in *Hölderlin-Handbuch*, pp. 78-82.

educational measure on Schiller's side to restrain the young Hölderlin's ambition.[36] The project failed, Schiller did not include the translation in his *Musenalmanach*, and Hölderlin later called the whole exercise 'albern' in a letter to Neuffer.[37]

Knowing this background, how are we to understand Mayröcker's reference to the exact same passage in her poem for Kling? Unlike Schiller and Hölderlin, Mayröcker and Kling remained in close contact until Kling's early death in 2005, and feelings of rivalry between them seem unlikely considering the deep respect that both poets articulated for each other throughout their careers.[38] Nevertheless, the reference to Phaeton in a poem dedicated to Kling at the beginning of his career in 1985 can certainly be read as a warning to a young poet to be moderate in his aspirations. In addition, by likening herself to Schiller and Kling to Hölderlin, Mayröcker underlined her own importance for and influence on Kling. Despite the apparent generosity and modesty of her 'Zuschreibung', Mayröcker seemed well aware of how deeply Kling was indebted to herself, not least stylistically. Thus, 'für einen Dichter' is a double-edged sword: it is both a gesture of appreciation towards a younger poet and a gentle reminder of his place within the poetic tradition. How the relationship between Mayröcker and Kling developed over the following years will become clear in the next close reading.

On 26 June 1990, Mayröcker wrote another poem for Kling: 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver / Lilien auf die Brust gemalt / für Thomas Kling', which was

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[36] On the relationship between Schiller and Hölderlin, the Phaeton myth and its influence on Hölderlin, see Charlie Louth, 'The question of influence. Hölderlin's dealings with Schiller and Pindar', *The Modern Language Review* 95.4 (2000), 1038-52.

[37] Friedrich Hölderlin, Letter to Neuffer, March 1796, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, 2 vols., ed. by Günter Mieth (Munich: Hanser, 1970), vol. II, pp. 690-92: 692.

[38] See also Aurélie Le Née, 'Le dialogue poétique entre Friederike Mayröcker et Thomas Kling', pp. 431-46.

published in the collection *Das besessene Alter* comprising poems from 1986-1991.[39] Five years had passed since Mayröcker had written 'für einen Dichter', and life had changed not only for Kling in the meanwhile. Kling had become a prize-winning author, published his second collection *geschmacksverstärker* with the prestigious publisher Suhrkamp in 1989 and received the Brinkmann-Stipendium in 1990. On a global level, what had still seemed unimaginable in the mid-80s was happening: the Cold War was coming to an end, the two German states were going to be reunited, and the Soviet Union was falling apart. This provides the background for the optimistic tone of the poem, which distinguishes it from the more cautious message of 'für einen Dichter'. The historical framework that is established in 'blaues Manöver' does not go back to the role model of classical antiquity, as is the case in 'für einen Dichter'. Important points of reference in 'blaues Manöver' are, again, Friedrich Hölderlin, Jean Paul, and Oswald von Wolkenstein. The complex title – 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver / Lilien auf die Brust gemalt / für Thomas Kling' – establishes the framework for the rest of the poem, but Mayröcker's montage technique needs decoding.[40] Jörg Drews read 'blaues Manöver' as a metaphor for the poetic writing process.[41] This fits the original meaning of the French 'manœvre' from which it was borrowed, as Kluge's etymological dictionary tells us:

> Entlehnt aus frz. *manœvre* f. (eigentlich 'Handhabung'), dieses
> aus spl. *manuopera* f. 'Handarbeit', zu l. *manū operārе* 'mit der Hand arbeiten',

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[39] Friederike Mayröcker, 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver / Lilien auf die Brust gemalt / für Thomas Kling' in *Gesammelte Gedichte*, p. 530. First published in *Das besessene Alter. Gedichte 1986-1991* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), p. 27.

[40] According to Luigi Reitani, 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver / Lilien auf die Brust gemalt / für Thomas Kling' is an example for the autonomous character of Mayröcker's titles, '[deren] Bezug zum Text nicht immer deutlich [ist]' and '[die] ihnen einen freien und assoziierenden Kommentar liefern'. See 'Verwandlungen und Fragmente. Zur späten Lyrik Friederike Mayröckers' in Klaus Kastberger and Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler (eds.), *In Böen wechselt mein Sinn. Zu Friederike Mayröckers Literatur* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1996), pp. 53-68: 59-60.

[41] Jörg Drews, '"Überaus schöne und blaue Manöver" – Laudatio auf Friederike Mayröcker zum Großen Literaturpreis der Bayerischen Akademie der Künste 1996', *neue deutsche literatur*, 509 (1996), 162-9.

> zu l. *manus* f. ʻHand' (manuell) und l. *opera* f. ʻArbeit' (zu l. *operārī* ʻarbeiten'; operieren). Aus ʻHandarbeit' ergibt sich die zusätzliche Bedeutung ʻBewegung (der Hand)', die dann auf Heeres- und Flottenschwenkungen übertragen wird. Daraus dann einerseits verallgemeinernd ʻTruppenübung', andererseits aus ʻgeschickte Wendung' dann ʻKunstgriff'.[42]

Originally, 'manœvre' – handiwork ('Handarbeit') or the handling of something ('Handhabung') – described the process of doing something manually. Later, it came to mean 'to handle something with particular artifice' ('Kunstgriff'). The semantic shortcut from 'doing something with particular artifice' to 'writing a poem' seems evident. Besides being extremely 'fine' or 'beautiful', the writing process is described as 'blue'. The hyperbaton – 'ein überaus schönes und blaues' instead of 'ein überaus schönes, blaues' – gives special emphasis to each attribute. Again, it is evident how a poem can be written in a particularly fine manner, but how it can be written 'blue' seems puzzling. The German 'blau' does not share the figurative meaning of the English 'blue', meaning 'sad' or 'melancholic'. The German expression 'etwas ins Blaue hinein tun' (to take a shot at something, to do something intuitively or haphazardly) seems closer to what is meant here. Of course, 'blue' is also the colour representing divine blessing and inspiration since antiquity, as can be seen in the depiction of saints, in particular the Virgin Mary, until the present day.[43] In German Romanticism, blue became the signifier of poetic inspiration and longing as such, condensed in the symbol of the 'blaue Blume'. This connotation continues until the present day.[44] Following this tradition, Mayröcker gave one of her first

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42 'Manöver' in Friedrich Kluge and Elmar Seebold, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012). Digital Edition.

43 See John Gage, 'Die Farbe des Göttlichen Lichts' in *Kulturgeschichte der Farbe. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 2009), pp. 58-61.

44 See Irmgard Egger, 'Blau und Gold: Chromatik der Sehnsucht bei Novalis' in Walter Pape (ed.), *Die Farben der Romantik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 127-35; Wolfgang Müller-Funk, *Die Farbe Blau: Untersuchungen zur Epistemologie des Romantischen* (Vienna: Turia und Kant, 2000); Ernst Leonardy, '"Farbe der Introvertierten": die Farbe Blau in der deutschen Lyrik zwischen Symbolismus und Expressionismus' in Irene Heidelberger-Leonard (ed.), *Wahlverwandtschaften in Sprache, Malerei, Literatur, Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 2000), pp. 129-45; Angelika

collections of poetry the title *Blaue Erleuchtungen* (1973).[45] Thus, Jörg Drews seems to be right: 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver' refers to the process of writing a poem, which requires luck, artifice and inspiration.[46] Considering Mayröcker's tendency to create overlapping layers of meaning, the phrase 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver' might even serve to establish a connection to her earlier Kling-poem 'für einen Dichter': Hölderlin's poem 'In lieblicher Bläue', which strikes a similar tone, was first published in Wilhelm Waiblinger's novel with the meaningful name *Phaeton* (1823).

But of course, the most common meaning of 'Manöver' in modern German describes a field exercise in military jargon. If this seems farfetched, let us bear in mind that the Cold War was just coming to an unexpected end in 1990 and that a new war had been a constant and real threat for decades after the Second World War. The openness and optimism that speaks out of the poem does not only express delight at Kling's success as a poet, but a more general relief as the threat of war seems to have passed. This reading becomes even more likely if one knows that the two sides of military manoeuvres are usually assigned colours, red for the aggressor and blue for the defender. Thus, it would have been quite common during the 1980s to read about 'Blauland' defending itself against 'Rotland' in reports about NATO-manoeuvres that were staged in West Germany as part of the allied demonstration of power against the Soviet Union.[47] Manoeuvres were held frequently and at times with an incredible investment of resources: operation

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Overath, *Das andere Blau. Zur Poetik einer Farbe im modernen Gedicht* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987).

45 Friederike Mayröcker, *Blaue Erleuchtungen. Erste Gedichte* (Düsseldorf: Eremiten-Presse 1973).

46 See also Mayröcker's poetological text 'blauer Bericht / Erdichtungen' in *Magische Blätter III* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 38-40. In Thomas Kling's poetry, the symbolism of the colour blue is more ambivalent, see Jutta Müller-Tamm and Lukas Nils Regeler, 'Bläue. Poetologische Lesarten einer Farbe in der Lyrik Thomas Klings', *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 2 (2018), 310-24.

47 See Hans Schueler, 'Nato-Manöver in Niedersachsen: Geheimhaltung unerwünscht. Unter den Augen sowjetischer Beobachter zeigte die Bundeswehr, was sie gelernt hat', *Die Zeit*, 27 September 1985.

'Lionheart' in September 1984 was Britain's 'biggest military exercise since World War II' involving 'over 130,000' soldiers practicing land battles including air support in an area that stretched across the entire Federal Republic of Germany from the border with the GDR in Lower Saxony to the Belgian coast at Ostende and Zeebrugge.[48] The exercise 'was primarily conducted by the British Army of the Rhine' (BOAR), and included operations in the area around Kling's native Düsseldorf.[49] Given the frequency, size and public attention with which these kind of military manoeuvres were staged, it is highly likely that Mayröcker was aware of this additional layer of meaning. As in 'für einen Dichter', political and poetical reflections complement each other in 'blaues Manöver'.

The second part of the title, 'Lilien auf die Brust gemalt', is a quote from Jean Paul. He used the phrase in one of his satirical idylls, 'Poetisch-prosaische Bauern-Idylle über die Freuden des reichen Stadt- und vornehmen Weltlebens', in which he mocked the bourgeoisie's naïve idealisation of country life and their hedonistic pleasures:

> Und an den Schäferinnen tun sich jeden Abend die rothen und weißen Nachtviolen der Schaam und Unschuld auf, Lilien auf die Brust gemalt, nicht auf den Rücken. Alsdann liebet das ganze Hirtenland, und an den Hirtinnen funkeln die Steine und die Hirten folgen den hellen Steinen; wie die Insektenweibchen nächtlich schimmern, um die Männchen nachzulocken.[50]

The lilies on the young women's chests are most likely an allusion to the Order of the Jar, or 'Orden der Lilie oder Blumentöpfe', a chivalric order that is described in encyclopaedias of Jean Paul's time.[51] The order followed the motto 'Be moderate', and the irony of the passage lies of course in the immoderateness of the young women's

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48 Michael C. Klaver, 'Lionheart 84. Armed Forces Exercise Report', *Armed Forces*, 4.1 (1985), 13-19: 13.

49 Ibid., pp. 13, 16.

50 Jean Paul, 'Poetisch-prosaische Bauern-Idylle über die Freuden des reichen Stadt- und vornehmen Weltlebens' in Franz X. Wißhoffer (ed.), *Geist- und kraftvollste Stellen aus dessen sämmtlichen Werken mit biographischen und historischen, wie auch Eigennamen- und Fremdwörter-Erklärungen* (Grätz: Greiner, 1834).

51 See Jacob Christoph Iselin, 'Lilien-oder-Blumen-töpfe-Orden', *Neu-vermehrtes Historisch- und Geographisches Allgemeines Lexicon*, part IV, 4th edition (Basel: Brandmüller, 1743), p. 746.

behaviour. Ferdinand of Antequera founded the chivalric Order of the Jar in 1403 during the crusades against the Moors in Spain.[52] This is only relevant here because the poet Oswald von Wolkenstein, one of Kling's historical role models,[53] was himself a member and is portrayed with a sash of the order in his collection of 'Minnesang' lyrics (Liederhandschrift B, Innsbruck, 1432).[54]

If the title of Mayröcker's poem likens Thomas Kling to Oswald von Wolkenstein using a reference to the Order of the Jar taken from Jean Paul, we need to understand what this multi-layered historical framework means in the context of the year 1990. Let's start with Jean Paul.[55] In order to understand his significance in the decade we are dealing with, it seems useful to first have a look at the history of his reception in Germany. There had been a growing interest in Jean Paul in both German states since the 1970s, which was inspired by the same idea: the urge to re-write the classical canon and its tradition.[56] Of course, the target was different – on the one hand, the Marxist tradition, on the other, the bourgeois one – but the function of Jean Paul in both cases was the same. In 1987, Jochen Golz went as far as to attribute the growing interest in Jean Paul to a 'krisenhafte

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52 D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe, 1325–1520* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), pp. 330-38.

53 In *Itinerar*, Kling likened himself to Oswald von Wolkenstein on a photograph that shows him next to Oswald's depiction on a memorial stone at the cathedral of Brixen in South Tyrol, 'lebensgroß und stilisiert in Stein, wie im Selbstbewußtsein und Kühle ausstrahlenden gemalten Porträt – das älteste erhaltene Porträt der Neuzeit, das ein Dichter von sich hat anfertigen lassen.' (IT, 61-2).

54 See Michael Waltenberger, '»paddelnde mediävistik«. Über Thomas Klings Umgang mit mittelalterlichen Texten' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte,* pp. 137-61.

55 Thomas Kling acknowledged Jean Paul' influence on his collection *morsch*: 'In "morsch" ist die "mitteltinte" Jean Pauls eingeflossen, gemündet.' (IT, 28).

56 See Jochen Golz, 'Jean-Paul-Forschung 1970-1983 in der BRD. Anmerkungen zu ihren Tendenzen und Ergebnissen', *Weimarer Beiträge* 4 (1987), 663-78, especially p. 664; Dorothee Böck, 'Jean Paul als "geheimer Lehrer". Aspekte und Probleme der Jean-Paul-Rezeption in der DDR', *Weimarer Beiträge* 36.1 (1990), 52-73, especially p. 53; Stephan Pabst, 'Eskapismus und Innovation : Jean-Paul-Rezeption in der DDR-Literatur der 60er und 70er Jahre', *Jahrbuch der Jean-Paul-Gesellschaft* 48/49 (2013/14), 185-204, especially p. 203.

gesellschaftliche Situation in der BRD Mitte der sechziger Jahre', in which Jean Paul became a 'Reflexionsmedium' of the New Left.[57] He concluded that

> es kann vor diesem Hintergrund einsichtiger werden, daß eine sich formierende linksbürgerliche Germanistik ihre Angriffe auf ein traditionell-geistesgeschichtliches Bild der deutschen Klassik auch unter dem Deckmantel Jean Paul vorgetragen hat.[58]

The change of values that was taking place in society did not spare literature and the literary canon. In this process of re-evaluation, Jean Paul seemed to be a new role model for two reasons, over and above his exclusion from the classical canon: as a contemporary of Goethe and Schiller, his work responded to the same historical context – the French Revolution and its aftermath, which offered another point of identification for a generation seeking renewal; and, instead of harmony and totality, his aesthetics cherished humour and digression. As a result of this, by the time Mayröcker wrote her poem, Jean Paul had become an icon opposed to the restrictive, bourgeois or Marxist idea of literature, and references to him were often more symbolic than literal, as Dorothee Böck concluded in 1990: 'Jean Paul mag zwar "in" sein, doch er ist nicht populär.'[59]

The second layer, the reference to Oswald von Wolkenstein, takes us back to a time when the idea of a shared European identity began to take shape that became the driving force for a shared cultural project based on humanist values in the following centuries. As we are aware today, this cultural project was too often used to cover a thinly disguised eurocentrism and promote economic interests at the expense of the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the belief in the value of this project in Mayröcker's poem is unbroken.

The image of the poet that is painted in the first lines is an image of triumph: the 'Lindenbaumfächer' in the poet's hair evoke images of a victor's wreath and palm leaves, both symbols for victory. In the neologism 'Lindenbaumfächer', the image of the palm is

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57 Jochen Golz, 'Jean-Paul-Forschung 1970-1983 in der BRD', pp. 663-4.
58 Ibid., p. 664.
59 Dorothee Böck, 'Jean Paul als "geheimer Lehrer"', p. 55.

blended with that of the lime tree. In contrast to palms, lime trees do not have fronds. In addition, 'nordafrikanische Knötchenfrucht' (line 2) seems to describe a date palm.[60] Whereas the palm tree is part of a Mediterranean, Judeo-Christian cultural history, the lime tree of course resonates with a specifically Germanic tradition of poetry.[61] A cultural history of Europe is evoked here that developed in exchange with, but also in opposition to, the East. Like the hint at the crusades in the title, the juxtaposition of the lime and the palm tree serves to establish an opposition between the orient and occident, the East and the West. In her poem, written in what seems to be the beginning of a new era after the Cold War, Mayröcker reworked old tropes of Europe as the cradle of civilisation and culture, a project in which the poet is supposed to take a leading role. It is thus not a surprise that the first lines of Mayröcker's poem recall Schiller's 'Die Künstler' (1789):

> Wie schön, o Mensch, mit deinem Palmenzweige
> Stehst du an des Jahrhunderts Neige
> In edler stolzer Männlichkeit,
> […] [62]

Schiller wrote 'Die Künstler' in 1789, at a time when he was inspired by his enthusiasm for the French Revolution, before it turned into a violent bloodshed that caused Schiller to fall into a writer's block that lasted until he wrote 'Das Reich der Schatten' about six years

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60 In the German context, the fruit and the palm have been used as symbols for language cultivation at least since 1617, when the 'Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft' (also 'Palmorden', because of the palm depicted on its crest) was founded in Saxony-Anhalt, the first society for the care of the German language. Martin Opitz and Andreas Gryphius were among its members. See Harald Weinrich, 'Eine fruchtbringende Gesellschaft für die deutsche Sprache', *Jahrbuch der deutschen Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung* (2016/17), 35-40. Thomas Kling alluded to this tradition in his inaugural speech at 'Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung'. See Frieder von Ammon, 'Von Epenchefs und Studienabbrechern' in *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 41-66: 59.

61 For instance Walther von der Vogelweide's 'Under der linden' in *Leich, Lieder, Sangsprüche*, ed. and rev. by Christoph Cormeau, 14th edition (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), pp. 77-8.

62 Friedrich Schiller, 'Die Künstler' in *Sämtliche Gedichte und Balladen* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2004), pp. 159-70: 159-60.

later.[63] While Schiller still wrote prose texts during this time, he produced not a single poem. 'Die Künstler' thus paints an optimistic image of the progress of humanity, with the artists at the forefront of civilisation. Jürgen Brokoff called it a 'triumphierende Inthronisation der Künstler, die den Kulturprozess der Menschheit vollenden werden.'[64]

In Mayröcker's poem as in Schiller's, the image of the artist painted in the first lines abounds with virility, victory and youth. In Schiller, he is decorated with 'Palmenzweige' (line 1), in Mayröcker, with 'Lindenbaumfächer' (line 1). Various references to his full and bouncy hair in Mayröcker attest his 'stolze edle Männlichkeit' (Schiller, line 3). The dynamic of the first lines of Mayröcker's poem is remarkable: As 'Lindenbaumfächer' fall down from the poet's hair, which is shaken by the wind, the reader's gaze is drawn to the ground, 'zu Boden' (line 4), and pulled further down by the enjambment, then drawn up again to his 'Schopf oder Duft oder Hölderlins Jugendlocke'. The result of this stylistic trick is that we seem to look up at him from a lower angle, which makes his appearance even more triumphant. In Mayröcker's poem as in Schiller's, the poet is the leader into a new era. And again, as in 'für einen Dichter', Thomas Kling is likened to the young Friedrich Hölderlin.

The tone of the poem changes in the following lines. There is a break between the symbolic, celebratory scene of the first lines and the following everyday scenes. The construction of the following lines is further complicated by the repeated use of the conjunction 'oder'. In logic, 'oder' connects at least two alternative words or phrases, each of which could make a statement true. In what way then is seeing 'Hölderlin's Jugendlocke' (line 5) similar to seeing a puppy hopping into a taxi (line 6), similar to seeing a pair of trainers drying on a windowsill (line 8), similar to lying on a bench in the

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63 See Jürgen Brokoff, 'Das Reich der Schatten/Das Ideal und das Leben' in Matthias Luserke-Jaqui (ed.), *Schiller-Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2011), pp. 267-9: 267.

64 Jürgen Brokoff, 'Die Künstler' in *Schiller-Handbuch*, pp. 265-7: 265.

shade of a tree (line 11)? It has to be that each of these moments can inspire a poem, and each experience can be sublimated in poetry. It is interesting how Mayröcker works with time here. Starting with moments happening in the blink of an eye, such as seeing a puppy on the street, she stretches literary time until it seems to expand endlessly, in the shade of a tree counting heartbeats (line 12). The everyday moments of our lives are linked to the endlessly stretched out time of humankind, as the poet writing at the present time is linked to the endless tradition of writers before them. Initially, the heartbeats seem to be a symbol of human time in general, similar to the ticking of a clock. But after the line break and the dash, we learn that it is the heartbeat of Catherine of Siena, a religious writer living around the time of Oswald von Wolkenstein. Catherine of Siena was influential in returning the seat of the papacy to Rome from Avignon, where it had moved in a time of political unrest. She is therefore considered one of the patron saints of Europe in Catholicism. Mayröcker's description of her 'mit dem Lilienstab vor den weiszen, vor den | halbgeöffneten Augen' (line 14-15) is an ekphrasis of a Renaissance fresco of her painted by Andrea Vanni at the Basilica of San Domenico in Siena.[65]

As my close reading of 'ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver' has shown, at the end of the Cold War, Mayröcker evoked a cultural vision of the European project that would eventually lead humankind towards progress. Thus, she followed a distinctly European humanist tradition that can be traced back to the French Revolution. Her poem reworked tropes of the artist as the leader of a cultural renewal that can be found in Schiller's 'Die Künstler', which was written as a response to the French Revolution. Both poems promote a humanist vision of the European project carried forward by the arts. How Mayröcker envisioned Europe's relationship to the rest of the world is not entirely clear;

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[65] See Inge Arteel on ekphrasis in Mayröcker's writing: 'Nach dem Bilder- und Berührungsverbot. Kunst und Erotik in *die Umarmung, nach Picasso*' in Alexandra Strohmaier (ed.), *Buchstabendelirien*, pp. 97-120.

while images like ‘Lindenbaumfächer’ suggest a symbiotic cultural exchange, the idea of a cultural supremacy of European ideals lingers in references to the crusades.

The poems ‘für einen Dichter’ and ‘ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver’ from the collections *Winterglück* (1985) and *Das besessene Alter* (1991) are important documents of the relationship between Mayröcker and Kling. In addition, they give us insight about the context of writing poetry in the 1980s. As has become clear, Mayröcker’s poetry in the 1980s resonates with the political reality of her time, most notably with the Cold War. In this context, aesthetic concepts developed around the time of the French Revolution became meaningful again. The poem ‘für einen Dichter’ demonstrated the role of the poet in a tradition reaching back to Hölderlin. His concept of ‘Erinnerung’ served as an example of how to make historical experience accessible and imagine change in the present of the Cold War. What connected Mayröcker, Hölderlin and Pindar is that they wrote in times of political change and were each faced with the question how poetry could respond: the Cold War (Mayröcker), the French Revolution and the post-revolutionary wars (Hölderlin) and the Greco-Persian Wars (Pindar). In each case, the question about the purpose of poetry was asked anew, and each time, a productive engagement with the past made it easier to open up a space in the present in which historical change could be imagined. By reworking Hölderlin’s humanist project and linking it to her present, Mayröcker underlined its on-going meaningfulness. The reference to Phaeton in this context served both a gesture of appreciation towards the young Kling and as a gentle reminder of his place within the poetic tradition.

Written at the end of the Cold War, ‘ein überaus schönes und blaues Manöver’ evoked an optimistic cultural vision of Europe led by the arts. Again, Mayröcker followed a distinctly European humanist tradition that can be traced back to the French Revolution. Using imagery that can be found in Schiller’s ‘Die Künstler’, the poem presented Kling as

the redeemer of this cultural project. In 1999, in one of her clearest political statements, Mayröcker wrote: 'Ich wünsche mir, daß es 2099 einen neuen Hölderlin geben | möge, daß es keine Kriege, keine Hungersnöte, keine Über- | schwemmungen, keine Erdbeben, keine Feuersbrünste | mehr gibt, daß die Wissenschaften human sein mögen.'[66] In the 1980s, the poet who promised to be the new Hölderlin in Mayröcker's view was Thomas Kling, and the poems she dedicated to him demonstrated how to fulfil this role.

While Mayröcker's role in Kling's making as a poet can hardly be overestimated, she was not the only person in Vienna that had an enormous impact on the trajectory of his career. The day before Kling met Mayröcker, he read his poetry for the first time in public at a performance with Joe Berger, which will be at the centre of the following chapter. As will become clear, the artist Berger presented an entirely different role model to Kling.

8

Getting Pedigree

Thomas Kling, Joe Berger and Wiener Gruppe

It is commonly assumed that at the beginning of his career, Kling modelled his performance strategies on the example of so-called *Wiener Gruppe* in a tradition going back to the historical avant-garde. According to Frieder von Ammon it is 'offenkundig, dass Kling an die performativen und musikopoetischen Praktiken Jandls und der "Wiener Gruppe" anknüpfte'.[67] It was Kling himself who first established this narrative in his writings.[68] His poetic roadmap *Itinerar* starts with his first visit to Vienna in 1979, where according to his own description he soon discovered the work of H. C. Artmann, Konrad

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66 Friederike Mayröcker, 'Botschaft für 2099' in *Magische Blätter VI* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), p. 277.

67 See Frieder von Ammon, *Fülle des Lauts. Aufführung und Musik in der deutschsprachigen Lyrik seit 1945: Das Werk Ernst Jandls in seinen Kontexten* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2018), pp. 436-42: 440.

68 See IT 9-13; BS, 29-31, 70-92, 95-6.

Bayer and Oswald Wiener, writers who – just like Kling twenty years later – 'die sogenannte Dichterlesung ablehnte[n]' and

> [sich] während ihrer Aktionen […] auf den verschütteten Spuren der Avantgarden des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts, explizit denen der zürcher Exilantenformation vom Cabaret Voltaire und ihren Auftritten [bewegten]: sie zeigten multimediale events, die vom Publikum in jeweils knallvollen Sälen mit einer Melange aus Schauder der Verstörung und dem Endlich-mal-was-los-Gefühl goutiert wurden. (IT, 10)

In this context, it only seems logical that Kling celebrated his own public debut in the Austrian capital when he performed there in 1983. According to von Ammon

> ist die Tatsache, dass seine erste Gedichtaufführung in Wien stattfand bzw. dass er sie dort stattfinden lässt, Programm. […] Kling wurde auf diese Weise gewissermaßen als Nachgeborener noch in die "Wiener Gruppe" aufgenommen.[69]

However, the cautious wording gives rise to some justified doubts about the historical accuracy of Kling's description. As von Ammon points out, Kling's account is heavily stylised and thus 'als Quelle für den Versuch einer Rekonstruktion der Aufführung […] mit Vorsicht zu benutzen'.[70] In this chapter, I will give some historical context to Kling's first performance in 'Margaretensäle' in 1983. While the spiritual kinship with *Wiener Gruppe* that Kling established in *Itinerar* cannot be denied, the question which writers belonged to the collective and which practices Kling might have adopted from them needs further clarification. In addition, I will point out other possible influences and try to paint a more diverse picture of the literary networks in Vienna after the Second World War.

Kling's vivid description in *Itinerar* of the performances of *Wiener Gruppe* not only encourages us to forget that he was still a toddler when H. C. Artmann, Friedrich Achtleitner, Konrad Bayer, Gerhard Rühm and Oswald Wiener were most active in the years around 1958/59, but it also belies the fact that the very existence of a collective called *Wiener Gruppe* is not undisputed among scholars. While Artmann, Achtleitner,

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69 Frieder von Ammon, *Fülle des Lauts*, p. 438.
70 Ibid.

Bayer, Rühm and Wiener certainly performed both together and in different constellations in those years, various sources indicate that they did not understand themselves as a fixed group. According to Melitta Becker

> hat Rühm [erst 1967] mit einer Anthologie in einem renommierten Verlag als Chronist der Gruppe ihre historische Existenz wie literaturgeschichtliche Bedeutsamkeit wesentlich verankert und verstärkt. […] Welche literaturgeschichtliche Bedeutung diese "Wiener Gruppe" als solche hatte, aus welchen Personen sie sich zur jeweiligen Zeit zusammensetzte, woher die entscheidenden Einflüsse kamen und wie es letztendlich um das "Gruppenbewußtsein" der als Mitglieder geführten Autoren bestellt war, hat sicher zum Teil mit dem Standpunkt ihrer Chronisten zu tun.[71]

Thus, our present understanding of *Wiener Gruppe* is largely based on Rühm's retrospective account in his eponymous book – and in fact, the same seems to be true for Kling.[72] In *Itinerar*, Kling presents *Wiener Gruppe* as the direct successor of Dadaist *Cabaret Voltaire* in Zurich, thus resuming the avant-gardist heritage after the caesura imposed by two world wars (IT, 10). In contrast to this interpretation, Becker suggests that the understanding of *Wiener Gruppe* as 'Traditionsbrücke' to the historical avant-garde demands further scrutiny, as

> bei diesen Traditionsbildungen […] [die Tatsache] aus dem Blickpunkt geriet […] daß die Geschichte der "Wiener Gruppe", wie sie vom Chronisten Rühm im Vorwort präsentiert wird, eine konstruierte ist, die in der vorgestellten Linearität nicht mit dem historischen Phänomen gleichzusetzen ist. Rühms Chronologie und Wertschätzungen wurden aber in zahlreichen literarhistorischen Darstellungen zum Ausgangspunkt für zusammenhangstiftende Bezugnahmen.[73]

Rewriting the history of *Wiener Gruppe* and their relationship to the historical avant-garde is an endeavour that goes well beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, Becker's insights prompt us to reconsider at least some of Kling's conclusions in *Itinerar.* For this

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71 Melitta Becker, 'Philander contra Laertes? Geschichten und Legenden um H. C. Artmann und die Wiener Dichtergruppe(n)' in Gerhard Fuchs and Rüdiger Wischenbart (eds.), *H. C. Artmann* (Graz: Droschl, 1992), pp. 47-75: 64-5.

72 See Gerhard Rühm (ed.), *Die Wiener Gruppe. Achleitner, Artmann, Bayer, Rühm, Wiener. Texte, Gemeinschaftsarbeiten, Aktionen* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1967).

73 Melitta Becker, 'Philander contra Laertes?', p. 68.

purpose, let us for the moment accept Kling's understanding of *Wiener Gruppe*. Even though *Itinerar* begins by pointing out their significance, Kling quickly concedes that

> Das, was die Wiener Gruppe 1958/59 anstelle von Lesungen zeigte, sie nannte es Aktion, war Performance; ein Begriff, der in die 70er Jahre gehört und für mich Anfang der 80er, als ich aufzutreten, *zu lesen* began, schon nicht mehr verwendbar war. (IT, 11)

This seems to be a contradiction. If Kling could not build on the tradition of *Wiener Gruppe* in the early 1980s, then why did he emphasise their influence at such great length? Moreover, if they did influence his early performances, why do we not find any examples of this in *Itinerar*? Even if we accept the existence of *Wiener Gruppe* as Kling presents it, it seems like *Itinerar* does not tell us the whole story. As Matthias Bickenbach has pointed out, while the writers around so-called *Wiener Gruppe* put poetry into a new context in their performances, they did not renew recitation techniques as such: the poet's voice was not central in their performances but had to compete with other media.[74] This is probably what Kling referred to when he distinguished between the collective's performances and his own readings in the above passage. In *Itinerar*, the story continues with Kling's poetic statement 'Der Dichter als Live-Act. Drei Sätze zur Sprachinstallation' (1992), which is commonly treated as his 'erste Poetik des Performativen' (IT, 18).[75] Again, Kling's performances strategies in 'Der Dichter als Live-Act' differ significantly from the tradition of so-called *Wiener Gruppe* in his demand to refrain from using any kind of props or

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[74] Matthias Bickenbach, 'Dichterlesung im medientechnischen Zeitalter. Thomas Klings intermediale Poetik der Sprachinstallation' in Harun Maye, Cornelius Reiber and Nikolaus Wegmann (eds.), *Original / Ton. Zur Mediengeschichte des O-Tons* (Konstanz: UVK, 2007), pp. 191-216: 197. See also Daniela Strigl, 'Ihr Auftritt, bitte! Sprachingenieure als Entertainer' in Thomas Eder and Juliane Vogl (eds.), *verschiedene sätze treten auf. Die Wiener Gruppe in Aktion* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 2008), pp. 9-28: 17.

[75] Christoph Jürgensen, 'Der Autor als Live-Act. Überlegungen zu Thomas Klings performativer Praxis am Beispiel von "kling. ungelöscht"' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Gedichte von Thomas Kling*, pp. 303-21: 306.

gimmicks and focus on the poet's voice instead.[76] As von Ammon has observed, a considerable change seems to have taken place between Kling's performances in 1983 and 1992.[77] However, Kling does not describe this change and what had prompted it anywhere in *Itinerar*, and hence his relationship to the practices of so-called *Wiener Gruppe* remains unclear. An earlier statement in the poetry anthology *Selbstzeugnisse* (1985) seems to offer a missing piece. Here, Kling explained that he understood

> die Lesungen seiner Gedichttexte – oft in Zusammenhang mit Musikern – als gehobenes Entertainment; hierbei können Tapes, Performance-Elemente und andere Kommunikations-Prothesen eingesetzt werden. Die von Literaten bei Lesungen fast ausschließlich gebotenen Schlafwagennummern sind seine Sache nicht. Ebenso lehnt er die Absonderung von poetologischen Überlegungen ab.[78]

In contrast to 'Der Dichter als Live-Act', this statement comes close to what the performances of so-called *Wiener Gruppe* probably looked like. In the argument that follows, I will fill in some of the gaps in Kling's narrative in *Itinerar* and shed light on his early performance strategies before the focus of his readings shifted entirely to the poet's voice with 'Sprachinstallationen'. For this purpose, I will first look in more detail at Kling's network in Vienna in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The network of writers, artists and performers in Vienna after the Second World War was in fact a lot more diverse and loosely organised than the common emphasis on *Wiener Gruppe* suggests. In his detailed account of subcultural Vienna between 1959-71, Rolf Schwendter comes to the conclusion that the so-called *Informelle Gruppe*, which organised various art events and performances, included up to 300 individuals, many of whom were

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[76] See Thomas Kling, 'Der Dichter als Live-Act. Drei Sätze zur Sprachinstallation' in *Proë* (Berlin: Galrev, 1992).

[77] Frieder von Ammon, *Fülle des Lauts*, p. 439.

[78] Klaus Ulrich Reinke (ed.), *Selbstzeugnisse. Gedichte von Hans Peter Keller, Thomas Kling, Horst Landau, John Linthicum, Käte Reiter, Ulrike Tillich* (Düsseldorf: Eremiten-Presse, 1985), p. 31.

also associated with other groups, like Konrad Bayer and Joe Berger.[79] Thus, for the Viennese context it seems more appropriate to think of various constellations with some overlap of personnel and a considerable fluctuation between them instead of single, stable groups. In addition, the subcultural art scene shared significant overlap with the alternative milieu.[80] In this diverse network, Joe Berger, a 'Wiener-Szene-Original', was a central mover and shaker.[81] As the story goes, he invited a completely unprepared Kling to perform with him at a charity event in 'Wiener Margaretensäle' on 23 January 1983, thus initiating Kling as a performer (IT, 12-3).[82] According to Kling, the two met during his first visit to Vienna in 1979, when Berger 'den Piefke' Kling

> im angesagten "Oswald und Kalb" zum brüllenden Vergnügen seines Tisches bei unserer ersten Begegnung mit einem Ad-hoc-Zweizeiler begrüßt[e]; da reimte sich Rüssel schoarf auf Düsseldorf und war zugegebenermaßen ein guter Spruch, den ich nicht wechseln konnte. (IT, 12)

Following Kling's portrayal, secondary sources until now have presented Berger as only a minor character whose main role was to give Kling access to the Viennese art circles.[83] This misjudgement is understandable insofar as Berger was not widely published during his lifetime and scholarship on him has been scarce for a long time. Nevertheless, Thomas Rothschild recognised Berger's influence in the Austrian context when he devoted an entire section to him in *Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* (1992).[84] The truth is that Berger was a well-connected writer and performance artist in his own right.

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79 See Rolf Schwendter, *Subkulturelles Wien. Die Informelle Gruppe (1959-1971). Literatur, Kultur, Politik* (Vienna: Promedia, 2003), p. 21.

80 See Andreas Unterberger (ed.), *A wie alternativ: alternative Lebensformen in Österreich* (Vienna: Herold, 1981).

81 Thomas Kling and Marcel Beyer, 'Das Eingemachte', p. 55.

82 Ibid.

83 See Frieder von Ammon, *Fülle des Lauts*, p. 438; Daniela Strigl, 'Kling in Wien', p. 87.

84 See Thomas Rothschild, 'Österreichische Literatur' in Klaus Briegleb (ed.), Hansers *Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur. Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1968*, vol. XII (Munich: Hanser, 1992), pp. 667-700: 687-8.

Thanks to a recent edition by Thomas Antonic and Julia Danielczyk, many of his writings are now available for research – in some cases for the first time – while a complementary collection of essays opens up new ways for critical engagement with his work.[85] Between the mid-1960s and 1970s, he was an active performance artist together with groups such as *Arbeitsgruppe Bauernschnapsen* (*AGB*), *first vienna working group: motion* (another member of this group was poet Reinhard Priessnitz) and *Zirkus Speisesoda*. These performances have now also been documented to a certain extent.[86] The newly available sources paint a different picture of Berger as 'wesentlicher Drahtzieher für Aktionen, Performances sowie Schauspieler, Dramatiker und Kultfigur bereits zu Lebzeiten'.[87] They also attest that Berger was 'ein außerordentlicher Vielschreiber' who not only wrote four books and various short stories and essays, but also poems, plays and a film script.[88] In the light of these findings, Berger's impact on Kling needs to be re-evaluated.

Without a doubt, Berger must have been an important source of information for Kling, who was too young to have witnessed the cultural height of subcultural Vienna himself. The story of their first encounter told in *Itinerar* seems likely, as Berger

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85 Joe Berger, *Hirnhäusl. Prosatexte aus dem Nachlass und verstreut Publiziertes*, ed. by Thomas Antonic and Julia Danielczyk (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 2009); Thomas Antonic and Julia Danielczyk (eds.), *"Denken Sie!" Interdisziplinäre Studien zum Werk Joe Bergers* (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 2010).

86 Thomas Antonic and Gabriele C. Pfeiffer, 'Happy Art zwischen Wien und Graz. Happenings und Aktionstheater mit Wolfgang Bauer und Joe Berger in den 1960er und -70er Jahren', *Studia Austriaca* 11 (2013), 5-28; Julia Danielczyk, '"Spielverderber" oder: Das subjektkonstituierende Potential des Subversiven' in Friedemann Kreuder, Michael Bachmann, Julia Pfahl, Dorothea Volz (eds.), *Theater und Subjektkonstitutionen. Theatrale Praktiken zwischen Affirmation und Subversion* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), pp. 603-13; Gabriele C. Pfeiffer, '"Warum sticht der Bube die Dame nicht?" Oder: Joe Berger hat "Aktionismus g'macht mit Freunden"' in *"Denken Sie!"*, pp. 131-52.

87 Julia Danielczyk, 'Das subjektkonstituierende Potential des Subversiven', p. 603.

88 Julia Danielczyk, 'Vorwort' in Hirnhäusl, pp. 8-12: 8.

> es geradezu [liebte], Menschen anzupöbeln, um ihre Reaktion zu testen. Wie er sagt, aus Interesse am Menschen selbst, beschimpfte und beflegelte er seine Mitmenschen, vorwiegend jene, die ohne etwas zu ahnen in ein Café kamen, in dem Berger gerade saß.[89]

Thus, Kling's first acquaintance with Berger might have been a mere coincidence. However, Berger seems to have left a lasting impression on Kling, who explained in *Itinerar* that he only went to 'Margaretensäle' to see Berger perform (IT, 13). It seems like the older Berger had considerable authority in Kling's eyes, which is underlined by the fact that his mocking remark left Kling, not usually at a loss for words, speechless.

It is impossible to say anything reliable about Kling's performance on 23 January at 'Kongresshaus Wien' (so-called 'Margaretensäle') – there are no sources of it besides Kling's own, heavily stylised accounts.[90] It is, however, possible to point out some facts about the event as such. 'Ein Fest für Hermi' was a fundraiser for the activist and pub owner Hermi Hirsch, whose pub – a central hub for the Viennese art scene – had recently gone bankrupt. The conclusion that both Friederike Mayröcker and Ernst Jandl saw Kling perform there is probably not correct; neither appear in the detailed record of the event including photographs, press clippings and organisational notes that is available at 'Archiv der Frauen- und Lesbenbewegung' in Vienna.[91] According to the schedule, Kling must have performed around 5 p.m. together with Joe Berger – long before the main acts of the night, Wolfgang Ambros and Konstantin Wecker, came on stage.[92] Kling's name does not appear in the record, but he does appear in two photographs: on one occasion next to Wolfgang Ambros, a 'Liedermachergestalt' that Kling later ridiculed in *Itinerar* (IT, 13),

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89 Gabriele C. Pfeiffer, '"Warum sticht der Bube die Dame nicht?", p. 141.

90 Thomas Kling and Marcel Beyer, 'Das Eingemachte', p. 55; IT, 13.

91 The view that Mayröcker and Jandl saw Kling perform can be found in Daniela Strigl, 'Kling in Wien', p. 84; Frieder von Ammon, *Fülle des Lauts*, p. 437. For a record of the event see Verein 'Feste-Solidarität', *Ein Fest für Hermi* (Vienna: Brücke-Druckerei, 1983).

92 Verein 'Feste-Solidarität', *Ein Fest für Hermi*, p. 52.

and on another one carrying crates of water backstage.[93] The press coverage of the night did not discuss Kling's performance, and it seems fair to assume that, while the experience of reading his poetry in front of a large group of people was groundbreaking for Kling himself, the audience on that night did not necessarily share this view. Thus, the belief that the performance established Kling's fame within Viennese art circles, as Hermann Korte suggested, seems to be a result of Kling's later self-stylisation.[94]

In *Itinerar*, Kling explains that he and Berger performed according to an 'altes Wiener Gruppen-Konzept' when they entered the stage (IT 13). Given Berger's own experience as a performer, Kling could just as well have called it a 'Joe Berger-Konzept', which would however have lacked the poetic pedigree that Kling was so eager to establish in *Itinerar.* According to Antonic and Pfeiffer, Berger's continuing lack of recognition in comparison with *Wiener Gruppe* has mostly been the result of a lack of self-historicisation:

> Es existieren zwar vereinzelt Beschreibungen der *Arbeitsgruppe Bauernschnapsen*, der *first vienna working group: motion*, dem *Zirkus Speisesoda*, der *Happy Art & Attitude*-Bewegung und anderen Aktionen und Happenings, dies aber sehr verstreut und zum Teil bloß in Form unveröffentlichter Texte im Nachlass Joe Bergers bzw. erst kürzlich publiziert […]. Aber einen konsequenten Chronisten aus ihren Reihen wie z.B. Gerhard Rühm für die Gemeinschaftsarbeiten von Achleitner, Artmann, Bayer, Rühm und Wiener hatten die Aktionsgruppen von Bauer, Berger, Dusek, Falk und Co. nicht gefunden. Und hierin liegt auch die wesentliche Ursache, warum letztere in Vergessenheit gerieten bzw. nur Insiderkreisen allerhöchstens durch nostalgisch verzerrte Erinnerungen mystifiziert wurden (und noch immer werden), während über die erstere und z.B. die Wiener Aktionisten Monographien und unzählige Abhandlungen verfasst und Symposien abgehalten werden.[95]

Thus, locating Joe Berger in the context of *Wiener Gruppe* was a strategy on Kling's side in order to establish his own poetic pedigree. Thanks to Rühm's historicisation, the significance of *Wiener Gruppe* as successors of the historical avant-garde was generally

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93 Ibid., pp. 21, 27.
94 Hermann Korte, *Deutschsprachige Lyrik seit 1945*, p. 257.
95 Thomas Antonic and Gabriele C. Pfeiffer, 'Happy Art zwischen Wien und Graz', p. 25.

accepted, while Berger remained a virtual nobody outside Vienna. Thus, the reference indeed allowed Kling to stylise himself, as von Ammon has suggested, as 'Nachgeborener' of *Wiener Gruppe* and, by implication, of the historical avant-garde, even though the ancestral line that connects both was probably another self-stylisation by Rühm.

'Ein Fest für Hermi', the event where Kling and Berger performed together, was closer to the alternative scene of the early 1980s than to avant-gardist circles during the First World War. Many of the organisers and protagonists of the night were members of alternative groups, like the political folkrock band *Die Schmetterlinge* or the writers around the alternative magazine *Frischfleisch & Löwenmaul*, whom Kling might have remembered from his days with *Zwiebelzwerg* at *Gegenbuchmesse* in 1979 (see chapter 3).[96] Joe Berger even seems to have used their performance as a platform to speak out against military rearmament according to a caption on one photograph.[97] Leaving Kling's later strategic self-positioning and the disavowal of his own background in the alternative scene aside, Joe Berger's influence on Kling's early performances in the early 1980s should not be underestimated. Similarities in their performance strategies become apparent when comparing two performances in particular: Berger's performance 'Hunger: Biafra' in 1968/69 and Kling's performance 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne' in 1984.

'Hunger: Biafra' was presented in various West German cities in 1969 by *first vienna working group: motion* and, according to Berger, it was 'das erste kulinarische Theater' – a description that resonates with the title of Kling's performance, 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne'.[98] The set-up of 'Hunger: Biafra' was an ironic political commentary on the Western response to the famine raging in the Republic of Biafra (now Eastern Nigeria):

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96 See Fritz J. Raddatz, 'Habichtskraut und Himmelsschiff'.
97 Verein 'Feste-Solidarität', *Ein Fest für Hermi*, p. 9.
98 As quoted in Thomas Antonic, 'Joe Bergers Leben und Wirken auf dem Misthaufen der Kunst. Eine biographische Annäherung' in *"Denken Sie!"*, p. 14.

> vor einem überdimensionalen Plakat mit der Aufschrift 'Hunger: Biafra' wird ein zehngängiges Mahl verzehrt, das aus den Eintrittsgeldern bezahlt wird, nach Abzug der Spesen bleibt lediglich ein lächerlich geringer Restbetrag, der den Hungernden auf ein Spendenkonto überwiesen wird.[99]

A review in *Münchner Merkur* gives a vivid impression of the performance:

> Immer mehr Essen flog auf den Boden, wo es ein dicker Mann mit geplatzter Hose – der große Hungernde – gierig zusammenpackte. Schweineschnitzel wurden zu Diskusscheiben, Ananasringe zu Brillenrändern, Kirschen zum Schmuck im Dekolleté. Das Publikum wurde in dies völlig anarchistische […] Theater insofern miteinbezogen, als ihm Fleisch und Scherben vor die Füße fielen, Fläschchen um die Ohren sausten und Flüssigkeiten auf den Anzug klatschten. […] [D]er 'Herr Berger' genannte, kabarettistisch begabte Hauptdarsteller [schritt] endlich zum Striptease und riß unter dem Ruf 'Für Biafra' sein Hemd in Fetzen.[100]

What appears to be distasteful tomfoolery in fact had political underpinnings: Berger saw his performances as 'subversive poetische Aktionen' and 'Interventionen im Alltagsleben', which should provoke the audience to reflect on the discrepancy between their everyday behaviour and global reality.[101] In particular, 'Hunger: Biafra' parodied the trend within Leftist circles of the mid-1960s to start political study groups on any given topic, a phenomenon that *Arbeitsgruppe Bauernschnapsen*, the group's precursor, had already ironically commented on with their name.[102] However, Julia Danielczyk has pointed out that the social criticism of Berger's performances was frequently met with 'Unverständnis bis harsche Ablehnung' by the audience, as they lacked clear ideological underpinnings.[103]

The supposed playfulness and sensuality of 'Hunger: Biafra' resonates strongly with 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne', an erotic-culinary performance that Kling staged together

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99 Joe Berger, *First Vienna Working Group: Motion*. Quoted in Gabriele C. Pfeiffer, '"Warum sticht der Bube die Dame nicht?", p. 143.

100 Effi Horn, 'Für Biafra saufen, aber nicht bezahlen. Die First vienna working group im antiteater', *Münchner Merkur*, 21 January 1969. Quoted in Thomas Antonic, 'Joe Bergers Leben und Wirken auf dem Misthaufen der Kunst', pp. 26-7.

101 Julia Danielczyk, 'Das subjektkonstituierende Potential des Subversiven', p. 606.

102 Thomas Antonic and Gabriele C. Pfeiffer, 'Happy Art zwischen Wien und Graz', p. 9.

103 Ibid., p. 608.

with Frank Köllges and other performers in Düsseldorf in 1984.[104] The so-called 'Astro-Erotisches Festmahl' included a twenty-course-dinner during which the at times blindfolded and partly undressed guests were entertained with music by Jörg Ritzenhoff, texts by Paul Müller-Abfack (aka Thomas Kling) and erotic performances by various actresses. The exuberant sensual entertainment of this performance stands in sharp contrast to the way in which Kling later characterised the same period in *Itinerar*, but it seems to be the missing piece that connects Kling's early performance strategies with that of the Viennese networks in the 1960s and 1970s. Apparently, not only Kling's performances changed considerably between the 1980s and 1990s, but also the way in which he later historicised them. In contrast to his statement in *Itinerar*, Kling's early performances differed significantly from his 'Sprachinstallationen' in their use of props, gimmicks, mixed media and their interaction with the audience. Like Berger's 'Aktionen', the political criticism of Kling's performances was humorous: while Berger's 'Hunger: Biafra' mocked the dogmatism of political study groups of the 1960s, 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne' parodied the countless sensitivity and bodywork groups of the 1970s, which sought to expand one's consciousness in a collective setting.[105] Of course, how 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne' turned the spiritual collective experience into an expensive commodity was part of the irony: tickets for the night were 120 Deutsche Mark.

Exactly what prompted Kling to change his performance strategies is not certain. While he stated that the concept of performance had become useless in the early 1980s, he did not explain why (IT, 11). One reason might be that the elusive character of performances rarely leads to public recognition, as Berger's case demonstrates, and Kling certainly had no intention of sharing Berger's fate. While performances like 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne' had the potential to incite critical thought about alternative lifestyle or

[104] I would like to thank Andreas F. Kelletat for sharing the promotional flyer with me.
[105] See Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, pp.794-806.

Western consumerism and wastefulness in a more sensual way and to develop more playful ways of interacting with the audience, they were rarely taken seriously as a form of artistic expression. In fact, Hubert Winkels, who vividly described the experience in a piece for *Überblick*, concluded that only the ratio of actresses to guests differentiated the night from a visit to a brothel: 'Ab 3:1 aufwärts wäre es ein Theater, bei 1:1 wäre es ein Bordell, aber 2:1, da weißt Du nicht mehr, wo Du bist'.[106] While Kling eventually abandoned these performance strategies in favour of more established roles, they nevertheless give important insight into the beginning of his career and the alternative traditions that are omitted in his self-stylisation in *Itinerar*.

Regarding the impact of Vienna on Kling's poetry, Strigl concluded that 'die Selbsterfindung als Wiener Dichter [beflügelt offenbar] die Phantasie'.[107] This seems to be the case indeed. While his visits to the Austrian capital without a doubt marked a turning point in Kling's career, the reality seems to be different from the story he told in *Itinerar*. Just like Rühm in the case of *Wiener Gruppe*, Kling proved to be a skilful constructor of his own history. As von Ammon has argued, Kling's essays were 'immer auch Literatur- und Werkpolitik'.[108] Thus, the influence of *Wiener Gruppe* has been exaggerated in *Itinerar* for strategic purposes, while the role of Joe Berger and Friederike Mayröcker – who is not mentioned once – has been understated. Kling himself later acknowledged this strategy in his 'Wiener Vorlesung zur Literatur', where he wrote:

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[106] Hubert Winkels, 'Gefüllte Strapse mit Safrancreme', *Überblick* 10 (1984), 22-3: 23. Winkels also wrote about 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne' in 'Botschaft aus Blei' in *Der Stimmen Ordnung. Über Thomas Kling* (Cologne: DuMont, 2005), pp. 27-39: 38-9.
[107] Daniela Strigl, 'Kling in Wien', p. 81.
[108] Frieder von Ammon, 'Von Epenchefs und Studienabbrechern', p. 65.

> In meinem Buch *Itinerar* habe ich mich gleich eingangs, genealogische und ästhetische Rhizome abtastend, als, sagen wir mal, Wahl-Wiener geoutet. Also: nicht, daß mir eine solche Installation helfen würde, ganz und gar nicht.
>
> Aber die Wahrheit ist es eben doch.
>
> Auch.
>
> Und nicht vergessen:
> *Such tricks have strong imagination* – Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* (BS, 70-1)

The reference to *Wiener Gruppe* certainly helped to establish Kling's poetic pedigree in the tradition of the avant-garde, but the diverse Viennese network of artist, above all the writer and performer Joe Berger, certainly influenced him in more immediate ways. While Joe Berger's playful performances resonated with Kling's own background in the alternative scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Mayröcker envisioned a more serious role for the poet within a larger cultural project, which would regain importance for Kling's self-stylisation from the 1990s onwards. Before turning to Kling's larger poetic project in the final section of this dissertation, I will explore in more detail the roles that were available to him as a young, male poet in the late Bonn Republic. In this context, the question how Kling redefined what authenticity could mean will again become of interest.

PART IV

Performing Masculinities

The issue of gender does not seem to have been discussed with regards to Thomas Kling so far, as even articles that explicitly deal with his self-fashioning as a poet do not touch upon it.[1] In terms of their self-stylisation, artists still seem to have 'eine eingebaute männliche Identität', as Irit Rogoff already attested in 1989.[2] Recent studies agree that 'Künstlerschaft' still seems to be 'per se an ein männliches Subjekt gebunden'.[3] Female poets, in contrast, are often reduced 'auf die Differenz zu oder auf "das andere" männlicher Autorschaft' (see also chapter 7).[4] However, assuming that 'doing gender' is a practice that is reserved for non-male individuals only certainly does not make sense.[5]

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1 See Samuel Hamen, 'Zwischen Sprach- und Selbstinstallation. Lyrische Autorschaft und ihre Inszenierung bei Thomas Kling' in Sonja Arnold, Stephanie Catani, Anita Gröger, Christoph Jürgensen, Klaus Schenk and Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (eds.), *Sich selbst erzählen. Autobiographie – Autofiktion – Autorschaft* (Kiel: Verlag Ludwig, 2018), pp. 337-59.

2 Irit Rogoff, 'Er selbst – Konfigurationen von Männlichkeit und Autorität in der Deutschen Moderne' in Ines Lindner, Sigrid Schade, Silke Wenk and Gabriele Werner (eds.), *Blick-Wechsel. Konstruktion von Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit in Kunst und Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1989), pp. 21-40: 22.

3 See the chapter 'Das Geschlecht der Künstler' in Sabine Kampmann, *Künstler sein: systemtheoretische Beobachtungen von Autorschaft* (Munich: Fink, 2006), pp. 46-54: 48.

4 Matthias Schaffrick and Marcus Willand (eds.), *Theorien und Praktiken der Autorschaft* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), p. 60.

5 On 'doing gender', see Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, 'Doing Gender', *Gender and Society* 1.2 (1987), 125-51; here, West and Zimmerman establish from a sociological perspective the performative concept of gender that Judith Butler later expands on in *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). Butler's Foucauldian reading of the practices that establish gender leaves little room for individual agency, cf. 'There is no possibility of agency or reality outside of the discursive practices that give those terms the intelligibility that they have. The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself', p. 189. Thus, Butler's subjects are in fact the objects of social discourse. West's and Zimmerman's approach, while acknowledging that 'doing

Instead, it should be clear that historically and culturally determined scripts for roles like 'the poet' are always 'ein "gegendertes" Produkt je spezifischer historisch-kultureller und medialer Konstellationen'.[6] With regards to Kling, gender promises to be a productive field for further research when looking at his self-stylisation, not least in his relationship to the avant-garde.[7] In the following chapters, however, I will look at his gender performance in the West German context of the 1980s.

If in terms of gender the 1960s and 1970s were determined by women's fight for equal rights, the 1980s saw a rising interest in how men were affected by the shifting gender norms. 'Wann ist ein Mann ein Mann?', Herbert Grönemeyer asked only half-jokingly in his song 'Männer' (1984), which ridiculed traditional concepts of masculinity as much as it endorsed them.[8] Upon its release, the song immediately entered the top ten of the West German charts. If Grönemeyer's song showed that there were now many accepted ways of being a man, this freedom also seemed to cause unease for others. A year after the song's success, Doris Dörrie broke box office records at West German cinemas with her comedy *Männer*, whose plot juxtaposes two male protagonists: the 'competitive careerist, breadwinner-husband and father' Julius (Heiner Lauterbach) and the 'leftover

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gender is unavoidable' (p. 145), allows for a different conceptualisation of the subject that leaves more room for individual agency.

6 Claudia Gronemann, Tanja Schwan and Cornelia Sieber (eds.), *Stategien von Autorschaft in der Romania. Zur Neukonzipierung einer Kategorie im Rahmen literatur-, kultur- und medienwissenschaftlich basierter Geschlechtertheorien* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2012), p. 9.

7 See Silke Wagener, *Geschlechterverhältnisse und Avantgarde. Raoul Hausmann und Hannah Höch* (Königstein im Taunus: Helmer, 2008); see also the special issue on 'Avantgarde und Geschlechterverhältnisse' of *kritische berichte* 4 (1992).

8 Herbert Grönemeyer, 'Männer', *4630 Bochum* [CD] (London: EMI, 1984). See also Martin Loeser, '"Wann ist ein Mann ein Mann?" Männlichkeitsinszenierungen in westdeutscher Rock- und Popmusik am Beispiel von Marius Müller-Westernhagen und Herbert Grönemeyer' in Marion Gerards, Martin Loeser, Katrin Losleben (eds.), *Musik und Männlichkeiten in Deutschland seit 1950* (Munich: Allitera, 2012), pp. 121-40.

hippie' Stefan (Uwe Ochsenknecht).[9] While on the surface the film's conversion narrative – Julian grooms his rival Stefan to follow into his own footsteps – seems to reinforce traditional gender roles, it also emphasises the 'performativity of […] masculinity and […] identities in general'.[10] Nevertheless, 'Dörrie's men […] obviously feel uneasy about the performativity of their identities.'[11]

Doris Dörrie at one point explained that she saw her film as a case study of men that had been socialised within the '1968er generation'.[12] Indeed, in order to understand the West German discourse on masculinities in the 1980s, one needs to trace its origins back to the changes that had taken place in the previous decades. So far, a lot of the focus in studies of masculinity in the German context has been on the trope of father-son-conflicts following National Socialism.[13] Similarly, West German youth cultures after the Second World War from the 'Halbstarke' of the 1950s to the punks of the late 1970s have often been understood as an expression of intergenerational conflicts between (mostly) fathers and their sons.[14] However, limiting our understanding of German post-war masculinities and their expression in youth culture to conflicts between fathers and sons establishes artificial binaries. Christina von Hodenberg has pointed out with reference to the benchmark of '1968' how the focus on father-son-conflicts masked the involvement of women in these events.[15] In addition, simple intergenerational oppositions do not seem to account for the various contradicting and competing concepts of masculinity that can be

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9 Holger Römers, 'Männer. Men' in Joseph Garncarz and Annemone Ligensa (eds.), *The Cinema of Germany* (Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 206-15: 208-9.
10 Ibid., p. 210, 212.
11 Ibid., p. 210.
12 Ibid., p. 213-14.
13 See Roy Jerome (ed.), *Concepts of Postwar German Masculinity* (State University of New York Press, 2001).
14 See Peter Ulrich Hein, *Protestkultur und Jugend. Ästhetische Opposition in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 1984).
15 See Christina von Hodenberg, 'Writing Women's Agency into the History of the Federal Republic: "1968", Historians, and Gender', *Central European History* 52 (2019), 87-106.

found in German history at any given time. Consequently, sociologist Raewyn Connell has argued for a more pluralistic understanding of a network of masculinities, in which certain masculine norms hold different positions of power within society.[16] As masculinities evolve within a culturally determined framework of shared gender practices, they can be performed by anyone regardless of their sex.[17]

Of course, any account of gender roles in West Germany after the Second World War can hardly ignore how both domains had been infused with Nazi ideology in the recent German past. But instead of proposing a history of clear oppositions between Nazi (grand)fathers and their sons, I argue for more fluid boundaries within a network of shared practices of gender and emotion that transcend simple binaries. Such a framework accounts for the existence of multiple, sometimes contradictory practices at the same time, in which the past can resurge in unexpected places. In contrast to the narratives of father-son-conflict, I propose to situate post-war masculinities in West Germany within a framework of competing emotional styles that are themselves always gendered. Historians like Joachim C. Häberlen and others have argued how the alternative Left in West Germany established a new emotional regime involving various therapeutic practices as part of the general 'psychoboom' of the 1970s.[18] 'Being able to express feelings, above all negative ones such as fear, was considered a crucial skill for both women and men. Such expression of negative emotions facilitated a putatively objective form of self-knowledge and thus created the conditions for an emotional transformation.'[19] In this context, the 'damaged self' – the individual fraught with problems resulting from capitalist society –

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16 R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Oxford: Polity, 1995).
17 Ibid., p. 230.
18 See Maik Tändler, *Das therapeutische Jahrzehnt: Der Psychoboom in den siebziger Jahren* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016); see also introduction, footnote 12.
19 Joachim C. Häberlen and Jake P. Smith, 'Struggling for Feelings', p. 622.

became an important way of performing subjectivity.[20] Especially for men, these emotional practices seemed to offer an alternative to traditional concepts of masculinity which eschewed 'sensitivity', as the new emotional style's emphasis on feelings was directed against the concept of hegemonic masculinity associated with patriarchy. However, the expression of feelings that was initially 'conceived as liberation from mainstream social norms, demands and expectations' turned into a norm 'that not only allowed participants to freely talk about their feelings, but also required them to do so.'[21] As a result, the expression of feelings became 'imperative'.[22]

While the new imperative to express emotions and the need for constant self-improvement could be perceived as debilitating and limiting for people of any gender, it was especially threatening for men with a self-image based on traditional masculinity. In a case study of a group of six men associated with the environmentally engaged alternative Left in Australia, Raewyn Connell has pointed out how for all members of the group the engagement in new emotional practices that challenged hegemonic masculinity led to feelings of guilt that often included 'a sense of personal crisis and worthlessness'.[23] While the men of the group renounced traditional concepts of masculinity, the alternatives they found did not seem particularly 'well resolved or […] stable'.[24] Reichardt has come to similar conclusions in the West German context, where numerous 'Männerbücher' in the late 1970s and early 1980s attest for a growing preoccupation with masculine identity.[25] Thus, the search for alternative practices seems to have dominated the discourse around masculinity in these decades. However, I do not suggest that the 1980s were a period of

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20 Ibid., p. 625.
21 Joachim C. Häberlen and Maik Tändler, 'Spaces for Feeling Differently', p. 106.
22 Joachim C. Häberlen and Jake P. Smith, 'Struggling for Feelings', p. 615.
23 R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, pp. 120-42: 130.
24 Ibid., p. 139.
25 Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 699.

ideological backlash or crisis.[26] Rather, the question seemed to be 'welche neuen Männlichkeitsvorstellungen zur Verfügung standen und wie diese realisiert werden konnten.'[27] Answering the question 'Wann ist ein Mann ein Mann?', films like *Männer* show how different emotional styles and masculinities competed with each other.

As Uta G. Poiger has argued, a focus on popular culture and music in particular seems helpful in highlighting the changes in the collective understanding of gender, race and sexuality taking place in West Germany after the Second World War.[28] In her analysis, she distinguished three phases when major re-evaluations in these domains took place: the emergence of jazz and rock and roll in the 1950s, beat and soul in the 1960s and early 1970s, and punk in the late 1970s and 1980s.[29] My focus in this section will be on the last of these phases, namely the emergence of punk in the late 1970s. The central issue in the continuing debates around gender (and its entanglement with issues of race and class) seems to be authenticity. In this context, punk as a movement that, as Jeff Hayton has argued, 'sought to redefine authenticity' offers a helpful point of reference.[30]

I will begin my analysis with an analysis of Eckhart Schmidt's film *Loft*, which Kling reviewed as a freelance writer for *Rheinische Post* in 1985. Looking at the way in which Schmidt adopted the rape-revenge narrative will be helpful for my purpose because, as Jacinda Read has argued, rape-revenge films 'emerged at key points in the history of

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26 Roger Horrock, *Masculinity in Crisis* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994).
27 Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 703.
28 See Uta G. Poiger, 'Popkultur und Geschlechternormen. Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit in der Bonner Republik' in Alexa Geisthövel and Bodo Mrozek (eds.), *Popgeschichte. Konzepte und Methoden*, vol. I (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014), pp. 57-78; idem, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels. Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).
29 Uta G. Poiger, 'Popkultur und Geschlechternormen', p. 58.
30 Jeff Hayton, 'Punk Authenticity. Difference Across the Iron Curtain' in Joachim C. Häberlen et al. (eds.), *The Politics of Authenticity*, pp. 212-32: 213, 216.

twentieth-century gender relations'.[31] Thus, the portrayal of gender relations in *Loft* will give us a better understanding of the wider cultural context of Kling's project. A comparison between film and poetry also seems insightful because both West German literature and film were perceived to be in a state of crisis after having lost their audience in the 1980s.[32] Thus, finding new strategies to engage with their audience seemed essential for agents in both fields, as my analysis of Kling's provocative self-stylisation as a young, male poet in the 1980s will reveal. I will continue with a close reading of the two poems 'ratinger hof, zb 1 & 2' and some wider reflections on the role of punk in Kling's poetry. To conclude, I will highlight aspects of Kling's self-stylisation in the early 1980s that have not received much attention yet in this context, in particular his clothing and recitation style. I believe that such an approach will help us understand better how Kling's self-stylisation as a young poet in the 1980s and his way of 'doing gender' and 'doing emotion' fitted into the gender norms and emotional styles of his time.

9

Painters in Leatherjackets

Eckhart Schmidt's 'Loft – Die neue Saat der Gewalt' (1985)

'Wir sind sehr sensibel, verstehst du?' – Furio, a character in Eckhart Schmidt's *Loft* (1985), declares early on in the film.[33] This statement is not as much a confession as a

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31 Jacinda Read, *The New Avengers. Feminism, Femininity and the Rape-Revenge Cycle* (Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 77.

32 Uwe Wittstock, 'Ab in die Nische? Über neueste deutsche Literatur und was sie vom Publikum trennt', *Neue Rundschau* 104.3 (1993), 45-58; Hans-Joachim Neumann, 'Der deutsche Film und sein Publikum: Gegenseitige Gleichgültigkeit' in *Der deutsche Film heute: die Macher, das Geld, die Erfolge, das Publikum* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1986), pp. 84-122.

33 Eckhart Schmidt (Director) and Wolfgang Odenthal (Producer), *Loft. Die neue Saat der Gewalt* [DVD] (Germany: Starlight Film, 2007).

threat. In the film, Raphaela (Rebecca Winter) and Raoul (Andreas Jung), a young couple who are 'Poppers' (the West German equivalent of the Anglo-American yuppie), are confronted with the violent consequences of hurt sensitivity when they visit an exhibition of young painters in a loft space who do not take kindly to Raoul's criticism of their work ('Die Bilder sind scheiße, dilettantisch und unbegabt!'). The ensuing events follow the script of a rape-and-revenge film, in which Raphaela and Raoul eventually manage to escape after having killed her attackers, the group of artists who – in contrast to Raphaela's and Raoul's sleek looks – wear scruffy black leather jackets. The black leather jacket is of course a highly charged cultural icon in this context; a versatile symbol of various counter-cultural movements and youth revolt.[34] *Loft*'s subtitle – *Die neue Saat der Gewalt* – alludes to Richard Brook's *Blackboard Jungle* (German title: *Die Saat der Gewalt*), a film dealing with youth violence and delinquency at an ethnically diverse high school in the Bronx, New York City, in the 1950s.[35] Together with *The Wild One* starring Marlon Brando (1953) and *Rebel Without a Cause* with James Dean (1955), *Blackboard Jungle* starring Sidney Poitier (1955) was among the films that exported the influential figure of the American 'young rebel' to post-war Germany and not only 'served as models for German juvenile fashions, dances, and mannerisms', but were also held responsible for various youth riots that erupted in East and West Germany in the mid-1950s.[36] Uta Poiger has pointed out that soon after the incidents 'it became West German consensus that *The Wild One* had in fact started youth riots and that Marlon Brando in his leather jacket was the model for rebellious young men in West Germany'.[37] However, these films were not

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[34] See Nicola Lepp, 'Ledermythen. Materialien zu einer Ikonographie der schwarzen Lederjacke', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 47.4 (1993), 471-95.

[35] See also Leerom Medovoi, 'Reading the Blackboard. Youth, Masculinity, and Racial Cross-Identification' in Harry Stecopoulos and Michael Uebel (eds.), *Race and the Subject of Masculinities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 138-69.

[36] Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, p. 71. On *Blackboard Jungle*, see pp. 85-9.

[37] Ibid., p. 79.

only ‘new stepping-stones for the evolving debates on young German rebels’ but also for the public discourse on masculinity in East and West Germany.[38] Both in the German public imagination and in its popular American depiction, the ‘young rebels’ were male, but their version of masculinity challenged the official stance of both German governments:

> The fact that riots occurred and American mannerisms spread just as German authorities were busy convincing their citizens of the necessity of rearmament and military service added to the anxiety of many East and West German observers. In the mid-1950s both East and West German officials tried to shape soldiers who were strong, appropriately aggressive, and loyal to their respective political system, yet not overly militaristic. Young males, with their American-influenced fashions and their rioting, raised fears about both unmanliness and male aggression and thus challenged the fine line that authorities were walking.[39]

As Poiger explains, ‘the new West German citizen/soldier was to protect German families and homes, especially women and children. Officials thus were reasserting the role of the male protector and provider that women’s labor in and out of the home during war and postwar emergencies had shattered.’[40] The rioting young men who challenged the established norms and values were perceived as a threat to this agenda. Soon, the West German public referred to them as ‘Halbstarke’, a term that ‘had been used for young male working-class delinquents since the second decade of the twentieth century’.[41] Thus, the discourse also revealed strong resentments towards working class culture among the West German establishment.[42] ‘Halbstarke’ could be easily identified by their fashion:

> Standard dress for West German *Halbstarke* was jeans, T-shirts, and short jackets (sometimes made of leather), revealing clear similarities with the male heroes of *The Wild One*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and *Blackboard Jungle*. Young males would go to great lengths in order to achieve the right look. Tight pants were a must, and for some it was important to wear the original Levis jeans and not the imitations from the German Woolworth stores. When T-shirts

[38] Ibid., p. 72.
[39] Ibid., p. 72.
[40] Ibid., p. 74.
[41] Ibid., p. 80.
[42] Ibid., p. 72.

> were not yet available in Germany, young men would wear the high backs of undershirts in the front, in order to achieve the high-cut neck. Others wore bright, colorful shirts. Their hair was greased back and combed into ducktail plumes.[43]

In fact, their dress code was so striking that 'some simply referred to them as the "leather jackets"'.[44] *Blackboard Jungle* was very successful at West German cinemas, making it the 'thirteenth most-watched movie of 1956.'[45] Contemporary German critics mostly discussed *Blackboard Jungle* with regards to the film's treatment of race and gender relations. Comments on the portrayal of racial tensions in the United States revealed a curious double bind in the West German mind-set: while 'commentators in both states were hostile toward the African American-influenced music styles and dances' and their influence on the German youth, they 'were at the same time critical of American racism.'[46] According to Poiger, the German audience of *Blackboard Jungle* identified strongly with the struggles of black Americans, because

> it also helped Germans position *themselves* as victims; after displacements, reparations, economic hardship, and fraternization in the aftermath of National Socialism and World War II, many Germans felt victimized by the occupation forces.[47]

However, the German discourse around 'Halbstarke' also had racist underpinnings, as a statement by chancellor Konrad Adenauer blaming a 'Verostung' ('Easternisation') for the behaviour of young West German men attested.[48] In addition, *Blackboard Jungle* provoked discussions on gender relations by featuring a scene in which a male student sexually assaulted a female teacher. According to Poiger, '*Blackboard Jungle* gave a progressive view of race relations, for the movie undermined the stereotype of the black rapist and his white victim, when it showed a young white man attacking a white female

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43 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
44 Ibid., p. 81
45 Ibid., p. 88.
46 Ibid., p. 85.
47 Ibid., p. 88.
48 Ibid., p. 83; see also p. 103.

teacher.'[49] However, while the film was progressive on race relations, it still implied that the teacher's sexually expressive behaviour was to blame for her assault.[50]

In summary, it can be said that Eckhart Schmidt's *Loft* paid tribute to a film that offered a complex social comment on changing gender roles, race relations and intergenerational conflict in the United States in 1950s and caused wide-reaching repercussions on how these issues were discussed in West Germany. The following close reading will investigate in how far *Loft* can be understood as a social comment in a similar way, thus helping to contextualise Kling's self-stylisation in West Germany in the 1980s.

In June 1985, Kling reviewed Schmidt's *Loft* for the local Düsseldorf arts section of the newspaper *Rheinische Post*, where he worked as a freelance writer between March 1984 and August 1985 and published twenty-six film reviews, either under his full name or under his initials 'tk'.[51] The reviews cover a variety of genres ranging from mainstream to auteur cinema.[52] Like his later essays, Kling's early film reviews are distinguished by his snotty style. In the case of *Loft*, he did not hide that fact that he hated the film:

> Daß Künstler, besonders verkannte, wahre Sensibelchen sind und harsch reagieren können, vor allem wenn man ihren Werken nicht die gewünschte Aufmerksamkeit schenkt, dürfte bekannt sein. Bei solchen Leuten ist Vorsicht geboten.
>
> Während einer Ausstellungseröffnung in einer teils zur Galerie umgestylten Fabriketage – einem Loft, wie sie vorzugsweise von Post-Avantgarde-Menschen und "Yuppies" genutzt wird

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49 Ibid., p. 86.

50 Ibid., p. 87.

51 In 2001, Thomas Kling wrote the poem 'Film und mündliche Mitteilung' for the commemorative collection *Geschichten vom Herrn K.*, published on occasion of the retirement of Reinhard Kill, who had been head of the arts section of *Rheinische Post* between 1970-2000. In this poem, Kling recalled his signature 'tk' and trips to the pub 'Ratinger Hof' together with his colleague Sebastian Feldmann, who also was a film critic at *Rheinische Post*. The poem was reprinted in BA, p. 8. Earlier references to his work as a film critic are rare. In a conversation with Marcel Beyer in 1991, Kling claimed that he 'could not remember' having done any journalistic work apart from one article for *Überblick* in 1984. See Thomas Kling and Marcel Beyer, 'Das Eingemachte', p. 57.

52 For a complete list see appendix, pp. 226-27.

> – frönt ein junges Schickeria-Pärchen unweit des lähmenden Vernissage-Trubels seinen ungebremsten Lüsten. Das hätte es nicht tun sollen! Schließlich lebt man in wilden Zeiten.
>
> […]
>
> Ein zitaten- und metaphernreiches Mörderspiel. Botho Strauß trifft Heiner Müller – genau zwischen die Augen? Und das à la New Wave? Bitte nicht.[53]

Reading his review, one cannot help but wonder what it was exactly that Kling hated about *Loft*. Unlike other contemporary critics, the reason he disliked the film did not seem to be its explicit violence against women and sexism.[54] Rather, it was the film's portrayal of the artist that Kling disagreed with, especially the idea of the artist's alleged sensitivity. What *Loft* shows – using the violent and exaggerated aesthetics of a trash film – is how the concept of 'sensitivity' and the emotional style surrounding it underwent changes in West Germany in the 1980s, and Kling's response suggests that it might have touched a sore point. Thus, I believe that the film is a revealing document of the practices of emotion and gender that also informed Kling's self-stylisation as a young artist in the 1980s.

Loft was screened in West German cinemas in the summer of 1985 and reached an audience of 41,600. This does not seem much. It is indeed a lot less than Doris Dörrie's box-office hit *Männer*, which set the record with 3,292,900 sold tickets the same year. But in comparison with 76,400 sold tickets for Wim Wenders' *Der Stand der Dinge* (1982), a critically acclaimed film with a considerably larger budget that was awarded the Golden Lion in Venice, it did not do too badly.[55] Schmidt had found a simple solution in order to attract a larger audience. When asked to outline his agenda, he explained:

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53 Thomas Kling, 'Das Auge bricht. Eckhard Schmidts Vernissagen-Horror "Loft"', *Rheinische Post*, 29 June 1985.

54 See 'Loft. Die neue Saat der Gewalt', *cinema* 7 (1985), 28-9.

55 Numbers according to Philipp Sanke, *Der bundesdeutsche Kinofilm der 80er Jahre. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seines thematischen, topographischen und chronikalischen Realitätsverhältnisses*, PhD thesis (Philipps University of Marburg, 1994), pp. 511-12.

> Mir machen Spaß: eine handfeste, geradlinige Story und Personen, die sich mehr durch das charakterisieren, was sie tun als durch das, was sie reden [...]. Mir machen Spaß: attraktive und interessante Gesichter, Kostüme und Schaueffekte vor der Kamera, und eine Kamera [...], die dem Geschehen dient und es nicht mit Mätzchen vergewaltigt. Ich filme lieber ein nacktes Mädchen als Problemgerede. Das klingt profan. Ich kann es nicht ändern: Ich finde, jeder sollte die Filme machen, die ihm Spaß machen.[56]

Schmidt wanted to entertain and to be entertained, and for him, this meant action, sex, and special effects. Schmidt's desire to entertain – and his understanding of entertainment – marked a clear break with the arthouse programme of the New German Cinema. On the one hand, it might be seen as a conscious strategy to compete with the growing home video market. By the 1980s, video had become a very cheap medium to produce and, because laws for youth protection were not extended until April 1985, it was not regulated to the same extent as television and cinema. A lot of films that would not have made it to West German cinemas were directly released on videocassette, most of them showing explicit violent and/or sexual content.[57] Porn dominated the market for rental videos, and the high demand led to an increased supply.[58] In this light, it made sense for filmmakers to show, in the words of Eckhart Schmidt, 'naked girls' if they wanted to keep it up.

On the other hand, Schmidt's statement shows how emotional styles underwent changes in West Germany in the 1980s. In this regard, it is revealing what he did not consider 'fun': 'problem talk'. Thus, his programme was clearly opposed to the emotional practices of the alternative Left in the 1970s that explicitly aimed at expressing 'sensitivity'.[59] The vehemence with which Schmidt refused to feature 'problem talk' in his film shows that the emotional practices of the New Left had indeed turned into a new norm

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56 Eckhart Schmidt, '… lieber nackte Mädchen (1968)' in Hans Helmut Prinzler and Eric Rentschler (eds.), *Der alte Film war tot* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 2001), p. 116.

57 Ralf Stockmann, 'Der Videoboom der achtziger Jahre' in Werner Faulstich (ed.), *Die Kultur der achtziger Jahre* (Munich: Fink, 2005), pp. 123-35: 129-30.

58 Ibid., pp. 127, 129-30.

59 See introduction, footnote 12.

– a norm that Schmidt clearly rejected. Thus, *Loft* needs to be seen in the context of an on-going societal discourse about emotional styles and gender roles. The fact that the film heavily features punk symbolism – above all, the artists' black leather jackets – is not coincidental in this context, as punk also opposed the emotional style and the idea of authenticity imposed by the alternative Left.[60]

Jacinda Read has argued that the narrative of rape-revenge films 'emerged at key points in the history of twentieth-century gender relations'.[61] She explained that 'rape-revenge film can be seen to be attempting to make sense of feminism' in so far as it articulates the on-going struggles 'over the meanings of femininity'.[62] While I agree with Read's analysis, I would add in agreement with Alexandra Heller-Nicholas that 'discourses about men and masculinity' are 'equally significant' in rape-revenge films.[63] Peter Lehman has argued that even though 'female rape-revenge films are a licensed form of violence in which a woman acts out male desires for the erotic satisfaction of a predominantly male mass audience', 'the meanings and pleasures offered by the genre are much more complex than such a description implies'.[64] According to him, the pleasures that male spectators find in rape-revenge films are 'complex, multiple, and fluid and address a male subjectivity which is both heterosexually masochistic and homosexually sadistic'.[65] In accordance with Lehman's analysis, empirical research suggests that it is indeed legitimate to assume a primarily male audience for trash films. Keyvan Sarkhosh and Winfried Menninghaus have pointed out that the typical trash film spectator is a

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60 Jeff Hayton, 'Punk Authenticity' in Joachim C. Häberlen, et al. (eds.), *The Politics of Authenticity*, pp. 216-17.

61 Jacinda Read, *The New Avengers*, p. 77.

62 Ibid., p. 10.

63 Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, *Rape-Revenge Films. A Critical Study* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2011), p. 9.

64 Peter Lehman, '"Don't Blame This on a Girl": Female Rape-Revenge Films' in Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (eds.), *Screening the Male. Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 61-6: 61, 65.

65 Ibid., p. 61.

'highly educated, almost exclusively white upper-middle-class' man.[66] But as Lehman's remark shows, this does not necessarily mean that the mechanisms of identification at play in films such as *Loft* are straightforward. According to Tammy Oler, rape-revenge films do 'more important cultural work' in the sense that they 'respond to and reflect larger dynamics of gender and power'.[67]

In order to understand how Schmidt's film participated in the contemporary discourse on gender roles and emotional styles from a decidedly male perspective, we need to look at it in more detail. The film opens with the voice of a male off-screen narrator drawing a picture of the world at the brink of collapse:

> Die Apokalypse ist nah. Chaos regiert. Die Angst vor dem Untergang der Welt hat bisher den großen Vernichtungsschlag verhindert. Über den Städten und in den Straßen tobt der Krieg. Ein Krieg, den keiner erklärt hat. Er ließ die Städte in Flammen aufgehen. Keiner löscht mehr die Brände in dieser Welt ohne Hoffnung. Der Rauch der Zerstörung zieht in die Häuser und wird zum allgegenwärtigen Zeichen des kommenden Endes. Wer nicht den Krieg aller gegen alle kämpft, stürzt sich in leere Vergnügen und lässt seinen Leidenschaften hemmungslosen Lauf.[68]

A frame of the film's title in bold, red letters slowly fills with smoke as the voice-over blends into a frantic electronic 1980s synth-score that is repeated throughout the film. While the social movements of the alternative Left might have shared a similar apocalyptic vision of the future as the one that is painted in the opening scene of *Loft*, it is crucial that the apocalypse is characterised not as a political crisis but as a moral one. Accordingly, instead of resulting in collective political action, it leads to individual hedonism. In a war of everyone against everyone, there are no collective solutions, only individual struggle.

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66 Keyvan Sarkhosh and Winfried Menninghaus, 'Enjoying Trash Films: Underlying Features, Viewing Stances, and Experiential Response Dimensions', *Poetics* 57 (2016), 40-54: 43.

67 Tammy Oler, 'The Brave Ones', *Bitch Magazine. Feminist Responses to Pop Culture* (2009), 30-34: 31.

68 Eckhart Schmidt (Director) and Wolfgang Odenthal (Producer), *Loft. Die neue Saat der Gewalt*.

Thus, the worldview presented in the opening scene presents a clear shift to the structural political analyses put forward by the alternative Left in the 1970s.

In the following scene, Raphaela and Raoul arrive at an art gallery that is located in a backyard loft, an epitome of neo-liberal urban lifestyle.[69] Shortly afterwards, they have non-consensual sex in an adjacent office room. The most striking feature of *Loft*'s plot is that Raphaela's first rape is not the one that initiates the violent vendetta. Her rape by Furio (Karl-Heinz von Liebezeit), one of the gang members, only takes place almost halfway through the film. Instead, it is her boyfriend Raoul who molests Raphaela from the very first minutes of the film against her explicit protest, until he finally pressurises her: 'Entweder du liebst mich, oder du liebst mich nicht. Und wenn du mich nicht liebst, dann geh ich. Und wenn du mich liebst, dann tu's. Jetzt.' During their sex, Raphaela tries to ward off Raoul, leading to an unsettling dialogue between the two: 'Spürst du was?' – 'Ich will nichts spüren.' In comparison to Raphaela's later rape by Furio, the sex scene between Raoul and Raphaela features considerably more violence and force.

The issue of non-consensual sex is further complicated by the fact that Raphaela is not portrayed as a stereotypical rape victim. This already becomes evident in her appearance: combining female stereotypes of both virgin and slut, she is dressed in an innocent white dress and wearing bright red lipstick. In addition, she is characterised as a woman who seeks sex for her own advantage, as we learn from the dialogue following their intercourse when Raoul asks 'Liebst du mich?', to which Raphaela replies ironically:

> Wie könnte ich anders. Du hast aus deinem Leben etwas gemacht. Du hast es aus eigener Kraft zu was gebracht. Du bist wirklich unabhängig vom Geld deiner Eltern. Man muss dich einfach lieben. […] Ich komme mir […] vor wie irgendeine Nutte. Total austauschbar. Und du fragst, ob ich dich liebe. Was tust du dafür?

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[69] See Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living. Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

She then goes on to suggest that she might break up with Raoul if he is not going to offer her financial stability. Thus, Raphaela implicitly questions Raoul's masculinity, as she doubts his ability to fulfil the role of the male provider. However, in his financial dependence on his parents, Raoul seems to be a typical example of a young man of his generation, as the following excerpt from a study undertaken in 1981 shows:

> Zunehmend mehr Jüngere treten nach der Jugendzeit als Schüler nicht ins Erwachsensein, sondern in eine Nach-Phase des Jungseins über. Sie verselbständigen sich in sozialer, moralischer, intellektueller, politischer, erotisch-sexueller, kurz gesprochen in soziokultureller Hinsicht, tun dies aber, ohne wirtschaftlich auf eigene Beine gestellt zu sein, wie das historische Jugendmodell es vorsieht. Das Leben als Nach-Jugendlicher bestimmt das dritte Lebensjahrzehnt.[70]

Obviously, *Loft* raises important questions about gender roles in heterosexual relationships, including sex and sexual consent, as they were discussed in the general public at the time. Throughout the 1980s in West Germany, an alliance of women's rights activists and politicians from both the Green party and the Social Democrats had been campaigning for an amendment to section 177 of the Federal Republic's criminal code that defined rape as forced extramarital intercourse with a woman. Forced intercourse within a marriage was not considered rape; in fact, Germany's federal court had ruled in 1966 that married women had a '"Pflicht zur Geschlechtsgemeinschaft", und zwar zur "ständigen Wiederholung", und "die Beiwohnung" dürfe sie auch nicht "teilnahmslos über sich ergehen lassen".'[71] Only in 1997, section 177 was updated to include marital rape and use gender-neutral language. However, rape victims still had to prove that they had physically resisted their perpetrators. The law only acknowledged verbal dissent in 2016, when section 177 was amended again. Thus, married women were still required by a federal court ruling to provide regular and 'dedicated' intercourse to their husbands when *Loft*

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70 Arthur Fischer (ed.), *Jugend '81. Lebensentwürfe, Alltagskulturen, Zukunftsbilder*, vol. I (Hamburg: Jugendwerk der Deutschen Shell, 1981), p. 101.

71 'Die älteren Herren tun sich hart', *Der Spiegel*, 29 June 1987.

entered the cinemas in 1985. The fact that their ruling virtually prostituted women by defining marriage as a trade of sexual services in exchange for financial stability does not seem to have bothered the federal judges.

In fact, *Loft* exhibits the same kind of logic. Even though Raphaela and Raoul are not married, the film presents their relationship as an exchange of sex in return for financial stability. The film's stance on the issue of non-consensual sex within a relationship is ambiguous – in contrast to Furio's rape, Raoul's rape does not lead to punishment. In addition, Raoul is presented as a likeable character – a blonde 'Bubi', as Kiddy (Catarina Raacke) calls him – whose smart suit and impeccable haircut contrasts with Furio's scruffy leather jacket and ripped jeans. The film invites the spectator to positively identify with Raoul. This becomes particularly evident during Raphaela's rape by Furio, which we observe from Raoul's perspective through the grid of the bathroom's louver, where he is locked up. Instead of showing the violence that is done to Raphaela, the film focuses on Raoul's suffering as another man has sex with his girlfriend. Reproducing misogynist ideas of rape ('She was asking for it'), the film shows Raphaela enjoying the sex with Furio. As Raoul is tearing his hair and scrubbing his face in despair in front of the bathroom mirror, he is obviously more concerned about the threat to his own masculinity than about the violence that is done to Raphaela. Consequently, it is Raoul who starts the vendetta against the gang members when he kills Joker (Max Tidof) by stabbing a shard of the bathroom mirror into his throat, thus restoring his threatened masculinity. This symbolism becomes even more evident when Raoul kills Furio in the film's final moments by penetrating his body with a mike stand, which is visualised in extended close-ups. Crucially, it is not Raphaela who exacts vengeance on her rapist Furio but her boyfriend Raoul, who restores his masculinity by penetrating his rival. Having successfully defended and proven his masculinity, Raoul regains Raphaela's affection. As

both take the elevator down in the final scene, Raphaela explains: 'Ich liebe dich. Ich möchte für immer bei dir bleiben.' However, Raoul bursts into laughter in response to Raphaela's confession, a reaction that seems to expose the idea that men need to prove their masculinity in order to gain women's affection as nonsense. While Schmidt rejected 'problem talk', the protagonists of his film do not appear satisfied with the alternatives. The artists, who repeatedly emphasise their own sensitivity, resort to violence as an emotional outlet, while Raoul, who constantly seeks approval from Raphaela ('Spürst du was?' 'Liebst du mich?'), is unable to connect with his girlfriend in a meaningful way. He too resorts to senseless violence in order to prove his masculinity and gain Raphaela's affection. Thus, her confession of love as the two escape from the loft seems meaningless.

Peter Lehman has pointed out that rapists in rape-revenge films are 'typically characterized as extremely repulsive, a characterization which frequently employs stereotypes of class and ethnicity'.[72] According to his analysis, this is because 'the heterosexual male spectators of female rape-revenge films have the same desire for the erotic women as the rapists do but they cannot, of course, acknowledge any similarity between themselves and the rapists.' Thus, the rapists turn into 'the external, evil embodiment of desires that are within [themselves] […]. In other words, they project on to these characters internal desires of their own.' For this reason, Lehman argues the rapists are always characterised in a 'sleazy, unappealing way'. Thus, 'the male spectator can hate rather than simply identify with these men who embody desires similar to his own.'[73] *Loft* seems to reproduce and subvert these politics of identification at the same time. On the one hand, Furio is presented as a repulsive character who deserves to be punished. On the other hand, the endorsement of Raoul's perspective means that the spectator still identifies with a rapist, even though he is presented as a likeable, upper-class character. Thus, the film

[72] Peter Lehman, '"Don't Blame This on a Girl"', p. 63.
[73] Ibid., p. 64.

does not offer a 'safe space' of male identification. Instead, *Loft* breaks down the seemingly clear distinction between 'repulsive rapists' and 'normal men', thus prompting more serious questions about the nature of rape and male violence against women. As the film does not clearly mark the non-consensual sex between Raoul and Raphaela as rape, it is embedded in a larger contemporary discourse around the understanding of rape.

Models of femininity in *Loft* are no less complicated than masculine models. While the women in the film – Raphaela and Kiddy as well as the chained female performance artists – are presented as sexually liberated and self-determined, they are certainly not emancipated in a feminist sense. In contrast, they are only self-determined within a network of hegemonic masculinity. For instance, the female performance artists who earn a living by displaying their naked, chained bodies are objectified by the male spectator, as Raoul's comment as he walks past shows: 'Das sind so die Mädchen, auf die ich stehe.' The tomboyish Kiddy, who initially seems to resist the demand to dress in a 'feminine' way, is presented as revengeful and jealous following Raoul's rejection. Relationships between women are characterised by female rivalry for men. In a symbolically charged scene, Kiddy forces Raphaela to take off her dress by pointing a knife at her while the two women are making coffee in the kitchen. Even as adversaries, women are united in their fulfilment of domestic chores. After having put on Raphaela's dress, Kiddy finally gets the male approval she wanted when Joker compliments her: 'Das Kleid ist schön. Gefällt mir gut.' In fact, *Loft* only lends itself to a limited extent to the kind of feminist reading that film critics often apply to rape-revenge films. However, the film shows how the understanding of feminism itself underwent changes. As Jacinda Read has argued with reference to *The Last Seduction*: 'The irony in the film's deployment of feminist discourses […] means that the film can rely on those discourses at the same time as it

disavows or critiques them.'[74] This also seems to be true for *Loft*, which can rely on a public awareness of feminist issues without necessarily having to advocate for them. Read explained that 'within the context of the yuppie ethos of the 1980s, in which upward-mobility, consumerism and acquisitiveness were not only emphasized, but legitimated, both the femme fatale's transgressive greed and ambition and feminist desires to "have it all" have been subject to reinterpretation.'[75] Ironically, the fact that feminist ideas had become widely accepted by the mid-1980s meant that they could be used for rather antithetical purposes in films like *Loft*, which presented the sexual objectification of women as sexual liberation.[76] The same strategy was used in a piece on Schmidt's films in the popular magazine *cinema*, which tried to increase its circulation by printing a 'feminist' critique of Eckhart Schmidt's films featuring very few words but various nude close-ups of the women in question, including a complete Playboy-style pin-up on the title page.[77] 'Besten Dank für die Veröffentlichung meiner Fotos', one of 'Schmidt's girls' replied in a letter to the editor in the magazine's next issue. 'Mein Endziel ist und bleibt allerdings die ernste Rolle im Film (die kommt noch) und im Theater. Darum spiele ich jetzt die Rosetta in "Leonce und Lena" in München. Züchtig bekleidet. Und gerne.'[78]

Towards the end of *Loft*, the dialogue increasingly stages the conflict between Raoul and Raphaela on the one hand, and the artists on the other, as a class war in which the couple's materialism and conformism clashes with the gang's sensitivity and authenticity. In a lengthy monologue, Furio accuses Raoul and his kind of being responsible for the current crisis:

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74 Jacinda Read, *The New Avengers*, p. 164.
75 Ibid., p. 17.
76 However, the same contradiction had already been discernible in the New Left's attitude towards sexual liberation, see Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, pp. 711-18.
77 'Die Mädchen des Herrn Schmidt', *cinema* 7 (1984), 30-32.
78 Letters to the editor, *cinema* 8 (1984), 92.

> Du glaubst, dass ihr immer gewinnt, ihr Anpasser. Ihr Chamäleons! Was willst du überhaupt hier? Gibt es einen Grund für deine Existenz? Sag mir einen einzigen Grund! Auf was wartest du, als auf die Kohle deiner Eltern? Was kommt aus dir heraus außer Mist? Was sehen deine Augen außer Scheuklappen? Begreifst du irgendwas? Bewegst du irgendwas? Ihr sorgt dafür, dass alles bleibt, wie es ist. Ihr seid Schuld daran, dass die Welt schon eine Ruine ist, noch bevor die Bomben sie in Trümmer schlagen. Ihr seid die Wüste, die uns umgibt.

This striking throwback to simplified Leftist class opposition stands in sharp contrast to the film's opening sequence, which rejected a political analysis of the current crisis. Thus, *Loft* is a revealing document of competing practices for establishing meaning in the 1980s. While the film rejects practices of the alternative Left, which emphasised political action and therapeutic self-improvement, the alternative remains unclear. Thus, Eckhart Schmidt's *Loft* indeed seems to do important cultural work in the sense that it takes part in a wider discourse on gender and class relations and power. While it highlights contradictions within contemporary gender norms and prompts important questions on masculinity and male violence in particular, it does not provide any clear answers. Instead, it resists the urge to present art as an alternative to the messiness of the human condition. *Loft* shows how both works of art and their makers are embedded in changing cultural norms and social practices. While *Loft* uses punk symbolism to expose societal norms and conventions, the film does not present punk as an avant-gardist alternative that is free from the demands of a growing consumer society. In fact, the paintings exhibited in the gallery resemble works by A. R. Penck and Jörg Immendorf, two artists who placed Kling's hometown Düsseldorf on the map of the international art market in 1984 and turned punk into a sought-after commodity.[79] While Schmidt had been an early member of the Munich punk scene and editor of the fanzine *S!A!U!* between 1979/80, his film *Loft* attests that punk's significant moment in the West German context was already over by 1985.[80]

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[79] See Kasper König (ed.), *Von hier aus. Zwei Monate neue deutsche Kunst in Düsseldorf* (Cologne: DuMont, 1984).

[80] See Alexandra Heller-Nicholas, *Rape-Revenge Films*, p. 125.

Even though both Kling and Schmidt rejected the emotional style of the 1970s, Kling was not convinced by the alternative presented in *Loft*, as his review of the film made abundantly clear. Thus, the following chapter will investigate how Kling used punk in order to establish new models of authenticity in his 'ratinger hof' poems.

10

Punks in Leatherjackets

'ratinger hof, zb' 1 & 2

Immediately after the publication of his first two collections of poetry, *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* (1986) and *geschmacksverstärker* (1989), Thomas Kling was commonly attributed the label 'punk poet' by contemporary critics. A review of the latter collection in *Die Zeit* in which Hubert Winkels, one of Kling's acquaintances from Düsseldorf, compared his poetry to the lyrics of Berlin-based punk rock band *Die einstürzenden Neubauten* contributed to this public image early on in Kling's career.[81] Connections between Kling and punk mostly relied on the 'ratinger hof' series, a set of three poems that, as Kling himself later acknowledged, lay the ground for his entire career.[82] The connection becomes clearer considering that Kling's hometown Düsseldorf was 'the unlikely epicenter of German punk' in the late 1970s and *Ratinger Hof*, a pub in the city's historic district, the scene's local hub.[83] In a detailed analysis of the historical and biographical background of the 'ratinger hof' poems, Enno Stahl has come to the

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81 See Hubert Winkels, 'Walkman? Über Kling und Koneffke', *Die Zeit*, 8 December 1989. Revised and reprinted as 'Walzer oder Pogo' in *Der Stimmen Ordnung. Über Thomas Kling* (Cologne: DuMont, 2005), pp. 41-9: 48.

82 See Heribert Brinkmann's interview with Kling, 'Wie man auf den Alltag zoomt', *Rheinische Post*, 17 August 2001.

83 Cyrus M. Shahan, *Punk Rock and German Crisis: Adaptation and Resistance After 1977* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 10; see also Stephan von Wiese, 'Der Ratinger Hof' in idem (ed.), *Brennpunkt 2* (Cologne: Wienand, 1991), pp. 128-31.

conclusion that Kling could not have been part of the original punk scene around *Ratinger Hof* in the late 1970s.[84] The height of Düsseldorf punk turned out to be short-lived, and contemporaries suggest that it might have ended as early as 1978.[85] According to Winkels, Kling wrote the 'ratinger hof' poems around 1982, when, as Stahl has pointed out, 'der eigentliche "rush" längst vorbei war'.[86] Hence, he accused Kling of using 'vorgebliche Identifikation mit Oberflächenritualen der Nacht' for strategic reasons.[87] But this criticism seems to miss the point. While I agree with Stahl that Kling's relationship to punk was at least partly strategic, his criticism is based on a narrow concept of authenticity, which seems puzzling in the context of a movement like punk that questioned the very notion of authenticity as such. Jeff Hayton has argued that 'what was most disturbing about the subculture was that punk indicated that authenticity was in fact not a stable entity to be found, cultivated, or nurtured, rather it could be fundamentally unstable.'[88] Thus, the 'ratinger hof' series can be 'punk', even if Kling himself was not.

Before discussing the role of punk in Thomas Kling's poetry, we need to establish the specific historical and cultural circumstances in which punk emerged in West Germany in the late 1970s. While punk started as an Anglo-American movement in two main centres in New York City and London, critics agree that 'German musicians, writers,

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84 See Enno Stahl, 'Amalgame. Geschichte, Sprache und Zeitgenossenschaft bei Thomas Kling', *Weimarer Beiträge* 4 (2008), 557-72; idem, 'Ratinger Hof – Thomas Kling und die Düsseldorfer Punkszene' in Dirk Matejovski, Marcus S. Kleiner and Enno Stahl (eds.), *Pop in R(h)einkultur. Oberflächenästhetik und Alltagskultur in der Region* (Essen: Klartext, 2008), pp. 205-26; reprinted in Enno Stahl, *Diskurspogo. Über Literatur und Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag, 2013), pp. 168-85; idem, 'Die Geburt des Geschmacksverstärkers aus dem Geiste des Punk' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 69-80.

85 Cyrus M. Shahan, *Punk Rock and German Crisis*, p. 13.

86 Enno Stahl, 'Ratinger Hof' (2008), p. 211.

87 Enno Stahl, 'Die Geburt des Geschmacksverstärkers', p. 74.

88 Jeff Hayton, 'Punk Authenticity' in Joachim C. Häberlen et al. (eds.), *The Politics of Authenticity*, p. 226.

artists, and journalists near-instantaneously made punk their own thing.'[89] Punk rock's raw aesthetic and critical message seemed to aptly express the mind-set of a young generation in a society that was still coming to terms with the legacy of its violent past. The editors of a recent collection on *Cultures of German Punk* have argued that punk was

> so inevitable to German cultural history precisely because of the tensions in Germany's Nazi past and present, its division post-1949, and the international Cold War powers dominating daily life. Though punk's origins are Anglo – first London's East End, then New York City – its apocalyptic mantra "no future", its investment in detritus, and its desire for shock found particularly fertile ground in a West German landscape speckled with US nuclear missiles, in a rubble-filled Berlin, and in a land where even into the 1980s, there were new revelations about perpetrators of Nazi atrocities in positions of economic and political power.[90]

If much of German society after the Second World War was occupied with reconstructing a fragile collective identity after the Nazi crimes, a movement like punk that rejected the 'collective, accepted, sociopolitical fault lines' and questioned national identity was a powerful tool of self-expression for young people dissatisfied with the present state.[91] Thus, the 'destruction of the leading discourse on the West German understanding of the Nazi past' became a central issue for the West German punk scene.[92] Both in their lyrics and with their visual language, West German punks explored 'new ways of dealing critically with Germany's past, distancing itself from the widespread moralizing tendency of leftist historical narratives.'[93] Thus, the use of tabooed Nazi symbolism and language among West German punks – which had already been a feature of American and British punk, though in a different context – was a violent attempt to break with the conventional

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89 Cyrus M. Shahan, Mirko M. Hall and Seth Howes, 'Punk Matters: An Introduction' in *Beyond No Future: Cultures of German Punk* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), pp. 1-14: 2; see also Cyrus M. Shahan, *Punk Rock and German Crisis*, p. 1.

90 Cyrus M. Shahan et al., 'Punk Matters: An Introduction', p. 3.

91 Cyrus M. Shahan, *Punk Rock and German Crisis*, p. 5, 6.

92 Melanie Eis and Fabian Eckert, '"1979 Deutschland": *Holocaust*, West German Memory Culture and Punk's Intervention into the Everyday' in Cyrus M. Shahan et al. (eds.), *Beyond No Future: Cultures of German Punk*, pp. 109-28: 116.

93 Ibid.

narratives that surrounded the Second World War and the Holocaust and to disrupt the collective repression of individual involvement in the Nazi crimes – an attempt that was, however, often insensitive to those who had experienced and survived Nazi terror.[94]

West German punk cannot be separated from the history of the New Left after the Second World War. Cyrus M. Shahan has argued that the failed projects of 1968 (the student revolts) and 1977 (RAF terror) were decisive moments in the emergence of West German punk.[95] Accordingly, Jeff Hayton has defined West German punk as 'a furious rejection of the student movement and the politics of the Alternative Left'.[96] Thus, 'what mainstream media often identified as punk's cynicism was actually an ironic strategy meant to expose the political left's now institutionalized, emotionalized, and moralizing historical narratives'.[97] German punk rejected the therapeutic emotional style of the 1970s and 'sought to redefine authenticity' in ways that differed from the alternative Left's practices established throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[98] Music and its surrounding practices had always been a 'means for young West Germans […] to wrestle with the burdens of their inherited national identity' and 'to rearticulate the meanings and feelings in their everyday life'.[99] Punk continued this trend. For a generation coming of age after the idealist projects of the New Left had failed, punk seemed to offer a new set of practices

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94 See Frank Apunkt Schneider, '"My Future in the SS" Zur Identifikation mit den Täter_innen im deutschen (Post-)Punk' in Jonas Engelmann, Hans-Peter Frühauf, Werner Nell and Peter Waldmann (eds.), *We Are Ugly But We Have the Music. Eine ungewöhnliche Spurensuche in Sachen jüdischer Erfahrung und Subkultur* (Mainz: Ventil Verlag, 2012), pp. 147-59; see also Steven Lee Beeber, *The Heebie-jeebies at CBGB's: A Secret History of Jewish Punk* (Chicago Review Press, 2006).

95 Cyrus M. Shahan, *Punk Rock and German Crisis*, p. 26.

96 Jeff Hayton, 'Punk Authenticity', p. 216.

97 Melanie Eis and Fabian Eckert, '*Holocaust*, West German Memory Culture and Punk's Intervention into the Everyday', p. 116.

98 See Jeff Hayton, 'Punk Authenticity', p. 213.

99 Richard Langston, 'Roll Over Beethoven! Chuck Berry! Mick Jagger! 1960s Rock, the Myth of Progress, and the Burden of National Identity in West Germany' in Nora M. Alter and Lutz Koepnick (eds.), *Sound Matters* (New York: Berghahn, 2004), pp. 183-96: 184, 194.

and symbols that could potentially open up more meaningful ways of connecting both to oneself and others and to a shared German past.

The following close reading will focus on the first two poems of the 'ratinger hof' series, which were published in *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* in 1986 (GG, 22-5). The third poem, 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)', was only published two years later in *geschmacksverstärker* (GG, 67-8). Friederike Reents has argued that all three poems were written 'in unmittelbarer zeitlicher Nähe', but archival evidence seems to question this conclusion.[100] According to her dating, 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)' was written around March 1985. If Winkels' estimate that Kling wrote the first two 'ratinger hof' poems around 1982 is correct, at least three years passed until he wrote 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)'. At a performance with Frank Köllges on 25 November 1988 in Kaarst, Kling told the audience: '1983 ist ratinger hof 1 und 2 entstanden und wir haben das in Düsseldorf damals aufgenommen für die selten dämliche Einrichtung des Literaturtelefons […]'.[101] While Kling's dating differs from Winkels' by one year, his statement also suggests that some time had passed until he completed 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)'. This would explain the considerable differences between the first two poems and the last one. As Reents has pointed out, 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)' has thus far received considerably more attention from critics.[102] According to her, this is because 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)' is '[das] ästhetisch avancierteste […] Ratinger-Hof-Gedicht'.[103] The reason why Reents considers the third poem to be aesthetically more refined is that it establishes a connection between punk and the avant-garde that is absent from the two earlier poems. Frieder von Ammon's

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[100] Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 16.

[101] Recording of 'panntz', Heinrich-Heine-Institut, Düsseldorf. Object number HHI.2013.G.1000.152.03, 21'06".

[102] In addition to Reents, see the following close readings: Frieder von Ammon, 'Poetische Psychonautik: Thomas Klings Gedicht RATINGER HOF, ZETTBEH (3)', *Parapluie* 23 (2006), [online]; Hermann Kinder, 'Zwei-Phasen-Lyrik. Bemerkungen zu Thomas Klings "ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)"', *text + kritik* 147 (2000), 81-90.

[103] Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 16.

close reading in particular has highlighted the various references to the avant-gardist Berlin nightlife of the 1920s in 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)'.[104] The understanding of punk as an avant-gardist continuation of Dadaism was originally articulated in Greil Marcus' book *Lipstick Traces*, which Kling read.[105] For obvious reasons, this understanding proved popular with critics, especially as Kling later repeated it in *Botenstoffe*:

> Die Skandal-Sehnsucht der Avantgarden, zuletzt – auch schon zwanzig Jahre her – manifestierte sich um 1976 im Punk. Die *lyrics* der – auch deutscher – Punk-Bands waren ästhetisch der neo-neurasthenischen westdeutschen Lyrik überlegen. (BO, 25-6)

But even though Kling considered punk a continuation of the avant-garde by the time he wrote 'ratinger hof, zettbeh (3)', there is nothing to suggest that this was already the case with 'ratinger hof, zb 1' and 'ratinger hof, zb 2'. This does not necessarily mean that these earlier poems are immature or less refined. Instead, Kling's first two 'ratinger hof' poems seem to express something else about punk. I would like to argue that they investigate punk's topical significance as an emotional practice in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which I will specify in greater detail in the following analysis.

'ratinger hof, zb 1' begins with a scene from what could be a news broadcast about a famine in a non-European country – 'hände die nach reis fiebern' (line 1) – before cutting to the sexualised and intoxicated atmosphere of a night club, marked by the word 'kontinentwechsel' (line 2). The beginning of the poem seems to be an ironic comment on Hans Magnus Enzensberger's 'abendnachrichten', which starts with a similar setting:

> massaker um eine handvoll reis,
> höre ich, für jeden an jedem tag
> eine handvoll reis […][106]

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[104] See Frieder von Ammon, 'Poetische Psychonautik'.

[105] Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Harvard University Press, 1989); Enno Stahl has commented on the fact that Kling read Marcus in 'Die Geburt des Geschmacksverstärkers', p. 79.

[106] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'abendnachrichten' in *blindenschrift* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), p. 11.

But Kling's poem undercuts Enzensberger's moralising political narrative by overriding the desire for 'reis' (line 1) with a desire for 'reiß | verschlüssn' (line 2-3). While Enzensberger's poem addresses the speaker's emotional reaction to the news of a famine over dinner, Kling's poem investigates the ways to distance oneself from such an emotional reaction.[107] The protagonists of 'ratinger hof, zb 1' – a male speaker and a nineteen-year-old girl he tries to pick up – are heavily intoxicated by 'tabletten' (line 3), 'säure' (line 4), and the contents of their glasses (line 6). The poem's elliptic syntax with frequent line breaks and enjambments sucks the reader into a rapid stream of impressions and evoke the feeling of drowning in the 'meer' or 'mehr' (line 14) of drugs and nightlife. A whole array of verbs suggesting movement and mutilation – 'reißen', 'wachsen', 'kappen', schwappen', 'stechen' – contributes to the feeling of instability running through the poem. The protagonist not only seems to be lost in the 'gedrängel' (line 5) of the club, but in the superfluity of impressions that pelt against his 'lederpanzerung' (line 11). However, the poem does not investigate the emotional repercussions of these impressions in an introspective mode. This is in stark contrast to Enzensberger's poem, which illustrates how the speaker's feelings at the news of the famine resonate with the world around them, namely the sound of the rain pattering on their rooftop:

> auf den glasierten ziegeln
> höre ich reiskörner tanzen,
> eine handvoll, beim abendessen,
> reiskörner auf meinem dach:
> den ersten märzregen, deutlich.[108]

In contrast, the protagonist of Kling's poem fends the world off with the symbolic toughness of his leatherjacket. Instead of placid introspection, he seeks distraction through

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[107] The fact that Paul Celan borrowed Enzensberger's phrase 'eine Handvoll Reis' in his poem 'Einem Bruder in Asien' (*Lichtzwang*, 1970), adds yet another layer of reception. See Charlotte Melin, 'Celan and Enzensberger on an Asian Conflict', *Germanic Notes* 18 (1987), 4-5.

[108] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'abendnachrichten', p. 11.

sensual stimuli. Drugs and sex in particular seem to offer a temporary refuge from his critical consciousness, as his reaching hands hold on to pills, his glass and, finally, the girl's naked shoulder. There is an underlying aggression, but also despair running through the poem. As a reader, one almost feels harassed by the rapid stream of impressions describing if not an actual case of harassment, then at the very least a quite aggressive instance of a man hitting on a woman. According to Reents, the poem leads to 'ein romantisch grundiertes Happy End'.[109] While the poem undoubtedly ends with the two protagonists having sex – whether consensual or not is impossible to tell, as we are only presented with the male perspective – there is nothing to suggest that this encounter is at all romantic. The language that is used to describe their flirtation and following intercourse is belligerent and aggressive both through Kling's alienating use of graphemes and imagery, which is condensed in the symbol of the stinging wasp.[110] At the same time, despair seems to be the true reason for the prevailing aggression. '»ICH KANN NACHTS NICHT […] MEER […] SCHLAFN«', the protagonist confesses throughout the poem. Doing drugs and sex are the only activities that offer temporary relief from the terrifying present – the Cold War, especially the deployment of Pershing II-missiles as part of the United States' strategy against the Soviet Union ('PRRSHNG', line 24), while other ways to obtain meaning – 'CHINESISCHE HOROSKOPE' (line 20) etc. – no longer suffice.

'ratinger hof, zb 1' presents a clear break with the therapeutic and spiritual emotional practices of the alternative Left, which the poem alludes to in phrases like 'CHINESISCHE HOROSKOPE' and 'HOPI TELEGRAMM' (line 20, 21). Among alternative groups, bodily practices such as dancing, meditation, yoga, etc. were tools of self-improvement used to expand and liberate one's consciousness in a political sense.

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[109] Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 27.
[110] Erk Grimm, 'Materien und Martyrien. Die Gedichte Thomas Klings', *Schreibheft* 47 (1996), 124-30: 128.

According to Reichardt, 'Drogenkonsum, Spiritualität und die Bearbeitung der Psyche' were 'Formen der Bewusstseinserweiterung' which saw 'die subjektive Selbstbefreiung als Voraussetzung für die gesellschaftliche Revolution'.[111] This also involved the body:

> Der gepanzerte Körper sollte durch verschiedene Körpertechniken, durch therapeutische Verfahren, spirituelle Techniken oder Drogenkonsum aufgesprengt werden, um die als essentialistisch, natürlich und ursprünglich verstandene Lebensenergie freizusetzen. Der Körper wurde Medium der Störung und Heilung in einem.[112]

In 'ratinger hof, zb 1', the same tools are used for different purposes. Instead of liberating the body and exposing it to the world, they were meant to shield it from it. 'Panzerung' is no longer the target, but the desired result of emotional practices. The same is true for critical consciousness, which the alternative Left had considered a precondition for individual and collective change. Following the failure of their idealist political projects, critical consciousness in the face of an apparently hopeless present became stifling. Thus, 'ratinger hof, zb 1' explores emotional practices that make it possible to continue in a globalised world whose blatant inequality and injustice have become too complex to be resolved on an individual level while collective attempts at doing so have failed.

However, while the poem discusses seemingly ephemeral hedonistic practices – going out, dancing, doing drugs, having sex – it goes beyond the fleeting moment by recording the instant in a poem.[113] On a meta-reflexive level, 'ratinger hof, zb 1' is a poem about the emotional practice of writing poetry, and about the possibility of making even the wish for a loss of critical consciousness available for critical engagement. While issues that poets like Enzensberger and other poets discussed in the 1960s and 1970s – inequality, poverty, war – are not absent from 'ratinger hof, zb 1', they no longer inspire political

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[111] Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 871.
[112] Ibid., p. 871.
[113] See also Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek, 'Thomas Kling: ratinger hof, zb 1 (1986)' in *Lyrisches Gespür*, pp. 478-81: 481.

action or placid introspection. Instead, emotional distancing mechanisms, including poetry, can become the theme of poetry itself.

Of course, the 'ratinger hof' poems are also about a particular feeling of being young and sensing the painful gap between one's experiences and desires, while lacking the knowledge to make complete sense of either one of them. They are about the process of figuring out what it means to be a person, namely what the collective rules of being a person and doings things in life are and what kind of person one wants to be in relation to the world. While the main horizon of experiences in 'ratinger hof, zb 1' is the opposite sex, 'ratinger hof, zb 2' turns to one's parents and grandparents as the horizon of collective rules and shared cultural knowledge. In this poem, scenes of the nightclub are combined with a care home in what Reents has interpreted as an intergenerational clash 'im Sinne des literarisch immer wieder bearbeiteten Vater-Sohn-Konflikts'.[114] However, the juxtaposition of intoxicated juveniles and medicated elderly also reveals analogies, as the reference to their 'dragée pupillen'/'dragéepupilln' (line 4 and 19) and failing communication 'durch trennscheiben'/ 'durchtrennscheiben' (line 6 and 18) suggests.

In addition, the poem demonstrates continuities in the shared pool of cultural knowledge, particularly regarding the symbolism of shoes, boots and feet that is repeated throughout. As an item of punk fashion, boots are only significant in the context of a shared pool of cultural knowledge that allows both members of the in-group and outsiders to read and decipher their meaning. This might include their meaning in folklore, as references to the Grimms' tales 'Die zertanzten Schuhe' and 'Die Gänsemagd' suggest, but also factual knowledge about their historical usage. In this context, references to the First World War ('verdun', line 22) but also the Second World War and the Holocaust,

[114] Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 30; similarly Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 89.

hint at their military use. 'vulkan fiber' (line 11) was a type of plastic produced by IG Farben, a company that was notorious for its responsibility in enabling the Holocaust.

The fact that both realms of cultural knowledge, fact and fiction, are not in opposition but in constant exchange is demonstrated by the references to the folk song 'Stiefel muss sterben' (line 9). Originally apolitical, the song turned into a 'Trinklied' among nationalist German 'Burschenschaften' over the course of the 19th century and was used in nationalist-militaristic propaganda in the 20th century.[115] Thus, the poem spans an arc that ranges from the symbolism of boots in German folklore, nationalism, militarism and totalitarianism to their appropriation in punk aesthetic. According to Trilcke, 'hier überliefert einer zwar nicht, was das Volk so erzählt, aber doch, was das "Volk" so treibt, dokumentiert dessen (sub-)kulturelle Praktiken und Produkte.'[116] In addition, the poem shows how all practices, even countercultural ones, take place within the horizon of an already existing pool of shared cultural knowledge. As such, rather than establishing a clear intergenerational opposition, as Reents has argued, the poem demonstrates how the range of experience of one's parents and grandparents is the backdrop against which the following generation constructs their own world. While this process might include conflict, it also creates continuities. The fact that Kling's referred to his grandfather in an early draft of the poem, as Friederike Reents has pointed out, emphasises this.[117]

The last, capitalised lines of the poem seem to deal with the normative dimension of this shared cultural knowledge, in what seems to be a quote from a passage in a medical textbook discussing shoe fetishism:

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[115] See 'Stiefel muß sterben', *Volksliederarchiv* [online], 17 October 2019.
[116] Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 89.
[117] Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 31.

> IM DRITTN STADIUM FUNKTIONIERT AUCH DIE
> ONANIE NICHT MEHR DER PATIENT HAT KEIN B
> DÜRFNIS NACH GENITALER BETETIGUNG DER AN
> BLICK DER GERUCH DI E BERÜHRUN DAS ABLE
> CKN ODER KÜSSN DES SCHUHES GENÜGN
>
> (GG, 25)

The passage demonstrates that even our understanding of 'normal' and 'deviant' sexual behaviour is determined by cultural knowledge that is in itself subject to historical change. While Freud considered shoe fetishism to be pathological, it was just one preference among others within the BDSM culture of the 1980s. In its appropriation of BDSM symbols like studs and dog collars, punk questioned traditional gender roles and brought sexual practices and gender norms up for discussion.[118]

In addition, the passage can be understood as a reference to Friedrich Hölderlin, to whom Kling paid tribute with the title of his collection *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* (IT, 15).[119] According to a diary entry by Wilhelm Waiblinger on 9 June 1823, compulsive masturbation was one symptom of Hölderlin's condition after 1805:

> Hölderlin weigert sich heute noch im Bett liegend, mit den schrecklichsten Entschuldigungen mit meiner königl. Majestet zu gehen. Der Tischler gab mir neue Nachrichten von seinem Leben. Auch Onanie trug zu seiner Versunkenheit bey. Sein Leben aber ist unendlich reich.[120]

At Hölderlin's time, masturbation was considered pathological, and the belief that in a third stage it would eventually lead to psychosis can still be found in medical textbooks from the second half of the 19th century.[121] Evidence from Kling's library attest to his interest in Hölderlin's medical condition and the contemporary academic discourse around

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[118] See Uta G Poiger, 'Popkultur und Geschlechternormen', p. 74.
[119] See also Friederike Reents, 'Mit Hölderlin und Benn im Ratinger Hof', p. 21.
[120] Gerhard Fichtner (ed.), *Psychiatrie zur Zeit Hölderlins* (Tübingen: Universitätsbibliothek, 1980), p. 69.
[121] See Hermann Rohleder, *Die Masturbation. Eine Monographie für Ärzte und Pädagogen* (Berlin: Kornfeld, 1899), p. 222.

it, as Peer Trilcke has pointed out.[122] His interest was also expressed in the series 'sonnenstudio hölderlin' in the collection *geschmacksverstärker* (GG, 121-8). Thus, the poem questions what kind of emotional practices are considered acceptable or pathological by pointing out the way in which they are culturally and historically determined.

As such, rather than situating it in a cultural history of the avant-garde, 'ratinger hof, zb 1' and 'ratinger hof, zb 2' discuss punk as a topical emotional practice for a young generation coming of age in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While 'ratinger hof, zb 1' deals more specifically with the emotional practices that are available in the face of a seemingly hopeless present, 'ratinger hof, zb 2' points out how these practices take place against the backdrop of a shared pool of cultural knowledge that is in itself historical. As such, the poem demonstrates how our practices might be determined by the past in ways that are beyond our conscious understanding. Nevertheless, in exploring the horizon of experience that is drawn by our parents and grandparents, the poem tries to investigate which parts of our shared past might be useful and which are not. In the following chapter, I will point out how the horizon of experience drawn by previous generations became particularly relevant in the context of Kling's performances from the mid-1980s onwards.

11

The Poet in a Leatherjacket

Thomas Kling's Self-Stylisation in the 1980s

In 1993, writer and critic Uwe Wittstock declared in *Neue Rundschau* that young German writers had lost touch with their audience over the past decade.[123] If the situation seemed dire for young upcoming novelists, it was even worse for poets. In the context of this

[122] Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 36.
[123] Uwe Wittstock, 'Ab in die Nische?', p. 45

perceived crisis, developing new strategies to engage with the audience was essential. In a review of Kling's *geschmacksverstärker* (1989), critic Frank Mennemeier described the alternatives that seemed available for young poets in the 1980s:

> Will man heute als Lyriker noch bei einem größeren Publikum reüssieren, muß man etwa die Gitarre zu Hilfe nehmen, sich aufs Liedermachen, Balladen-Singen werfen, oder aber man versucht, den umgekehrten Weg, einen höchst paradoxen, zu gehen: Man verschließt sich jeglicher "Mitteilung" – in der Hoffnung, daß die Leute eben dadurch auf einen aufmerksam werden und daß sie anfangen, selbst dort nach der "Botschaft" zu suchen, wo vielleicht gar keine ist. Für diese zweite Möglichkeit, Kommunikation erzwingen zu wollen durch radikalen Kommunikationsentzug, hat sich also Kling mit Vehemenz entschieden.[124]

While Mennemeier's conclusion that Kling stopped communicating with his audience is not accurate, it seems obvious that Kling did indeed communicate differently – in particular in comparison with the 'Liedermacher'-tradition of the 1970s. A statement by Kling in a conversation with Gabriele Weingartner in 1998 could be read like a direct response to Mennemeier's criticism. Asked when he had realised that he wanted to be a 'Poet' – and Weingartner's word choice is important here – Kling explained:

> Also! Poet schon mal gar nicht, weil ich ja nicht André Heller bin. Ich bin auch kein Liedermacher und kein Barde. Diesen ganzen Siebziger-Jahre-Mist habe ich immer bekämpft. Nein, ich habe mich das nie gefragt, ob ich Dichter oder Schriftsteller werden sollte, denn das war ich ja. Das war ich. Es war klar, dass ich es nie sein lassen würde.[125]

What is remarkable in this passage is how Kling defined his poetic persona as a kind of authentic self-expression – he did not have to become a poet since he had always been one – whereas he saw concepts associated with 1970s poetry – 'Poet', 'Barde', and 'Liedermacher' – as inauthentic roles. But what distinguished the new kind of authenticity performed by Kling? In this chapter, I will investigate in more detail the strategies that

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[124] Franz Norbert Mennemeier, 'Ein allzu perfektes Debüt. Thomas Klings Gedichtband "geschmacksverstärker"' [review] in *Spiegelungen. Literaturkritik 1998-1958. 40 Jahre Neues Rheinland* (Pulheim: Rhein-Eifel-Mosel-Verlag, 1998), pp. 83-4: 83.

[125] Thomas Kling and Gabriele Weingartner, 'Spracharchäologie, diesen Ausdruck habe ich erfunden', p. 54.

Kling used to perform the 'authentic' self-expression of his poetic persona. The main question will be how his performances strategies compared with other contemporary practices of authenticity – the alternative Left's practices of self-improvement and emotional introspection on the one hand, and punk's strategy of subversive provocation on the other. Punk in particular – when understood as a topical movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s, not as a mere continuation of the avant-garde – will be central in understanding Kling's strategies of performing authenticity.

In the previous chapter I have, like Enno Stahl, come to the conclusion that it would be incorrect to label Kling a 'punk poet' as he was never part of a punk 'scene' in the narrow sense. But this does not mean that he did not share important characteristics with punk. According to Jeff Hayton, punk was a movement that 'sought to redefine authenticity' and 'rejected conformity' through 'being different'.[126] I will argue in this chapter that Kling sought to do the same. In doing so, he rejected the concept of authenticity associated with the emotional style of the alternative Left in the 1970s. Just like Eckhart Schmidt, whom I discussed in chapter 9, Kling opposed the 'problem talk' associated with the previous decade, in particular the poetry of 'Neue Subjektivität'. The emotional practices of the alternative Left had left their mark on poetry just as they had on film, and just like Schmidt, Kling attacked this style when he defamed the poets of the past decade as 'die durch die 70er wallenden, nun sprachlich völlig verwahrlosten Bauchnabelbetrachter, Fußlahme des Denkens, insgesamt ein unerfreuliches Lazarett von potentiellen New-Age-Fällen' (IT, 21). If in the 1970s authenticity had meant introspection and self-improvement, Kling did something new. As such, he did not get rid of the quest of authenticity as much as redefine what authenticity could mean.

[126] Jeff Hayton, 'Punk Authenticity', pp. 213, 218, 219.

To say that performance was a central aspect of Kling's poetry is to state the obvious.[127] His performances were of course a central practice of authenticity, because, as Matthias Bickenbach has argued, 'der Dichterlesung haftet etwas von der Aura des Authentischen an'.[128] However, an analysis of Kling's performances still seems to pose great methodological and technical challenges. As Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus has pointed out, research is still complicated by the lack of an archive making the multitude of existing audio recordings, video footage and photographs available to scholars.[129] The release of an audio book including several yet unknown recordings has been very valuable in this regard, but can only be seen as a first step.[130] Another difficulty seems to be that the process of historicising Kling is still at its beginnings. One consequence of this is that critics tend to read with Kling rather than against or alongside his own self-interpretations. As a result, they often rely on Kling's own poetic statements in order to characterise his performances, which poses considerable methodological problems in the case of a poet as prone to self-stylisation as Kling. While poetic statements are invaluable historical documents, we need be aware that the relationship between poetic theory and practice might be more complicated than that of being a mere supplement to each other.

Another problem is that, apart from a few watershed moments which Kling himself established retrospectively, mainly in *Itinerar* (1997), critics have tended to look at his performances as a more or less homogenous continuum. When Kling described his first public performance in Vienna in 1983 in *Itinerar*, he presented a poet who had perfected

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[127] See Christoph Jürgensen, 'Der Autor als Live-Act' (see chapter 8, footnote 75); Enno Stahl (ed.), *Duo Kreationen. Thomas Kling & Frank Köllges, gemeinsam und mit anderen* (Düsseldorf: edition virgines, 2016); Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, '"Ohrenbelichtung für alle". Thomas Kling über den Dichter als "Live-Act"', in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 241-62; Matthias Bickenbach, 'Dichterlesung im medientechnischen Zeitalter'.

[128] Matthias Bickenbach, 'Dichterlesung im medientechnischen Zeitalter', p. 191.

[129] Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, '"Ohrenbelichtung für alle"', p. 247.

[130] See Thomas Kling, *Die gebrannte Performance*, ed. by Ulrike Janssen and Norbert Wehr (Düsseldorf: Lilienfeld, 2015).

his public appearance before his career had even started (IT, 12-3, 18; see also chapter 8). In the same way that Kling claimed to have always been a poet, he always seems to have been a performer. But as compelling as such a narrative may be, it is unlikely to tell the whole truth. As Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus has pointed out, Kling's performances spanned at least two decades and underwent significant changes not only over the course of time but also depending on their context.[131] In the words of Christoph Jürgensen, 'der […] "junge" Kling 1986 [tritt] anders auf als der "alte" 1998'.[132]

In the following, I will look at an even earlier period, namely that between Kling's first performance in 1983 and the year 1986, when he published his first collection *erprobung herzstärkender mittel* and won two awards for his poetry in Düsseldorf. In doing so, I will compare Kling's own written accounts with that of other sources, in addition to contemporary photographs and recordings of his performances. Two of Kling's earliest public readings at poetry competitions, in Lüdenscheid in 1984 and in Düsseldorf in 1986, will be central in my argument. Partly due to the nature of the material, but also because I think it will enable important insights, I will focus on two main aspects: Kling's self-stylisation through his recitation techniques and his clothes. Of course, such an approach is of limited scope. However, looking at certain aspects of Kling's performances during a specific period will enable further research and comparisons with his later performances, which are better documented and have been discussed already.[133]

It is commonly assumed that Kling borrowed his performance strategies from the so-called *Wiener Gruppe* in a poetic tradition going back to the historical avant-garde.[134] In chapter 8, I have disentangled some of the influences that are commonly subsumed

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[131] Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, '"Ohrenbelichtung für alle"', pp. 247, 250-51.
[132] Christoph Jürgensen, 'Der Autor als Live-Act', p. 304.
[133] For an analysis of Kling's performances from the 1990s onwards, see Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, '"Ohrenbelichtung für alle"', pp. 245-6, 249-51.
[134] See also Frieder von Ammon, *Fülle des Lauts*, pp. 436-42.

under the term *Wiener Gruppe* and pointed out the importance of other groups and individuals in the diverse Viennese literary network, most notably the artist Joe Berger. My analysis has shown that Kling's early performances, which were not only inspired by *Wiener Gruppe*, but also by groups such as *first vienna working group: motion*, differed significantly from his later 'Sprachinstallationen' in their use of props, gimmicks, mixed media and their interaction with the audience. The following analysis will shed light on Kling's development from 'Aktion' to 'Sprachinstallation'.

In September 1984, Kling read 'ratinger hof, zb 1' at a prize reading in Lüdenscheid.[135] It was the first competition that Kling competed in, and thanks to a journalistic piece he wrote for *Überblick* it is possible to reconstruct his experience of it.[136] Two years later, in September 1986, Kling read 'obst und gemüse-marterl' at another prize reading in Düsseldorf.[137] In both instances, he was awarded the first prize for his poetry. The context and setting of both readings is comparable. From an analytic point of view he would ideally have read the same poem. But unfortunately, 'ratinger hof, zb 1' was not among the poems he submitted to the competition in Düsseldorf. Still, the similarities are sufficient to draw some conclusions. When listening to the recording of 'ratinger hof, zb 1' in Lüdenscheid, the first impression that strikes the ear is how understated this performance is compared to the dramatic style usually associated with Kling. While it would be an exaggeration to call his intonation monotonous, the vocal elements of his performance are certainly reduced. The poem 'ratinger hof, zb 1' includes various different levels of speech, which are realised with capital letters in the print version. In the reading, Kling mildly varied volume and emphasis of his diction, but not the natural pitch or tone

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[135] Thomas Kling, *Die gebrannte Performance*, CD1, track 1.
[136] Thomas Kling, 'Nimm 2', *Überblick* 12 (1984), 102-3: 102.
[137] Westdeutscher Rundfunk, *Land und Leute. Lyrik in Nordrhein-Westfalen. 6. Nordrhein-Westfälisches Autorentreffen*, 1 December 1986 [radio broadcast], 5'00"-7'10".

of his voice. Apart from the common elision of the phoneme schwa (/ə/) in word endings, the realisation of which is more remarkable in print than in speech, only the pronunciation of the word 'PRRSHNG' stands out, which Kling realised with a long alveolar trill at the tip of his tongue, a phonetic variation of ⟨r⟩ that can be found in various German dialects but which differs from the voiced uvular fricative in Standard German.

The low-key style of Kling's reading in Lüdenscheid contrasts with the sharp criticism of his fellow contestants he voiced in *Überblick*: 'Fast alle ans Katheder tretenden Kandidaten nutzen genüßlich nuschelnd die volle Länge "ihrer" Zeit. Mit einer Stimmintensität, mit der ansonsten allenfalls der Wasserstandsbericht verabreicht wird.'[138] The comparison with the footage of Kling's own reading reveals a striking disparity between theory and practice. Kling read well and he certainly did not 'mumble'; however, his reading was far from breaking any conventional boundaries. Unintentional elements of his performance might partly explain why: a slightly trembling voice and an increased breathing rate especially at the beginning of the reading give an idea of the tension the 27-year-old must have felt at his first competition.

Not a single sign of this tension is audible at the reading of 'obst und gemüse-marterl' in Düsseldorf two years later. In this performance, Kling varied his voice and intonation with great virtuosity. His pace shifted between high speed and extreme deceleration, he changed his pitch and accent to realise different voices that included broad Tyrolese as much as a snappy Berlin dialect, and the volume of his voice ranged from a low whisper to an aggressive shouting. Clearly, we are dealing with a speaker who is in complete control and has perfected his mastery over all aspects of his voice over the past two years. What had happened since Lüdenscheid? Later readings of 'ratinger hof, zb 1' that display the same virtuosity indicate that the difference in texts could not be the reason

[138] Thomas Kling, 'Nimm 2', p. 102.

for the sharp contrast between both performances.[139] It also seems that more has been going on than a poet gaining routine and self-confidence through practice, although this certainly played a role. Kling had obviously found his voice – but how? As I have already pointed out, he could not have drawn on the example of *Wiener Gruppe* in his re-evaluation of the poetic reading. In order to understand where Kling came from, we need to look at the history of poetry readings in West Germany after the Second World War.

Kling's scorn for poetry readings in West Germany after the Second World War is not a secret. According to him, they were 'piepsig und verdruckst, vor allem aber von peinigender Langeweile' (IT, 9). While the observation that poetry readings were tedious might be accurate, historical context explains why. Rhetoric had been a central tool of Nazi propaganda, and in the years following the end of the Second World War, a new 'regime of speech' emerged in West Germany in opposition to the emotive, declamatory style of National Socialism.[140] If poetry readings after the war were tedious, they were so because emotive speech had lost its moral grounds with the fall of the Nazi empire:

> Wenn im Nationalsozialismus Aspekte der Klanggestalt dazu verholfen haben, menschenverachtende Inhalte zu vermitteln, wenn die hohe Kunst der Rhetorik zu niederen Zwecken angewandt worden ist, wenn im offiziellen Sprachgebrauch ein Missbrauch der Sprache stattgefunden hat, dann erscheint es einleuchtend, darauf mit einer Sprechhaltung zu reagieren, die Stil zugunsten von Substanz in den Hintergrund rücken lässt.[141]

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[139] See e.g. Kling's performance of 'ratinger hof, zb 1' with Frank Köllges in 1988, *Die gebrannte Performance*, CD1, track 11.

[140] See Frieder von Ammon, *Fülle des Lauts*, pp. 47-53; Cornelia Epping-Jäger, 'Embedded Voices. Stimmpolitiken des Nationalsozialismus' in Brigitte Felderer (ed.), *Phonorama. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Stimme als Medium* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2004), pp. 145-57; Marcel Beyer, 'Thomas Kling: Haltung', *text + kritik* 147 (2000), 70-80: 73

[141] Marcel Beyer, 'Thomas Kling: Haltung', p. 73.

Thus, as Marcel Beyer has argued, 'Kunstlosigkeit' became central in performing authenticity.[142] Cornelia Epping-Jäger has identified this 'Kunstlosigkeit' with a so-called 'Pathos der Nüchternheit', which particularly writers around 'Gruppe 47' advocated for.[143]

> Es ist deutlich, dass die *Gruppe* mit einem solchen Monotoniegebot einer unausgesprochenen Maxime folgte, die sich in der Überzeugung manifestierte, man könne sich dadurch am sichersten vom politischen Pathos der NS-Stimmen distanzieren, dass man jegliches Pathos unter Verbot stelle. […] Da die Autorengruppe offenbar den Nationalsozialismus in einer wesentlichen Hinsicht über sein Stimmregime, d.h. über den emotionalen, pathetisch-appellativen Charakter des öffentlichen Redens, identifizierte, bestand für sie ein wichtiges Moment in der Distanznahme zum Nationalsozialismus in der Sanktionierung von Indexikalität, Pathos und Appellativität der Stimme überhaupt.[144]

While 'Gruppe 47' assumed that banning emotive speech would also ban National Socialist thought, Paul Celan's first reading at the group's meeting in 1952 showed how misled such an argument was. When Celan, who had been schooled in the declamatory tradition of 'Burgtheaterdeutsch', read his poem 'Todesfuge', members of the group – most likely Hans Werner Richter himself – ridiculed him for 'reading like Goebbels'.[145] This remark not only belies the assumption that any particular style of speech could offer moral integrity, it also illustrates how strongly emotive speech was associated with National Socialism in the German mind – as a result, it even seemed acceptable to compare a Holocaust-survivor with one of the genocide's central designers.[146]

Frieder von Ammon has noted that it was 'wenig überraschend, dass in der Nachkriegszeit im Hinblick auf den Vortrag von Gedichten ein "Monotoniegebot" galt und

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142 Ibid.

143 See Cornelia Epping-Jäger, '"Diese Stimme mußte angefochten werden". Paul Celans Lesung vor der Gruppe 47 als Stimmereignis' in Günter Butzer and Joachim Jacob (eds.), *Berührungen. Komparatistische Perspektiven auf die frühe deutsche Nackkriegsliteratur* (Munich: Fink, 2012), pp. 263-80: 269. See also in the same collection Joachim Jacob, 'Kahlschlag Pathos. Ein verdrängtes Phänomen der Nachkriegsliteratur', pp. 243-61.

144 Cornelia Epping-Jäger, 'Paul Celans Lesung vor der Gruppe 47', p. 270.

145 Ibid., pp. 266, 278.

146 See also Klaus Briegleb, *Mißachtung und Tabu: eine Streitschrift zur Frage: "Wie antisemitisch war die Gruppe 47?"* (Berlin: Philo, 2003).

Lyriker, die ihre Gedichte dennoch in einem pathetisch-expressiven und damit an die "Stimmgewalt" des "Dritten Reichs" erinnernden Stil vortrugen, entsprechend misstrauisch betrachtet wurden.'[147] Thus, it seemed comprehensible that 'die deutschsprachigen Literaturkritiker […] zu Beginn der 1950er Jahre offenbar noch nicht in der Lage [waren], zwischen der musikalischen Expressivität Celans und dem depravierten Pathos Goebbels' zu unterscheiden'.[148] In contrast to this understanding, however, I agree with Cornelia Epping-Jäger, who argued that 'die monotone Stimme als Stimme der Erinnerungsvermeidung gelten [kann]'.[149] After all, what had lost its moral grounds as a consequence of the Second World War and the Holocaust was not simply a way of speaking but German identity itself, of which Celan's voice was a painful reminder. In this context, Kling's opposition to monotonous reading practices through his emotive speech and to sober introspection with extrovert provocation marked a significant change in the history of poetic performance in West Germany after the Second World War. With his emotive recitation techniques, Kling broke conventions and evoked unsettling memories of the German past. A description of his first performance that predates its subsequent poetic rendering in *Itinerar* confirms that Kling was clearly aware of this particular German tradition of emotive public speech and its careful orchestration in Nazi propaganda:[150]

> […] das war dann der absolute Sportpalast-Flash, das Jupiterlicht, die Leute saßen bis ganz vorne, 1200 Leute, Wahnsinn, und du siehst ja nichts, du hörst es nur immer so Glucksen im Raum und Atmen […] Das war einfach irre. Das war die erste offizielle Lesung '83.[151]

In the same conversation with Beyer, Kling explained:

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147 Frieder von Ammon, *Fülle des Lauts*, p. 48.
148 Ibid.
149 Cornelia Epping-Jäger, 'Paul Celans Lesung vor der Gruppe 47', p. 270.
150 See also Cornelia Epping-Jäger, 'Stimmpolitiken des Nationalsozialismus', pp. 153-4. Whether Kling's remark presents an accurate description of the setting of his first public performance is a question which I discussed in chapter 8.
151 Thomas Kling and Marcel Beyer, 'Das Eingemachte', p. 55.

> Für mich hat das Lesen vor Öffentlichkeit auch immer so dazugehört. Dieses zum Teil aggressive Lesen ist wesentlich daraus entstanden, daß ich mich halt unglaublich geärgert habe über Literaturlesungen, das Glas Wasser, dieses Raunen, dieses absolut Asexuelle.[152]

Remarkably, Kling used the same words to characterise poetry readings in West Germany that members of 'Gruppe 47' had used to defame Paul Celan, who had also been criticised for his 'Geraune'.[153] The analogy reveals how easily different regimes of speech, because they are both historically and culturally determined, are delegitimised by 'othering' a certain way of speaking. In the case of 'Gruppe 47', anti-Semitic tropes of the Jewish 'other' and the comparison to the Nazi perpetrator served as distancing mechanisms, while Kling associated a certain regime of speech with a gendered 'other' that was either asexual, as in the above quote, or feminine. Thus, when he criticised 'die durch die 70er wallenden, nun sprachlich völlig verwahrlosten Bauchnabelbetrachter', he clearly marked them as feminine by drawing attention to their long ('wallend') hair (IT, 21).

Contemporary sources confirm how divisive the style of Kling's performances was. A journalist who covered the 1986 poetry competition in Düsseldorf for *Rheinische Post* criticised that Kling appeared 'grimmiger als nötig und attackiert sogar die Jury'.[154] Norbert Hummelt recalled how at the same reading in response to Kling's aggressive demeanour 'empfindsame Zuhörer […] unter Protest den Saal [verließen]'.[155] According to Hubert Winkels, those who stayed followed Kling's performance 'mit einem leichten Schaudern'.[156] What uncanny horror did Kling's performance conjure that caused his audience to shiver? In the context of the above statement, it seems plausible to suggest that it was his use of a regime of speech that had become unacceptable in Germany due to its

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[152] Ibid.
[153] Heinz Ludwig Arnold, *Die Gruppe 47* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004), pp. 74-6.
[154] 'Viele Worte mit Biß', *Rheinische Post*, 29 September 1986.
[155] Norbert Hummelt, 'Erinnerung an Thomas Kling', *Castrum Peregrini. Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst- und Geistesgeschichte* 268/269 (2005), 103-10: 105.
[156] Hubert Winkels, 'Zungenentfernung' in *Der Stimmen Ordnung*, pp. 79-88: 79.

association with National Socialism. In opposition to the conventions of poetry readings in West Germany after the war, Kling recited with an aggressive emotive voice that had last been heard from the likes of Hitler and Goebbels. It is this strategy of retrieving a tabooed aspect from the German past and using it to disrupt conventional norms that aligns Kling with West German punk. As I have argued in more detail in the previous chapter, the 'destruction of the leading discourse on the West German understanding of the Nazi past' was a central issue for West German punk.[157] Both with their lyrics and with their visual language, West German punks explored 'new ways of dealing critically with Germany's past, distancing itself from the widespread moralizing tendency of leftist historical narratives.'[158] Thus, West German punks frequently used tabooed Nazi symbolism and language in order to disrupt the conventional narratives that surrounded the Second World War and the Holocaust and to break the collective repression of individual involvement in the Nazi crimes – an attempt that was, however, often insensitive to those who had experienced and survived Nazi terror.[159] By using a tabooed kind of speech that was still associated with National Socialism, Kling used a similar strategy. According to Winkels, Kling's speech had 'Autorität, was man Anfang der achtziger Jahre noch nicht so gerne mochte'.[160] Considering its role in the rise of German totalitarianism, the scepticism seems understandable. Before discussing the implications of Kling's strategy, I would like to add another aspect by looking at the way in which his clothes reinforced this impression.

From the mid-1980s onwards, the clothes that Kling used during his performances evoked unsettling memories of the German past as much as his speech. A few years ealier, this had not been the case: photographs from Lüdenscheid show Kling wearing his so-

[157] Melanie Eis and Fabian Eckert, '"1979 Deutschland": *Holocaust*, West German Memory Culture and Punk's Intervention into the Everyday', p. 116 (see chapter 10, footnote 92).
[158] Ibid.
[159] See Frank Apunkt Schneider, '"My Future in the SS" (see chapter 10, footnote 94).
[160] Hubert Winkels, 'Botschaft aus Blei', p. 29.

called ‘Wespenpulli’ – a woollen yellow jumper with a graphic black pattern – both for the reading and the award ceremony.[161] Photographs from the same year that illustrate his piece for *Überblick* and his poems in *Selbstzeugnisse* show him wearing the same jumper.[162] In fact, Kling’s dress is quite similar to the woollen jumpers that had been so popular among the alternative Left in the 1970s. However, soon after, he started wearing a black leather jacket at public performances.[163] In the German context, the black leather jacket was not just an expression of working class culture or youth revolt, but also served as a disconcerting reminder of SS uniform.[164] In combination with Kling’s aggressive recitation style, the allusion seemed obvious. Even Kling’s friends were unsettled by this self-stylisation, as an autofictional text by Andreas F. Kelletat, who had known Kling since the two had started university together in 1978 and published the collection *Amptate* in 1983, attests. Kelletat recalls how he was bothered by the way in which

> Thomas gezielt die Pose des zornigen jungen Mannes einzunehmen schien. […] Das Schreien [wurde] damals sein Markenzeichen […], neben seiner Lederjacke und seinem gelben Wollpullover mit den großen schwarzen Dreiecken drauf. Die Vorliebe für Cowboystiefel, für Boots, hatte er allerdings schon lange, trug sie sommers wie winters […][165]

The passage confirms how both his aggressive speech and clothing style were central aspects of Kling’s self-stylisation from the mid-1980s onwards. As Christoph Jürgensen has argued, Kling knew how to read ‘das Zeichensystem “Mode”’.[166] His choices were carefully chosen references to the dress code of his time.[167] By combining classic accessories of the alternative Left like the woolen jumper and the cowboy boots with the

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[161] See the record by Stadtbibliothek Lüdenscheid, *Literatur Lüdenscheid 20-23 September 1984* (Oer-Erkenschwick: Satz- und Repro-Studio G. Neumann KG, 1984).
[162] See chapter 11, footnote 136 and chapter 8, footnote 78.
[163] See e.g. the photograph in Wolfgang Schiffer (ed.), *Heimat und Geschwindigkeit* (Munich: F. Schneider, 1986), p. 83.
[164] See Nicola Lepp, ‘Ledermythen’, pp. 489-90.
[165] Quoted from a manuscript by Andreas F. Kelletat. Revised and published as ‘Amptat, Ach je’, pp. 10, 12.
[166] Christoph Jürgensen, ‘Der Autor als Live-Act’, p. 315.
[167] Sven Reichardt, *Authentizität und Gemeinschaft*, p. 632.

black leather jacket, Kling broke with the common symbolism of contemporary fashion. When just a few years later punk symbolism became mainstream, another change took place in Kling's self-stylisation. In a passage in *Botenstoffe*, he explained:

> Als ich aus Österreich zurückkam nach Düsseldorf trug ich über meinem schwarzgelben Wespenpullover Trachtenjacke – obligatorisch war 1980 auf der Szene (Ratinger Hof) naturgemäß Leder. Dazu verwandte ich wienerische Sprachfärbung. Zur Schau. *Das* reichte. (BO, 82)

As usual, Kling's dating is unreliable – according to early photographs, he wore neither 'Trachtenjacke' nor 'Leder' as early as 1980. But a series of photographs by Bernd Jansen of a performance in 1986 show Kling in a black jeans and shirt with a Tyrolean jacket.[168] Again, the incident shows how central gestures of opposition and nonconformity, which had also defined punk in its early days, were to Kling's self-stylisation. At a time when punk had already lost its subversive potential by becoming mainstream fashion, Kling performed nonconformity by using a traditional Tyrolean jacket. However, the symbolism of the black leather jacket and the Tyrolean jacket are less diametrically opposed than it might seem: while the former evoked associations of Nazi militarism, the latter alluded to a deeply rooted traditional conservatism that had supposedly laid the ground for Hitler's rise. Throughout the 1980s, Kling thus continued to include unsettling symbols of the German past in his self-stylisation, as video footage of a performance in 1989 attests. On this occasion, Kling appeared, as Christoph Jürgensens has put it, 'feldherrnhaft':

> Über einen schlichten dunklen Rollkragenpullover trägt Kling einen beigefarbenen Trenchcoat, mit militärisch anmutenden Schulterklappen, und die eigentlich "normale" Hose ist in Stiefel gesteckt und verstärkt so den, pointiert gesagt, paramilitärischen Eindruck seines Habits.[169]

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[168] See Bernd Jansen's contribution in Joseph A. Kruse, Heidemarie Vahl and Ute Langanky (eds.), *den sprachn das sentimentale abknöpfn. Widmungen zum 50. Geburtstag von Thomas Kling* (Düsseldorf: Heinrich-Heine-Institut, 2007), no page number.

[169] Christoph Jürgensen, 'Der Autor als Live-Act', pp. 315-16.

Clearly, Kling's self-stylisation worked in the sense that it granted him a degree of public attention that poets usually did not receive. In his rejection of the alternative Left's emotional style and poetry practices, Kling claimed the most provocative heritage possible: that of the German perpetrator. But in how far did this self-stylisation also expand the petrified discourse on the role of emotive speech in the German past? Obviously, 'Gruppe 47' had dealt with the issue in an overly simplified way. Banning any kind of emotive speech simply denied the fact that National Socialist ideology could – and indeed did – continue in other forms of speech in the Federal Republic well after the fall of Nazism. But did Kling really question this taboo, or did he simply reinforce it by shocking his audience and 'causing them to shiver'? The poem 'mann aus reit (rheinland)' in the collection *brennstabm* (1991), which re-enacts one of Goebbel's speeches, might offer an answer (GG, 317). In a detailed close reading, Marcel Beyer has argued that the poem

> […] Hierarchien außer Kraft [setzt] […] [indem es] [a]nstatt die inszenierte Rede [Goebbels] durch "authentische" Rede [des Dichters] zu ersetzen, […] aus einem anderen Zusammenhang inszenierter Rede heraus […]kontert. Dem bewussten Missbrauch von Sprache wird nicht die einfache einer "aufrichtigen" Rede entgegengehalten, ohne dabei aber die Sprechhaltung in Frage zu stellen, sondern es gilt, auf der Grundlage einer anderen Sprechhaltung Redefiguren, indirektes Sprechen, Authentizitätsbehauptungen mit ihresgleichen zu konfrontieren.[170]

Thus, Beyer concluded that

> Unter diesen Voraussetzungen ist es Thomas Kling beim Vortrag eines Gedichts wie "mann aus reit (rheinland)" möglich, Tonlagen anzunehmen, ohne als Vertreter dieser Tonlagen und der mit ihnen verbundenen Auffassungen missverstanden zu werden. Aufgrund der präzisen Inszenierung seines Vortrags ist die Problematik des Einflüsterns stets präsent, selbst falls Thomas Kling sogar Goebbels' Stimmführung nachvollziehen oder die im Gedicht beschriebene Gestik umsetzen sollte. Seine Sprach- und Sprechbewegungen mögen irritieren, doch die Gefahr, der Hörer könne sich oder den Dichter mit der Sprechhaltung eines Diktators identifizieren, bleibt ausgeschlossen.[171]

[170] Marcel Beyer, 'Thomas Kling: Haltung', p. 77.
[171] Ibid., p. 77-8.

The particular phrase in the poem that Beyer referred to is a direct quote from Goebbels, '(»… wird | ihnen das freche judenmaul gestopft | werdn«)', which in the print version of the poem is clearly marked as such through brackets and inverted guillemets. However, the same distancing mechanisms are not available for the speaker of the poem if the listener does not have a copy of the poem at hand to reconstruct them. Thus, the case of 'indirektes Sprechen' that Beyer sees at work in the poem seems more complex than he suggested.

Beyer compares the poem's 'indirect speech' with what he calls Afro-American 'hip talk'. This argument is not persuasive. Slangs are in-group languages that work within an agreed framework with a specific set of rules. Competent speakers within the group are familiar with these rules and how they work. However, there is neither a group nor an agreed set of rules surrounding 'indirect Nazi talk'. If this is what Kling had in mind, he lacked an in-group. Competent readers can certainly reconstruct what the poem tries to do. But this is not necessarily the case for listeners. The most intuitive reaction would be to interpret the poem as a direct utterance that is first and foremost a shocking breach of taboo. Maybe the shock will trigger some listeners to think in greater detail about the reaction that such an utterance creates in them and why. Others might prefer to be in denial of the uncomfortable feelings that such an utterance provokes in them. Yet others might even tend to agree. The truth is, there are various possible ways in which listeners could react to hearing 'mann aus reit', but the fact that poetry readings are fleeting and sensual events makes it likely that their immediate reactions will be more visceral than intellectual. Most importantly, their reaction is not necessarily affected by the awareness that they are part of a staged setting. When we see a play at the theatre we are usually aware that the dialogue and actions are staged – we do not confuse the actors with their characters. Nevertheless, we can identify with their utterances in character. The idea that the same could not be true for poetry readings seems highly unlikely.

This means that Kling could not rule out a certain risk of having his self-stylisation interpreted in ways that ran contrary to his intentions. Whether the end justified the means is a question that is difficult to answer. Kling succeeded in creating more attention for his poetry, and the provocative strategies that he used could potentially disrupt conventional narratives around the Second World War and the Holocaust in West Germany. However, they were also insensitive towards anyone who had experienced and survived Nazi terror. Poems like 'mann aus reit (rheinland)', but also 'leidenfrost. quellenlage',[172] and 'geschrebertes idyll, für mike feser'[173] are shocking in their re-enactment of Nazi perpetrators, crude depiction of Nazi crimes and crass language, but the provocation remains essentially self-centred and detached from the victim's perspective. Empathy that does not shock and provoke can only be found in the non-Jewish German perspective on the Second World War, for instance in the poem 'schlachtenmaler: halber kirschkuchn'.[174]

By definition, the provocative and taboo-breaking strategies of Kling's self-stylisation in the 1980s could only be of a temporary nature. In the course of the 1990s, his performances practices changed once again, and eventually, being punk could even mean returning to traditional forms, as an email to Franz Josef Czernin in July 2002 attested:

> restaurative tendenzen spielen sich seit jahren schon ab, und ich rede nicht vom gedicht. der jüngeren. von der ubiquitären bühnenhampelei, den performativen mißverständnissen, welche die stimme in den hintergrund abschieben, einmal ganz abgesehen. anwendung: drei glas

[172] See Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, pp. 128-9.
[173] See Jörg Wesche, 'Hortuskopie. Schauplatz Kleingarten in Klings "geschrebertes idyll, für mike freser"' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (ed), *Gedichte von Thomas Kling*, pp. 49-60.
[174] See Michael Waltenberger, '"Erde gekehrt". Kriegserfahrung und Nachkriegsverdrängung in Klings "zeit-geschichtlichem" Gedicht "schlachtenmaler: halber kirschkuchn"' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (ed), *Gedichte von Thomas Kling*, pp. 61-84.

> wasser. auf den tisch. sitzen. sprechen. das ist die antwort. oder ich werde denen die kassettendecks umtreten (der nazarener als punk).[175]

While Kling's provocative self-stylisation had expressed a shared mind-set in the 1980s, he increasingly wanted to move beyond the single hedonistic moment in the following years.[176] According to Kling, this meant launching a larger cultural project (BO, 235). The scope of Kling's cultural project from the 1990s onwards, which again encompassed central issues of German identity, will be at the centre of the following section.

[175] Thomas Kling in an e-mail to Franz Josef Czernin on 18 July 2002. 'Thomas Kling / Franz Josef Czernin. Wandlung von Sprache in Sprache. E-Mails Juli – August 2002', *Schreibheft* 65 (2005), 155-62: 158.

[176] See Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz, 'Das Gedicht unter Dampf halten', p. 182 (see chapter 3, footnote 78).

PART V

Strategies of Self-Affirmation

From the 1990s onwards, a larger cultural project began to take shape in Thomas Kling's poetry, much like the one that Friederike Mayröcker had envisioned for him in her poems (see chapter 7). Instead of the focus on topical issues that was discernible in much of his poetry in the 1980s, Kling now turned his attention towards a wider European history, and the First World War in particular.[1] This shift went along with changes in his poetic style. Increasingly, he left behind 'die Geschwindigkeit […], also die Cliphaftigkeit der 1980er Jahre', features which I have argued were central to the development of his distinctive poetic voice at the beginning of his career (see part II).[2] In contrast, the new objective of his poetry was 'über den hedonistischen Moment hinauszugehen, ohne die alexandrinische Gelehrsamkeit sausen zu lassen'.[3] As Kling observed retrospectively: 'nach *geschmacksverstärker* ging es mir zunehmend um *dosierte Geschwindigkeiten*'.[4] In accordance with this, the collection *brennstabm* (1991), which opens with a poem about the First World War, is often seen as a watershed moment. Peer Trilcke has attested that

> Während […] Kling ab Ende der neunziger Jahre öffentlich als "dichtender Historiker", mithin als Geschichtslyriker gilt, ist die Lyrik Klings aus den achtziger Jahren durch Zeitgenossenschaft, durch Gegenwärtigkeit geprägt. *brennstabm* markiert dabei einen

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1 See Frieder von Ammon, 'Von Epenchefs und Studienabbrechern: Zur Essayistik Thomas Klings' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 41-66: 56; Enno Stahl, 'Amalgame. Geschichte, Sprache und Zeitgenossenschaft bei Thomas Kling', *Weimarer Beiträge* 4 (2008), 557-72.

2 Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz, 'Das Gedicht unter Dampf halten', pp. 181, 182. See also Thomas Kling, 'Brief' in Ulrich Janetzki and Wolfgang Rath (eds.), *Tendenz Freisprache. Texte zu einer Poetik der achtziger Jahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 78-9.

3 Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz, 'Das Gedicht unter Dampf halten', p. 182.

4 Thomas Kling, 'Brief', p. 79.

> Wendepunkt: einen Ort, an dem Klings Lyrik von einer Gegenwarts- in eine Vergangenheitsorientiertheit zu kippen beginnt.[5]

Instead of the provoking and aggressive demeanour that had characterised Kling's performances in the 1980s (see chapter 11), he now increasingly began to present himself as a modern 'poeta vates'-figure, an inspired seer with a privileged access to history.[6] Tendencies to re-establish classical artistic role models like the 'poeta vates' had already been noticeable in the German literature scene since the 1980s.[7] As a matter of fact, the new scope of Kling's project and his changing self-stylisation from the 1990s onwards were very much in tune with the changing cultural climate of his time. As Sebastian Kiefer has attested, 'der Klimawandel der neunziger Jahre hin zum Konsolidierten, Gebundenen, Unverstellten, […] zur großen geschichtsumgreifenden Geste […] war an Kling nicht spurlos vorübergegangen.'[8] In the next chapters, I will investigate in more detail how Kling's poetic project from the 1990s onwards resonated with general tendencies in the West German public and a new German self-understanding developing at the same time.

The late 1980s onwards can be seen as a period of self-affirmation and 'normalisation' in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, which four decades after the war finally considered itself a 'normal' sovereign state and acted with growing confidence in the globalised world.[9] With regard to the German reunification in 1989/90, Andreas Wirsching has pointed out the irony 'daß der tatsächliche Abschied vom Provisorium zu eben jenem Zeitpunkt gleichsam "passierte", als sich die "alte"

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5 Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 87.
6 Ibid., p. 156.
7 See Gunter E. Grimm, 'Buchmarkt und Literatur der achtziger Jahre' in Werner Faulstich (ed.), *Die Kultur der achtziger Jahre* (Munich: Fink, 2005), pp. 91-104: 98.
8 Sebastian Kiefer, 'Inszenierte Bedeutung. Auftakt einer Studie über Thomas Kling', *Schreibheft* 65 (2005), 191-200: 193.
9 See Andreas Wirsching, *Abschied vom Provisorium. Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1982-1990* (Munich: DVA, 2006).

Bundesrepublik definitiv von ihrem Selbstverständnis als Provisorium löste'.[10] But of course, if anything, the end of the Cold War and German reunification seemed to validate West Germany's new confident self-understanding. Nevertheless, its new identity needed context and a narrative in order to make it appealing both at home and abroad. Identities are constructed not only in relation to an imagined future, but also in relation to a certain understanding of the past. In light of Germany's fraught history in the 20th century, the question which version of the past to tell and how seemed crucial.[11] Events such as the 'Historikerstreit' 1986/7 and the criticism following Kohl's proposal to build a museum for national history, which was realised in 1994 with the opening of 'Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland' in Bonn, are the most visible phases of this discussion.[12] The purpose of Kohl's museum was 'den Deutschen ihre Geschichte wieder näherzubringen […], deren Vielfalt und positive Aspekte sowohl vor 1933 wie nach 1945 stärker zu betonen', thus providing the nation with a new, positive self-understanding.[13]

Of course, the public discourse shaping a new collective German identity was highly emotionally charged. As much as telling a version of the German past, Kohl's museum also offered an official model of how to feel about it and thus presented an instance of collective and public performance of emotion. The idea that nations and national identities are socially constructed is certainly not new.[14] While the important role that emotions play in the understanding of nations as 'imagined communities' is implied in these theories, Dieter Langewiesche has drawn attention to the lack of studies that analyse in more detail the relationship between personal feelings of national identity and official

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10 Ibid., p. 11.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., pp. 485-91.
13 Ibid., p. 486.
14 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 1991).

narratives and explore how individuals practice national emotions in their everyday lives.[15] Despite this lack, however, it remains clear that 'ohne Emotion keine Nation.'[16]

In the case of Kling, the lack of studies offering a clear methodology how to access private involvement with national narratives can be neglected, as from the 1990 onwards his public poetic project strongly resonated with official narratives. This certainly has to do with the issues that were now increasingly at the centre of his poems. Whereas his poems in the 1980s dealt with individual experiences, like the clubbing experience in the 'ratinger hof'-series, or issues that were only relevant for some subcultural groups, like the issue of animal rights in 'fragliche fabrik', from the 1990s onwards Kling increasingly participated in major discourses on the German past, like the First World War. In Kling's poetry as much as in the general discourse, the growing interest in the First World War at a time of collective identity building is not surprising, considering that narratives of war are, as Langewiesch explained, 'thematisch am ergiebigsten' with regards to national emotion.[17]

With regards to German narratives of the past after 1945, Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert have pointed out how engagement with the past in post-war Germany oscillated between historical obsession and amnesia.[18] In fact, both phenomena seem to be extremes in the public discourse around Germany's new self-understanding and the question which version of the past to tell. In the process of positioning itself in a new global world order, the question how to frame its past became relevant for Germany not only with regards to the Second World War and the Holocaust, but also with regards to the First World War

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15 See Dieter Langewiesche, 'Gefühlsraum Nation. Eine Emotionsgeschichte der Nation, die Grenzen zwischen öffentlichem und privatem Gefühlsraum nicht einebnet', *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 15 (2012), 195-215: 196.

16 Ibid., p. 195.

17 Ibid., p. 196.

18 Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit – Geschichtsversessenheit: vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1999).

and Germany's colonial past.[19] In this section, it will become clear how collective remembrance of the First and the Second World War, the Holocaust and colonialism are intertwined in the German context and often acted as a surrogate or compensation for the other in the public discourse on the past. Thus, in order to understand how these events have been framed in the public mind, they need to be looked at together. In particular, we need to consider what function different practices of remembrance served in terms of Germany's collective and individual self-understanding.

In the following three chapters, I will show how the First and the Second World War, the Holocaust and colonialism emerged in different constellations in Thomas Kling's writings. First of all, a close reading of the poem 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer' from the collection *nacht.sicht.gerät* (1993) will show how references to the Holocaust and anti-Semitic tropes were used as foils to articulate fears of postcolonial migration in the context of the crash of an Israeli air plane in Amsterdam's multicultural Bijlmermeer neighbourhood in 1992. After this, a close reading of the series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' in the collection *Fernhandel* (1999) will show how Kling's poetic project, particularly his investment in the First World War, led to a limited understanding of the conflict that ignored its global dimension and the role of German colonialism in particular. Finally, close readings of the poem 'Larven' and the essay 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien', first published in *Du: Zeitschrift der Kultur* in 1997, will demonstrate how Kling engaged with Germany's colonial past following the tradition of modernist primitivism.

As a self-described 'Spracharchäologe', Kling drew inspiration from disciplines whose history cannot be separated from a project of German identity building that was

[19] See also Helma Lutz and Kathrin Gawarecki (eds.), *Kolonialismus und Erinnerungskultur* (Münster: Waxmann, 2005).

deeply rooted in 19th century nationalism.[20] Thus, we need to ask how far Kling's poetic practices might have reproduced biases and patterns of ethnocentric ideology deeply rooted in the history of European modernity.

12

How to Frame the Holocaust

Thomas Kling and the Historians' Debate

The publication of the collection *nacht.sicht.gerät* (1993) coincided with the beginning of a new era in Europe. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War had come to an end and a unified Germany positioned itself in a new world order. Several poems in *nacht.sicht.gerät* deal with events of the recent past, though often in a coded way. The collapse of the Soviet Union provided a point of reference for the series 'russischer digest' in which Kling used material from a trip to Moscow and St Petersburg (then Leningrad) in 1991.[21] The series 'sachsnkriege' comprises poems dealing with the (pre-GDR) history of some of the new Eastern states: Brandenburg, Saxonia, and Thuringia. Before, Kling had already dealt with German reunification in the series '"retro?" – "retro." / 3 gedichte mit 78 umdrehun'' and the poem 'LEIPZIG IM SCHUMMER', written on a trip to Leipzig in March 1990, in the collection *brennstabm* (1991). But the poem that I will discuss in the following does not address any of these major upheavals. Instead, 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer'

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[20] See Charlotte Trümpler (ed.) *Das große Spiel: Archäologie und Politik zur Zeit des Kolonialismus* (Cologne: DuMont, 2010); Jane Lydon (ed.), *Handbook of Postcolonial Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010); H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl (eds.), *Worldly Provincialism. German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[21] See Frieder von Ammon, 'rolltreppe russland runter. Thomas Kling und andere 1991 in Moskau und Leningrad' in Henrieke Stahl and Hermann Korte (eds.), *Gedichte schreiben in Zeiten der Umbrüche. Tendenzen der Lyrik seit 1989 in Russland und Deutschland* (Leipzig: Biblion Media, 2016), pp. 267-83.

shows how Kling took part in the project of German identity building and the associated re-evaluation of the German past that had started in the 1980s.

The 'Bijlmermeer' featured in the poem's title is a neighbourhood in the Dutch city of Amsterdam. For contemporary readers, the name probably rang a bell. On Sunday 4 October 1992, an Israeli El Al cargo plane crashed into an eleven-floor apartment block in Bijlmermeer, leading to the death of 47 people, including three crewmembers and a passenger.[22] The accident gained huge media attention. It had been caused by a technical fault, as the accident report published in February 1994 later revealed:

> On October 4, 1992, at 17:20 UTC, El Al Israel Airlines (ELY) Flight 1862, a Boeing 747-200 Freighter, with three crewmembers and one non-revenue passenger on board, took off from runway OIL at Schiphol Airport and followed the Pampus departure as cleared by air traffic control services. At 17:27.30 UTC, with the aircraft at flight level 65, engine no. 3 and its pylon separated from the aircraft and damaged part of the leading edge of the right wing. The no. 3 engine then struck engine no. 4, causing this engine and its pylon to depart the wing. During an attempt to return to Schiphol Airport control was lost and at 17:36 UTC the aircraft crashed into a residential area in a suburb of Amsterdam.[23]

The first stanza of Kling's poem mimics the style of an accident report by reducing it to its most basic features, a list of technical parameters: '*geschwindigkeit.* | *höhe.* | *kurs.* | *steign.* | *falln.* | *uhrzeit.*' (line 1-6). The nouns, each of which forms a single line, are printed in italics, as to set them off from the rest of the poem typographically, and only the lack of the epenthesis 'e' in the verbs 'fallen' and 'steigen' alludes to the destruction of language following in the second and third stanza. In the first stanza, the technical parameters are presented without further comment, as if they were able to speak for themselves. Accident reports represent the idea that accidents can be explained rationally and objectively by using the kind of data listed here, but the sense of rationality and objectivity expressed in the first stanza stands in sharp contrast to the rest of the poem.

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[22] Nederlands Aviation Safety Board, *Aircraft Accident Report 92-1 1, El Al Flight 1862*, 24 February 1994 [online], p. 9.

[23] Ibid., p. 5.

Before I continue with a close reading of the remaining stanzas, more needs to be said about the public discourse surrounding the Bijlmermeer accident. Despite the fact that a simple explanation for the accident – a technical fault – could be presented soon after the event, it developed into a scandal that occupied Dutch politics for the following decade. A detailed analysis of the turn of events can be found in the article 'Toxic Fear' by Arjen Boin, Menno van Duin and Liesbet Heyse, on which the following account is based.[24]

Immediately after the accident, rumours and conspiracy theories began to spark. Most rumours evolved around the fact that it had been an Israeli plane that caused the accident and that the Bijlmermeer was a multicultural area 'populated mostly by (first- and second-generations) immigrants – many of which supposedly held no legal status'.[25] The fact that the plane's cargo was not immediately known sparked rumours that it had carried illegal military and toxic freight, which led to 'increasing numbers of reported health complaints' over the following years.[26] Even though 'all investigations concluded that the quantity of dangerous toxic material in the plane could not have caused any public health problems' and 'medical researchers could not establish a link between the diverse health problems reported and the Bijlmer disaster', rumours that the plane had carried 'ingredients for chemical warfare' persisted.[27] A second set of conspiracy theories evolved around the immigrant status of the victims.[28] Soon after the accident, the Dutch

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[24] Arjen Boin, Menno van Duin and Liesbet Heyse, 'Toxic fear: the management of uncertainty in the wake of the Amsterdam air crash', *Journal of Hazardous Materials* 88 (2001), 213-34.

[25] Ibid., p. 215.

[26] Ibid., pp. 214, 216-17.

[27] Ibid., pp. 217, 223-4, 228.

[28] The two largest groups of immigrants in Bijlmermeer are from Suriname and Ghana. Thus, the discourse following the accident also needs to be seen in the context of the Netherland's colonial past and changing migration patterns from the former colonies to Europe following the process of decolonisation. See for an overview of postcolonial immigration to the Netherlands Hans van Amersfoort and Mies van Niekerk, 'Immigration as a Colonial Inheritance: Post-Colonial Immigrants in the Netherlands, 1945-2002', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32.3 (2006), 323-46; Hans van

government had promised that 'all victims, regardless of race and […] legal status, would be entitled to government assistance in refounding their lives'.[29] This sparked fears of so-called 'pseudo victims' who would seek 'to take advantage of Amsterdam's perceived generosity'.[30] The quick rise of conspiracy theories following the Bijlmermeer accident demonstrated how easily narratives of fear – in this case, anti-Semitic and racist tropes – could be reactivated, especially in a moment of perceived crisis. Existing anti-Semitic tropes like the idea of a 'Jewish revenge' for the Holocaust were expressed in the theory that the Israeli plane had carried toxic gas, thus poisoning countless victims in the area of the crash, while racist tropes of the immigrant as the parasitic 'other' infiltrating a vulnerable and well-meaning society featured in the discourse around the victims.[31] In the most extreme cases, news stories reported of 'Israeli Mossad agents in moon suits stealing the cockpit voice recorder from the disaster site, cargo loads of ingredients for chemical warfare and […] the finding of human remains (arms and legs) on a garbage dump.'[32]

When Kling wrote 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer' in 1993, he could not know of the ways in which the discourse around Bijlmermeer would develop until the release of the final investigation report in 1999. However, conspiracy theories rose quickly after the accident. In the close reading of the last two stanzas, I will point out how Kling included aspects of the discourse on the Bijlmermeer air crash in his poem and, more importantly, how he framed them. While Kling's distinctive poetic style had helped him to create

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Amersfoort, *Immigration and the Formation of Minority Groups. The Dutch Experience 1945-1975* (Cambridge University Press, 1982); on Ghanaian immigrants in the Netherlands see Ineke van Kessel (ed.), *Merchants, Missionaries & Migrants: 300 Years of Dutch Ghanaian Relations* (Amsterdam: KIT, 2002); on Surinamese immigrants in the Netherlands see Mies van Niekerk, *Premigration Legacies and Immigrant Social Mobility. The Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese in the Netherlands* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002).

29 Arjen Boin et al. 'Toxic fear', p. 214.

30 Ibid.

31 On these and other tropes of fear, see also Frank Biess, *Republik der Angst*.

32 Arjen Boin et al., 'Toxic fear', p. 226.

complexity in his poems in the 1980s, its ambiguity turned out to be problematic in the context of the historical framework established in 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer'.

Not only typography, also style sets the second and third stanza off from the beginning of the poem. Ellipses, deconstructed words and phonetic orthography are characteristic of Kling's poetry in general, but they become even more symbolically charged in the context of a plane crash. On a surface level, the second stanza is about the flight recorders. Like any modern aircraft, the El Al plane was equipped with two flight recorders: a Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR) and a Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR).[33] While the DFDR tracks flight parameters like the ones that are listed in the first stanza, the CVR records sounds and conversations in the cockpit between the pilots. In the case of the Bijlmermeer air crash, the accident report stated that

> The DFDR was found in a heavily damaged condition. The outer case suffered massive impact damage during the crash and was further damaged by post-crash fire. The shock and heat resistant crash protection unit, which contained the DFDR tape and the tapedrive mechanism, was slightly damaged by heat and water. Some small parts of the wiring and electronic circuit boards were burned.
>
> The tape itself was found broken at four places, where it was not wound on the reels. The tape exhibited cracks, discoloration, and contamination, particular at the section that contained the information of the last two and a half minutes of the flight. A small amount of water was also found in the crash protection unit of the recorder.
>
> Notwithstanding this damage, a readout was accomplished on all recorded parameters. Validations were accomplished on some parameters. The data were converted into graphical plots and time correlated with the ATC time reference.[34]

The diagnosis of the damages to the DFDR tape corresponds with Kling's reference to 'lädierte | aufzeichnungen im koffer' (line 7-8). But phrases like 'kehlenaas' (line 7), 'rachnaas' (line 8) and 'lädierte köpfe ausm koffer' (line 10) make clear that Kling did not

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33 Nederlands Aviation Safety Board, *Aircraft Accident Report*, pp. 22-3.
34 Ibid., p. 23.

allude to the DFDR's recording of flight parameters, but to the CVR's recording of conversation in the cockpit. Concerning the plane's CVR, the accident report stated that

> Despite intensive search activities to recover the CVR from the wreckage area, the recorder was not found. El Al personnel stated that a CVR had been installed in the aircraft.[35]

The fact that the CVR of the plane involved in the Bijlmermeer crash remained unlocatable sparked further rumours, of which the most persistent one 'held that agents of Israel's secret service (Mossad) had entered the premises dressed as emergency workers and had thus retrieved the cockpit voice recorder.'[36] Kling's poem alludes to the missing CVR indirectly, by pointing out its striking red colour: 'rot. signalrot, dass mans findet' (line 11). While the poem's inherent ambiguity makes it impossible to pin down the subtext of this phrase with complete certainty, the way in which the CVR's red colour is presented, serving the only purpose 'dass mans findet', at least facilitates a reading according to which there must be something odd about the missing recorder, which was, after all, red and easy to find. Conversely, if the red recorder is not found this means that either 'one' did not want to find it or 'one' deliberately made it disappear. The intellectual shortcut is the same as that of conspiracy theories, which attribute the responsibility for events to an unknown but powerful actor ('man', line 11) and take the lack of evidence itself as evidence. Thus, while Kling usually used ambiguity and polyvalence to create complexity, these devices turn out to be rather problematic in the context of the Bijlmermeer accident. The framing that Kling chose further aggravates this issue.

The voices of the pilots that are recorded by the CVR are given a striking physicality in Kling's poem. They are described as 'kehlenaas' and 'rachnaas'. 'Aas' is not only a corpse, but a decaying cadaver, usually that of an animal. Thus, the neologism evokes a repulsive sensuality, the intention of which is unclear in the context of this poem.

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35 Ibid.

36 Arjen Boin et al., 'Toxic fear', p. 215.

The emotional response it creates does not encourage the reader to engage further with the talking pilots, nor does it provide any information that would help the reader to understand the accident – on the contrary. 'Aas' is commonly used as a derogatory term to defame a supposedly contemptible person. The decision to use this specific term to describe the voices of the Israeli pilots seems incomprehensible, to say the least, given the term's history in Nazi propaganda and its anti-Semitic undertones. While one could argue that Kling intended to restage rather than reproduce the anti-Semitic discourse following the accident, there is no indication of this in the poem. While Kling usually used punctuation marks like guillemets and brackets to highlight staged direct speech in his poems, 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer' does not make use of these strategies.

In the poem, the box of the recorder is surrounded by 'grad mal briketts, | in schattnkrümmun' menschnbriketts' (line 17-18). This fits into early media coverage of the plane crash that told stories of countless victims that had virtually evaporated in the heat of the intense fire caused by the plane's fuel ('kerosin', line 6):

> In the days following the disaster, uncertainty about the number of deaths dominated the atmosphere in the crisis center. The first impression was that at least 250 people had died in the crash (this assessment was partially based on the number of affected apartments). Even though evidence of a much lower death toll soon became available, the general belief holding that hundreds had died persisted for days. The virtual absence of dead bodies – 48 hours after the crash only 12 bodies had been found – was explained by the heat of the ground fires: many bodies had been "cremated" according to this theory.[37]

Indeed, *Der Spiegel* repeated the same story on 12 October 1992, eight days after the accident, although evidence of a lower death toll was already available:

> Mehr als 100 000 Liter Kerosin flogen beim Aufprall der vierstrahligen El-Al-Maschine in die Luft, vermutlich mehr als 200 Bewohner der Betonsilos verkohlten oder verbrannten sekundenschnell zu Asche. Den Pathologen Anthony Busuttil von der Universität Edinburgh, als Experte für die Lockerbie-Katastrophe tätig, wundert nicht, daß nur von rund 50 Menschen Überreste gefunden wurden: "Bei Temperaturen von über 1000 Grad Celsius, wie sie bei

[37] Ibid., p. 215.

> einem Kerosin-Brand entstehen können, verdampft menschliches Gewebe – nichts bleibt davon übrig."[38]

Again, anti-Semitic tropes of Jewish revenge explain why the narrative that hundreds of victims had been 'cremated' and vanished in the crash remained so persistent in the public discourse. The collective memory of the crematories in Nazi death camps was reactivated in a bizarre reversal of the roles of victim and perpetrator.

The framework of the Holocaust is not imposed on the poem by this reading; rather, it was established by Kling himself. The last line 'und siedeln in der luft' (line 30) is a reference to Celan's 'Todesfuge', a central poem on the Holocaust, in which the speaker addresses the victims of the genocide: 'dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft | dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng' (line 25-6).[39] As Celan explained in a letter to Walter Jens on 19 May 1961: 'Zur "Todesfuge": Das "Grab in der Luft" – lieber Walter Jens, das ist, in *diesem* Gedicht, weiß Gott weder Entlehnung noch Metapher.'[40] Of course, in the context of a poem that so bluntly seems to reproduce anti-Semitic tropes, such a reference raises some questions.[41]

So far, critics have mostly chosen to ignore the issue of problematic historical comparisons with regards to Kling's reception of Celan, even though Hiltrud Gnüg already objected to the comparison of medieval witch-hunt and the Holocaust in Kling's

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38 'Katastrophe. Verzweifelter Kampf', *Der Spiegel*, 12 October 1992.

39 Paul Celan, 'Todesfuge' in *Die Gedichte. Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), pp. 40-1: 40.

40 Barbara Wiedemann (ed.), *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre. Dokumente zu einer "Infamie"* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), p. 532.

41 Kling repeated the phrase 'und siedelten in der luft' in the poem 'Manhattan Mundraum Zwei' from the collection *Sondagen* (2002) dealing with 9/11 (GG 724-32). Hermann Korte's argument that we should read the allusion to the Holocaust in 'Manhattan Mundraum Zwei' not as a 'politisch-inhaltlicher Vergleich' but as 'poetische Sprachpraxis' is not convincing in the light of Celan's explicit statement that the phrase is not a metaphor. See Hermann Korte, 'Der Stylit auf der Säulenplattform. Thomas Klings Manhattan-Zyklen' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Gedichte von Thomas Kling,* pp. 181-209: 208-9.

'düsseldorfer kölemik' in 1997.[42] Markus May discussed Kling's reception of Celan 'ohne die Diskussion über die Vergleichbarkeit historischer Ereignisse und Erfahrungen, der Shoah zumal, hier führen zu wollen'.[43] Erk Grimm concluded that Kling's engagement with Celan, whom he mistakenly identified as a Romanian poet, did not concern itself with '[der] grauenvolle Wunde der Shoah; dazu ist Klings Idiom zu sehr auf die Trennung von Erinnerung und Schmerz angelegt'.[44] Whether such a decision is justifiable in the case of a non-Jewish German poet like Kling is a question that needs to be discussed.

While I do not propose that Kling's reception of Celan is objectionable as such, a more differentiated analysis of the contexts in which he referred to Celan is necessary. References in 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer', a poem which reactivates anti-Semitic tropes, need to be critically addressed. Markus May dismissed those critics who might object to Kling's 'Ausklammerung der Shoah als dem historischen wie persönlichen Trauma, von dem Celan sich in emphatischer Weise herschrieb' and might consider it '[eine] Provokation, ja als Skandalon'.[45] Nevertheless, looking at the nuances and contradictions of Kling's reception of Celan is not so much an emotional issue as a professional duty as a critic. Poets do not, as Friederike Reents has suggested, write from a 'non-moral' place.[46]

A close reading of 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer' shows how persistent anti-Semitic tropes still lingered in the collective West German memory in the 1990s, and how easily

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42 See Hiltrud Gnüg, ''Kopfzoo' mit 'heftiger Nervenrevue'. Zu Thomas Klings Gedicht düsseldorfer kölemik' in Walter Hinck (ed.), *Gedichte und Interpretationen*, vol. VII (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), pp. 177-86.

43 Markus May, 'Von der "Flaschenpost" zum "Botenstoff": Anmerkungen zu Thomas Klings Celan-Rezeption' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 197-213: 212.

44 Erk Grimm, 'Materien und Martyrien. Die Gedichte Thomas Klings', *Schreibheft* 47 (1996), 124-30: 125.

45 Markus May, 'Von der "Flaschenpost" zum "Botenstoff"', p. 201.

46 Friederike Reents, 'Über Wahrheit und Lyrik im außermoralischen Sinne. Transmoderne Zeitgeschichtslyrik am Beispiel der 9/11-Gedichte von Durs Grünbein und Thomas Kling', *Internationale Zeitschrift für Kulturkomparatistik* 1 (2019), 243-62: 258.

they could be reactivated. Such narratives are powerful right up to the present day, as demonstrated in a reference in *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (2nd edition, 2006), where Alexander von Bormann concluded that Kling's poem dealt with the crash 'eines israelischen Transporters, mit vermutlich Giftgas an Bord, auf das dichtbevölkerte Amsterdam-Bijlmermeer'.[47] Again, the rumour that the plane carried toxic gas, which was proven wrong in several investigation reports, is presented as 'presumably' true and aggravated by pointing out how 'densely populated' the area was. Bormann ignored the fact that, unlike terrorists, pilots involved in air crashes do not seek densely populated areas on purpose. Thus his phrasing can only be read as resulting from an unthinking acceptance of habits of thought.

An article discussing the rise of right-wing attacks throughout Europe in *Der Spiegel* from 30 November 1992 shows that Kling could have been aware of the misuse of the Bijlmermeer accident for racist and anti-Semitic purposes very early on:

> Den Absturz des israelischen Fracht-Jumbos auf das hauptsächlich von Ausländern bewohnte Quartier Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam schlachten holländische Extremisten aus. Auf die Wände eines anderen, von Zuwanderern bewohnten Hochhausviertels pinselten sie den Spruch "Warum nicht hier?"[48]

In addition to the persistence of anti-Semitic tropes, the poem also shows that the memory of the Holocaust as such was changing in the mind of the West German public. The comparison it established between an air crash and the Holocaust touched on a central issue that had caused intense discussions in West Germany since the mid-1980s: the question whether or not the Holocaust was unique and, as a consequence, whether it was

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47 Alexander von Bormann, 'Die Lyrik der neunziger Jahre', p. 1047.
48 'Rechtsradikale. Flammen als Waffe', *Der Spiegel*, 30 November 1992.

comparable to other historical events or not. The question of where to position the Nazi crimes in the collective German identity was at the centre of this discussion.[49]

The most prominent figure advocating for the singularity of the Holocaust was Jürgen Habermas, who strongly argued against 'the historicizing and therefore (in his view) normalization of the Nazi past.'[50] 'Should we, with the help of historical comparisons, attempt macabre squarings of accounts in order to sneak out of the liability for the encumbered history of the Germans?', Habermas asked.[51] While the belief in the incomparability of the Holocaust dominated the most visible discourse at the time, documents like Kling's poem show that the discussion did not come to an end, but continued in different places. In 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer', Kling compared the air crash (which can be read as a foil for the Holocaust) and the retrieval of the plane's flight recorder to Franklin's lost expedition to the Arctic in 1845 (line 22) and the search for their remains. With new excavations undertaken in 1992, the failed expedition was again present in the public mind.[52] Let us take a moment to consider this historical framework. Kling seemed mostly interested in human practices of recording and archiving – of memory building – in the context of both events. Early on, he compared the flight recorder with rock paintings (line 9, 14 and 24), while in the case of Franklin's expedition, the medium was probably a journal or logbook (line 19-20). Hubert Winkels concluded that

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49 On the original debate see *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*, ed. and trans. by James Knowlton and Truett Cates (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994); for an overview of the debate see e.g. Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (New York: Berghahn, 1997).

50 Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, 'The Pre-History of the Holocaust? The *Sonderweg* and *Historikerstreit* Debates and the Abject Colonial Past', *Central European History* 41 (2008), 477-503: 482.

51 Jürgen Habermas, 'On the Public Use of History: The Official Self-Understanding of the Federal Republic is Breaking Up' in *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*, pp. 162-70: 168.

52 See Paul Watson, *Ice Ghosts: The Epic Hunt for the Lost Franklin Expedition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017).

the human practice of recording and archiving was the central issue discussed in 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer': 'Die Frage nach der Aufzeichnungsform, nach Bild und Gedächtnis und dem Schreiben selbst steht im Vordergrund.'[53] Peer Trilcke later followed Winkel's reading.[54] While it seems accurate that Kling was interested in archival practices in general, the question as to what is being recorded, archived, retrieved and remembered here certainly cannot be ignored. In short: how is collective memory built and how did Kling take part in this process through this poem? A postmodern emphasis on polyphony and polyvalence should not let us forget that these effects are created by an individual making choices about selecting, framing, and even altering their material. Thus, it is possible to question the legitimacy of their choices. Both Trilcke and Winkels seem to ignore this dimension. This becomes evident in Winkels' close reading of the third stanza:

> Der Semantik dieser umlautgeprägten Kombination von Ausdrücken kann man die Antwort auf die implizite Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Krieg und Schreiben denn auch entnehmen: Der Sphäre konkreter Zerstückelung von dinglichen und menschlichen Körpern, von technischem Speicher (Aufzeichnungsgerät) und poetischer Sprache, welche (selbst zerstückelt) Einzelbilder heraufbeschwört (zweite Strophe), wird hier die Vorstellung einer Zerstörung am Ursprung aller menschlichen Aufzeichnung unterlegt: Schon das Felsbild, früheste Form graphischer Repräsentation, ist durch eine Funktionsverletzung gekennzeichnet; eine Verletzung, die der bildhaften Repräsentation selbst wesentlich zukommt ('felsbildläsionen'): Die (graphische) Repräsentation ist konstitutiv von einem (schmerzlichen) Mangel (Funktionsstörung) gekennzeichnet, in dessen Folge Kriege sich auch historisch auf Kritzeln (stab)reimen.[55]

Winkels' equation of 'Krieg' and 'Kritzeln' – war and writing – presents a very postmodern broadening of the concept of violence. However, most people would probably agree that it is not irrelevant whether a human body or a recording medium or language is 'chopped into pieces' – there is a line to be drawn between the actual harm of a person and

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53 Hubert Winkels, 'Zungenentfernung. Über sekundäre Oralität, Talk-master, TV-Trainer und Thomas Kling', *Schreibheft* 47 (1996), 131-8: 136.
54 See Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, pp. 236-8.
55 Hubert Winkels, 'Zungenentfernung', p. 136.

material loss or violence as a metaphor. While it is possible to write about all these experiences and about the interconnectedness between writing and other forms of violence – and indeed we should – , we must not confuse them. In the case of Kling's poem, again, context matters. Is a rock painting the same as a flight recorder? Only in the sense that both are human practices of recording and archiving. But, as Heidegger argued, we cannot separate a tool from its purpose, and a rock painting fulfils a different purpose from a flight recorder. The oddity of flight recorders lies in the fact that their purpose only becomes evident in the very event they seek to prevent: the accident. The flight recorder is, Greg Siegel argues, 'an instrument that, by its very being, acknowledges the "evil" existence of the aviation accident. Its ostensible necessity calls attention to the distressing presence and nagging possibility of human error and mechanical failure'.[56] The title of Kling's collection *Auswertung der Flugdaten* (2005) suggests reading the flight recorder as a metaphor for the relationship between poetry and human history. If we follow the thought through, it presents human history as a chain of regrettable but ultimately inevitable catastrophes of which poetry only gives testimony. One can agree or disagree with the dim picture of humanity that is painted here, but it certainly ascribes a high degree of responsibility to poets. If the purpose of flight recorders is to provide evidence for rational and objective explanations, the question of how poets produce meaning in their historical narratives seems crucial. This is especially true in the context of this poem and the way in which it framed the readers' engagement with the Holocaust.

In the case of 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer', Habermas' worst fears regarding a historicisation of the Holocaust seem to have come true. As the close reading has shown, the reference to the Holocaust in the context of the Bijlmermeer air crash not only

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[56] Greg Siegel, *Technologies of Accident: Forensic Media, Crash Analysis, and the Redefinition of the Progress*. PhD thesis (University of North Carolina, 2005), p. 75.

normalised the genocide by putting it on the same level as an aviation accident but, by reproducing anti-Semitic tropes, reversed the roles of victim and perpetrator. The comparison between a failed British colonial expedition and the Holocaust did not reveal any insightful parallels, apart from the usage of recording practices in both instances, which ignored the context in which they took place. As a result, the comparison seemed indeed, in the words of Habermas, like a 'macabre squaring of accounts'. The framework that Kling established in 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer' neither helps the reader to understand the plane crash nor the Holocaust nor phenomena like genocide or colonialism in a wider sense. Instead, it turned history into an unaccountable mishmash of violence in which the poet seems to write for the sake of writing itself.

The conclusion drawn from the 'Historikerstreit' today need not be to compare either anything or nothing. Recent scholarship in the field of history has opened up productive ways of going beyond the limitations of Habermas' claim of the Holocaust's singularity without doing away with it altogether. While most scholars agree, in the words of Frank Biess and Astrid M. Eckert, that the 'emphasis on the "singularity" of the Holocaust as a result of the Historians' Debate in the 1980s' should be 'considered a cultural victory for progressive Holocaust memory' and seemed necessary at that time, it has become increasingly clear over recent years that the concept is now 'due for reevaluation'.[57] The reason for this lies within the paradoxical nature of German Holocaust remembrance itself, which, as Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz have argued, has reinforced 'an ethnically homogeneous notion of German identity in order to ensure Germans' responsibility for the crimes of the recent past, even though that very notion of

[57] Frank Biess and Astrid M. Eckert, 'Introduction: Why Do We Need New Narratives for the History of the Federal Republic?', *Central European History* 52 (2019), 1-18: 12-13.

ethnicity was one of the sources of those crimes.'[58] In a multicultural, post-migrant society, traditional forms of German Holocaust remembrance based on an ethnical understanding of the German 'Volk' excludes a large part of the population from a collective German identity. Rothberg and Yildiz argued:

> Twenty-five years ago, in the Historikerstreit or Historians' Debate, the liberal-progressive position associated with Habermas held strongly to the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a defense against relativistic conservative positions seeking to overcome the singularity of German responsibility via comparisons to Stalinist terror and Germany's own losses. It remains essential to guard against relativization and denial, but we also must recognize that times have changed and that the singularity of the Holocaust is increasingly used to discipline non-Jewish minorities in Europe – especially those interpellated as Muslim – through the assertion of the complete incommensurability of anti-Semitism and other forms of racism and through the ascription of 'new' forms of anti-Semitism to Muslim minorities.[59]

As a result, Biess and Eckert concluded that 'the significance of a specifically German commemorative culture focusing on the national past in an increasingly multicultural society remains unclear'. The question remains 'how to retain the historical specificity of Jewish victimhood yet also expand the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust to all forms of racism and ethnic cleansing appears to constitute a central commemorative task for the twenty-first century.'[60] Rothberg and Yildiz have presented some examples of more inclusive forms of practising collective memory in a multicultural, post-migrant society. Moreover, research has been undertaken on the continuation of racial ideology in post-war Germany,[61] and a number of studies in postcolonial history investigate structural and intellectual continuities between Germany's colonial past and the Holocaust.[62]

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58 Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, 'Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany', *Parallax* 17.4 (2011), 32-48: 35.

59 Ibid., p. 38.

60 Frank Biess and Astrid M. Eckert, 'New Narratives', pp. 12, 13.

61 See Rita Chin, Heide Fehrenbach, Geoff Eley and Atina Grossmann (eds.), *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

62 For an overview of recent scholarship, see Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, 'The Pre-History of the Holocaust?' (see chapter 12, footnote 50); on the continuities between the Herero

But these approaches are very different from what Kling did in 'löschblatt. bijlmermeer'. Kling did not evoke the colonial framework in order to investigate structural similarities with the Holocaust, and in any case, a comparison with British colonial history would only have reinforced revisionist arguments that every nation of the Global North was involved in the systematic exploitation of the Global South in some way, which are usually used to relativize colonial guilt and argue for a general absolution.[63] While Kling's distinctive poetic style had helped him to create complexity in his poetry in the 1980s, its ambiguity turned out to be potentially problematic as a larger cultural project began to take shape in his poetry in the 1990s. As the focus of Kling's poetry turned towards a wider European history and its violent course in the 20th century in particular, the question how to frame two world wars, the Holocaust and colonialism became crucial. As Kling assumed the larger role that Mayröcker had imagined for him in her poems, the new responsibility also carried the risk of failure, as illustrated in the example of Phaeton.

The next chapter will investigate Kling's engagement with the First World War in his series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg'. As I will argue, Kling's poetic project was invested in the First World War as a positive point of reference as opposed to Germany's Nazi past, which obstructed a serious engagement with the history of German colonialism. Thus, the supposed consistency of Kling's project came at the prize of colonial amnesia.

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and Nama genocide in German South West Africa (now Namibia) and the Holocaust see Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz?* (Berlin: Lit, 2011); for a critical response to Zimmerer's ideas articulated in earlier articles see Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, 'Hannah Arendt's Ghosts: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz', *Central European History* 42 (2009), 279-300.

63 See Andreas Eckert and Albert Wirz, 'Wir nicht, die Anderen auch' in Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria (eds.), *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2002), pp. 372-92.

13

The Other War

Thomas Kling and the First World War

Legend has it that the sky was shrouded in a misty drizzle when German chancellor Helmut Kohl and French president François Mitterrand met on Saturday 22 September 1984 in Douaumont near Verdun to commemorate the dead of the First World War on one of its most horrible battlefields.[64] Initially unnoticed by the eyes of the attendants who were just then watching the trumpeter playing the Marseillaise, the two head of states joined hands while standing in front of the graves of countless French and German soldiers in a symbolic gesture of reconciliation. Ulrich Wickert, at that time correspondent for the German television channel ARD in Paris, recalled: 'Jeden, der dabei war, überlief ein Schauer. Da haben die Gefühle auch den französischen Staatspräsidenten und den deutschen Kanzler übermannt. Plötzlich standen sie Hand in Hand.'[65] Without diminishing the significance of this gesture, it needs to be understood in the context of a contemporary urge to rewrite the collective West German memory that had started with the beginning of Helmut Kohl's chancellorship in 1982. The aim was to restore a positive collective identity on which West Germany's central role in global politics could build with new confidence in the future.[66] In this context, the question how to deal with the memory of the two world wars and the Holocaust became crucial.[67] The fact that a reinterpretation of the First World

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64 Roger de Weck, 'Freundschaft über Gräbern', *Die Zeit*, 28 September 1984.

65 Ulrich Wickert, 'Warum reichten sie sich die Hände?', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 September 2009.

66 See Andreas Wirsching, *Abschied vom Provisorium*, p. 486.

67 See Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler, 'Memories of the Second World War and National Identity in Germany' in Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (eds.), *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), pp. 239-54; see also Robert Moeller, *War Stories. The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

War was underway as the numbers of those who had witnessed it first-hand was inevitably decreasing also played an important role.

The process culminated in the rededication of 'Neue Wache' in Berlin as 'Zentrale Gedenkstätte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für die Opfer von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft' on 14 November 1993. As the name suggested, the new memorial ought to commemorate the victims of both wars as well as the Holocaust. However, its history as well as its layout remained deeply rooted in the commemoration of the First World War.[68] A *pieta* that German artist Käthe Kollwitz had created in memory of her son who had died a soldier in Flanders in 1914 was central in the memorial's new design. While the statue's symbolism could be transferred to represent the 'grief of mothers who lost their sons in battle' in the Second World War, it virtually excluded the experiences of victims of Nazi terror, as Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler argued:

> The pieta is attached to, and remains in, the imagination of the First World War, and cannot depict the qualitative change which is marked by the National Socialist racial war […]. Possibly even more serious is the objection that the pieta is basically a Christian symbol of grief and hope, which implicitly excludes the biggest group of victims, i.e. the Jews, by means of symbolism and artistic object and style.[69]

Thus, the new memorial served to override the memory of German guilt in the Second World War and the Holocaust in favour of a narrative focussing on German victimhood in the First World War. As will become clear in the following close reading of 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', Kling's poetic engagement with the First World War followed similar trends.

Two of Kling's texts primarily discuss the First World War: the poem 'di zerstörtn. ein gesang' in *brennstabm* (1991) and the series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' in *Fernhandel* (1999). In addition, there exist a number of poems raising the issue less explicitly, like the series 'Aufnahme Mai 1914', which describes a picture of Georg Trakl in a soldier's

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[68] See Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler, 'Memories of the Second World War and National Identity in Germany', p. 250.

[69] Ibid., p. 251.

uniform and is illustrated with unrelated war photographs (also in *brennstabm*) and the poem 'Zivildienst. Lazarettkopf' (*geschmacksverstärker*). The following analysis will focus on the later and more wide-ranging series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', which is generally considered Kling's major work on the First World War.[70]

Similar to the version of the past presented at the 'Neue Wache' memorial in Berlin, Kling developed a historical narrative that favoured the commemoration of the First World War over that of the Second World War and the Holocaust. This was as an unusual decision for anyone writing poetry in West Germany after 1945, which was still coming to terms with Theodor W. Adorno's claim that 'writing a poem after Auschwitz' was 'barbaric'.[71] The decision to ignore the caesura of the Second World War and the Holocaust clearly distinguished Kling from other poets writing before him.[72] As Aniela Koblich pointed out, Kling was 'obviously not interested in arguments that posit a special

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[70] For an overview of the role of the First World war in Thomas Kling's poetry, see Karen Leeder, '"spritzende brocken: der erinnerung | versteht sich:" Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 41.2 (2005), 174-86; Carolin Duttlinger, '"Grobkörnige Mnemosyne": Picturing the First World War in the Poetry of Thomas Kling', *Oxford German Studies* 34.1 (2005), 103-19; Tobias Lehmkuhl, 'Gedächtnisspeicher. Zu Thomas Klings Zyklus "Der Erste Weltkrieg"', *Weimarer Beiträge* 49 (2003), 44-54; Hermann Korte '"Bildbeil", "Restnachrichten" und "CNN Verdun". Thomas Klings Erster Weltkrieg', *text + kritik* 147 (2000), 99-115. Naomi Shulman came to similar conclusions to mine in her analysis of 'di zerstörtn. ein gesang'. She pointed out the problematic nature of Kling's use of Yiddish in particular. See Naomi Shulman, 'Extraterritorial Language and the Ethics of Plurilingualism: Yiddish as Poetic Force in the Work of Thomas Kling and Irena Klepfisz' in Didier Lassalle and Dirk Weissmann, *Ex(tra)territorial: Reassessing Territory in Literature, Culture and Languages* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), pp. 231-44. The use of Yiddish in this context is particularly problematic considering the fact that the collective speaking in the poem likely refers to German war veterans in the 1980s. See Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, pp. 107-8. Claudia Hillebrandt's close reading of 'di zerstörtn. ein gesang' follows conventional German narratives of the First World War. See Claudia Hillebrandt, 'Der Chor der Kriegsversehrten. Traumaerleben, Geschichtsdeuten und Poetologisches in "di zerstörtn. ein gesang"' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Gedichte von Thomas Kling*, pp. 107-27.

[71] See introduction, footnote 9.

[72] See Karen Leeder, 'Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', p. 174; Carolin Duttlinger, 'Picturing the First World War in the Poetry of Thomas Kling', p. 104; Tobias Lehmkuhl, 'Gedächtnisspeicher', p. 44.

situation for writers after the Second World War'.[73] Bearing in mind that Kling considered the First World War to be the key in understanding the course of the 20th century, such an approach need not in itself be problematic.[74] However, the question remains whether Kling's narrative of the First World War offered a useful key for unlocking the past and understanding our present. Kling's efforts to establish the First World War as a historical turning point, thus avoiding the question of how to write poetry after Auschwitz and reviving an avant-gardist project instead, has been widely accepted by literary critics.[75] Few critics considered his decision to turn to the First World War to be controversial. Reformulating the universal issue of how to represent human suffering, Karen Leeder questioned how 'such cataclysmic events' could be revisited 'from the perspective of the present' and which 'aesthetic strategies [...] can be brought to bear on such material'.[76] In contrast, Hermann Korte regarded Kling's decision to write First World War poetry as 'weder neu noch originell' because, as he argued, a whole generation of expressionist writers whose accounts were based on personal experience had grappled with the First World War long before Kling.[77] Both objections seem valid. Thus, the question needs to be what distinguished Kling's approach from that of other writers before him. What were

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73 Aniela Knoblich, 'Rupture, Tradition, and Achievement in Thomas Kling's Poetics and Poetry' in Gert Hofman (ed.), *German and European Poetics after the Holocaust: Crisis and Creativity* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 200-15: 202.

74 See Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz, 'Am Anfang war die *Menschheitsdämmerung*. Interview mit Thomas Kling', *literaturkritik.de* 2 (2000) [online]. Here, Kling explained: '[*Fernhandel*] befaßt sich in erster Linie mit dem Ersten Weltkrieg, als Abschluß für 1999, Abschluß unseres Jahrhunderts. Da liegt, glaube ich, der Schlüssel zu allem, was unsere Zeit anbelangt.' The print version of the interview does not feature the passage. See Daniel Lenz and Eric Pütz, 'Das Gedicht unter Dampf halten'.

75 See Arina Rotaru, 'Contemporary German Poetry and Avant-Garde Reappraisals in the Work of Thomas Kling and Oskar Pastior', *Forum for Modern Languages Studies* 47.4 (2011), 364-78: 371; Peer Trilcke, '"Restnachrichten" aus einem "verplombten Jahrhundert"' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds.), *Gedichte von Thomas Kling*, pp. 167-79: 169-70.

76 See Karen Leeder, 'Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', p. 174.

77 Hermann Korte 'Thomas Klings Erster Weltkrieg', p. 99; idem, *Der Krieg in der Lyrik des Expressionismus. Studien zur Evolution eines literarischen Themas* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1981).

the nature and the purpose of Kling's engagement with the First World War in contrast to earlier narratives presented by those who had witnessed it?

In order to be able to answer this question, I will rely on two studies: Evelyn Cobley's *Representing War* (1993), a study of the narratives strategies applied in early literary accounts of the First World War, and Ann Linder's *Princes of the Trenches* (1996), which points out the most common narratives of the First World War used during the Weimar Republic and analyses their role in the context of national identity building.[78] As Linder has argued, 'the question of authenticity lies at the core of the bitter debates that raged […] over the literary depiction of the war'.[79] Thus, it will be crucial to understand what stylistic devices helped Kling to establish the authenticity he naturally lacked as someone born after the Second World War. Evelyn Cobley's work will prove helpful in understanding whether or not Kling's strategies were similar to those found in earlier literary accounts of the First World War, while Ann Linder's study will offer a point of comparison with the Weimar Republic in order to find out which historical narratives Kling might have reproduced, questioned, or subverted in his poetic undertaking. To conclude, I will reconstruct the aim of Kling's narrative of the First World War and ask how it fitted into the contemporary project of national identity building. In this context, I will critically assess Kling's project and ask whether it opened up a productive space from where it was possible to progress after the violent 20th century.

Kling's series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' comprises fourteen poems. The longer poem opening the series, 'Die Modefarben 1914', is followed by thirteen shorter poems, which each consist of nine tercets without a fixed metre or rhyme scheme. According to one explanation put forward by Kling, the tercets meant to visualise the 'Menschenwalze des

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78 Evelyn Cobley, *Representing War. Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives* (University of Toronto Press, 1993); Ann P. Linder, *Princes of the Trenches. Narrating the German Experience of the First World War* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996).

79 Ann P. Linder, *Princes of the Trenches*, p. 1.

Krieges' (BO, 238). But of course, they also recall poetic precursors like Dante's *Divinia Commedia.* Thus, 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' follows the tradition of the epic.[80] A quotation from Egon Erwin Kisch that Kling noted down in a manuscript with the title 'motti f. wahrnehmung' reinforces his claim of writing a text that would present a collective account of the experiences of the First World War: 'plötzlich erhielt das schreien der massen einen gemeinsamen text.'[81] But how this claim could be fulfilled by someone writing eighty-five years after the outbreak of the war was not obvious. Thus, instead of concealing the difficulties he faced in overcoming the distance imposed by time, Kling made them the poem's primary subject. All critics agree that the question how the experience of the First World War could be made accessible through historical documents and objects is central to Kling's series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg'.[82] As Carolin Duttlinger argued, 'questions of visual representation, perception, and mediation lie at the very heart of this poetic enterprise'.[83] In addition to official archives, most critics emphasise the fact that Kling drew on his own family archive and conversations with war veterans, such as Kling's grandfather Dr Ernst Matthias.[84] For Karen Leeder, the question of the poem's legitimacy seems at least partially answered by the fact that Kling relied on 'apparently

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80 See also Peer Trilcke, '"Restnachrichten" aus einem "verplombten Jahrhundert"', p. 171.

81 Thomas Kling, 'Die Wahrnehmung'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.944. Kling quoted from Egon Erwin Kisch's war diary on 10 September 1914. The original says 'Mit einemmal erhielt das Schreien der Massen einen gemeinsamen Text.' See Egon Erwin Kisch, 'Schreib das auf, Kisch' in *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. by Bodo Uhse and Gisela Kisch, 10 vols. (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1986), vol. I, pp. 165-426: 258.

82 See Carolin Duttliner, 'Picturing the First World War in the Poetry of Thomas Kling', p. 105; Hermann Korte 'Thomas Klings Erster Weltkrieg', p. 100; Karen Leeder, 'Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', p. 178.

83 Carolin Duttliner, 'Picturing the First World War in the Poetry of Thomas Kling', p. 103.

84 Carolin Duttliner, 'Picturing the First World War in the Poetry of Thomas Kling', p. 113; Hermann Korte 'Thomas Klings Erster Weltkrieg', pp. 103, 107; Karen Leeder, 'Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', p. 174-5; Tobias Lehmkuhl, 'Gedächtnisspeicher', p. 45.

authentic sources'.[85] As such, Kling's poem is very much in line with earlier accounts of the First World War, which as Evelyn Cobley remarked 'present themselves, and are generally read, as autobiographically grounded.'[86] In contrast to Karen Leeder, Hermann Korte has argued that 'familiengeschichtliche Denotate nicht den Zweck [erfüllen], Authentizität unter Beweis zu stellen'.[87] I agree with Karen Leeder that Kling's sources are central in providing a sense of authenticity in 'Der Erste Weltkrieg'. However, I will explore the literary strategies that Kling used to create this authenticity in more detail.

The sense of authenticity that is created in the series is inseparable from the voice of the speaker, whose struggles in making the past accessible through archival objects the reader shares. The persona of the poet, who will guide the reader through the following poems, is first introduced towards the end of the opening poem 'Modefarben 1914'. Among the polyphony of voices in 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', their voice stands out. It offers a point of identification that contrasts with the war's chaos and horrors invoked through numerous staged citations, comments and media reports in Kling's typical pastiche style. In contrast to the speaker one often finds in Kling's poems, this one does not pretend to be detached from the events they present. Instead, they make their own vulnerability one of the text's primary subjects, as they are grappling with the feasibility of their poetic project and their emotional involvement in it. Leeder and Korte have also pointed this out.[88] In addition, Korte has highlighted the speaker's ambiguous nature:

> In doppelter Weise ist diese Kommentierungsform kennzeichnend für Klings Umgang mit seinen historischen Fundstücken. Geschichte konkretisiert sich auf der einen Seite an einzelnen

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85 Karen Leeder, 'rhythmische historia': Contemporary Poems of the First World War by Thomas Kling and Raoul Schrott' in Christian Emden and David Midgley (eds.), *Cultural Memory and Historical Consciousness in the German-Speaking World Since 1500* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 281-305: 284.

86 Evelyn Cobley, *Representing War*, p. 73.

87 Hermann Korte 'Thomas Klings Erster Weltkrieg', p. 107.

88 Hermann Korte 'Thomas Klings Erster Weltkrieg', pp. 102-3, 112; Karen Leeder, 'Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', p. 179.

> Gegenständen, die ebenso neugierig wie detailgetreu in den Blick genommen werden. Auf der anderen Seite aber ist der Blick nicht der eines distanzierten, forschenden Historikers, sondern der eines aufs Höchste verwunderten, vom aufgefundenen Gegenstand magisch angezogenen Sprechers.[89]

Evelyn Cobley discerned a similar narrator in many earlier narratives of the First World War. What was 'most striking in these […] narratives', she argued, was 'the degree to which the autobiographical subject is effaced or depersonalized; in his retrospective function as narrator, he acts as an objective historian, and in his authenticating role as experiencing character, he acts as an illustrative case'.[90] The same mechanism is at play in 'Der Erste Weltkrieg'. The persona of the poet is ambivalent, as they seem to offer emotional identification and historical objectivity at the same time. Cobley recognised a 'commitment to empirical evidence' in many narratives of the First World War which was 'above all exemplified by overdetermination, that is, by allusions to documentary sources and eyewitness accounts. War narratives often include documents meant to legitimize their discourse.'[91] According to Cobley, diaries and 'other documentary evidence – such as letters, official reports, copies of orders, press cuttings, labels – appears in most war narratives.'[92] Thus, Kling's use of archival material in order to construct authenticity in 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' can be seen as a conventional strategy that was also applied in many earlier First World War narratives.

The crucial difference between 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' and earlier accounts seems to be how the speaker makes their difficulties in reconstructing the past from archival evidence a central issue in the text. But this does not mean that the idea of authenticity or coherence is disposed of altogether. To illustrate this, I will turn to the poem 'das bildbeil' which, as Karen Leeder pointed out, 'is commonly treated by critics as the core of Kling's

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89 Hermann Korte 'Thomas Klings Erster Weltkrieg', p. 102.
90 Evelyn Cobley, *Representing War*, pp. 24-5.
91 Ibid., p. 83.
92 Ibid., p. 84.

cycle'.[93] The poem 'das bildbeil' vividly describes the seeming unfeasibility of the series's poetic enterprise. The process of writing is likened to being outside in a snowstorm, at the constant risk of being lost in unintelligibility: '*schrift ist durch einen schneesturm waten*' (line 5). In the driving snow, the poet can only create temporary understanding. By slamming their visual axe ('Bildbeil') into the beech or book of collective visual memory ('Bildbuch'), they are able to light 'flammen […] aus denen fremde aschenseiten auferstehn', but the flames turn out to be 'kurzlebig' (line 2). Assuming the persona of Georg Trakl and alluding to his incestuous relationship with his sister, the speaker cries for help: 'der kopist bin ich die sprache ist die schwe- | ster ich gehe mit der schweren schwester ins bett in dem sie manchmal wie | ein brett liegt heiliger Georg hilf' (lines 8-10). Invoking both their poetic precursor Trakl and St George, the saint assisting in dangers of war, the poet displays their own despair and vulnerability. The poem also seems to answer the opening question in 'Modefarben 1914' – 'wieweit reichen die ohren?' We learn that the poet's ear is '*das angegriffene ohr, mit dem das hören | erst erschrieben werden muß*' (lines 6-7). The past does not exist prior to the poet's engagement with it. It only gains reality through the experience of writing, which the reader is able to share through compassion.[94] Thus, the poet's testimony becomes a way of momentarily accessing an otherwise fragmented past.[95] But even their testimony ultimately leads to failure, as the poem ends with the outcry 'ich sacke durch, Georg, wie du' (line 27).

Let us have a closer look at the model of historical engagement that is constructed here. As already said, the poet's persona is vital in making the past accessible to the reader. Through their experience of the writing process and their testimony the past gains reality, even though it remains a fragmented one. By allowing the reader to take part in the

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93 Karen Leeder, 'Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', p. 183.
94 Ibid., p. 183.
95 See also Hermann Korte 'Thomas Klings Erster Weltkrieg', p. 106.

writing process, they become witnesses of the poet's struggles in accessing the past and take part in the creation of history through compassion. Of course, such a model of historical engagement is highly hierarchical. As the intermediary of the readers' experience of the past, the poet's experience is privileged over that of anyone else. In addition, the model still relies on the idea that the past did at one point offer coherence, even though the poet can only present a fragmented version of it. 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' does not so much abolish the idea of historical coherence so much as mourn for its irretrievability. As such, it presents a poetic project that is essentially sentimental and nostalgic.[96] The poem's use of modernist literary strategies like fragmentation, self-reflexiveness, polyphony, ellipses, and so on, is no contradiction. Roy Boyne and Ali Rattansi have argued that the

> preoccupation of modernism with highlighting the means of representation, the disruption of narrative, contradiction and fragmentation in subjectivity and identity, and so on, should not, however, be allowed to obscure the significance of an underlying and sometimes contradictory, tendency within most modernist projects to cling to the belief that in principle the deep structure of reality is knowable, that it is intellectually and culturally penetrable, as it were, but requires aesthetic, philosophical and psychic strategies more complex, inventive and self-reflexive than the ones typically deployed in realist and naturalist forms.[97]

Evelyn Cobley has come to similar conclusions in her close readings of early modernist texts dealing with the First World War. With reference to David Jones' *In Parenthesis*, she argued that the text 'seeks to unify, recuperate, and reintegrate through metaphor or analogy all the heterogeneity of all the elements it also foregrounds through its fragmented

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[96] Peer Trilcke also concluded that 'Klings spätmoderne Geschichtslyrik, sein Geschichtsdichtertum […] dem "Sentimentalismus der Moderne" verbunden [bleibt]: Nicht als Gewinn, sondern als Verlust wird verstanden, dass ein einstmals möglicher Umgang mit der Vergangenheit nunmehr unmöglich ist'. See *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 544.

[97] Roy Boyne and Ali Rattansi, 'The Theory and Politics of Postmodernism. By way of an Introduction' in idem (eds.), *Postmodernism and Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 1-45: 7.

narrative structure.'[98] In 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', Kling repeated an essentially nostalgic gesture that had already characterised earlier narratives of the First World War.

The modernist style and language of the series occasionally let critics forget that the account of the war it presents is selected and mediated. The way in which the poem stages its own unfeasibility is certainly a powerful narrative strategy. But this need not encourage us to conclude, as Karen Leeder suggested, that the poet 'gives a voice' to history 'without explaining or interfering'.[99] Leeder argues that the 'radical network of quotations and voices' in 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' allows readers to 'forge their own' version of the past.[100] However, the narrative framework established in the series draws clear boundaries to their reassessment of the past. In the words of Evelyn Cobley, the narrative presented in 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' might be 'authentic but not necessarily accurate'.[101]

In *Princes of the Trenches*, Ann Linder argued that the most common narratives of the First World War during the Weimar Republic presented what she called a 'conservative experience' of the war, which focussed on male comradeship at the front lines as a basis for cultural renewal.[102] She contrasted this 'conservative experience' with the 'liberal experience' of the war that can be discerned in many British war narratives, which focussed on 'meaningless suffering, loss and death, not only of men but of institutions and even of the cultural and historical past'.[103] Both narratives served different political agendas. They were 'shaped by national cultural paradigms and the overwhelming need to validate personal experience while creating a meaningful and representative

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98 Evelyn Cobley, *Representing War*, p. 84. Chapter VI of her book presents a comprehensive close-reading of *In Parenthesis*.
99 Karen Leeder, 'Contemporary Poems of the First World War', p. 295.
100 Ibid., p. 303.
101 Evelyn Cobley, *Representing War*, p. 88.
102 Ann P. Linder, *Princes of the Trenches*, p. 2.
103 Ibid., p. 1.

national myth of the war'.[104] While the boundaries between the two categories established by Linder are certainly more fluid than she proposed, they still offer a useful framework for a comparison with Kling's account of the First World War put forward in the 1990s. While on the surface 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' seems to present what Linder called a 'liberal experience' of the war with an emphasis on meaningless suffering, I will argue that central elements of the so-called 'conservative experience' persisted in his narrative. In particular, Kling's account of the First World War recreated an experience of male comradeship at the frontline that reinforced the understanding of Germany as a homogenous nation-state.

The series' temporal arc ranges from the summer preceding the outbreak of the First World War until the poem's present in the 1990s. The opening poem 'Modefarben 1914' starts by taking the reader to the fashion world of the summer 1914 by reference to the Dadaist photographer Erwin Blumfeld. Fashion is a symbol that is used to contrast the supposed carelessness of the summer preceding the war with the war's later horrors. This contrast is condensed in the image of the catwalk ('laufsteg') that is going to be replaced by trenches ('laufgraben', both line 33). The war is presented as a catastrophe that befell the contemporary establishment unexpectedly: 'zur frühjahrssaison natürlich | von marne gar noch nicht | die rede' (line 21-3). The decision where to let a story begin is fundamental for its interpretation, as it sets the framework for the reader's understanding of the events presented. This is certainly true in the case of a global conflict with as far-reaching repercussions as the First World War. Kling chose the summer of 1914 as a starting point for 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', a decision which could easily be defended with the argument that only the European powers' declarations of war in August 1914 turned this war into a global conflict. But in addition to that, Kling presented the war as a catastrophe that befell Europe unexpectedly – according to his account, one moment, there

[104] Ibid.

was fashion, and the next, there was war – which defies any notion of causality or indeed responsibility. The narrative that Europe 'slithered over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war without any trace of apprehension or dismay' goes back to the British Secretary of State for War and later Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who presented this interpretation in his *War Memoirs* published between 1933-36.[105] Historians have argued that it needs to be understood within the contemporary policy of appeasement towards National Socialist Germany in the 1930s.[106] Nevertheless, revisionists were eager to accept a more lenient account of German responsibility in the events that led to the outbreak of the war. As Linder has argued, 'the spirit of August is as much a part of the myth of the war as is the experiences of the trenches'.[107] By presenting the war as a catastrophe that befell Europe unexpectedly in the summer of 1914, Kling repeated this revisionist trope and ignored how deeply the war was rooted in global events that preceded the summer of 1914 and that might, in fact, have served as warning signs.

Kling's view seems less self-evident if we approach Germany and Austria-Hungary not as nation states but as colonial empires.[108] Germany in the First World War was a colonial empire at war and the decision where to let a narrative account of the First World War begin depends heavily on this understanding. As Heather Jones has argued, the notion of Germany as a colonial empire at war 'ultimately forces us to engage with more fluid chronological boundaries'.[109] As a consequence, the Second Moroccan Crisis and Italy's invasion of Ottoman Libya in 1911 could be seen as possible starting points for the First

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[105] David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 6 vols. (London: Nicolson and Watson, 1933-36), vol. I, p. 32.

[106] See Jost Dülffer, 'Die geplante Erinnerung. Der Historikerboom und der Erste Weltkrieg', *Osteuropa*, 64 (2014), 351-68: 357-8.

[107] Ann P. Linder, *Princes of the Trenches*, p. 5.

[108] Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

[109] Heather Jones, 'The German Empire' in Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (eds.), *Empires at War: 1911-1923* (Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 52-72, 52.

World War in the German context.[110] Recently, strong cases have been made to see not only the First World War but also the Second World War and the Holocaust in continuation with the violent practices employed in the German colonies, especially the genocide of the Herero and Nama in German South West Africa in 1904-8 and the Maji Maji war in German East Africa between 1905-7.[111] Heather Jones has argued that

> the German Empire at war [...] should not be seen as a set of separate military fronts, but rather as an interconnected series of imperial assumptions that grounded military and foreign policy decision-making across its different combat and occupation zones, which stretched from Shandong in China to Zanzibar in Africa and Samoa in the Pacific to Courland in the Baltics.[112]

In limiting his perspective to Central European scenes, Kling chose to ignore the global dimension of the First World War. As Karen Leeder also pointed out, Kling's account mostly repeated familiar narratives of Verdun.[113] In doing so, he reinforced dichotomies of earlier war narratives. According to Ann Linder, narratives of the First World War in the Weimar Republic constructed an ideal of male comradeship at the front that constituted itself in opposition to the rear and the home front. Thus, she explained,

> the fissure between the front line troops and the homeland, the *Heimat*, was an unbridgeable chasm. For the German front line soldiers of the First World War, "home" existed in two forms: letters and leave. In both cases, the most significant factor is the soldier's feeling of separation from the homeland, the feeling that "the front becomes his homeland". Letters from home, although greeted with enthusiasm, often brought either distressing news or, worse, were so filled with trivialities and silly complaints that they lost all meaning for soldiers in constant danger of death. […] Packages from home, especially in the early war, provide an even more striking picture of the disjunction between the two worlds.[114]

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110 Ibid.

111 See Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz?* (see chapter 12, footnote 62); Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

112 Heather Jones, 'The German Empire', pp. 53-4.

113 See Karen Leeder, 'Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', p. 180; 'Contemporary Poems of the First World War', p. 296.

114 Ann P. Linder, *Princes of the Trenches*, p. 58.

Kling evoked a similar feeling of separation in 'diese photographie. dieses foto', where the speaker asks: 'ist dies der inhalt der geschichte: eure marmelade und dein und vaters brief?' (line 25). While the estrangement articulated here seems understandable if coming from those men who had witnessed the war and its horrors, one needs to ask what was gained by reproducing an all-male perspective of the First World War in the 1990s.

According to Ann Linder, most early narratives presented war as 'an exclusively male activity that inevitably excluded women and their concerns.'[115] Kling followed this account of the First World War in so far as he only included the female perspective where it concerned men. Women's experiences of the war are limited to the letters they write to their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons engaged in combat. But while their concern for and loss of male loved ones certainly was a central aspect of how women experienced the war, it was not their only occupation during wartime.[116] More importantly, while narratives focussing on male comradeship at the front lines might have served a purpose immediately after the war, they did not necessarily continue to do so. For the soldiers who had fought in Verdun and witnessed its horrors, narrating a tale of male comradeship was one of the few forms of coping available. Linder has pointed out the negative implications of this coping mechanism. For many witnesses of the First World War, she explained

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[115] Ibid., p. 75.

[116] On women's experiences of the First World War see Richard Wall and Jay Winter (eds.), *The Upheaval of War. Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge University Press, 1988); Ute Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen in der Kriegsgesellschaft. Beruf, Familie und Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989); Birthe Kundrus, *Kriegerfrauen. Familienpolitik und Geschlechterverhältnisse im Ersten und Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Christians, 1995). On gender and the war see Margaret Higgonet et al. (eds.), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender. How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge University Press, 2001); Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (eds.), *Home/Front. The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2002). On the 'home front' see the third volume on *Civil Society* of *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, ed. by Jay Winter, 3 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

> the experience of the war at the front was such that it could only be understood by someone who had taken part in it. Consequently, the entire front generation was irretrievably cut off from the staffs in the rear and from the civilians at home. Their alienation from the rest of German society laid the foundations for the sense of betrayal they felt at the loss of the war, and undoubtedly provided fertile ground for the growth of the *Dolchstoßlegende* […] . All of these factors alienated the front veterans from German society and from the realities of postwar German life, including democratic government. That alienation was to have far-reaching consequences.[117]

If Kling's intention for writing 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' was to uncover the ways in which the First World War had determined the course of the 20th century, it would have been essential to scrutinise familiar narratives for their biases instead of reproducing them. In particular, it would have been necessary to highlight the way in which narratives like that of male comradeship had contributed to the rise of German totalitarianism.

But in fact, even Kling's account of the Western front seems rather limited. As narratives of the First World War had often served nationalist purposes in the Weimar Republic, they usually disregarded 'conventional distinctions' such as 'class, occupation and region'.[118] In a similar way, Kling did not acknowledge that the German and Austrian armies in the First World War were not homogenous groups, but included soldiers from diverse cultural backgrounds within these multicultural empires. The German army included about 850,000 Polish-speaking soldiers from Prussia's Eastern territories who made up about 6 per cent of German manpower.[119] In addition, countless colonial subjects fought for the German empire at all fronts of the First World War.[120] The presence of

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[117] Ann P. Linder, *Princes of the Trenches*, p. 60.
[118] Ibid., p. 76.
[119] Alexander Watson, 'Fighting for Another Fatherland: The Polish Minority in the German Army, 1914-1918', *English Historical Review* 126.522 (2011), 1137-66: 1138.
[120] See e.g. Michelle Moyd, '"We don't want to die for nothing": Askari at War in German East Africa' in Santanu Das (ed.), *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 90-107; Christian Koller, 'Representing Otherness: African, Indian and European Soldiers' Letters and Memoirs' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, pp. 127-42; Hermann J. Hiery, *The Neglected*

colonial troops in the British and French forces led to encounters between Germans and colonial subjects in prisoner-of-war camps.[121]

While Kling seems to have been aware of the colonial dimension of the First World War, he did not engage with it beyond stereotypical tropes. In the opening poem 'Modefarben 1914' we learn that 'südfrüchte wurden kaum gekannt | sie kamen im beamtentume vor: | auf dem weihnachtsteller' (line 13-15). The origin of the 'tropical fruits' in the colonial territories is not discussed. Instead, they are presented as a symbol of frugality and virtue of the people in charge of running the colonial empire: civil servants. 'Tropical fruits', it is claimed, were only available to them, and only at Christmas. In 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', the colonial perspective is only relevant in terms of its exotic otherness, as can be seen in the 'orientalised' fashion of the bourgeoisie (line 6).[122]

Only once in the cycle did Kling acknowledge the multicultural character of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The series' concluding poem 'es stützen mit den toten schultern' takes the reader to the soldiers' graves and Jewish graves on the Central Cemetery in present-day Vienna. By introducing victims of the Second World War and the Holocaust, the poem reinforces an understanding of the First World War as the original catastrophe of the 20th century, the turning point from which the entire course of the century can be reconstructed.[123] However, the past seems to be forgotten as we look at gravestones 'auf denen keine | steinchen liegen' (lines 1-2). The Jewish tradition of leaving pebbles on a gravestone is presented as an 'alte markierung aus dem alten orient' that is

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War. The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995).

[121] See Heather Jones, 'Imperial Captivities: Colonial Prisoners of War in Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918' in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, pp. 175-93; Andrew D. Evans, 'Anthropology at War: Racial Studies of POWs during World War I' in H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl (eds.), *Worldly Provincialism. German Anthropology in the Age of Empire*, pp. 198-229.

[122] See Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: M & P Verlag, 1997).

[123] See Karen Leeder, 'Thomas Kling's Poetry of Memory', p. 178.

contrasted with the gravestones' 'nachruf- | sprache: deutsch' (lines 2-3). Of course, the fact that the inscriptions on the Jewish gravestones are in German should not come as a surprise – the deceased were, after all, Austrian.[124] The fact that their German native language receives special mention here points to the opposite: only if their Austrian identity is questioned in the first place does this detail become relevant. The anaphora putting special emphasis on their 'ancientness' serves the same purpose. By marking them as 'ancient' and 'oriental', the Austrian Jews are assigned the place of the other in the context of the Austrian empire. Thus, Kling revealed that his understanding of Austria-Hungary as a multicultural state reproduced ethnocentric tropes. Only in the context of colonial empires based on ethnic hierarchisation do ethnical markers like names and native language become relevant.[125] Instead of expanding our understanding of the First World War, Kling reproduced narratives of nationalist ideology that were at the basis of it.

Archival material confirms that Kling considered the First World War to be the key to a better understanding of the course of the 20th century. In a draft structure, Kling listed the following material for 'Der Erste Weltkrieg':

[124] On Jewish experiences of the First World War, see Jason Crouthamel, Michael Geheran, Tim Grady and Julia Barbara Köhne (eds.), *Beyond Inclusion and Exclusion. Jewish Experiences of the First World War in Central Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019).

[125] Charles Maier has defined the empire as a supra-national entity characterised 'by size, by ethnic hierarchization, and by a regime that centralizes power but enlists diverse social and/or ethnic elites in its management.' See Charles Maier, *Among Empires: America's Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 31.

MATERIAL *2. WK, familiär.*
wolfgang: taschenkalender 1943 = hölderlinjahr; feldpostbriefe
heidi: TB KLV u. briefe (der 13 jährigen), tschechei; traum der
schwester über „vermißten“ bruder; das untertauchen: 45 in gerresheim (check!: von gahlenstr.);
2. WK:
malaparte, reportagen;
pound, pisaner cantos;

70er: DRK-suchdienstplakate[126]

The undated note shows that Kling used various documents from his family archive on the Second World War in order to write about the First World War. They include his uncle Wolfgang's pocket calendar and diary entries and letters of his mother, Heidi Kling, written during the 'relocation' of the then thirteen-year-old to the countryside ('KLV', short for 'Kinderlandverschickung'). Notably, his grandfather Dr Ernst Matthias does not appear on the list. The personal documents are completed by two literary works: Curzio Malaparte's coverage of the Second World War, probably his novels *Kaputt* (1944) and *The Skin* (1949), and Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos*. This list differs from an account of his sources that Kling gave in conversation with Hans-Jürgen Balmes, to whom he explained:

> [Ich] bezog mich wiederum auf Gedächtnisprotokolle von Gedächtnisprotokollen alter Menschen aus den Achtzigern. Ganz wichtige Zeugen, gar nicht inhaltlich, aber klimatisch, sind mein Großvater und meine Großmutter gewesen. Dazu kam zweitens die Auswertung von Texten, eben Feldpost, von Zeitschriften des Ersten Weltkriegs wie die "Universum"-Sachen, die damals in jedem kleinbürgerlichen oder bürgerlichen Haushalt zu haben waren, bis eben hin – drittens – zu den stehenden Bildern, Fotos, und den Stummfilmen, also den bewegten Bildern, wie ich sie in dem Militärhistorischen Museum in Wien angeschaut habe. Das waren die Grundmaterialien, die ich ausgewertet und dann auf verschiedene Gebiete, auf verschiedene Texte aufgeteilt habe. (BO, 235)

Again, such an approach need not in itself be problematic. But as the close reading has demonstrated, it seems questionable whether Kling's narrative of the First World War offered a useful key for unlocking the past and understanding the present. Because the poem does not investigate potential ideological and structural continuities between the

[126] Thomas Kling, 'fernhandel [Inhaltsverzeichnis]'. Manuscript at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.1315.

First and the Second World War in any depth, the idea of a historical continuum implied by the image of the graves on the Vienna cemetery is highly problematic, as its symbolism amounts to nothing more but universal suffering – whether the deceased were victims of genocide, civilian casualties of war or soldiers killed in action is irrelevant in the context of the poem. Such a view resonated with revisionist tendencies in West Germany since the 1980s. 'Volksbund Deutscher Kriegsgräberfürsorge' and CDU-affiliated members of the 'Bundestag' in particular argued that death had 'erased all differences' between victims and perpetrators commemorated at war cemeteries and memorials.[127]

Kling had to ignore the colonial dimension of the First World War in order to save it as a positive point of identification. This was crucial for his cultural project, which, in order to avoid the question of how to write poetry after Auschwitz, presented the First World War and the avant-garde as the better alternative to the Second World War and the poetry written in response to it. The purpose of Kling's engagement with the First World War was to restore a tradition of the avant-garde that had, in his view, been forcefully interrupted by the course of the 20th century. The investment in the First World War as a positive reference point would have been complicated, if not rendered impossible, by a serious consideration of Germany's past as a colonial empire. Kling once explained towards Hans-Jürgen Balmes that his objective in writing 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' had been to 'defend high modernism, at any price' (BO, 243). In the end, the coherence of his poetic project came at the price of colonial amnesia. Thus, a serious engagement with the structural similarities between colonialist, racist and anti-Semitic practices employed in both the First and the Second World War was rendered impossible. The world that Kling tried to revive was an essentially nostalgic and revisionist version of the past that did not acknowledge its inherent contradictions and tensions. In doing so, he facilitated a notion of

[127] See Gerd Knischewski and Ulla Spittler, 'Memories of the Second World War and National Identity in Germany', pp. 242, 249.

undifferentiated, collective victimhood and took part in the revisionist practices that had informed West Germany's politics of national identity building since the 1980s.

Kling hoped to offer a point of purchase from the perspective of which it was possible to proceed beyond the petrified patterns of discourse after the Second World War and the Holocaust, but the view point he offered was too backward-looking in order to open up a space from where to proceed in the future. Kling's concepts of language, identity and culture reproduced the same ethnocentric patterns of exclusion that he tried to overcome. This will also become clear in the following close reading of his essay 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien', in which Kling engaged with non-European indigenous art in the modernist mode of primitivism, thus repeating the avant-garde's colonial practices.

14

The Eye of the Ethnographer

Modernist Primitivism in Thomas Kling's Poetry

Thomas Kling has assumed many roles during his career as a poet and performer.[128] The fact that he occasionally enjoyed 'going native' is well known, even though critics usually did not call it that.[129] Instead, self-stylisations like that of a 'shaman' have been widely accepted as part of his poetic programme.[130] The appropriation of 'native' practices went beyond the mere metaphor in his case. Not only did Kling liken writing poetry to being a

[128] See Samuel Hamen, 'Zwischen Sprach- und Selbstinstallation. Lyrische Autorschaft und ihre Inszenierung bei Thomas Kling' (see introduction to part IV, footnote 1).

[129] See Christof Hamann and Magdalena Kißling, 'Going Native' in Dirk Göttsche, Axel Dunker and Gabriele Dürbeck (eds.) *Handbuch Postkolonialismus und Literatur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017), pp. 149-53.

[130] See 'Hubert Winkels im Gespräch mit Franz Josef Czernin und Heinrich Detering (Raketenstation Hombroich, 26. Februar 2010)' in Frieder von Ammon et al. (eds), *Das Gellen der Tinte*, pp. 401-16: 412; Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, pp. 537-40.

shaman, he also stylised himself wearing 'shamanic' headdress on various photographs.[131] Which 'shamanic' tradition Kling referred to in particular is hard to tell – his use of the term ranged from Finnish folklore to Dadaist poetry and H. C. Artmann.[132] This vagueness is not surprising. Rather than evoking practices based in a factual past or present, Kling's notion of 'shamanism' is part of a Western imagination of indigenous cultures with a long history in European modernism.[133] In fact, his engagement with indigenous cultures often followed patterns set out by modernist primitivism, as the following discussion of the essay 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien' and the poem 'Larven' will show.[134]

In 1997, Kling contributed to a special issue of Swiss art magazine *Du – Zeitschrift für Kultur* on occasion of the opening of the Beyeler Foundation, a museum near Basel which curates the private collection of Swiss art dealers Hildy and Ernst Beyeler. His contribution with the title 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien' comprised an opening poem and an essay alongside fifteen photographs of some representative artworks.[135] The visual arts were a great source of inspiration for Kling's writing, as demonstrated in his repeated collaborations with artists.[136] He also surrounded himself with art in his everyday life: The Beyelers' museum shares many similarities with 'Stiftung Insel Hombroich', a German art foundation established in 1996, whose 'Raketenstation', a former NATO-base-turned-museum-and-studio-space, became Kling's home after 1995. Hombroich's founder,

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131 See the photographs in *Schreibheft* 65, p. 147 and *Schreibheft* 76, p. 17.

132 Thomas Kling, 'Wenn die Recken ihre Socken selber stricken. Die altfinnische "Kalewala", ein Wunderhorn des Nordens, endlich in neuer Übersetzung', *Die Zeit*, 9 December 2004; IT, 37; BO, 75.

133 See Alice Beck Kehoe, *Shamans and Religion: An Anthropological Exploration in Critical Thinking* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2000).

134 Thomas Kling articulated similar thoughts in 'Sprachinstallation 2' (IT, 15-26: 20).

135 See Thomas Kling, 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien', *Du: Zeitschrift der Kultur* 57.12 (1997), 65-71. Kling later included the poem 'Larven' in *Fernhandel* and featured the essay in *Botenstoffe* (2001) under the title 'Rhapsoden am Sepik'. See Thomas Kling, 'Larven' (FH, 64; GG, 664); 'Rhapsoden am Sepik' (BO, 110-15).

136 For an overview and introduction see Gabriele Wix and Kerstin Stüssel (eds.), *Thomas Kling - Double Exposure*.

German art dealer Karl-Heinrich Müller, had acquired various properties in the area of Düsseldorf since the 1980s and, like the Beyelers, he had built a public museum for his private collection. In addition, he offered studios and living spaces for artists in residence, of whom Kling was one of the first. Müller's collection, like the Beyelers', comprises works of European modernism alongside non-European indigenous art. Thus, it can be assumed that Kling was already familiar with this particular kind of art when he decided to write about the sculptures from Papua New Guinea in the Beyelers' collection.

As Frieder von Ammon has pointed out, Kling was the only one of several writers contributing to the magazine who did not focus on works of European modernism.[137] But his choice only seems unusual on the surface. The engagement with non-European indigenous art, mostly expressed in the mode of 'primitivism', was of course an important source of inspiration for European modernism.[138] The work of artists like Alberto Giacometti, Paul Klee, Pablo Picasso, who are discussed by other writers in the same issue, resulted to no small degree from their engagement with indigenous art from Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific.[139] Thus, by discussing indigenous sculptures from Papua New Guinea, Kling underlined his own rootedness in the modernist tradition. As von Ammon correctly observed: 'Kling hat nie etwas rezensiert, das nicht in irgendeiner Form mit ihm und vor allem seinem Werk zusammengehangen hätte.'[140] In this sense, his essays were 'immer auch Literatur- und Werkpolitik'.[141] But in the case of 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien', von Ammon misread the nature of Kling's politics. His choice did not position

[137] See Frieder von Ammon, 'Von Epenchefs und Studienabbrechern', p. 50.
[138] See Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (eds.), *Prehistories of the Future: the Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford University Press, 1995).
[139] See William Rubin (ed.), *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, 2 vols. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984).
[140] Frieder von Ammon, 'Von Epenchefs und Studienabbrechern', p. 63.
[141] Ibid., p. 65.

him, as von Ammon argued, 'jenseits des Kanons der klassischen Moderne'.[142] Instead, in discussing non-European indigenous sculptures, Kling drew on a well-established line of tradition within European modernism, namely that of primitivism.[143]

The concept of primitivism originally referred to European visual artists who took indigenous art from Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific as inspirations for their own work in the age of modernism.[144] But, as Iris Därmann pointed out, what exactly counted as 'inspiration' is unclear – more often than not, the term seemed to be a euphemism for various instances of cultural appropriation.[145] In literature, the case was slightly different. Here, the adaption of 'primitive' forms was less straightforward than in the visual arts, as foreign languages complicated a direct reception.[146] Thus, primitivism in literature did not rely on the imitation of so-called 'primitive' forms, but on the adoption of allegedly 'primitive' thought and practice.[147] Thus, while primitivism in the visual arts depended on material objects, primitivism in literature to a large degree depended on imagination.

Just as we need to investigate the specific circumstances in which cultural exchange took place in the visual arts to determine whether it is still justified to speak of 'inspiration' or not, we need to question the cognitive framework that informed the imagination of the 'primitive' in literature in order to reveal the ideologies that informed it. Primitivism in the visual arts and literature is inseparable from modernity and colonialism as the forces that enabled cultural contact with the 'primitive' non-European other in the

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142 Ibid., p. 50.

143 For an overview of current research on literary primitivism, see the collection edited by Nicola Gess (ed.), *Literarischer Primitivismus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); see also her monograph *Primitives Denken: Wilde, Kinder und Wahnsinnige in der literarischen Moderne* (Munich: Fink, 2013).

144 Nicola Gess, 'Literarischer Primitivismus: Chancen und Grenzen eines Begriffs' in idem (ed.), *Literarischer Primitivismus*, pp. 1-9: 1.

145 Iris Därmann, 'Primitivismus in den Bildtheorien des 20. Jahrhunderts' in Nicola Gess (ed.), *Literarischer Primitivismus*, pp. 75-91: 77.

146 Erhard Schüttpelz, *Die Moderne im Spiegel des Primitiven: Weltliteratur und Ethnologie* (Paderborn: Fink, 2005), p. 360.

147 Nicola Gess, 'Literarischer Primitivismus', p. 3.

first place. Thus, we need to ask how primitivism shared, reinforced or subverted colonialist thought. Primitivism's relationship with indigenous art might not have been either appropriating or appreciating – crucially, it might have been both at the same time.

In the German-speaking context, an understanding that the avant-garde was anti-colonial by definition still seems to prevail.[148] This is in contrast to Anglo-American scholarship, where several studies have revealed the entanglement of modernism and colonialism.[149] This disparity can be explained with a general negligence towards Germany's colonial past as a result of the short lifespan of the German colonial empire.[150] However, colonial possession is not the same as colonialism and colonial thought, and the latter do not depend on the former. Indeed, research that has been undertaken to this point suggests that the German-speaking avant-garde's primitivism was not informed by an appreciation of the colonial other, but often reproduced racist stereotypes.[151]

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[148] See e.g. Michael Hofmann, *Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft. Eine Einführung* (Paderborn: Fink, 2006), p. 97.

[149] See Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses (eds.), *Modernism and Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward W. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

[150] See Lora Wildenthal, 'Notes on a History of "Imperial Turns" in Germany' in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn. Thinking with and Through the Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 144-56.

[151] See Manuel Maldonado Alemán, 'Die Konstruktion des Anderen. Carl Einstein und der Primitivismus-Diskurs der europäischen Avantgarden' in Nicola Creighton and Andreas Kramer (eds.), *Carl Einstein und die europäische Avantgarde* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 170-85; Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek, 'Primitivismus. Literarische "Anti-Kunst" im Spannungsfeld von Provokation und Diskriminierung' in Nicola Gess (ed.), *Literarischer Primitivismus*, pp. 315-32; Jan Gerstner, *"die absolute Negerei". Kolonialdiskurse und Rassismus in der Avantgarde* (Marburg: Tectum, 2007); Wolfgang Struck, '"Ein renegatisches Machtabenteuer unter den Negern". Der phantasierte Kolonialismus der literarischen Moderne in Deutschland' in Monika Albrecht and Axel Dunker (ed.), *(Post-)Kolonialismus und deutsche Literatur: Impulse der angloamerikanischen Literatur- und Kulturtheorie* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2005), pp. 179-202; Béchie Paul N'guessan, *Primitivismus und Afrikanismus: Kunst und Kultur Afrikas in der deutschen Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002); Miklós Szalay, 'Europäische Avantgarde und afrikanische Ästhetik' in Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik (ed.), *Verstehen und Verständigung: Ethnologie, Xenologie, interkulturelle Philosophie* (Würzburg: Könighausen & Neumann, 2002), pp. 144-52; Joachim

Kling seems to have been aware of the controversial nature of this particular line of tradition when he decided to draw on modernist primitivism in his essay 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien'. Thus, he defended himself against the potential accusation of ethnocentrism by opening his essay with a sharp criticism of exoticism in popular culture, more precisely a travel report that had been published in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*:

> Zunächst die Presseschau. Ein des Schweissfilms kundiger deutschsprachiger Europäer bereist das Innere Papua-Neuguineas und hat mit bewaffneten Ortsansässigen eine "Begegnung der unwirklichen Art", über die er sich wie folgt zu äußern weiß. Der selbstverständlich "martialisch aufgerüstete Krieger", Gesicht und Körper selbstverständlich "wild" bemalt, ist mit "groben, fast schaufelgroßen Händen" versehen, und Gott sei Dank gibt es das "golden(e) Sonnenlicht, so dass "seine rohe Gefährlichkeit gemildert erscheint". Die Kollegen des Papua entsprechen ebenfalls eher nicht der ästhetischen Norm des tropengeilen Abendländers: "Ihre Körper sind nach kolossalen Massstäben gebaut, die Beine massige Säulen." Auch sie "schlüpfen" tierhaft und furchterregend aus der grünen Hölle, tragen selbstverständlich "Kraushaar" – ja, so wird die Figur des "schwarzen Mannes" seit alten Tagen gern gezeichnet, ein streng riechendes Sarottimohr-Hardcore, ein nettes abendländisches Lehrstückchen in Primitivismus, dessen Notorietät auf der Hand liegt.[152]

As Kling remarked critically, the writer of this piece re-used well-known tropes of the 'noble savage' to describe his encounter with the Papuans.[153] What Kling omitted is that this gaze is reversed when the journalist and his fellow travellers visit the Papuans' village and the locals gather to inspect their visitors. 'Keine Frage, wer hier die Exoten sind', the journalist concludes self-ironically.[154] This seems to indicate that the case is more complex than Kling's criticism suggested. As Edward Said argued: 'There is nothing particularly controversial or reprehensible about such domestications of the exotic […] what is more important […] is the limited vocabulary and imagery that impose themselves as a

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Schultz, *Wild, irre und rein: Wörterbuch zum Primitivismus der literarischen Avantgarden in Deutschland und Frankreich zwischen 1900 und 1940* (Gießen: Anabas, 1995).

[152] Thomas Kling, 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien', pp. 65-6.

[153] The article that Kling referred to is Roland Mischke, 'Die wildeste Insel der Welt. In den Dschungeln und Dörfern, auf den Flüssen und Bergen Papua-Neuguineas', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 15 February 1996.

[154] Ibid.

consequence'.[155] As his criticism shows, Kling was very aware of the kind of exoticism that Said called the 'domestication of the exotic'. But it seems that he was less aware of the cognitive frameworks underlying such domestications. As a consequence, he was oblivious to the ways in which it limited his own vocabulary and imagination.

Kling's criticism of popular exoticism has led von Ammon to favourably draw attention to Kling's anthropological perspective in 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien'.[156] But if Kling's perspective was inspired by anthropology, as his use of the term 'teilnehmende Betrachtung' suggests, this still does not make him an anthropologist. And even if he had been one, it would be wrong to conclude that being an anthropologist implied being immune to ethnocentrism and exoticism.[157] Peer Trilcke has cautiously alluded to this:

> Und wenn Kling sich schließlich in seinen Essays etwa mit den "Rhapsoden am Sepik" befasst, dann ist selbst der Exotismus nicht weit, auch wenn Kling dessen populärer Variante in einer "Presseschau" zu Beginn des Essays eine polemische Abfuhr erteilt.[158]

In order to give more substance to this observation, I will show how Kling's engagement with non-European indigenous art in 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien' reproduced ethnocentric patterns of modernist primitivism. I will begin my argument with a close reading of the essay before turning to the poem 'Larven'.

For someone as critical of academia and academic scholarship as Kling, it is striking how willingly he used their credentials if it served his own cause. After having exposed the exoticism of *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Kling called on Claude Lévi-Strauss'

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[155] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 60, 67.
[156] Frieder von Ammon, 'Von Epenchefs und Studienabbrechern', p. 50.
[157] See H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl (eds.), *Worldly Provincialism*; Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (see introduction to part V, footnote 20); Sabine Schupp, *Die Ethnologie und ihr koloniales Erbe: ältere und neuere Debatten um die Entkolonialisierung einer Wissenschaft* (Hamburg: Lit, 1997); Woodruff D. Smith, 'Anthropology and German Colonialism', in Arthur J. Knoll and Lewis H. Gann (eds.), *Germans in the Tropics: Essays in German Colonial History* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).
[158] Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 245.

Tristes Tropiques (1955) to further distance himself from the suspicion of ethnocentrism. But in this case, he called upon the wrong authority. As Jacques Derrida argued in *Of Grammatology* (1967), Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques* presented not so much a deconstruction of European ethnocentrism as its mirror image:

> One already suspects – and all Lévi-Strauss's writings would confirm it – that the critique of ethnocentrism, a theme so dear to the author of *Tristes Tropiques*, has often the sole function of constituting the other as a model of original and natural goodness, of accusing and humiliating oneself, of exhibiting its being-unacceptable in a counter-ethnocentric mirror.[159]

As Derrida pointed out, Claude Lévi-Strauss followed a long European tradition of idealised primitivism that can be traced all the way back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[160]

Kling next called upon Carl Einstein, or as he called him, 'der einflussreiche Autor der bahnbrechenden Studie *Negerplastik*'.[161] German writer and art critic Einstein (1885-1940) had indeed published a book on African sculptures in 1915 that featured 116 photographs alongside an essay in which he discussed their significance for Cubist art.[162] How 'influential' and 'groundbreaking' his essay was among his contemporaries is hard to tell – Einstein himself remarked in a letter to his fiancée Tony Simon-Wolfskehl in 1923: 'Die *Negerplastik* hätte ohne Bildchen keine Sau gelesen und kapiert haben sie nur ein paar Leute in Frankreich.'[163] But within intellectual circles, *Negerplastik* was certainly

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159 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), pp. 123-4.

160 See also Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought* (Harvard University Press, 1993)

161 Thomas Kling, 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien', p. 66.

162 Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik* (Leipzig: Verlag der Weissen Bücher, 1915). See Klaus H. Kiefer (ed.), *Die visuelle Wende der Moderne: Carl Einsteins "Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts"* (Munich: Fink, 2003).

163 Carl Einstein in a letter Tony Simon-Wolfskehl in early 1923. As quoted in Matthias Berning, *Carl Einstein und das neue Sehen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), p. 19.

well received, as reviews by Ernst Bloch and Hermann Hesse among others attest.[164] Still, the vehemence with which Kling emphasised Einstein's authority says more about his own agenda than it does about Einstein himself. Even Oswald Wiener – another key figure in Kling's poetic lineage – once admitted 'daß Einstein wohl nirgends das gewesen ist, was der Volksmund einen bedeutenden Schriftsteller nennt.'[165]

Kling referred to two of Einstein's works: *Negerplastik* and the later essay *Südseeplastiken* (1926), published on occasion of an exhibition by the Flechtheim gallery in Berlin, Zürich and Düsseldorf between May and August that year. I will not discuss *Südseeplastiken* in detail here, because Einstein's discussion of the artworks as such is irrelevant for Kling. He only referred to the following passage:

> Wir gestehen, daß die Zeichen dieser symbolhaften Kunst bis heute im großen und ganzen fast unverständlich blieben oder man vageste Deutung kaum übertraf. Jedes ornamentale Zeichen besagt Bestimmtes, doch der Sinn ist seit längerem den Eingeborenen schon ins Schwanken geraten, und das gleiche Ornament deuteten verschiedene Menschen gänzlich verschiedenartig.[166]

To which Kling added:

> Carl Einstein, der einflussreiche Autor der bahnbrechenden Studie *Negerplastik*, ist der Urheber dieses Statements über "Südsee-Plastiken" (speziell Neuguineas), die seinerzeit von Flechtheim gezeigt wurden. Der Kunstschriftsteller, dessen Aufsatz sogleich in mehreren Sprachen nachgedruckt wurde, macht in seinem Ausstellungs-Vorwort für das schon vor einem dreiviertel Jahrhundert nur mehr verschwommen wahrzunehmende Bild der Kunst Melanesiens "den furchtbaren Schock der Kolonisation" verantwortlich und die damit verbundene "plötzlich eingeführte europäische Kultur und das völlige Unterwühlen der geistigen und religiösen Zustände dieser Kunst".[167]

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[164] Ernst Bloch, 'Negerplastik' and Hermann Hesse 'Die Plastik der Neger' in Rolf-Peter Baacke and Gerti Fietzek (eds.), *Carl Einstein: Materialien*, vol. I (Berlin: Silver & Goldstein, 1990), pp. 88-94, 95-8.

[165] Oswald Wiener, 'Beim Wiederlesen von Carl Einstein' in *Carl Einstein: Materialien*, pp. 29-37: 35.

[166] Carl Einstein, *Südseeplastiken* (Berlin: Das Kunstarchiv Verlag, 1926), p. 4.

[167] Thomas Kling, 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien', p. 66.

Correspondingly, Kling did not dwell much on the Papuan sculptures in his essay. Instead, he used them as a foil to develop his own poetic agenda. As von Ammon put it: 'insgesamt geht es ihm gar nicht so sehr um die "Skulpturen" selbst.'[168]

Notably, this was not what Einstein did. In *Südseeplastiken*, his cautious remark was followed by detailed explanations that reveal quite a bit about the sculptures' cultural context. As Manuel Maldonado Alemán argued with regards to *Negerplastik*, Einstein's ostentatious lack of knowledge must be seen as a strategy to break away from the dominant racist and colonial discourses of his time.[169] In order to make it possible for the sculptures to be appreciated as works of art in their own right, Einstein had to detach them from a cultural context that would limit them to a contemporary racist discourse. Even if by doing so he integrated them into a European discourse that ignored their original purpose, it was a discourse that was still concerned with their status as art.

In contrast, Kling removed them from their cultural context in order to be able to promote his own poetic agenda, with the difference that he wrote his essay in the 1990s and not in the 1920s. At best, Kling's approach in 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien' was uninformed. At worst, it was disingenuous. Contrary to Kling's suggestion, European narratives of the 'fatal impact' of colonialism do not reveal colonial power relations – they obscure them. Instead of enabling a complex understanding of colonialism with all its contradictions and acknowledging the perspectives and agencies of the colonised within the colonial setting, these simplified tropes reproduce colonial hierarchies and silence the colonised voices once again.[170] Again, it is an idealised primitivism that presupposes the

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[168] Frieder von Ammon, 'Von Epenchefs und Studienabbrechern', p. 51.
[169] Manuel Maldonado Alemán, 'Die Konstruktion des Anderen', p. 184.
[170] See Nicholas Thomas, 'Partial Texts: Representation, Colonialism, and Agency in Pacific History' in idem, *In Oceania. Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 23-49: 44

existence of a wholesome, original and homogenous native culture prior to European contact and discredits all continuing indigenous practices as contaminated.[171]

That Kling was not really interested in the sculpture's cultural context also becomes apparent in the way that he used Douglas L. Oliver's *Native Cultures of the Pacific Islands* (1989). The book is an abridged version of a more comprehensive work by Oliver, *Oceania: The Native Cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands* (1989), which Kling did not consult. A comparison with Oliver's book reveals that Kling misrepresented it in several ways. For instance, Kling explained how the most eloquent members of the Iatmul communities that live alongside the river Sepik were called "man with talk".[172] But in fact, Oliver was writing about the Duna people that live in the mountain regions of eastern New Guinea and not the Iatmul.[173] There is also no mention in Oliver's book of 'holzgeschnitzte, kniehohe Rednerpulte' that the Iatmul used to display their oral skills according to Kling. He either took this detail from another source or – not entirely unlikely – he made it up, just as he omitted Oliver's final conclusion: 'In fact, there were only a few societies where oratorical eloquence itself was a highly respected skill.'[174] The concealment of this conclusion is crucial, because Kling's entire essay relies on the alleged significance of eloquence among the indigenous communities of Papua New Guinea. Von Ammon pointed out how Kling developed his poetic programme by establishing

> eine Analogie zwischen den Ritualen der Iatmul und seiner eigener Performance-Praxis […], die auf diese Weise anthropologisch legitimiert wird und aufgrund der so viel größeren kulturellen Relevanz der Dichtung in Neuguinea auch eine nachgerade utopische Dimension erhält.[175]

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171 Ibid., pp. 38, 44.
172 Thomas Kling, 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien', p. 68.
173 Douglas L. Oliver, *Native Cultures of the Pacific Islands* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), p. 142.
174 Ibid.
175 Frieder von Ammon, 'Von Epenchefs und Studienabbrechern', p. 52.

Kling's poetic programme collapses with the insight that eloquence (much less the Western concept of poetry) was generally not a highly respected skill among the Papuans.

It should become clear now that the Papua New Guinea that Kling described in 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien' is a fiction. His poetic programme did not rely on anthropological fact but on phantasy. The Papua New Guinea he created in his essay is a myth in Roland Barthes's sense, a type of speech that 'is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message'.[176] 'Skulpturen aus Ozeanien' establishes a discourse that staged credibility with rhetorical means. Kling was neither interested in indigenous artwork from the South Pacific nor in their creators nor in the impact that colonialism had on their lives. Instead, he created an exotic myth of Papua New Guinea as a foil for his own poetic agenda. By doing so, he repeated an ethnocentric variant of the 'primitive' that is deeply rooted in colonialism and modernism, as the following close reading of the poem 'Larven' will confirm.

The poem consists of eight couplets in free verse without a fixed rhyme scheme. The first couplet creates the setting: '1913 sind auf Papua-Neuguinea die ströme und | gebirge längst nach den Hohenzollern benannt' (line 1-2). It situates the reader in time – 1913 – and place – Papua New Guinea – and gives context – the reign of the Hohenzollern dynasty. These key words are capitalised in order to give them more emphasis. Thus, we immediately know that the poem discusses German colonial rule in Papua New Guinea before the First World War. The first couplet presents a consequence of this rule: all rivers and mountains of Papua New Guinea are named after the Hohenzollern rulers. Of course, this is as much a consequence of colonial rule as a symbol for it. Naming is claiming, and replacing the indigenous names with German ones reinforced colonial hierarchies. Thus,

[176] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Jonathan Cape (London: Random House, 2000), p. 109.

the reality of colonialism that is presented here is based on clear dichotomies between the colonisers and the colonised, between the active rulers and the passive colonial subjects.

After this short introduction, the actual poem begins, which is indicated by a change to an irregular iambic metre. The following five couplets establish the image of Papua New Guinea and Berlin as heads: 'der kopf der fremde' (line 3) is contrasted with 'berlin – | die zunge' (line 9-10). Kling used similar imagery in other poems dealing with different instances of colonisation, like the repression of the Etruscans by the Romans from the late 4th century BC onwards in 'ruma. etruskisches alphabet' and Francisco Pizarro's violent conquest of today's Peru in the 16th century in 'signaturen' (both in *morsch*, 1996).[177] In these poems, Kling's interest in colonisation seemed to be grounded in the cultural contact following expansion. Being a poet, he adopted a cultural perspective on colonisation with a particular focus on language contact. But in primarily regarding colonisation as a motor of cultural change, Kling risked flattening out all historical and cultural differences between various instances of colonisation, which could encompass peaceful cohabitation as well as violent conquest. Any similarities between Roman expansion, Spanish *conquista* and German imperialism are likely to be of such a general nature that a comparison between them will not offer any useful insight, but only obscure their specific character and historical context.

Indeed, Kling presented a very undifferentiated image of the relationship between the German empire and Papua New Guinea in 'Larven'. He seemed to want to acknowledge the colonies' cultural contribution by presenting Berlin as 'der mund […] der schmeckt' (line 5) and Papua New Guinea as 'der kopf […] der liefert' (line 3). However, introducing Berlin as the recipient and Papua New Guinea as the supplier of resources does not subvert colonial hierarchies but reinforces them. According to the poem's

[177] See Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, pp. 337-8, 342-3.

imagery, the metropole consumed while the colony supplied. This is not so much a re-reading of colonial economy as its illustration. Berlin is presented as the isle of the dead that was stirred up by a fresh wind from the South Pacific. The driving iambic metre lends an adventurous dynamic to this setting. The sentence 'die […] segel knattern frisch ein wind aus übersee' could be taken from a colonial adventure novel telling stories of 'discoveries' in the 'New World'. The repeated shift to language contact – in fact we are dealing with 'gaumensegel' – does not alter the conqueror-like attitude of this setting.

The colonial hierarchy seems to be subverted in the last two couplets, indicated by a sudden change from an iambic to a dactylic metre: 'südfrüchte fallen | der stadt aus dem mund' (line 12-13). Suddenly, Berlin seems to be overwhelmed by the colony's otherness: 'die neue zunge [ist] so | gesprächig. anders irgendwie' (line 13-14). The poem claims that 'es sprechen alle plötzlich | wie die papuas' (line 14-15). This sentence seems puzzling in the context of this poem. Again, it seems that Kling wanted to emphasise the colonies' cultural impact on Berlin. But of course, no one in Berlin spoke like the Papuans in 1913.

This sentence only makes sense if it is read as a reference to modernist primitivism. After all, Hugo Ball – who was, according to Kling 'zeitgenössisch inspiriert von afrikanisch-ozeanischen Kulturen' (BO, 19) – once explained that his idea of Dadaism was 'die absolute Negerei'.[178] As Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek has pointed out, stereotypical ideas of African and Pacific cultures were central in Dadaist performances.[179] Read in this context, the poem's last sentence appears in a different light: 'der mund als übersee, als schein. | so strömt der sepik mündet in den rhein.' (line 15-16). It does not make sense to assume that Kling wanted to draw a connection between himself and Papuan culture by likening the Papuan Sepik to his native Rhine. Kling was obviously not a spokesperson for

[178] Hugo Ball in a letter to August Hoffmann on 1 October 1916 in *Briefe 1911-1927*, ed. by Annemarie Schütt-Hennings (Einsiedeln: Benzinger, 1957), p. 66.

[179] See also Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek, 'Primitivismus. Literarische "Anti-Kunst" im Spannungsfeld von Provokation und Diskriminierung', p. 315.

the Papuans. Instead, he referred to the modernist tradition of primitivism that he himself followed.[180] Then as now, Papua New Guinea was presented as the exotic other whose culture could be consumed and imagined for so-called 'inspiration'. The fact that Kling exposed the modernist imagination of 'übersee' as a 'schein' in the final line of the poem does not undo the distorted myth of Papua New Guinea that he created up to that point. In using Papua New Guinea as a foil for his imagination, Kling followed the same colonialist patterns that had already informed modernist primitivism.

This is aggravated by the fact that Kling concealed circumstances that might have subverted the colonial dichotomy of active German rulers and passive Papuan colonial subjects. The German names that are presented as an unambiguous symbol of colonial rule in the poem's first couplet are one example. Historian Hermann J. Hiery has given the following description of colonial naming practices in German New Guinea:

> Es gibt klare Anzeichen dafür, daß in der zweiten Hälfte des letzten Jahrhunderts der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft eine Änderung in der prinzipiellen Haltung gegenüber dem Vorrang und dem Recht der Melanesier auf ihre Heimat eintrat. […] Seit 1907 wurden auf Anregung des Kommandos des Vermessungsschiffes "Planet" die eingeführten Kolonialnamen im Schutzgebiet wieder abgeschafft und durch einheimische Namen und Begriffe ersetzt. Die europäischen Namen sollten in erster Zeit noch in Klammern hinzugefügt werden, später aber ganz verschwinden. Im Bereich des deutschen Melanesien wimmelte es von französischen, englischen und deutschen Namen, mit denen sich die europäischen Entdecker verewigen wollten. Ihnen ging es jetzt an den Kragen. Die Besatzungen der Vermessungsschiffe und die Bezirksamtsmänner und Stationsleiter machten sich fast einen Sport daraus, den zutreffenden und originärsten "Eingeborenennamen" zu ermitteln. In Mikronesien, wo schon zu Beginn der deutschen Kolonialtätigkeit die europäischen Namen in einheimische umgewandelt worden waren, vertieften sich die deutschen Beamten in akademische Auseinandersetzungen um die "richtige" Aussprache und Schreibweise der einheimischen Namen. Teilweise gab es wütende

[180] The poem's title – 'Larven' – also refers to this tradition. See Helmut Lethen, 'Masken der Authentizität. Der Diskurs des "Primitivismus" in Manifesten der Avantgarde' in Hubert van den Berg and Ralf Grüttemeier (eds.), *Manifeste: Intentionalität* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 227-58.

> Auseinandersetzungen darum, ob es nun Palau oder besser "Pelau" oder gar "Bälau" heißen müßte […][181]

The reality of colonial naming practices presents a more ambivalent picture of colonial rule. Instead of confirming their authority, the German officials' efforts to impose their conceptual framework on the native geography appear ridiculous in Hiery's account. One might even wonder if colonial rule was not occasionally subverted during this undertaking:

> Die Suche nach einer melanesischen Identität für Neupommern verlief ebenso im Sande wie die nach einer einheimischen Bezeichnung für Neumecklenburg. Bereits 1885 hatte die Neu-Guinea-Compagnie "Birara" als lokalen Terminus für Neupommern und "Tombara" als indigenen Namen Neumecklenburgs zur amtlichen Übernahme vorgeschlagen. Wilhelm I. hatte die neuen, "traditionellen" Benennungen bereits genehmigt, als sich herausstellte, daß man in beiden Fällen nur einem der üblichen Sprachmißverständnisse aufgesessen war. Denn als man den Einwohnern der Gazellehalbinsel über das Meer nach Norden zeigte und jene mit "Tombara" antworteten, meinten sie nicht die Insel im Norden (Neumecklenburg), sondern den Nordwestmonsun, der aus jener Richtung kam. Und "Birara" war keine einheimische Bezeichnung für Neupommern, sondern eine rein lokale Verballhornung des englischen "New Britain".[182]

But Kling was not interested in painting a more ambiguous picture of colonial hierarchies, since denying the Papuans history and agency was essential for his poetic project.

This also becomes clear in the details given about colonial economy. The poem mentions two main export goods from Papua New Guinea by referring to 'der mund der fremdes neues schmeckt | wie kopra oder kasuar' (line 5-6). While the focus in these lines seems to be on language contact, more substantial information about the colonial economy could have painted a more diverse picture. Indeed, cassowary birds were not hunted for their meat but for their feathers, which were the latest craze on women's hats in the German empire at the turn of the century and the main export good from German New

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[181] Hermann J. Hiery, *Das Deutsche Reich in der Südsee 1900-1920. Eine Annäherung an die Erfahrung verschiedener Kulturen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), p. 228.

[182] Ibid., p. 230.

Guinea to the German metropole besides copra.[183] Cassowaries and birds-of-paradise had already been hunted by the Papuans to decorate their own headdresses before, but the new demand for exotic feathers grew so much that early animal rights activists soon became alarmed. In Berlin, the fashion created deep rifts within the growing women's movement, which raised concerns that extravagant headdresses resembling native attire would be unhelpful in accomplishing women's right to vote. Finally, German emperor Wilhelm II enforced a ban on fowling in 1913 – and thus put an end to one of the earliest public relations disasters in a growing globalised consumer society.[184] Thus, historical facts could have helped to engage with German colonialism in more complex ways that revealed various links with Kling's poetry in the 1980s (see part II).

Kling also could have investigated the origins of the sculptures, which were of course not produced for the European art market, but whose history is deeply entangled with that of colonialism.[185] As Andrew Zimmermann has explained, indigenous objects in European collections and museum were 'purchased, received as gifts, or taken as booty in the everyday course of colonial rule'.[186] Details are known about the origin of at least some of the sculptures depicted alongside Kling's essay.[187] One *nalik* figure was sold to the Museum of Ethnography in Leipzig in 1911 by Carl Nauer, an Allgäu native who

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[183] See Michael Apel (ed.), *Natur- und Kulturgeschichte der Paradiesvögel* (Munich: Museum Mensch und Natur, 2011); Bernhard Gißibl, 'Paradiesvögel: Kolonialer Naturschutz und die Mode der deutschen Frau am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts' in Johannes Paulmann et al. (eds.), *Ritual – Macht – Natur. Europäisch-ozeanische Beziehungswelten in der Neuzeit* (Bremen: Überseemuseum Bremen, 2005), pp. 131-54.

[184] Hermann J. Hiery, *Das Deutsche Reich in der Südsee*, p. 65.

[185] See Rainer Buschmann, 'Colonizing Anthropology: Albert Hahl and the Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea' in H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl (eds.), *Worldly Provincialism*, pp. 230-55; Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*, pp. 149-171.

[186] Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany*, p. 150.

[187] See Oliver Wick and Antje Denner (eds.), *bildgewaltig. Afrika, Ozeanien und die Moderne* (Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2009).

navigated the South Pacific as a captain on-board the 'Sumatra' for North German Lloyd, until the First World War put a temporary halt to cruise trips in the region.[188]

Not only captain Carl Nauer served as a soldier in the First World War, but also Carl Einstein, and various Pacific islanders who defended German New Guinea against the invasion of the Australian army.[189] Einstein went on to publish another book on African sculpture after the war.[190] This time, he was able to present new insights about the sculptures' cultural context – insights he had gained during his appointment at the colonial department of the general government in German-occupied Brussels.[191] But instead of making use of these links, Kling's project was invested in an idealised image of the avant-garde that did not recognise its inherent contradictions. Just as he repeated narratives of the First World War without querying their inherent biases, he reproduced avant-gardist primitivism without questioning its rootedness in the colonial mind-set. It is a truism that our awareness is always limited by the cultural horizon of our times. But Kling's uncritical re-enactment of the avant-garde put him far behind the cultural horizon of his time, behind that indeed of Carl Einstein on whose work he purported to draw.

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[188] See Andrea Müller, 'Der Lloyd-Kapitän Karl Nauer als Sammler in der Südsee für das Überseemuseum', *Arbeiterbewegung und Sozialgeschichte: Zeitschrift für die Regionalgeschichte Bremens im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* 10 (2002), 32-56.

[189] Hermann J. Hiery, *The Neglected War* (see chapter 13, footnote 120), p. 33.

[190] Carl Einstein, *Afrikanische Plastik* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1921).

[191] See Sibylle Penkert, *Carl Einstein. Beiträge zu einer Monographie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), p. 78.

Conclusion

Historical narratives not only express present concerns, they also determine how we imagine our future. Together they build the backdrop of collective experience and knowledge that can either broaden or limit our thoughts and actions. Thus, there lies responsibility in the historical narratives we choose to tell. With regards to Thomas Kling, who considered himself not only a poet but also a historian, the question which version of the past he created in his poetry is not without consequences.[1] Building extensively on archival material and historical sources, this dissertation has contextualised and historicised both Kling's self-understanding and some common interpretations of his work, thus allowing for new aspects of his poetic project to appear. In particular, it has become clear how Kling's poetry resonated with the cultural climate in various phases of the late Bonn Republic. Peer Trilcke has already questioned whether Thomas Kling's common association with the avant-garde is indeed useful.[2] This dissertation has demonstrated that it is revealing to see Kling not simply in opposition to (supposedly non-avant-gardist) tendencies in West German poetry of the 1970s like 'Neue Subjektivität' and 'Ökolyrik', but in exchange with them. While the poetic pedigree that Kling himself created at the beginning of his career helped him to establish an audience and made him legible and audible to the public, a focus on topical continuities can explain why his poetry appealed to his readers in the way it did. The achievement of Kling's poetry in the 1980s was to develop a new poetic language to express the shared mind-set of his generation, a language that combined lyrical subjectivity and political concern with a highly sophisticated poetic style, thus going beyond the ideological discourse of his time and overcoming a limited

1 Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, p. 505.
2 Ibid., p. 35.

concept of political poetry. Kling's poems in the 1980s not only found new ways to express present concerns – ranging from environmental issues to animal rights – , but they also refashioned lyrical subjectivity in a new poetic style, thus ridding themselves of the narrow concept of authenticity imposed by the emotional style of the alternative scene in the 1970s. Archival records that attest how Kling revised some poems over a considerable period of time and returned to certain themes after several years allowed us to track the development of his distinctive poetic voice. If in the 1970s authenticity meant introspection and self-improvement, Kling's poetry in the 1980s did something new. While lyrical subjectivity in need of authentic experience and a meaningful connection to the world was not erased in his poems, it was presented in a complex poetic style which was inspired by film just as much as by his role models in Vienna, above all Friederike Mayröcker and Joe Berger. In his early poetry, Kling did not get rid of the quest of authenticity so much as redefine what authenticity could mean. By considering poetry as an emotional practice and situating Kling within changing emotional styles in West Germany after the Second World War, this dissertation offered new perspectives beyond the contrived oppositions in the history of West German poetry after the Second World War that still determine our understanding of poetry until the present day.

Instead of presenting simple explanations, Kling's poetry in the 1980s created far-reaching networks of cultural and historical references in which the readers themselves needed to navigate and create meaning. These poems engaged the reader both on a sensory level, through their soundscape and visual qualities, and on an intellectual level, through their cultural references and foregrounding effects. The montage technique that Kling applied in poems like 'obst und gemüse-marterl' revealed the contradictions of our modern world instead of trying to conceal and resolve them. Thus, he was able to show the complexity of our confusing present without masking its inherent inconsistencies. In this

context, punk as a movement that re-appropriated, subverted and re-defined conventional meaning and presented authenticity as fundamentally unstable proved inspirational. West German punk rejected 'institutionalized, emotionalized, and moralizing historical narratives'[3] that went along the 'collective, accepted, sociopolitical fault lines'.[4] For a generation of young West Germans dissatisfied with the present state, punk became a powerful tool for self-expression. Rather than situating punk within a history of the avant-garde, Kling's poems 'ratinger hof, zb 1 & 2' investigated punk as a topical practice and demonstrated how all practices, even countercultural ones like punk, take place within the horizon of a shared pool of cultural knowledge. As a result, the past could materialise unexpectedly in seemingly trivial objects like punk jump boots. While the myriad ways in which the past informed the present were not entirely available to its conscious understanding, the poem seemed aware of these limitations as it tried to investigate them.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, punk seemed to offer a new set of practices and symbols that could potentially open up more meaningful ways of connecting both to oneself and others and to a shared German past. Kling's early performances provoked a new engagement with the German past in their re-appropriation of a tabooed, emotive regime of speech in particular. His opposition to monotonous reading practices though emotive speech and to sober introspection with extrovert provocation marked a significant change in the history of poetic performance in West Germany after the Second World War. Hence, his early performances exposed social conventions as the result of cultural and historical processes and made them accessible for reconsideration and change. As performances like 'Restaurant der 7 Sinne' demonstrated, this could also happen in a playful and sensual collective setting. But as his project matured, Kling seemed

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3 Melanie Eis and Fabian Eckert, '*Holocaust*, West German Memory Culture and Punk's Intervention into the Everyday', p. 116.

4 Cyrus M. Shahan, *Punk Rock and German Crisis*, pp. 5, 6.

increasingly oblivious to the ways in which the cognitive framework underlying prevailing narratives of the past limited his own understanding.

Kling's earlier approaches stand in stark contrast to the way in which he reconfigured the exchange with the past in his later poetry, above all in the series 'Der Erste Weltkrieg', which, as Peer Trilcke has also attested, presented a more conservative and established way of accessing the past that was to a significant extent determined by modernist nostalgia.[5] In contrast to the model presented in 'ratinger hof, zb 2', history no longer resulted from an ever-shifting historical and cultural framework, but became a fixed entity, whose original completeness could only be partially reconstructed. The poet was now presented as a modern 'poeta vates' figure, an inspired seer with a privileged access to history. Thus, Kling abandoned earlier provocative performance strategies in favour of more established roles and returned to a more conventional concept of authenticity. While Kling's poetry and performances in the 1980s presented authenticity as something unstable that could be created and reinvented, in 'Der Erste Weltkrieg' we find instead the idea of a pre-existing authenticity that has been lost and needs to be regained. Thus, the model of historical engagement in Kling's later poetry appears considerably more conservative and rigid in comparison with the flexible and collective model expressed in his earlier poems.

As he developed his larger historical project that revolved around the First World War and the avant-garde in particular, Kling reproduced common historical narratives without questioning their rootedness in the dark side of European modernity – imperialism, racism and sexism. As a result, his poetry echoed their biases. As it turned out, Kling's poetic project was too heavily invested in an idealised image of European modernity and the avant-garde in order to recognise its inherent contradictions. Thus, the

[5] Peer Trilcke, *Historisches Rauschen*, pp. 506-7, 544.

coherence of his project came at the price of a partial amnesia, which erased memories of German colonialism and its continuities with the First World War and the Holocaust.

By questioning some of the traditional fault lines of research on Thomas Kling and West German poetry after 1945, this dissertation intended to make room for new approaches and re-evaluations of Kling's work in the future. A lot of work remains to be done in terms of the continuities between Kling's early and late poetry and its relationship with film. Thus, the new edition that is currently prepared by Frieder von Ammon and Marcel Beyer will prove indispensable. Reading Kling is still worthwhile, as his poetry can help us to understand which parts of our shared past are useful and which are not.

In the highly contested debate on the role of subjectivity in modern poetry, the question as to what poetry does with those who read and write it still requires further scrutiny. Kling's poetry found different answers at different times and expressed subjectivity in different ways, some of which seemed more promising than others. While contemporary literature attests to the on-going significance of subjectivity as a category for experience and knowledge, it also indicates that subjectivity must not necessarily be straightforward and simple.[6] On the contrary, it can be complex, inconsistent, and even contradictory, as demonstrated in a poem by Özlem Özgül Dündar, who belongs to a new generation of German poets. 'wo es mich bricht' seems to deconstruct dualistic concepts of subjectivity and instead points towards the possibility of being both, or neither:

> wenn ich n gehöre zu dem e
> inen u n gehöre zu dem and
> eren […] [7]

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6 See Heribert Tommek and Christian Steltz (eds.), *Vom Ich erzählen. Identitätsnarrative in der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016).

7 Yevgeniy Breyger, Özlem Özgül Dündar, Alexander Kappe, Ronya Othmann, Sibylla Vričić Hausmann, Saskia Warzecha (eds.), *Ansicht der leuchtenden Wurzeln von unten.* (Leipzig: poetenladen, 2017), p. 67.

Such a concept might be a challenge, but it need not be a weakness. After all, the 'dissonance between feelings and thoughts is just the kind of clash of practices that can generate personal, social, and historical change'.[8] In the light of our fraught history in the 20th century, there is a need for new historical narratives that allow for inconsistencies, examine cognitive frameworks for their biases and give up apparent certainties in favour of new possibilities and a general openness.

[8] Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice', p. 208.

Appendix

a) Thomas Kling's publications in *Zwiebelzwerg* (1977-81)

1. Poems

ISSUE	YEAR	TITLE	PAGE
2	1977	am frühen morgen	38
4	1978	schlagworte	4
		fortschritt	5
		autopsie	6
		gebärden des windes / gräsergestik	7
6	1979	kein anschluß	21
		naturereignis 3	22
		siebenunddreißig grad	23
		ankunft	24
8	1979	windstille	65
		Theseus	65
		frevel	66
		fußgängerpassagen	66
10	1980	reisenotizen	9-12
		1 bemerkung über Genua	9
		2 überfahrt	9
		3 altstadt, Palermo	10
		4 altstadt, Palermo	10
		5 altstadt, Palermo	10
		6 katakomben des kapuzinerkonvents, Palermo	11
		7 tal der tempel, agrigento	12
		8 rückfahrt	12
		9 landkreis Mettmann	12
Jubelzwerg	1981	Schiffsschraube	26
		Rovaniemi	27
		Leeres Deck	28

2. Essays

ISSUE	YEAR	TITLE	PAGE
1	1977	Dada. Die Dada-Bewegung in Berlin.	43-4
3	1978	Klaus Kinski. Ich treibs so wild in deinem Erdbeermund.	39
5	1978	Federico Garcia Lorca. Zigeunerromanzen.	67-9
7	1979	Dada-Drummer Huelsenbeck	60-2
8	1979	Salvadore Quasimodo – Ein zugänglicher Hermetiker	36-7
9	1980	Die Schlange der Liebe – Zigeunerpoesie	29-31

b) Poems in *der zustand vor dem untergang* (1977)

POEM	TITLE	PAGE
1	der zustand vor dem untergang	5
	photograph	7
2	jonas	9
3	die entjungferte heilige	11
4	epitaph für milde frische	13
5	täglich eine gute tat	15
6	winter bei uns	17
7	ballade vom kaiser rotbart	19
8	die versuchung des hl. antonius	21
	photograph	23
9	tolle hunde	25
10	friedhofsblumen	27
11	anatomie	29
12	opus octopus	31
13	herbst	33
14	brombeeren	35
	photograph	37
15	märchen	39
16	nachts auf dem friedhof	41
17	invasion	43
	photograph	45
18	unheil	47
19	das lied der nachtigall	49
20	an den jungen leidenden	51
21	archäologie	53
22	unfallbericht	55

POEM	TITLE	PAGE
23	das verhalten des blitzes	57
24	das märchen vom robbenpelz	59
25	wald-idyll. an Alfred Lichtenstein	61
26	das sind nächte	63
27	begebenheit aus dem unterholz	65
28	mittag	67
29	daktaris einhorn	69
30	ölpest	71
31	ende märz im tessin	73
	von einer reise	
	photograph	77
32	loch ness	79
	photograph	81
33	august in schottland	83
34	langustenfang	85
35	schottisches meer	87

c) Transcript of ‘ölpest’ (1977)

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(ZU, 71)

d) Archival records for ‘ölpest’ at Thomas-Kling-Archiv, Neuss (1976-79)

‘ölpest (2)’. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.2294

ölpest: 1 typescript, final version, 1 page, 24 December 1976, Hilden

A: ölpest (2), 1 typescript, 1 page, 24 January 1978, Cologne

B: ölpest (2), 1 typescript, 1 page, 26 January 1978, Cologne/Hilden

C: ölpest (2), 1 typescript, 1 page, 26 January 1978, Cologne

D: ölpest (3), 1 handwritten manuscript, 1 page, 22 February 1978

E: ölpest (3), 1 typescript with handwritten comments, 1 page, 22 February 1978 / 11 April 1978, Cologne/Hilden

‘ölpest 2’. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.2282

A: ölpest 2, 1 typescript, 1 page, 4 September – 17 November 1978, Hilden

B: ölpest 2, 1 typescript with handwritten comments, 1 page, 4 September – 16 November 1978, Hilden

C: ölpest 2, 1 typescript with handwritten comments, 1 page, undated

D: ölpest 2, 1 typescript, undated

‘pest’. Object number HHI.2008.D.KLING.2319

A: ölpest, 1 handwritten manuscript, 1 page, 9 June 1979, Hilden

B: ölpest, 1 typescript with handwritten comments, 1 page, 9 June 1979, Hilden

C: ölpest, 1 typescript with handwritten comments, 1 page, 9 / 12 June 1979, Hilden

D: pest, 1 typescript with handwritten comments, 1 page, 9 / 12 June 1979, Hilden

E: pest, 1 typescript, 2 pages, 9 / 12 June 1979, Hilden

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e) Transcript of ‘öl’ (1986)

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(*Heimat und Geschwindigkeit*, ed. by Wolfgang Schiffer, Munich 1986, p. 93)

f) Transcript of ‘frevel’ (1979)

The text originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright.

(*Zwiebelzwerg* 8 (1979), no page number)

g) Thomas Kling's film reviews for *Rheinische Post* (1984-85)

ISSUE	DATE	AUTHOR	ARTICLE	FILM	ORIGINAL TITLE	DIRECTOR	COUNTRY	RELEASE (West Germany)
60	10 March 1984	T.K.	Strand-Klamauk. "Eis am Stiel" 5. Teil	Eis am Stiel 5 – Die große Liebe	Roman Za'ir	Dan Wolman	Israel, West Germany	1984
72	24 March 1984	THOMAS KLING	Massaker. "The Executor"	Der Vollstrecker	The Executor (Il Giustiziere della Strada)	Jules Harrison (Giuliano Carnimeo)	Italy	1984
90	14 April 1984	THOMAS KLING	Frau Dr. Mabuses Reich. "Dorian Gray im Spiegel der Boulevardpresse"	Dorian Gray im Spiegel der Boulevardpresse	-	Ulrike Ottinger	West Germany	1984
101	30 April 1984	T.K.	Kalter Killer. College-Girl "Angel"	Angel	Angel	Robert V. O'Neil	USA	1984
110	11 May 1984	THOMAS KLING	Wertvolles Instrument des Filminstituts. Der Exot unter den Düsseldorfer Orgeln	-	-		-	-
111	12 May 1984	tk	Doofe Römer. "Sieben glorreiche Gladiatoren"	Die sieben glorreichen Gladiatoren	I sette magnifici gladiatori	Bruno Mattei	Italy	1984
126	30 May 1984	tk	Ein Vater fährt Amok. James Garner rettet seinen Boy im Actionfilm "Der Tank"	Der Tank	Tank	Marvin J. Chomsky	USA	1984
139	16 June 1984	THOMAS KLING	Teuflische Ränke. Howard Zieffs Mords-Komödie "Bitte nicht heute nacht"	Bitte nicht heute nacht	Unfaithfully Yours	Howard Zieff	USA	1984
140	18 June 1984	tk	Simple Tricks. "Space Raider"	Space Raiders - Weltraumpiraten	Spaice Raiders	Howard Cohen	USA	1984
152	3 July 1984	tk	Wüste Jagd. "Todes-Trip Los Angeles"	Spree - Rocker der Wüste	Survival Run	Larry Spiegel	USA / Mexico	1979
156	7 July 1984	THOMAS KLING	Die tägliche Groteske. Die Aussteige-Kömodie "Kassensturz" von Rolf Silber aus Frankfurt	Kassensturz	-	Rolf Silber	West Germany	1984
280	1 December 1984	tk	Popper-Klamauk. "Ein irres Feeling"	Ein irres Feeling	-	Nokolai Müllerschön	West Germany	1984
70	23 March 1985	THOMAS KLING	Applaus, Applaus! "Die Muppets erobern Manhattan"	Die Muppets erobern Manhattan	The Muppets take Manhattan	Frank Oz	USA	1985
76	30 March 1985	THOMAS KLING	Zynische Raffer. "Das Condor Komplott"	Das Condor Komplott	Green Ice	Ernest Day	UK	1985

ISSUE	DATE	AUTHOR	ARTICLE	FILM	ORIGINAL TITLE	DIRECTOR	COUNTRY	RELEASE (West Germany)
120	25 May 1985	THOMAS KLING	Abfall des Lebens. “Barocco” mit Isabelle Adjani und Gérard Depardieu	Barocco	Barocco	André Téchiné	France	1983
125	1 June 1985	THOMAS KLING	Spannender, Star-gekrönter Thriller. “Das nackte Gesicht” mit Steiger	Das nackte Gesicht	The Naked Face	Bryan Forbes	USA	1985
136	15 June 1985	tk	Depperte Detektive. “...Clever und Smart”	Die verrückten Abenteuer von Clever & Smart	El amario del tiempo	Rafael Vara	Spain	1985
142	24 June 1985	tk	Ein Räuberpistölchen. “Ratsy” aus Spanien	Ratsy	La patria del rata	Francisco Lara Polop	Spain	1985
147	29 June 1985	THOMAS KLING	Das Auge bricht. Eckard Schmidts Vernissagen-Horror “Loft”	Loft - Die neue Saat der Gewalt	-	Eckard Schmidt	West Germany	1985
153	6 July 1985	tk	David in blond. Chuck Norris, “Action forever”	Breaker! Breaker! Voll in Action	Breaker! Breaker!	Don Hulette	USA	1981
159	12 July 1985	tk	Gute Regie-Leistung. Burt Reynolds spielte mit und drehte “Sie nannten ihn Stick” in Miami	Sie nannten ihn Stick	Stick	Burt Reynolds	USA	1985
159	12 July 1985	THOMAS KLING	Die Macht der Ami-Uniform. Der deutsche Debutfilm “Kolp” erregte schon in Cannes Aufsehen.	Kolp	-	Roland Suso Richter	West Germany	1985
165	20 July 1985	THOMAS KLING	Abenteuerspielplatz Berlin. Aus USA: “Gotcha - Ein irrer Trip” mit Klaus Löwitsch	Gotcha - ein irrer Trip	Gotcha!	Jeff Kanew	USA	1985
171	27 July 1985	THOMAS KLING	Unerbittliche Kalauer. “Cara(b)binieri...” aus Italien	Carabinieri - ab in die Polizeischule	I carabbinieri	Franscesco Massaro	Italy	1985
177	3 August 1985	THOMAS KLING	Tanz des Drachen	Der Tanz des Drachen	The Last Dragon	Michael Schultz	USA	1985
194	23 August 1985	tk	Klischees. “Love-Fighters”	Love-Fighters - Tuff Turf	Tuff Turf	Fritz Kiersch	USA	1985

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