

ALTERNATE HISTORY – ALTERNATE MEMORY:  
COUNTERFACTUAL LITERATURE IN THE CONTEXT  
OF GERMAN NORMALIZATION

by

GUIDO SCHENKEL

M.A., Freie Universität Berlin, 2006

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(German Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2012

© Guido Schenkel, 2012

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines a variety of Alternate Histories of the Third Reich from the perspective of memory theory. The term ‘Alternate History’ describes a genre of literature that presents fictional accounts of historical developments which deviate from the known course of history. These *allohistorical* narratives are inherently presentist, meaning that their central question of “What If?” can harness the repertoire of collective memory in order to act as both a reflection of and a commentary on contemporary social and political conditions. Moreover, Alternate Histories can act as a form of *counter-memory* insofar as the counterfactual mode can be used to highlight marginalized historical events. This study investigates a specific manifestation of this process. Contrasted with American and British examples, the primary focus is the analysis of the discursive functions of German-language counterfactual literature in the context of German normalization. The category of *normalization* connects a variety of commemorative trends in postwar Germany aimed at overcoming the legacy of National Socialism and re-formulating a positive German national identity. The central hypothesis is that Alternate Histories can perform a unique task in this particular discursive setting. In the context of German normalization, counterfactual stories of the history of the Third Reich are capable of functioning as *alternate memories*, meaning that they effectively *replace* the memory of real events with fantasies that are better suited to serve as exculpatory narratives for the German collective.

To develop the theoretical framework for this new category, the dissertation delineates and contrasts pertinent theories of both collective memory and counter-memory and harnesses the scholarly findings of these fields to expand existing critical understandings of the genre of Alternate History. The combination of this sociological approach with the methodology of literary studies is applied in a close reading to an exemplary selection of Alternate Histories, grouped into three themes which correspond closely to prominent narratives of German collective memory: The universalization of National Socialism, the motif of the ‘good German,’ and the myth of German victimization. This approach demonstrates in detail the narrative strategies that constitute alternate memory in the context of German normalization.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Abstract.....  | ii  |
| Table of Contents .....  | iii |
| Acknowledgements .....   | iv  |
| Dedication.....  | v   |
| 1. Introduction.....   | 1   |
| 2. Alternate Histories: Memory, Counter-Memory, Alternate Memory ..... | 8   |
| 2.1 Alternative Historiographies .....                                 | 9   |
| 2.2 Counterfactual Nazis .....   | 19  |
| 2.3 Collective Memory and National Identity .....                      | 28  |
| 2.4 From Counter-Memory to Alternate Memory .....                      | 37  |
| 2.5 Alternate Memory and German Normalization .....                    | 46  |
| 3. It Could Happen ... Anyway: Universalizing Nazism .....             | 57  |
| 3.1 <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> .....                            | 58  |
| 3.2 <i>Samuel Hitler</i> .....   | 64  |
| 3.3 <i>Making History</i> .....  | 81  |
| 3.4 <i>Ausflug</i> .....   | 88  |
| 3.5 <i>Requiem für einen Stümper</i> .....                             | 96  |
| 4. Counterfactual Heroes: The ‘Good German’ .....                      | 106 |
| 4.1 <i>Fatherland</i> .....  | 108 |
| 4.2 <i>Alles bleibt anders</i> .....                                   | 113 |
| 4.3 <i>Der 21. Juli</i> .....  | 124 |
| 5. Alternate Holocausts: Victimizing the Perpetrators.....             | 137 |
| 5.1 <i>Die Stimmen der Nacht</i> .....                                 | 144 |
| 5.2 <i>Morbus Kitahara</i> .....                                       | 159 |
| 5.3 <i>Im Jahre Ragnarök</i> .....                                     | 174 |
| 6. Conclusions.....  | 182 |
| Works Cited .....  | 185 |

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My sincere thanks go first and foremost to the members of my supervisory committee. My supervisor, Dr. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, has been a major inspiration for this project from the very beginning, through both his own insightful work on the subject of Alternate History and his supportive advice throughout the preparation of my thesis. Dr. Ilinca Iurascu has motivated me to look beyond the immediate scope of my topic and improved my understanding of the issues surrounding it. And, last but certainly not least, Prof. Dr. Sabine Schülting, as an expert in the fields of English Literature and Cultural Studies, has provided me with an invaluable interdisciplinary perspective. All of them have tirelessly supplied me with helpful feedback and have patiently guided me through moments of crisis. This dissertation would not exist without their support.

I would further like to thank the Department of Central, Eastern and Northern European Studies at the University of British Columbia (Vancouver) for facilitating my research both academically and financially, and my countless friends and colleagues across the globe, whose manifold contributions to the successful completion of my dissertation have ranged from moral support to ad hoc international library runs. Finally, I am grateful to the good people at the Letter Shop and especially my wife Henriette (in addition to a million other things) for the printing of the finished product.

for h.

*bis zum mond und wieder zurück*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A war or revolution may create a great chasm between two generations, as if an intermediate generation had just disappeared. In such a case, who can be sure that, on the day after, the youth of society will not be primarily concerned, as the old will be, with erasing any traces of that rupture, reconciling separated generations and maintaining, in spite of everything, continuity of social evolution?<sup>1</sup>

Wenn etwas vorbei ist, ist man nicht mehr der, dem es passierte.<sup>2</sup>

In light of the development of German memory discourses over the past seventy years and the ways in which they engage the legacy of the Third Reich, the Second World War, and the Holocaust, the above quote from Maurice Halbwachs' seminal study *The Collective Memory* appears virtually prophetic. Erasing the traces of the rupture that these events represent in the context of (German) history has been an ongoing process ever since the earliest days of the postwar period. This has been referred to, by proponents and critics alike, as the process of German *normalization*. As a victim of the very regime whose crimes have inscribed themselves so deeply into the collective memory of Germans and the whole world, the inherent optimism expressed by Halbwachs in these lines – which were, of course, actually concerned with the disruption of social continuity caused by World War I – also acquires a tragic quality. In direct contrast, the second quote becomes almost cynical. It is taken from Martin Walser's novel *Ein springender Brunnen*, a prominent literary example of a highly selective interaction with the past, represented by the author's attempt to reflect on his childhood under, but utterly untouched by, National Socialism. While Walser has generally become one of the most well-known and vocal proponents of the normalization of German collective memory through several public speeches over the past fifteen years, the integration of this sentiment into his writing is of particular significance, as it contradicts a widespread misconception about the relationship between literature and memory.

Geoffrey Hartman argues that art in general “provides a counterforce to manufactured and monolithic memory.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, for Régine Robin-Maire, monolithic and mythic memory is

---

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 82.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Walser, *Ein springender Brunnen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University

produced primarily by official historians (including revisionist trends), while art is the place where ‘true’ memory is produced.<sup>4</sup> Both of these assessments highlight the relativizing power of official history, and justifiably so. The role of historiography in the formation of what both Hartman and Robin-Maire call “monolithic memory” can hardly be overstated. Monolithic memory, here, denotes a commemorative culture of virtually unassailable tenets that selectively exclude (and include) elements of historical knowledge in the interest of creating and maintaining viable collective identity. However, this view not only neglects but directly denies the capacity of other narrative forms to fulfil the same function. Helmut Schmitz posits that “*any* German engagement with the legacy of National Socialism implicitly poses the question of identity, both personal and national,” and that literary narratives that do so can be considered “political projects pursued by the writers.”<sup>5</sup> Of course, to some extent this contention could easily be extended to all fictional representations of history, not merely those dealing with Nationalism Socialism and/or written by German authors. This reasoning does also not immediately contradict that of Robin-Maire and Hartman, who do not categorically dispute the political potential of memory literature. However, Schmitz’ study as a whole provides a variety of examples of relatively recent German fiction which indeed refute the notion of literature as a necessarily progressive medium. Rather, in the same way as Walser’s novel, many fictional engagements with the German past do not only not counteract forms of monolithic or mythic memory, they in fact contribute to them. Many critical investigations into this function exist, but they commonly focus exclusively on what, in the context of German literary studies, is still widely considered ‘serious literature’ by a majority of scholars. Accordingly, most of these critical inquiries concern themselves with the works of such established German authors as Grass, Sebald, and Walser. What is still widely referred to as ‘trivial literature,’ on the other hand, is rarely the object of study in this context. As Malcolm Humble suggests, this represents an oversight because “‘Trivialliteratur’ appears less trivial if it is interpreted not in terms of literary merit,” but as a “barometer of widely held views on the forces governing political change [...]”<sup>6</sup>

---

Press, 1996), 104.

<sup>4</sup> Régine Robin-Maire, “The Bifurcations of Memory,” in *Politics of Collective Memory: Cultural Patterns of Commemorative Practices in Post-War Europe*, ed. Sophie Wahnich, Barbara Lášticová and Andrej Findor (Berlin: LIT, 2008), 40-42.

<sup>5</sup> Helmut Schmitz, *On their Own Terms: The Legacy of National Socialism in Post-1990 German Fiction* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2004), 15. My emphasis.

<sup>6</sup> Malcolm Humble, “How Trivial is ‘Trivialliteratur’?: The Exploitation of the Nazi Past in the British and American

By examining Alternate Histories, this dissertation heeds this advice and investigates a genre of fiction that is not only widely considered to fall summarily into the category of ‘trivial’ or popular literature, but which represents a unique mode of accessing historical themes and produces narratives that can be read as both representations of and interventions into discourses of collective memory. The term Alternate History denotes a genre of speculative fiction that “concerns itself with history's turning out differently than what we know to be true.”<sup>7</sup> The majority of contributions to the relatively scarce body of scholarship on this type of literature have noted that such allohistorical narratives are inherently presentist, meaning that their central question of “What If?” can harness the repertoire of collective memory in order to act as both a reflection of and a commentary on contemporary social and political conditions. Moreover, Alternate Histories can act as a form of *counter-memory* insofar as the counterfactual mode can be used to highlight marginalized historical events. A popular example of this in the context of British literature are Alternate Histories that can be read as commentaries on the narrative of the war against Nazi Germany as Britain’s ‘Finest Hour.’ This is realized, for instance, by stories that envision an alternative course of history in which the Allies lost the war and the Nazis reign victorious. In an extensive comparative study of Alternate Histories of the Third Reich, Gavriel Rosenfeld has shown that this particular premise can function in (at least) two ways.<sup>8</sup> It can either re-affirm the actual course of history and the established narrative of the moral superiority of the British people by depicting the fictional present in dystopian terms as a result of the historical alterations and portraying valiant efforts of British resistance. Or it can question these very same tenets by either imagining the changed world in relatively benevolent terms or depicting the defeated Britons as willing collaborators. There are, of course, many variations of these themes. However, it is significant to note that Alternate Histories belonging to the second category generally can be said to adopt the role of counter-memories by actively subverting established commemorative traditions and thereby contesting their importance in contemporary discourses of national identity. This study investigates a specific manifestation of this process.

In the following, I will discuss a selection of texts that present counterfactual scenarios of the genre’s most popular theme: the history of National Socialism. I will show how these

---

Bestseller since 1945," in *Anglistentag 1984: Vorträge*, ed. Manfred Pfister (Gießen: Hoffmann, 1984), 216.

<sup>7</sup> Karen Hellekson, *The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time*. (Kent: Kent State UP, 2001), 1.

<sup>8</sup> See Gavriel Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).



alternative accounts can be read as counter-memories in the sense that their specific narrative structure, as in the example above, serves to popularize versions of remembering the past that deviate from established commemorative axioms. This will illustrate how Alternate Histories can, in fact, be considered an ideal medium for ‘counteracting’ monolithic memory, in the terms of Hartman and Robin-Maire. It will also become clear that this process is not necessarily subversive, but can just as well be used to pursue a reactionary agenda. While this distinction applies to all national contexts, it is especially relevant with regard to German-language allohistorical fiction because, like many German postwar writers, authors of Alternate History “have continually experimented with different narrative perspectives and structures to reinterpret and recreate their history.”<sup>9</sup> Even in non-allohistorical narratives, German reinterpretations of the memory of the Third Reich are not categorically progressive or even neutral, but in many cases constitute what Eric Santner calls instances of “narrative fetishism,” namely “the construction or deployment of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of the trauma or loss that called the narrative into being in the first place.”<sup>10</sup> In Santner’s view, such engagements with a traumatic past represent the opposite of acts of mourning, in contrast to which narrative fetishism does not entail “the willingness or capacity to include the traumatic event in one’s efforts to reformulate and reconstitute identity.”<sup>11</sup> In the context of postwar German memory debates, this distinction corresponds directly to the prominent dichotomy between *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (overcoming the past) and *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (working through the past). This also provides a fundamental argument for accessing these texts from a nationally specific perspective, because Alternate Histories of the Third Reich generally “tell us less about the Nazi past than about the shifting concerns within the nations that have produced them.”<sup>12</sup> And while it is unquestionably true that “there is still a sense in which British and American speculative fiction are divided with their commonality, using the same vocabulary of ideas but speaking with distinctive accents,” the approaches of both these national variants of counterfactual literature to the subject of National Socialism differ much more radically from

---

<sup>9</sup> Reiko Tachibana, *Narrative as Counter-Memory: A Half-Century of Postwar Writing in Germany and Japan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 25.

<sup>10</sup> Eric L. Santner, “History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts in the Representation of Trauma,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the ‘Final Solution’*, ed. Saul Friedländer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 144.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>12</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 383.

their German counterparts.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to the winning nations of the Second World War, Germans did not have access to positive memory narratives.

German accounts have mirrored those in Britain and the United States [but] have differed from British and American narratives in their function. If early accounts mostly aimed to affirm West Germany's postwar rehabilitation by showing how much worse history would have been had the Nazis won the war, they also enabled Germans to express regret for the disastrous course of their recent history. This self-critical function has disappeared, however, from the alternate histories that have appeared in Germany since the country's reunification in 1990. In contrast to British and American narratives, which normalized the premise of a Nazi military triumph for the purpose of self-critique, recent German tales have done so for the triumphalistic purpose of re-establishing a normal sense of national identity.<sup>14</sup>

While this chronological outline adequately assesses the different status of Alternate History fictions in postwar Germany, it neglects the existence of earlier examples of the latter type. In the following chapters, I will discuss several examples that pre-date the reunification of Germany but which can nonetheless be read as representations of a specifically German trend of normalization. Nonetheless, overall the historical evolution of this theme in the German context is an important aspect. Despite not being confined to this era exclusively, German-language Alternate Histories that display a tendency to normalize the memory of the National Socialist past have indeed not only increased in number but also adopted distinctly different narrative strategies over the past two decades. While the genre never produced many examples which could be considered contributions to a working-through of the past, as it were, the absolute majority of recent German Alternate Histories can be read as representations of counter-memory narratives aimed at overcoming it. This shift directly correlates not only with the re-formulations of German identity in the wake of reunification, but also with a paradigmatic turn in the discourse of German collective memory that accompanied the generational and ideological changes in the German political landscape at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These developments have given risen rise to a new type of exculpatory counter-memories. In the context of official commemorative culture and non-allohistorical literature, these can be understood as a form of *anti-memory*: that is, a process in which the overcoming of

---

<sup>13</sup> Brian Stableford, "The British and American Traditions of Speculative Fiction," in *Contours of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Eighth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. Michele K. Langford (New York: Greenwood, 1990), 47.

<sup>14</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 162.

the past is no longer characterized by repression, but by practices of demonstrative commemoration that at the same time serve to replace the memory of the legacy of National Socialism with a narrative of successful atonement and redemption.<sup>15</sup> In German allohistorical literature, the same strategy can be observed. In contrast to other forms of memory, however, which are necessarily bound to reconcile their attempts at the restoration of German national identity with real history, Alternate Histories – due their inherently counterfactual nature – have the capacity to effectively *replace* the memory of real events with fantasies that are better suited to serve as exculpatory narratives for the German collective. I will therefore call this particular phenomenon, which is unique to both the genre of Alternate History and the German (and Austrian) national context, *alternate memory*.

To develop the theoretical framework for this new category, I will delineate and contrast pertinent theories of both collective memory and counter-memory and harness the scholarly findings of these fields to expand existing critical understandings of the genre of Alternate History. The combination of this sociological approach with the methodology of literary studies is then applied in close readings to an exemplary selection of allohistorical narratives. The first chapter establishes the theoretical foundations. Here, the categories of Alternate History, collective memory, counter-memory, German normalization and alternate memory are developed and situated within the context of extant scholarship. The following three chapters analyze representative examples that serve to illustrate the discursive strategies of alternate memory. These are grouped into three themes which correspond closely to prominent narratives of German normalization: The universalization of National Socialism, the motif of the ‘good German,’ and the myth of German victimization. In this context, the specificity of German-language Alternate History will become clear through the direct contrast with British and American examples which incorporate similar allohistorical themes, but perform distinctly different functions in the context of their respective national, cultural, and commemorative settings. It should be noted, however, that this study does neither suggest that reactionary Alternate Histories are limited to a German-language context nor that, within that context, no other forms of allohistorical fiction exist. The texts discussed in the following chapters were explicitly selected to illustrate the potential of counterfactual literature to function as alternate memories. There are certainly a number German and Austrian Alternate Histories that do not

---

<sup>15</sup> See Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 10.

conform to this model and some are mentioned in the first chapter. This study does not claim to be an exhaustive review of German-language allohistorical writing. Rather, it constitutes an exemplary examination of a prolific narrative phenomenon that has not been discussed in any previous explorations of the genre and that, especially in the past two decades and in light of the paradigmatic shifts in German memory culture, represents a unique manifestation of the interactive relationship between literature and memory.

## 2. ALTERNATE HISTORIES: MEMORY, COUNTER-MEMORY, ALTERNATE MEMORY

As a genre, Alternate History is intimately linked to the category of memory. Rosenfeld has argued that allohistorical fictions “lend themselves very well to being studied as documents of memory for the same reason historians have dismissed them as useless for the study of history – namely, their fundamental subjectivity.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, Alternate History is as much an expression of memory as it is its product. In this sense, fictional speculations about altered paths of history must not merely be read as narrative representations of non-literary memory discourses, but, at the same time, as contributions to and interventions into them. In addition, Alternate Histories lend themselves exceptionally well to such a line of enquiry due to their inherent presentism. As a large number of scholars of the genre have posited, despite the apparent narrative focus on the past, Alternate History’s primary concern is for the present.<sup>17</sup> The general argument is that fictional visions of altered pasts and the consequences they bear for the future are not an end in itself, but must be read as either affirmative or critical comments on the contemporary status quo. Here, the link between Alternate History and memory is especially evident, for, as Siobhan Kattago points out, “[m]emories of the past perhaps tell us more about the present society than about the past. Because memory is a dynamic, fluid activity framed by social groups and located in symbolic places, the activity of remembering is guided by the needs of the present.”<sup>18</sup>

The first chapter will discuss this connection between Alternate History and memory and outline in detail how allohistorical fictions can not only be read as artefacts of and contributions to collective discourses of remembering and forgetting, but also illustrate how narratives of alternate pasts represent a form of counter-memory in their own right. At the same time, the concept of counter-memory and its overwhelmingly positive connotations in contemporary (academic) discourse will itself be subjected to in-depth scrutiny, and a new category, *alternate memory*, will be developed and suggested as a basis on which to analyze pertinent works of fiction in this context. In conclusion, it will be shown how alternate memory serves different

---

<sup>16</sup> Gavriel Rosenfeld, “‘Why Do We Ask ‘What If?’: Reflections on the Function of Alternate History,” *History and Theory* 41, no. 4 (2002): 93.

<sup>17</sup> See Helbig, Korthals, Rosenfeld, Wesseling, et al.

<sup>18</sup> Siobhan Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity* (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 171.

functions in different national contexts, and, in contrast to the commonly progressive connotations attached to counter-memory, it will be argued that, in the context of postwar German memory discourses, its principal function must be considered anything but. Rather, within the context of what has been called the normalization of memory in contemporary Germany, what I will call *alternate memory* is really a means for the relativization of history.

## 2.1 ALTERNATE HISTORIOGRAPHIES

In order to establish this theoretical framework, however, the first question must be: What is Alternate History? In a simple yet concise definition, it is the fictional account of “history that never happened.”<sup>19</sup> Or, as Gordon Chamberlain puts it, it is a genre which “deals with the known past as it might have been – not as it may have happened behind the scenes, or to unknown individuals, but as we here and now are sure that it did not.”<sup>20</sup> While Alternate History stories may include the element of partially recounting actual historical events, their defining characteristic is the production of narrative scenarios of how history might have turned out if any one of these events had played out differently. If, for instance, Roosevelt (as in Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*) had been assassinated prior to World War II, if Hitler had never been born (as in Stephen Fry’s *Making History*) or had merely never ascended to political power (as in Sabine Wedemeyer-Schwiersch’s “Requiem für einen Stümper”), how would our world have been different? It is this kind of speculative departure from factual history that is at the heart of Alternate History.

Speaking in broad aesthetic terms, allohistorical fictions can generally be defined as a literature of estrangement or, rather, as a kind of writing which relies on the interplay of the counterfactual and the real.<sup>21</sup> Booth, Rowlinson, Clark, Delahaye, and Procter recognize this in their definition of what they call “modal narratives” by saying that in order “to be cognizable, [counterfactuals] must first be estranged, yet estrangement requires cognition to enable any sense

---

<sup>19</sup> See Alexander Demandt, *History that Never Happened: A Treatise on the Question, What Would Have Happened If...?* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Gordon B. Chamberlain, “Afterword: Allohistory in Science Fiction,” in *Alternative Histories: Eleven Stories of the World As It Might Have Been*, eds. Charles Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Garland, 1986), 283.

<sup>21</sup> See Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 5. Edgar McKnight also fundamentally conceptualizes Alternate History as literature of estrangement in his unpublished dissertation, *Alternative History: The Development of a Literary Genre*.

to be made of the novum.”<sup>22</sup> And both Wilhelm Füger and Jörg Helbig, the latter explicitly discussing “parahistorical” novels on the basis of the former’s more general definition, include speculative fictions in the category of “allotopia.” Füger’s definition of this term includes an element very similar to Booth et al.: “Einerseits müssen Normal- und Gegenwelt irgendwie aufeinander bezogen oder zumindest beziehbar sein, andererseits dürfen sie nicht völlig kommensurabel werden, da Alternativität sonst in Alterität umschlüge.”<sup>23</sup> Generating this specific dialectic of estrangement and familiarity implies a relatively high relevance of intentional ‘constructedness’ in Alternate History fictions because it suggests that, as Hermann Ritter puts it very bluntly, the author must construct a counterfactual story *intentionally*.<sup>24</sup> This is not only interesting when taking into account the otherwise heavily postmodernist direction of the genre, as manifested in its central play with historical contingencies, as well as the majority of the scholarship it has generated, but especially when attempting to read Alternate Histories in the context of non-literary discourses of memory. I will return to this point later.

The question of when Alternate History began is strongly contested. In a considerable number of texts, Charles Renouvier’s *Uchronie (l’utopie dans l’histoire)* from 1876 is named as the first actual Alternate History, in the sense of serving as a founding text for a new literary tradition.<sup>25</sup> However, this may be explained primarily by the fact that it was Renouvier who coined the term “Uchronie” or Uchronia (as a chronological pendant to Thomas More’s geographical Utopia), which is still widely used synonymously with Alternate History today, while other terms have generally not garnered the same widespread acceptance.<sup>26</sup> Some critics

---

<sup>22</sup> Charles Booth et al., “Scenarios and Counterfactuals as Modal Narratives,” *Futures* 41, no. 2 (2009): 93.

<sup>23</sup> Wilhelm Füger, “Streifzüge durch Allotopia,” *Anglia* 102 (1984): 256.

<sup>24</sup> See Hermann Ritter, “Kontrafaktische Geschichte: Unterhaltung versus Erkenntnis,” in *Was wäre wenn: Alternativ- und Parallelgeschichte: Brücken Zwischen Phantasie und Wirklichkeit*, ed. Michael Salewski (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999), 16.

<sup>25</sup> See Hellekson, Rosenfeld, Steinmüller et al.

<sup>26</sup> Uchronia is today not only the title of the largest genre bibliography (see <http://www.uchronia.net>), but also the only term which is still, by some, actively contested. Christoph Rodiek, for example, differentiates between Alternate Histories and Uchronias in terms of literary value, with the former being relegated to the realm of pulp fiction, whereas the latter constitutes ‘worthwhile’ literature. And Amy Ransom understands Uchronia, in contrast to Alternate History, as including “any other chronologies other than that of the empirical world, past, present or future”. See Amy Ransom, “Alternate History and Uchronia: Some Questions of Terminology and Genre,” *Foundations: The International Review of Science Fiction* 32, no. 87 (2003): 65. The most prominent other labels include Alternative History (Suvin), Allohistory (Chamberlain), Allotopia (Füger), Counterfactuals (mainly used outside of literary studies), and Parahistory (Helbig). I will be using a variety of these terms synonymously throughout this paper.

suggest that early examples can even be traced back to ancient Greece,<sup>27</sup> while others argue that Alternate History is a distinctly modern phenomenon. Most convincingly, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young has labeled attempts to find ever older cases of Alternate History writing an “anticipatory fallacy that presents evidence of a tradition which in fact did not exist, [intimating] connections where there were only isolated incidents”.<sup>28</sup> He argues that, despite possible earlier examples, the “genre’s first, formative period [occurred] from the early 1930s to the early 1940s,”<sup>29</sup> because “the sensitivity to the mutability of time hardly existed in literature prior to the 1930s.”<sup>30</sup> And Elmar Schenkel contends that “alternatives Geschichtsdanken” does not actually develop its full potential until after the end of the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> While I agree with both the Winthrop-Young’s and Schenkel’s assessments that Alternate History is intimately tied to the twentieth century – perhaps even the second half of the twentieth century – and while it is crucial to be aware that the overall questions at stake in the genre of Alternate History are historically specific and the narrative means of addressing them change as the genre itself evolves, this particular question is secondary for the investigation at hand. The Alternate History narratives in question here all deal immediately with altered outcomes of the Second World War and therefore are necessarily restricted one and all to the second half of the twentieth century.

In large parts of the early scholarship investigating the genre, Alternate History was – and, by some, is to this day – widely held to be a sub-genre of Science Fiction, and this classification certainly applies to a considerable number of texts. The link between Science Fiction and Alternate History has been discussed by many critics;<sup>32</sup> most prominently, albeit again with a focus on slightly too early examples, by Darko Suvin in his article on Victorian Science Fiction:

---

<sup>27</sup> See Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, “Fallacies and Thresholds: Notes on the Early Evolution of Alternate History,” *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 2 (2009): 103.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>31</sup> Elmar Schenkel, “Die Macht des Ungeschehenen: Phantastische Geschichtsschreibung in *alternative histories*,” in *Fantasy in Film und Literatur*, ed. Dieter Petzold (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1996), 130.

<sup>32</sup> Most authors who assume this connection take it for granted; the only actual case made explicitly for an inclusion of Alternate History into the Science Fiction genre can be found in: Jürgen Thomann, “Leben im Konditional: Alternative Welten und ihre Relevanz. Einführung in das Genre der Alternate History,” *Kopfgebirten* 7 (1996): 5-20.



Alternative History can be identified as that form of SF in which an alternative locus (in space, time, etc.) that shares the material and causal verisimilitude of the writer's world is used to articulate different possible solutions of societal problems, those problems being of sufficient importance to require an alteration in the overall history of the narrated world.<sup>33</sup>

Other critics, such as Karen Hellekson and Winthrop-Young, provide more differentiation, pointing out that contemporary Alternate Histories no longer need to display any immediate genre characteristics of Science Fiction. Hellekson creates an entire taxonomy to account for this fact, but remains somewhat ahistorical in the process;<sup>34</sup> Winthrop-Young, on the other hand, shows a developmental progression within the genre from early versions, which still rely heavily on Science Fiction elements like time travel, to newer stories, which have increasingly shed these narrative crutches and are continuously evolving into an autonomous genre.<sup>35</sup>

The much more important aspect in Suvin's definition, however, is the mentioning of a necessary verisimilitude and the commenting, even interventionist character it assigns to Alternate History – I will return to the latter aspect. In the meantime, the aspect of verisimilitude is indeed an indispensable prerequisite in order for Alternate Histories to function. In Suvin's account, this term can be read as synonymous with *intelligibility* rather than with the much more restrictive concept of plausibility which, for instance, Christoph Rodiek considers an integral factor of a functioning Uchronia.<sup>36</sup> An allohistorical narrative does not need to be plausible in order to work, but it does need to retain sufficient similarities with reality (verisimilitude) to be recognizable as an alternative account. And it is not least this factor which makes Alternate History, on many levels, inseparable from the realm of history and historiography. As Paul Alkon points out, Alternate History requires "knowledge of real history on the part of the reader."<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Darko Suvin, "Victorian Science Fiction, 1871-85: The Rise of the Alternate History Subgenre," *Science Fiction Studies* 10 (1983): 149.

<sup>34</sup> See Karen Hellekson, *The Alternate History*. It should also be noted here that Hellekson's model is explicitly based on an earlier taxonomy taken from Joseph William Collins' unpublished dissertation "Paths Not Taken: The Development, Structure, and Aesthetics of Alternative History."

<sup>35</sup> See Winthrop-Young, "Fallacies and Thresholds." For an immediate critique of Hellekson's taxonomy see especially p. 115.

<sup>36</sup> See Christoph Rodiek, *Erfundene Vergangenheit: Kontrafaktische Geschichtsdarstellung (Uchronie) in der Literatur* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1997). Like Christoph Rodiek, Norbert Schaffeld generally differentiates between "trivial" and "serious" counterfactual literature, with the only difference being that Schaffeld does not make this a necessary genre criterion as Rodiek does. See Norbert Schaffeld, *Die Darstellung des nationalsozialistischen Deutschland im englischen Roman*. (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Paul Alkon, "Alternate History and Postmodern Temporality," in *Time, Literature and the Arts: Essays in Honor*

Without at least a general awareness of what went on in the world between 1933 and 1945, Alternate Histories of the Third Reich would not work. The same is true, of course, for any historical scenario. Without the knowledge that the Union won the American Civil War – a similarly popular period for Alternate History writers –, a story like Ward Moore’s acclaimed *Bring the Jubilee* (1953), featuring a time-travelling historian from an America in which the Confederacy was victorious, who inadvertently ‘corrects’ history, would not make much sense. This very simple fact highlights the necessary relationship between Alternate History and historiography. But what is the exact nature of this relationship?

Within the discipline of historiography, many historians in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have advocated – albeit not without a considerable amount of opposition – methods of counterfactual extrapolation for the study of history, arguing that an examination of its potential outcomes could greatly benefit the understanding of its actual developments at specific junctures. Niall Ferguson, for instance, even goes so far as to suggest that the counterfactual is generally a factor in historiography, saying that in the “absence of the scientific procedure of verification by repetition, the historian [can only] speculate as to what would have happened had the initial conditions or some event in the sequence been different.”<sup>38</sup> In the same vein, Alexander Demandt posits that “[h]istorical scholarship must speculate if it is concerned with achieving understanding; it does so whenever it makes a judgement; it can do so whenever it finds reasons; and it is permitted to do so because every fact has implications beyond itself.”<sup>39</sup> Michael Salewski metaphorically calls the time machine “Wunschtraum und Paradies für den Historiker”<sup>40</sup> and, as already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Rosenfeld endorses counterfactuals – both literary and otherwise – as relevant documents of memory, representing a collective subjectivity in a specific historical context. Other, more radically postmodernist approaches by historians such as Hayden White, who stresses the narrative character of all historiography, can be said to at least implicitly promote the counterfactual mode, when taking into account the fact that both directly reinforce the idea of the contingency of historical

---

of Samuel L. Macey, ed. Thomas R. Cleary (Victoria: University of Victoria Press, 1994), 69.

<sup>38</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London: Papermac, 1998), 76.

<sup>39</sup> Demandt, *History*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Salewski, *Zeitgeist Und Zeitmaschine: Science Fiction und Geschichte* (Munich: dtv, 1986), 227.

processes in their own way.<sup>41</sup> Susana Onega also links historiography and literature by stating that, generally, the “contemporary creative writer becomes a historian in an attempt to fill the gaps left by traditional totalitarian history while at the same time the philosophers of history try to achieve the same aim through the exploration of the narrative mechanisms of history-writing.”<sup>42</sup> Hellekson, author of the only general English-language book-length study on the Alternate History genre to date, bases her entire analysis of allohistorical texts explicitly on four models of history – the eschatological, the genetic, the entropic, and the teleological model –, concluding that, overall, Alternate Histories follow the genetic model, because “the alternate history relies on cause and effect. It assumes that an event in the past caused our present.”<sup>43</sup> Finally, Rosenfeld even argues that in “insisting that everything in the past could have been different, in stressing the role of contingency in history, and in emphasizing the open-endedness of historical change, alternate history is inherently anti-deterministic.”<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Rodiek asserts: “Da die konjunkturalhistorische Adaption (Uchronie) eine klar umrissene Bezugsgröße (realhistorische Vorlage) voraussetzt, beharrt die historische Gegendarstellung noch im Realitätsdementi auf der objektiven Erkennbarkeit der Geschichte.”<sup>45</sup> And, indeed, despite the fact that most Alternate Histories emphasize the importance of coincidence and small-scale individual agency in the alteration of large-scale historical developments, the very concept of an *alternate* history also necessitates, as Karlheinz Steinmüller argues, a concept of an *actual* history.<sup>46</sup> Or, as Elmar Schenkel puts it: “Geschehene Geschichte kann ungeschehene ignorieren – das Umgekehrte gilt jedoch nicht.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, it seems clear that neither counterfactual narratives themselves nor their critical interpretation can easily be subsumed under any one approach.

---

<sup>41</sup> See Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973).

<sup>42</sup> Susana Onega, “‘A Knack for Yarns’: The Narrativization of History and the End of History,” in *Telling Histories: Narrativizing History, Historicizing Literature*, ed. Susana Onega (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 16.

<sup>43</sup> Hellekson, *Alternate History*, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Rodiek, *Vergangenheit*, 27.

<sup>46</sup> See Karlheinz Steinmüller, “Zukünfte, die nie Geschichte wurden: Zum Gedankenexperiment in Zukunftsforschung und Geschichtswissenschaft,” in *Was wäre wenn*, 43-53.

<sup>47</sup> Schenkel, *Phantastische Geschichtsschreibung*, 133.

As in historiography, conflicting ideas persist in the sphere of literature, both in fiction itself and within the context of literary scholarship. While critics such as Hellekson maintain that all Alternate History fiction primarily foregrounds the contingency of historical cause and effect, scholars like Alkon differentiate between what he calls the “classical” and the “postmodern” modes of Alternate History, arguing that “it may serve to provide enhanced awareness of what the past was like and of our relationships to it as well as our present historical moment [or it] may serve the more postmodern purpose of blunting awareness of actual historicity and of chronological distinctions.”<sup>48</sup> The first category is represented, for instance, by such diverse texts as Ward Moore’s *Bring the Jubilee*, Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and Robert Harris’ *Fatherland* (1992). According to Alkon, examples such as these harness the counterfactual mode in order to contribute to a deepened understanding of historical circumstances.<sup>49</sup> The mention of Dick’s novel may appear strange in this context, seeing as it is otherwise rather widely considered to be an archetypical example of the fictional representation of the idea of subjective reality and, with its strongly metafictional style, appears to incorporate central narrative characteristics of postmodern literature. However, Alkon makes a convincing argument for its inclusion in the first category by emphasising the novel’s or, rather, its main narrative level’s plausible delineation of (alternate) historical cause and effect as well as its innate presentism, that is its propensity to be read as a commentary on contemporary American society.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, he criticizes the texts in the “postmodern” category for being precisely that: postmodern. In recourse to Fredric Jameson’s critique of postmodernist engagements with history, he speaks of their “pseudohistorical depth,” which in his view amounts to little else but a devaluation of historical knowledge.<sup>51</sup> Because, as Jameson suggests, in particularly ludic and intentionally unreliable literary or cinematic engagements with the past – and with the memory of the past in particular – “the history of aesthetic styles displaces ‘real’ history.”<sup>52</sup> History, in other words, becomes intertextual, imbued with meaning only through the narrative act.

Whichever side of the philosophical argument one chooses to come down on, it seems

---

<sup>48</sup> Alkon, *Temporality*, 83.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> See *ibid.*, 74.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>52</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991), 20.

that the dualism suggested by Alkon can be identified for the majority of Alternate History texts, as opposed to the entire genre aligning itself with a postmodernist approach, as others have suggested. While it can hardly be contested that the integral aspect of every Alternate History, the detailed speculations about how things could have turned out differently, inevitable serves to foreground that history is little more than a set of variables and contingencies, it can also be said that investigating the possibility of different outcomes actually highlights why these variables and contingencies combined the way they did in their specific historical moments. As Hermann Ritter puts it: “Durch das Nachdenken über mögliche Wendepunkte ergibt sich automatisch ein Nachdenken über die Faktoren, die Geschichte so und eben nicht anders verlaufen lassen.”<sup>53</sup> From either perspective, it seems undisputed that Alternate Histories always contain at least an implicit statement about the world that goes beyond the immediate historical setting of their own narrative. As mentioned before, for Rosenfeld “[a]lternate history is inherently presentist [because it] explores the past less for its own sake than to utilize it instrumentally to comment upon the state of the contemporary world.”<sup>54</sup> And William Hardesty concurs:

[A]n alternate history uses its art – by forcing the reader to seize a non-existent past – to problematize the received truth about the past. To some extent, it calls ‘what happened’ into question, thereby problematizing accepted theories of why it happened in the way it did, how it may have affected the present, and what it may yet do to affect the future.<sup>55</sup>

This concern with the present brings us back to the commenting function of Alternate History already suggested in Suvin’s definition, because this inherent presentism of allohistorical fictions is not neutral, not an end in itself, but always contains, as Korthals points out, an element of judgment, whether positive or negative.<sup>56</sup> Winthrop-Young criticizes Suvin’s notion for being “prescriptive” and limiting.<sup>57</sup> He is both right and wrong: While it is certainly true that Alternate

---

<sup>53</sup> Ritter, “Kontrafaktische Geschichte,” 31.

<sup>54</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 10.

<sup>55</sup> William H. Hardesty, “Toward a Theory of Alternate History: Some Versions of Alternate Nazis,” in *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Fiction*, eds. Edgar L. Chapman and Carl B. Yoke (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 81.

<sup>56</sup> See Holger Korthals, “Spekulation Mit Historischem Material: Überlegungen Zur Alternate History.” in *Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft: Grundfragen einer besonderen Disziplin*, ed. Rüdiger Zymner (Berlin: Schmidt, 2001) 169.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

Histories cannot universally be said to “articulate different possible solutions of societal problems,”<sup>58</sup> already Kurt Tucholsky recognized that counterfactual speculations about history have the potential to serve as a means of political commentary or criticism.<sup>59</sup> And it makes sense for contemporary Alternate Histories to be read in a political vein, as well. That is not to say that the genre precludes the possibility of mere escapist speculation for the sake of entertainment, but its format, as it has been established thus far, lends itself exceedingly well to act as a literary intervention into political discourses focusing on history and memory. It is possible to interpret allohistorical narratives, which commonly can be broadly classified as either utopian fantasies or dystopian nightmares in their depiction of altered states of the world, in terms of the position they take towards the contemporary status quo of their authors’ reality:

Fantasies tend to be liberal, for by imagining a better alternate past, they see the present as wanting and thus implicitly support changing it. Nightmares, by contrast, tend to be conservative, for by portraying the alternate past in negative terms, they ratify the present as the best of all possible worlds and thereby discourage the need for change.<sup>60</sup>

Notwithstanding the rather reductive characterization of liberal and conservative, or progressive and reactionary political agendas, taking this assessment as a general guideline for understanding the presentist aspect of the genre is certainly not without merit. For instance, Rosenfeld lists various British Alternate Histories in the early postwar phase in which nightmare scenarios were a popular means of reinforcing the myth of the “Finest Hour” for the purpose of bolstering patriotic identification.<sup>61</sup> In the following, I will discuss a number of German and Austrian texts in which primarily dystopian accounts of historical alterations arguably serve a reactionary agenda, though in a distinctly different context and through different narrative means. And although, not surprisingly, Alternate Histories of National Socialism, specifically, do not comprise many texts which one could classify as truly utopian, in the sense of the fictional

---

<sup>58</sup> Suvin, “Science Fiction,” 149.

<sup>59</sup> Tucholsky used the phrase “Was wäre wenn...?” as a heading for several newspaper and magazine columns from 1918 through 1925. Not all of these were allohistorical speculations in the strictest sense. However, one of the most famous is perhaps Tucholsky’s biting speculation about the death of Wilhelm II. and the rise of his son to the throne before the outbreak of World War I in the *Berliner Volkszeitung* on April 23, 1919, which, despite its brevity, can be classified as an Alternate History. A conveniently searchable collection of these columns can be found at: <http://www.textlog.de/tucholsky-essays.html>

<sup>60</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 11.

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid.*, 34-94.

creation of a better world, it is generally true that stories which portray less nightmarish scenarios tend to direct more criticism towards the contemporary state of society. At the same time, it is not particularly difficult to find exceptions to these rules. Stephen Fry's *Making History* (1996), in which the world without Hitler turns out even worse than it did with him in it, is one example in the next chapter which employs a nightmare scenario to progressive ends. And while, on the other end of the spectrum, it is more difficult to find concrete examples (outside the German context) of stories pursuing a reactionary agenda by showing the alteration of history in a relatively favourable light, the question could be raised whether a favourable depiction of victorious Nazis does not always contain a reactionary element to a certain degree.<sup>62</sup> Manfred Pfister and Monika Lindner have also argued that the counterfactual mode in literature always involves a critical element, regardless of which of these two categories it fits into, writing that "sowohl beim utopischen Idealbild als auch beim anti-utopischen Schreckbild – wird [die Differenz zwischen dem Alternativentwurf und der aktuellen Realität] jedoch kritisch auf die Wirklichkeit zurückfallen."<sup>63</sup>

In any event, there can be little question about the propensity of Alternate Histories to function as commentaries on non-literary discourses of memory. In some cases, this type of commentary can even be seen as a form of active intervention, driven by the authorial motivation of 'correcting' history gone wrong, as Edgar L. Chapman points out.<sup>64</sup> In this sense, Alternate Histories can often be read as examples of *counter-memory*, that is as conscious deviations from accepted versions of history. Like other forms of counter-memory, such narratives intentionally subvert mainstream ways of representing the past in order to gradually affect a shift in the canon of official historical knowledge towards an inclusion of previously excluded aspects or interpretations of historical events. What is interesting in this comparison, however, is that while Alternate History, as will be shown in detail in the following chapters, can work in similar ways, in terms of its narrative and discursive function it differs from other types of counter-memory in that these commonly work through recourse to factual (or, at least, allegedly factual) historical

---

<sup>62</sup> In this universal form, however, there will unfortunately not be room within the limited scope of this investigation to provide an answer to this question.

<sup>63</sup> Manfred Pfister and Monika Lindner, "Alternative Welten: Ein typologischer Versuch zur englischen Literatur," in *Alternative Welten*, ed. Manfred Pfister (Munich: Fink, 1982), 17.

<sup>64</sup> See Edgar L. Chapman, "Introduction: Three Stages of Alternate History Fiction and the 'Metaphysical If'," in Chapman and Yoke, *Iconoclastic Alternate History*, 22.

events, which have merely been ignored or misinterpreted by historians thus far; Alternate History fictions, in contrast, are based on events which we know never actually occurred. Nonetheless, the effect of these two categories on public and political discourse can be almost identical. Many scholars have made this link: While Rosenfeld only mentions the term “counter-memory” several times in passing with regard to Alternate Histories of the Third Reich,<sup>65</sup> Elisabeth Wesseling all but equates the two, saying that the “ideological principle which informs [...] alternate histories is the sympathetic identification with those who have suffered history.”<sup>66</sup> However, no scholarly approach to the genre has so far investigated this connection in detail, with a concrete focus on theories of memory and counter-memory. Therefore, the questions that need to be answered in the following are: by what means and to what end can Alternate Histories affect and effectively subvert previously accepted versions of history and what role does ‘real’ history play when comparing Alternate History with other forms of counter-memory? To facilitate this analysis, however, the area of research should be limited to a specific type of Alternate Histories and, with it, to a specific area of collective memory: stories of alternate outcomes of National Socialism and World War II. Not coincidentally, this complex also represents the most prominent field of activity for allohistorical speculation, so the first question becomes: What is it that makes Nazis so popular for writers and audiences of Alternate History?

## 2.2 COUNTERFACTUAL NAZIS

While relatively young as a genre, there has been a considerable amount of literary and, to a lesser extent, cinematic production of Alternate History narratives over the past 60 years. A veritable myriad of historical turning points or “nexus events” have been taken as cues for counterfactual speculations.<sup>67</sup> While, in some cases, these events seem intentionally trivial and obscure, it is not by accident that the most popular and prolific themes within the Alternate History genre take as their starting points alterations at historical watershed moments. Principal among these are, without question, the Third Reich and the Second World War. Questions as to

---

<sup>65</sup> See, for instance, Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 16.

<sup>66</sup> Elisabeth Wesseling, *Writing History as a Prophet: Postmodernist Innovations of the Historical Novel* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1991), 162. While not without theoretical merit for the study of Alternate History on the whole, Wesseling’s approach is relatively unorthodox in that she exclusively discusses texts which no other critic has (or, most likely, would have) ever labelled as Alternate History (e.g. Günter Grass’ *Der Butt*).

<sup>67</sup> Hellekson, *Alternate History*, 5.



whether and how our contemporary world would be different, had specific events between 1933 and 1945, or more or less directly leading up to this period, occurred differently, provide the foundation of the majority of (Western) Alternate Histories. While the specific shape these speculations take is extremely variegated, Rosenfeld argues that a relatively small number of overarching themes can be identified in the vast majority of these works.<sup>68</sup> These are: “Nazi wartime victory, Hitler’s survival, the world without the Führer, and the Holocaust.”<sup>69</sup> Variations of these themes abound in some of the most prominent works of Alternate History over the past six decades. But what is it that makes this specific topos so extraordinarily attractive to writers of Alternate History fictions? Gregory Benford explains it like this:

This intellectual, as opposed to psychosexual, fascination with the subject stems, I believe, from the perception that World War II was the most important nexus thus far in human history, that the Battle of Armageddon has already been fought, in the form of a total war between modern humanistic civilization and the incarnation of the deepest evil within the human spirit ever to have manifested itself on earth.<sup>70</sup>

Elmar Schenkel concurs by saying that Alternate Histories in general, which he suggests did not develop their full potential until after World War II, are fundamentally linked to what he calls the “Verarbeitung eines welthistorischen Traumas” and that the pertinent turning points or nexus events overall represent “traumatische Knotenpunkte.”<sup>71</sup> Other critics, such as Winthrop-Young and Bernhard Giesen, while acknowledging the impact of the historic political upheavals of this era, are more wary of understanding the ever-growing prominence of the Nazi theme solely in terms of collective trauma or, for that matter, as necessarily indexical for a recourse to the ‘real’ history of National Socialism as such. Giesen, writing not on Alternate History but on the ubiquity of representations of Nazism in postwar discourse in general, contends that “the Holocaust has acquired the position of a free-floating myth or a cultural icon of horror and

---

<sup>68</sup> The text types of counterfactual speculations about the Third Reich range from historical essays to outright tales of Science Fiction. Some interesting hybrid forms have also emerged: Cf. Ralph Giordano, *Wenn Hitler den Krieg gewonnen hätte: Die Pläne der Nazis nach dem Endsieg* (Hamburg: Rasch & Röhring, 1989).

<sup>69</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 13. Rosenfeld’s monograph is not only the only book-length study on this topic to date, it also contains a near exhaustive survey of the current state of the narrative production of the genre across several media, historical periods, and national contexts.

<sup>70</sup> Gregory Benford, “Preface: Imagining the Abyss,” in *Hitler Victorious: Eleven Stories of the German Victory in World-War II*, eds. Gregory Benford and Martin H. Greenberg (New York: Garland, 1986), 9.

<sup>71</sup> Schenkel, *Phantastische Geschichtsschreibung*, 130. A similar interpretation can be found in Edgar V. McKnight’s dissertation.

inhumanity [which] has ascended to the status of an undisputed master narrative.”<sup>72</sup> In other words, the mythologization of the Holocaust or National Socialism overall has, in the Barthesian sense, detached these themes from their original meaning, thus opening them up to being used as flexible templates signifying anything from authoritarian personalities to, as Winthrop-Young paradoxically suggests, a new type of universal deflector or ‘scapegoat’ in the sense of Nazis standing in as “the *Lumpenproletariat* of contemporary culture because they – and increasingly, they alone – provide a repository of villains that can be vilified and dispensed with without fear of offense.”<sup>73</sup> This view is also generally in line with what Rosenfeld calls the *normalization* of the Nazi theme, a point that is also central to this investigation and which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

However one may judge the individual factors that have contributed to the rise of the Nazi theme in popular culture in general and in Alternate History in particular, its use is unquestionably closely tied to the memory of National Socialism as a whole. In the light of the majority of scholarship on this topic, which one and all acknowledges this link at least to some degree, Jörg Helbig’s lone assertion must appear strange. He argues that, for authors of Alternate Histories, the Second World War represents no basis for historiographically relevant inquiries, but rather realist variant of absurdist theatre.<sup>74</sup> Winthrop-Young, for example, suggests that “while alternate history revolves around issues that are of less concern to other genres, they are close to the concerns of historiography. It appears that the evolution of the Third Reich in official history and in alternate history have followed fairly similar paths.”<sup>75</sup> According to his analysis, gradual shifts in the interpretation of National Socialism in the field of historiography can be said to correlate with different, successive phases of representation in Alternate History, starting with the idea of a victorious Nazi society as “decelerated [and] resolutely premodern,” and moving via the image of a “socially regressive dictatorship state that usurps, fosters, and unleashes the powers of up-to-date science by trying to reconcile a premodern blood-and-soil ideology with modern technology” – or what can be called: “reactionary modernism” – ultimately to the conceptualization of “a society that, above and beyond all lip service paid to reactionary ideals,

---

<sup>72</sup> Bernhard Giesen, *Triumph and Trauma* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 142.

<sup>73</sup> Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, “The Third Reich in Alternate History: Aspects of a Genre-Specific Depiction of Nazi Culture,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 39, no. 5 (10, 2006), 881.

<sup>74</sup> Helbig, *Der parahistorische Roman*, 222.

<sup>75</sup> Winthrop-Young, “Third Reich,” 892.

has enthroned and fully unleashed the destructive powers of technology.”<sup>76</sup> Rosenfeld identifies a similar set of phases in the development of Alternate Histories of the Third Reich, but links these much more immediately to the category of memory.<sup>77</sup> By analyzing these phases, he suggests that Alternate Histories follow an overall normalizing trend, that is a movement towards a de-demonization of Nazism that corresponds not only with other areas of popular culture but also with concurrent developments within memory discourses. I will revisit the details of what is meant by the term ‘normalization’ in the last part of this chapter. Although this is not explicitly mentioned, Rosenfeld’s phase model can be seen as an elaboration of that developed by Norbert Schaffeld with regard to British novels dealing with the Third Reich overall, who also argues that there is a noticeable historical shift in the way in which Nazism is portrayed in literature in general and Alternate History in particular.<sup>78</sup> However, in the case of Britain, Schaffeld merely sees this development as one from nationalistic cautionary tales to a more self-critical expression of ‘British pessimism.’ Harald Husemann concurs, writing exclusively on British Alternate History narratives, by stating that “the third generation of authors consists of the pseudo-documentarists to whom personal experience and the study of historical records have given a pessimistic view of Britain’s gift for self-regeneration through popular resistance after a German conquest.”<sup>79</sup> In contrast, Rosenfeld’s approach is not only more international and comparative, it is also far more nuanced in identifying a wider, much more differentiated array of different historical phases. It will become clear in the following, however, that such a model is not universally compatible with the commemorative developments in Germany.

In any event, the Third Reich constitutes the single most prolific topic for Alternate History fictions in the past 66 years. Rosenfeld’s study alone, published in 2005, discusses a grand total of 116 narratives of alternate versions of the Nazi era across a variety of different media, with the author pointing his readers to Robert Schmunk’s *Uchronia: The Alternate History List*,<sup>80</sup> the largest annotated genre bibliography to date, in an explicit acknowledgement

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 891.

<sup>77</sup> See especially Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 22-25.

<sup>78</sup> See Schaffeld, *Darstellung*.

<sup>79</sup> Harald Husemann, “When William Came; if Adolf had Come: Speculative Novels on the Military Conquest of Britain by Germany,” in *Anglistentag 1984: Vorträge*, ed. Manfred Pfister (Gießen: Hoffmann, 1984), 349.

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.uchronia.net>

of the fact that even his selection is anything but complete.<sup>81</sup> In the past six years, the production of Alternate Histories of the Third Reich, the Second World War and the Holocaust has continued – a small fraction of the stories that have been published in this time will be discussed in the following chapters of this study.

One central innovation of Rosenfeld's study has been the systematized grouping of the absolute majority of these stories into four overarching themes, namely "1) the Nazis win World War II; 2) Hitler escapes death in 1945 and survives in hiding well into the postwar era; 3) Hitler is removed from the world historical stage either before or some time after becoming the Führer; 4) the Holocaust is completed, avenged, or undone altogether."<sup>82</sup> These themes can indeed be applied to almost all Alternate Histories of the Third Reich, across national and historical boundaries. Despite being separated by more than a decade as well as the Atlantic Ocean, highly popular texts like Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), Len Deighton's *SS-GB* (1978) and Otto Basil's *Wenn das der Führer wüßte* (1966) all investigate the ramifications of a victorious Third Reich (or, in Dick's case, a victorious Axis) for their respective countries. Tales of Hitler's survival can be found in as diverse sources as Philippe van Rjndt's novel *The Trial of Adolf Hitler* (1978), several Monty Python skits throughout the early 1970s and Armin Mueller-Stahl's film *Gespräch mit dem Biest* (1996). Texts like Hans Pleschinski's "Ausflug" (1983), Stephen Fry's *Making History* (1996) and Wolfgang Brenner's *Führerlos* (2006) represent thematically similar speculations about the disappearance of Hitler prior to the Second World War. And, finally, alternate versions or outcomes of the Holocaust feature prominently in texts like Thomas Ziegler's short story "Eine Kleinigkeit für uns Reinkarnauten" (1990), Martin Amis' much-discussed novel *Time's Arrow: or The Nature of the Offence* (1991) and Daniel Quinn's *After Dachau* (2001).

However, while these themes are indubitably applicable to a wide variety of texts, their capacity for providing a framework for a more nuanced differentiation between the nationally specific discursive settings in which such narratives were produced and consumed is arguably limited. Without question, speculative accounts about alternate versions of National Socialism, the Second World War and a myriad of issues that are situated in the historical context of this era are of central significance in Britain, the United States and Germany alike. But while Rosenfeld

---

<sup>81</sup> See Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 404n52.

<sup>82</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 13.

certainly makes an effort to illustrate the differences in the function these similar themes fulfil in their respective national contexts and does focus on the radically different perspectives from which they are addressed in the German context specifically,<sup>83</sup> the strict adherence to these four themes serves as a hindrance for an adequate differentiation between the form and function of Alternate Histories of the Third Reich conceived from a winning and a losing perspective.

All Alternate Histories that deal with the legacy of National Socialism can be said to directly relate to memory discourses which are external to the realm of literature. In this sense, it needs to be taken into account that the memory of the winning nations involved in the Second World War – in this context most centrally Great Britain and the United States – differs fundamentally from that of the losing ones, that is: Germany. To be sure, Rosenfeld's approach is anything but oblivious of this fact, but it nonetheless performs a certain amount of levelling by including texts from all three of these nations in the same categories. In contrast, I suggest that the radical differences between the role that the memory of Nazism has played and still plays for Britons and Americans, as both contemporaries and descendants of those who successfully opposed it, and Germans, as those who have borne or inherited the responsibility of the perpetrators, merit to be reflected by an entirely different set of categories. These categories or themes, which provide the structure for the upcoming chapters of this study, are aligned much more immediately with corresponding themes in popular and official memory discourses in postwar Germany and are therefore arguably better suited to highlight the inherent interdependencies between the two. I propose a model of three themes into which especially German Alternate Histories can be sensibly grouped.<sup>84</sup> These are: The universalization of National Socialism, the motif of the 'Good German' or counterfactual stories of fundamental German resistance, and narratives of alternate Holocausts. The last category remains quite similar to Rosenfeld's fourth, under the heading of which he also discusses a number of the same texts; however, it is especially this theme that serves to illustrate national differences.

The first category comprises texts which share the unifying characteristic of depicting Nazism as an ahistorical phenomenon: that is, texts in which the concrete historical and socio-

---

<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 31.

<sup>84</sup> As I will show in the corresponding chapters, British and American narratives can also be included in this model. However, this will be done mainly in order to highlight the functional differences between the accounts of the winners and the losers of WWII, rather than suggest additional similarities. Also, this only applies to two of the three categories.

political foundations of real National Socialism are either generalized, omitted or transposed to another geographical or historical locus. Two examples, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, are Stephen Fry's *Making History* and Dimitris Chorafas' relatively obscure novel *Samuel Hitler* (1973), published in German under the pseudonym Sissini. These two texts serve particularly well to illustrate the potential of the first new category for the study of Alternate History as documents of memory. In Rosenfeld's model, both texts would be subsumed under the theme of "alternate Hitlers."<sup>85</sup> Fry's novel speculates about a world in which, with the help of a very limited time travel device, Hitler's existence is erased from history by means of introducing a powerful contraceptive into the water supply of Braunau am Inn, Hitler's actual birth place. As a direct result, history turns out even worse, with a much more charismatic leader emerging in Hitler's stead, who leads Germany to considerably greater success. Rosenfeld reads this as apologetic of 'real' history in the sense that, for him, imagining a world in which the absence of the historical Führer leads to even more catastrophic results, always contains a validation of the contemporary status quo and the Allied war effort. However, Fry's story can also be read as being less about Britain than, in fact, about Germany itself and, in such a reading, can serve a distinctly different purpose. By removing Hitler from the equation but showing the rise of National Socialism as not only unaffected but actually accelerated and amplified, Fry's narrative effectively subverts the resilient myth of Nazism having been thought up and carried out primarily, if not exclusively, by a small number of individual madmen. Instead it highlights the deep-seated socio-political causes of the Nazis' rise to power and the widespread appeal of their ideology (and practice) for the general population of Germany. In this light, speculations like Fry's universalize the phenomenon of National Socialism merely on the surface, while actually shifting the focus onto its historical roots.

Sissini's novel, on the other hand, works quite differently. In general, an approach like the one exemplified by Fry is absent from German Alternate History. Wolfgang Brenner's *Führerlos* and Dieter Kühn's collection of short stories *Ich war Hitlers Schutzengel* (2010), also show the removal of the Führer from history at a relatively early stage as more or less inconsequential, but they do so with a different outcome overall. Sissini's text, however, is a strange beast indeed but nonetheless serves to highlight the intricacies of the universalizing trend in German commemorative culture. In *Samuel Hitler*, the Führer is not erased from history in the strictest

---

<sup>85</sup> In fact, Rosenfeld does discuss Fry's text in some detail from this perspective. Sissini's novel is not mentioned.

sense, but is instead: a Jew. The novel develops an intricate speculation about how the world would have turned out if Hitler had not, in fact, been history's greatest and most murderous anti-Semite, but actually a Jew himself. The story spans from the Führer's birth far into the reader's present, in which Hitler lives on in the shape of a Führer machine, a computer programmed with the ideas and ideals of Samuel Hitler himself. The alterations in this fictional world do not only allow Germany to achieve much greater success in the war – Sissini's central theory is that a philo-Semitic Germany could have retained all the brilliant Jewish minds who, in actuality, defected to the Allied side to save themselves and their people from the Nazis' homicidal fervor. It also relegates the militant anti-Semitism to Germany's enemies, who are now effectively waging war against a Jewish state and glosses over the historical roots of the widespread anti-Jewish sentiments in Germany, as even the suggestion that a Jew could have been elected to the highest German political office in the early 1930s is highly questionable from a historically informed perspective. By these means, the narrative reinforces – in contrast to Fry's notion, for instance – the idea that all it would have taken to prevent fascism from taking root in Germany would have been the replacement of (the real) Hitler by a different, better leader. This represents a central tenet of a normalizing approach to German memory, which will be examined in greater detail in the last section of this chapter, namely the delegation of responsibility by means of a universalization that implies, in this example, that central aspects of historical National Socialism were not specific to Germany and the particular historical setting in which they occurred. Similar approaches will be examined in the remaining texts in the second chapter. Overall, the four texts analyzed in this first category would fall into three different categories in Rosenfeld's model. Here, it becomes evident that re-organizing them into themes which correspond more closely to specific axioms of German memory discourses is beneficial for understanding Alternate History and memory as inherently related – not only where the German context is concerned, but also to highlight the contrast between this and other national perspectives.

The following chapters are arranged in order of descending compatibility of the suggested categories with non-German texts, but ascending importance for highlighting the link between Alternate History and memory. That is, while the theme of universalization can still be applied, albeit with differing results, to English and American texts as well, already the second theme, the disproportionate emphasis on the 'Good German,' focuses more on the differences between German and Anglo-American stories and less on their similarities. For this reason, the third chapter only discusses one non-German example: Robert Harris' bestselling novel

*Fatherland* (1992). Like the German texts included in the same category, *Fatherland* presents a German protagonist who risks life and limb to oppose National Socialist rule. Arguably, Harris' Xavier March represents the most classic incarnation of the 'Good German' of all the stories on this list, because he is not only initially a collaborator whose conscience gets the better of him when he learns about the (past) evils of the regime he supported (i.e. the Holocaust), he also metonymically personifies the well-refuted myth that even relatively high-ranking officials, let alone the general populace, actually had any knowledge of the genocidal policies and practices of the Nazi elite. On the surface, the German texts representing this theme take a comparatively subtler approach. However, when analyzing them with a focus on their function within their respective commemorative settings, the differences between British and German narratives shifts considerably. Despite being set exclusively in Germany and featuring a German protagonist, Harris' novel must always also be read in the context of British memory discourses. This accounts for the devalorization of some of the most central tenets of postwar memory in Britain, namely the myth of the "Finest Hour," but also, somewhat diametrically opposed, the criticism of Britain's prewar policy of appeasement. German texts featuring the motif of the 'good German,' on the other hand, must instead be read first and foremost as relating to German memory culture, suggesting a very different interpretation of this theme. In the context of German normalization, stories of heroic Germans, resisting or directly subverting the National Socialist regime, fulfil a decidedly different discursive function, namely the replacement of guilt with a disproportionate centrality of conscientious objection. In these texts, alternate Nazi Germany does therefore not represent, as Winthrop-Young suggests for many Alternate Histories of the Third Reich, "a society in which the destructive energy of the system is apparent in the commitment or fanaticism of each and all of its representatives."<sup>86</sup> From this perspective, both German texts discussed in the third chapter exhibit significant similarities with each other and ultimately differ considerably from non-German examples which follow comparable plot lines. These factors will be highlighted in a close reading of these three exemplary stories.

The third category, the theme of German victimization, and the selection of texts used to illustrate it, are particularly effective in highlighting the specificity of German Alternate Histories. Central narrative devices, such as the infamous Morgenthau plan, represent 'alternate Holocausts' in which the victim-perpetrator relationship has been reversed to varying degrees.

---

<sup>86</sup> Winthrop-Young, "Third Reich," 883.



Not coincidentally, in *Alternate Histories of the Third Reich*, this is an exclusively German phenomenon. In all three novels analyzed in the third chapter, Germans have in some way, shape or form become victimized themselves and this aspect represents a prominent and consequential plot device. Whether, as in Christoph Ransmayr's *Morbus Kitahara* (1995), the Morgenthau plan is, more or less explicitly, invoked to illustrate the postwar hardships of the German (and Austrian) population; or, as in Thomas Ziegler's *Die Stimmen der Nacht* (1983), the devastation of Germany has caused the survivors to flee and rebuild their nation elsewhere; or, finally, as in Oliver Henkel's *Im Jahre Ragnarök* (2009), the theme of German suffering functions as a ubiquitous backdrop for a separate main plot: all these narratives can be linked to a third central element of relativist German postwar memory discourses. Stories of German victimization during or after the war emerged almost immediately following the end of the Second World War, but have arguably increased in popularity since reunification and, as will be shown in the last section of this chapter, have also undergone a qualitative change in the context of an even more recent later discursive shifts – I will expand on this point in the following. While this theme is by no means exclusive to Alternate History, the discursive characteristics of the genre lend themselves exceedingly well to promote this narrative. The third and last chapter will discuss this dynamic in detail.

### 2.3 COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Centrally implied by the overall prominence and the national and historical specificities of the Nazi theme in Alternate History is the importance of memory and identity or, more pertinently, of collective memory and national identity for the genre as a whole. Jörg Helbig states: “Die Angst um den Verlust der nationalen Identität spricht aus den meisten parahistorischen Romanen.”<sup>87</sup> This assessment indeed holds true for a considerable number of Alternate Histories. However, in the context of American and British allohistorical fictions one can discern a relatively clear line between conservative and progressive narratives in this regard. Only the former are immediately concerned with the maintenance or restitution of a positive, unifying national identity, whereas the latter more often focus directly on questioning categories of national pride and unity.<sup>88</sup> In the context of German postwar Alternate Histories, this line of

---

<sup>87</sup> Helbig, *Der parahistorische Roman*, 102.

<sup>88</sup> Whether or not the means to this end are always necessarily progressive in and of themselves remains debatable

demarcation is considerably less rigid or, as will be established in the following, hardly applicable at all. The initial question, however, is how collective memory, national identity and Alternate History are connected. To this end, one first needs to ask: What is collective memory?

First coined by Maurice Halbwachs, the category of collective memory, especially as it pertains to the issues at hand, underwent considerable revisions in the subsequent decades, in particular through the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann.<sup>89</sup> In almost all of the different conceptualizations of the category, however, collective memory has been differentiated from individual forms of memory. Jeffrey Olick sums up and critiques Halbwachs' original distinction, which is still at the heart of most newer models:

Collective memory in Halbwachs [...] indicates at least two distinct, and not obviously complementary, sorts of phenomena: socially framed individual memories and collective commemorative representations and mnemonic traces. [...] The problem is that these two sorts of phenomena to which the term collective memory can refer [...] seem to be of radically distinct ontological orders and to require different epistemological and methodological strategies.<sup>90</sup>

While Olick may be correct in pointing out that these two different forms of memory originate from “distinct ontological orders,” and that they need not necessarily be complementary in terms of their function within any given set of national memory discourses, the field of literature provides a setting in which their potential interconnectedness is especially apparent. Taking a look at German postwar and post-unification literary production, in which Alternate History certainly does not play the most prominent role, and its relationship with memory, it becomes clear that so-called *Väter-* and *Enkelliteratur* has emerged as an important genre since the 1960s.<sup>91</sup> The texts in this genre, while one and all dealing with family histories and thus, on the

---

nonetheless (e.g., effectively relativizing the deeds and policies of the Nazis as a means of criticizing British or American postwar society), as the previous sections have shown.

<sup>89</sup> See Halbwachs, *Collective Memory* and Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992). See also various references to Aleida Assmann's contributions throughout this dissertation.

<sup>90</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 20-21. Olick himself suggests the term “social memory” for the latter phenomenon to account for the diversity of factors involved. While this suggestion is certainly not without merit and well worth considering, I will stick with the more widely recognized “collective memory” in the context of this study.

<sup>91</sup> For a detailed overview over the development of this genre, see Mathias Brandstädter, *Folgeschäden: Kontext, narrative Strukturen und Verlaufsformen der Väterliteratur 1960 bis 2008: Bestimmung eines Genres* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010). For a more focused discussion of the more recent *Enkelliteratur*, see Mila Ganeva, “From West-German *Väterliteratur* to Post-Wall *Enkelliteratur*: The End of the Generation Conflict in

surface, with individual memories, display a particularly close link to the developments of the collective memory culture of Germany in the same timeframe. Starting out as relatively critical assessments of the personal histories of the authors' fathers and their involvement with National Socialism, eventually a gradual shift can be observed, not exclusively but most distinctively with the move from the first to the second postwar generation, towards a greater understanding of the perpetrators' actions and a focus on their own trauma rather than on that of their victims. That this shift correlates with the extra-literary developments of memory culture and how seemingly individual engagements with the memory – or, more precisely, the postmemory<sup>92</sup> – of the Third Reich and the Second World War are tied to mnemonic narratives which transcend the individual context, has been shown in great detail in the seminal study *Opa war kein Nazi*.<sup>93</sup> It gauges the approaches of the generation of the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators and collaborators to their grandfathers' past and comes to similar conclusions as large parts of the scholarship on *Väter- and Enkelliteratur*: There appears to be an ongoing shift of the primary interest away from the victims of Nazi Germany and towards the German perpetrators and a corresponding tendency to empathize with the latter instead of the former. This trend constitutes a central aspect of the normalization of collective memory in Germany. In order to properly understand this category, however, the question that first needs to be answered is what is meant by the term “collective,” when one speaks of collective memory. An excellent, workable definition is provided by Jan Assmann in *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*:

Unter einer kollektiven oder Wir-Identität verstehen wir das Bild, das eine Gruppe von sich aufbaut und mit dem sich deren Mitglieder identifizieren. Kollektive Identifikation ist eine Frage der Identifikation seitens der beteiligten Individuen. Es gibt sie nicht ‚an sich‘, sondern immer nur in dem Maße, wie sich bestimmte Individuen zu ihr bekennen. Sie ist so stark oder schwach, wie sie im Denken und Handeln der Gruppenmitglieder lebendig ist und deren Denken und Handeln zu motivieren vermag.<sup>94</sup>

---

Marcel Beyer's *Spione* and Tanja Dücker's *Himmelskörper*,” *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 43, no. 2 (2007), 149-162.

<sup>92</sup> The term “postmemory” was originally coined by Marianne Hirsch in her book *Family Frames* (1997) and denotes the specificity of memory debates which no longer include the participation of what Hegel calls “original historians,” i.e., those who have witnessed the events in question first-hand. I will elaborate more on this term and its significance for this investigation in the next section of this chapter.

<sup>93</sup> Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall, *Opa war kein Nazi: Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2002).

<sup>94</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 132.

Similar to Benedict Anderson's model of imagined communities, a collective, for Assmann, is thus fundamentally defined through discourse, that is through the voluntary, albeit not necessarily conscious, association of individuals into a larger group in accordance with certain metaphysical denominators (nation, culture, religion, etc.).<sup>95</sup> For both Jan and Aleida Assmann, as for Anderson, this formative and sustaining discursive process is centrally influenced by media, thus relating back to the realm of literature, especially where memory can still be considered "communicative" rather than exclusively "cultural."<sup>96</sup> While in the context of this investigation both categories – "collective" and "memory" – will be used somewhat liberally, the heightened significance of literature for the formation of both is of central importance. Especially with regard to German memory discourses focusing on the Third Reich, which currently still fall in their entirety into the category of communicative memory, I understand the boundaries between individual and collective memory as fluid or, in Olick's terms, highly complementary. The relationship between literature, in the context of which Alternate History represents a special case, and official memory narratives I understand as a dialectical interaction in which the individual and the collective are inextricably intertwined. This will become clearer in the following sections and chapters.

But, in more general terms, what are the functions of collective memory in a national context? Hannes Heer and Ruth Wodak describe it as follows:

Ziel von Vergangenheitspolitik wäre demnach die Sinnkonstruktion nationaler Vergangenheit. Ihre Aufgabe ist es, über Brüche der Geschichte hinweg, Kontinuität des kollektiven Selbstbildes, Integration der wichtigsten gesellschaftlichen Gruppen sowie eine an Akzeptanz orientierte Repräsentation nach außen sicherzustellen. Das Ergebnis dieses Akts der Sinnkonstruktion, der nicht einmalig und friedlich, sondern permanent und konfliktgeladen verläuft, der nicht per Anordnung, sondern in einem kommunikativen Prozess erfolgt, wird eine erzählte Geschichte sein, die konsensfähig geworden ist, d.h. als verbindendes nationales Narrativ dienen kann.<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

<sup>96</sup> See Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999). Both Assmanns divide collective memory into communicative and cultural memory. The former includes memory debates within roughly the first three generations after the remembered event, while the latter denotes the archeological accessing of collective memories which are further removed from the present.

<sup>97</sup> Hannes Heer and Ruth Wodak, "Kollektives Gedächtnis. Vergangenheitspolitik. Nationales Narrativ," in *Wie Geschichte gemacht wird*, ed. Hannes Heer (Wien: Czernin, 2003), 19.

Notably, Heer and Wodak do not speak explicitly of collective memory in this passage, but of “Vergangenheitspolitik.” They do not, however, use this term to exclusively denote officially sanctioned or mandated engagements with the past but to emphasize the communicative nature of negotiations of memory in the production of national identity. In other words, those collective memories work or, rather, can be harnessed as national narratives which according to Heer and Wodak commonly possess a “glättende and entschärfende Struktur” and are, as such, more geared towards a relativization of contentious aspects of the past rather than a radical working-through of them.<sup>98</sup> This crucial difference is fundamentally reflected in the German debates over *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* versus *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*, which has been most prominently discussed by Theodor W. Adorno in his seminal essay “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit,” in which he criticizes the relativizing direction of overcoming the past: “Der Gestus, es solle alles vergessen und vergeben sein, der demjenigen anstünde, dem Unrecht widerfuhr, wird von den Parteigängern derer praktiziert, die es begingen.”<sup>99</sup>

Alon Confino writes that the “beauty of memory is that it is imprecise enough to be appropriated by unexpected hands,” which he considers to be a positive aspect of the discursive nature of memory and memory politics.<sup>100</sup> But this categorical optimism becomes somewhat more questionable when taking into account that these “unexpected hands” – essentially already a reference to the category of counter-memory, which I will discuss in greater detail in the following section – may appropriate and (re-)write history in a way which effectively undermines a critical engagement with collective memory in Adorno’s sense. In the German context this is best illustrated by the continually increasing tendency to understand not only the memory of the victims of National Socialism but also that of its participants and their descendents as a trauma narrative. This is the case not only for official commemorative practices (such as the ongoing debate about the *Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen*, fostering a representation of, among others, the deportation of Jews by the Nazis and the expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe after the war as commensurable events) or memory literature (from the early

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 10.2 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 555. First published in Theodor W. Adorno, *Eingriffe: Neun kritische Modelle* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963).

<sup>100</sup> Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *American Historical Review* 102 (1997), 1403.

'Zeitzeugenschaft' of *Trümmerliteratur* to the contemporary postmemory approaches of *Enkelliteratur*), but also for prominent scholarly debates. Aleida Assmann, for instance, has posited that the existence of the so-called "Kollektivschuldthese," according to which the whole of the German collective could be seen as complicit in the crimes of the National Socialist regime, should be understood as a "Trauma, das die Anamnese von Schuld blockiert und damit die deutsche Erinnerungsgeschichte von ihrem Anfang an verformt hat."<sup>101</sup> But while it is certainly true, as Karoline von Oppen writes, that "[r]emembering German suffering [...] did not always coexist easily with remembering Germany's victims, suggesting that the process of normalization is [...] far from inclusive,"<sup>102</sup> recent years have unarguably seen a greater proliferation of and a greater acceptance for popular narratives of German suffering, presented either alongside or entirely in the absence of a thematization of the suffering caused by Germans. According to Robert Moeller, "this vision of the past [...] transformed *Germans* into the victims of the *Nazis*' war and attributed responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism to a handful of faceless individuals, not a thoroughly fascist social order."<sup>103</sup> Especially interesting in relation to Alternate History, however, is the fact that central tenets of this presentation of the historical development of collective memory in Germany have been refuted by other historians as pure myth. Norbert Frei, for instance, refers to the "Kollektivschuldthese" as "im wesentlichen eingebildet,"<sup>104</sup> suggesting that it constitutes a category invented within German postwar memory discourse itself in order to facilitate the narrative of a victimization of Germans not only during, but also after the war. Others have cited empirical evidence likewise relegating the idea of a tabooization of German suffering and a widespread silence on this issue in the immediate postwar years to the realm of invention and pointed out that, in fact, the fate of civilian casualties among the German population under the aegis of National Socialism, as well as that of German POWs and expellees following its demise, actually became the subject of public debate and

---

<sup>101</sup> Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit - Geschichtsversessenheit: vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999), 117.

<sup>102</sup> Karoline von Oppen, "(Un)Sägliche Vergleiche': What Germans Remembered (and Forgot) in Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s," in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, eds. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), 178. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>103</sup> Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 49. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>104</sup> Norbert Frei, *1945 und wir: Das Dritte Reich im Bewusstsein der Deutschen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005), 155.

literary production much sooner than the fate of the Nazi's victims.<sup>105</sup>

In this light, Valentina Adami's suggestion makes sense that "collective memory represents the past in the light of the needs of the present and selects, reconstructs and organizes the events according to the will of some social group – usually the dominant one – endowing them with political meaning."<sup>106</sup> Helmut Schmitz concurs by saying that the "ubiquity of issues of collective memory and collective identity is thus part of a crisis of the self-assessment of the present in which history increasingly becomes instrumentalised in order to stabilise a group identity."<sup>107</sup> The centrality of this presentist aspect once more bespeaks the inherent link between collective memory and Alternate History. Like Alternate History, collective memory, in this understanding, engages with historical material not primarily from the vantage point of analyzing the past for its own sake, but rather in order to access it as a workable narrative for present discourse, in accordance with a specific agenda. At the same time, certain central elements of history cannot simply be erased in non-fictional iterations of collective memory. Most importantly for the issue at hand, Stephen Brockmann points out that "Auschwitz continues to be at the core of German national identity, whether individual Germans like it or not."<sup>108</sup> In other words, the challenge for memory narratives aimed at re-establishing a viable form of national identity is not to negate the existence or even the importance of pivotal elements of historical knowledge, but to reframe them in such a way that allows their appropriation for their respective agendas. Outright denial of the Holocaust, for instance, has never been more than a far-right fringe phenomenon, and due to the sheer abundance of empirical evidence and survivors' accounts that attest to the contrary, even the refusal to acknowledge its significance for contemporary debates about German collective identity has proven untenable. In contrast, the recontextualization of the Holocaust within a narrative of universal commensurability of suffering has been considerably more successful in establishing itself as a general trend within postwar German memory discourse:

---

<sup>105</sup> See Aleida Assmann, Berger, Schmitz, Wittlinger et al.

<sup>106</sup> Valentina Adami, *Trauma Studies and Literature: Martin Amis's Time's Arrow as Trauma Fiction* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 29.

<sup>107</sup> Schmitz, *On Their Own Terms*, 5.

<sup>108</sup> Stephen Brockmann, "Normalization': Has Helmut Kohl's Vision been Realized?" in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, eds. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), 27.

Whereas actively denying the importance of the past for the present policy proved just the opposite (that is, the more one denied the centrality of the past, the clearer it was how central the past was), dutiful performance on segregated occasions and in special places achieved the goal perhaps less dramatically than hoped but, in the end, more effectively.<sup>109</sup>

As suggested by Anton Blok, who directly links the creation of a new type of nationalism to the breaking down of “overarching state structures [in Central and Eastern Europe] which have constrained or tried to eradicate those collective memories in the name of ‘history,’”<sup>110</sup> it is by no means exclusively official memory narratives which effect this shift. While it is true, as a number of critics have argued, that official, politically sanctioned commemorative practices and especially dedicated sites of memory have played a central role in advancing an “Entkonkretisierung” of the engagement with the German past, non-official and individual contributions to the changing narrative have, for good reason, always been an integral part of this development.<sup>111</sup> As Olick posits, in “complex society, and in democratic societies at least, the space where such collection [of memory] occurs is the public sphere, where private and official come together in new ways and where contestation is the rule.”<sup>112</sup>

However, it must be noted that the fact that collective memory exists in a constant state of contestation or, at least, negotiation, should not be taken to imply that no dominant narratives can form under these circumstances. In fact, the opposite is true for most national memory discourses today. The struggle between rival approaches to engaging with the past is almost always one for “Definitionsmacht” and the dominance of one mnemonic model over another or, for that matter, several other counter-memories can commonly be identified in most cases, at least temporarily. Heidemarie Uhl argues that “the objects of cultural memory first and foremost bespeak social power structures, indicating which groups have succeeded in entrenching their individual

---

<sup>109</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, “What Does It Mean to Normalize the Past?: Official Memory in German Politics since 1989,” in *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 280.

<sup>110</sup> Anton Blok, “Reflections on ‘Making History,’” in *Other Histories*, ed. Kirsten Hastrup (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 125.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Sabine Moller, *Die Entkonkretisierung der NS-Herrschaft in der Ära Kohl: Die Neue Wache, das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, das Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Hannover: Offizin, 1998).

<sup>112</sup> Olick, *Regret*, 188.



conception of history as the universally valid and binding memory of a community, a nation.”<sup>113</sup> But while social and, along with it, discursive power is unquestionably a factor in the process of memory formation in general and the establishment of dominance of one memory narrative over any given number of others, this correlation is not as clear-cut as Uhl’s statement suggests. Under certain conditions – and this refers back to Anton Blok’s relatively recent example of the reshaping of nationalism in Central and Eastern European countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union – it can be precisely through the proliferation of a collectivized counter-narrative that social power is achieved in the first place. In the case of postwar Germany and, especially, Germany after reunification, which has provided an additional repertoire of conflicting memory narratives,<sup>114</sup> the continual shift away from a memory culture primarily focused on the guilt of the Germans and towards an emphasis on their suffering both during and after the war, represents a universalizing influence that can also be understood as a counter-memory. However, in this case it is highly debatable whether the social and discursive power that this narrative currently possesses did indeed originate from a previously excluded position or whether it was not, in fact, always an influential undercurrent in postwar Germany. After all, the proliferation of the tabooization myth can arguably be said to generate a misleading image in which, effectively, the whole of the German population features as a marginalized group. Either way, there is a notable distinction between such developments within German collective memory and in the context of British and American discourses, in which positive narratives of these nations’ involvement in World War II have retained their relative dominance and revisionist interventions represent fringe phenomena. In contrast, the re-evaluation of some of the central tenets of German memory discourse has, especially in recent years, begun to gradually replace previously accepted notions about the past – a movement in which individual and official engagements with history are indeed fundamentally complementing each other. At the same time, these revised approaches nonetheless still purport today to be marginalized within German memory discourse as a whole, maintaining their status as contested counter-memories irrespective of their growing influence. Therefore, in order to better understand the function of these narratives, among which Alternate

---

<sup>113</sup> Heidmarie Uhl, “Memory Culture - Politics of History: Some Reflections on Memory and Society,” in *Politics of Collective Memory: Cultural Patterns of Commemorative Practices in Post-War Europe*, eds. Sophie Wahnich, Barbara Lášticová and Andrej Findor (Wien: LIT, 2008), 63.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Konrad Jarausch, “Normalization or Renationalization?: On Reinterpreting the German Past,” in *Rewriting the German Past: History and Identity in the New Germany*, eds. Reinhard Alter and Peter Monteath (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1997), 23.

Histories of the Third Reich represent a particularly interesting example, the category of counter-memory itself needs to be examined further.

## 2.4 FROM COUNTER-MEMORY TO ALTERNATE MEMORY

According to Rosenfeld, “the dialectical relationship between official and counter-memories helps to define the overall character of a society’s historical consciousness.”<sup>115</sup> But what is really meant by the term *counter-memories*? Within the context of postmodern sensibilities, the term counter-memory commonly bears a predominantly, if not exclusively, positive connotation as a form of critical historical consciousness that serves to effectively and efficiently question any notion of objective historical truth. In “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Michel Foucault writes of “effective history” (a term used here synonymously with counter-memory):

“Effective” history differs from traditional history in being without constants [...] History becomes “effective” to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being – as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. “Effective” history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial [sic] ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity.<sup>116</sup>

This dictum has been echoed, with or without explicit reference to the category of counter-memory, by a vast array of critics, including Hayden White and Elisabeth Wesseling, and countless authors of postmodern history fiction. However, such all-but-universal condemnations of the idea of historical truth are commonly based on two central misconceptions: they falsely equate objectivity with teleology and, more importantly, they assign an intrinsic, necessarily positive value to anti-canonical approaches to history. For Foucault, the effect of such radical approaches – in the most literal sense of the word (“uproot”) – represents the epitome of critical history, which he explicitly posits as an imperative: “The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must be systematically dismantled.”<sup>117</sup> However, the line between productive,

---

<sup>115</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 17.

<sup>116</sup> Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 153-154.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 153.

subversive counter-memory and reactionary revisionism is thin. As Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn point out in their introduction to a special issue of the journal *Representations* on the topic of *Memory and Counter-Memory*, “a private fetish or public injunction to forget... are [also] forms of counter-memory.”<sup>118</sup> In this sense, the pivotal questions “by whom, where, in which context, [and] against what”<sup>119</sup> collective memory is constructed can and must not only be applied to official versions of history and memory discourses, but also to discursive interventions that deviate from these mainstream accounts as well. Significantly, Davis and Starn also highlight the distinction between private and public commemoration and argue, as I have done in the previous section, that both types of mnemonic contributions can generally produce similar effects. In fact, the collectivization of individual commemoration is an integral part of the process of replacing one (dominant) memory narrative with another (seemingly marginalized) one. Norbert Frei mentions chancellor Gerhard Schröder’s public invocation of his father, who fell as a soldier of the Wehrmacht in Romania during World War II, as an example of this movement and states that “[w]er als Staatsmann in diesem Modus des Privaten über die Geschichte spricht, [...] der wirkt auch mit an einer Umcodierung der Vergangenheit.”<sup>120</sup> George Lipsitz affirmatively describes this dynamic as follows:

Counter-memory is a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal. Unlike historical narratives that begin with the totality of human existence and then locate specific actions and events within that totality, counter-memory starts with the particular and the specific and then builds outward toward a total story. Counter-memory looks to the past for the hidden histories of those excluded from dominant narratives. But unlike mythical narratives that seek to detach events and actions from the fabric of any larger history, counter-memory demands revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past.<sup>121</sup>

While Lipsitz’ overall assessment of the mechanics of counter-memory is certainly to the point, the question is whether the described movement of counter-memories from the bottom up, as opposed to the top-down direction of traditional historiography, necessarily precludes a

---

<sup>118</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, “Introduction,” *Representations*, no. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), 2.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Frei, *1945 und wir*, 17.

<sup>121</sup> George Lipsitz, “Myth, History, and Counter-Memory,” in *Politics and the Muse: Studies in the Politics of Recent American Literature*, ed. Adam J. Sorkin (Bowling Green: Popular, 1989), 162.

‘mythical’ nature, both as a starting point and as an end result. Especially postmemory accounts that function as counter-memories call this position into question. Postmemory, as defined by Marianne Hirsch, signifies “the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated.”<sup>122</sup> However, Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove contend that while postmemory “might provide continuity, tradition, and identity in an otherwise fractured and fragmented [...] history, the fictionalizing perspective of the belated generation often succumbs to the temptations of sentimentalizing narrative and thus revises history from a subjective perspective.”<sup>123</sup> This sentimentalizing element can be identified for a considerable amount of postwar memory narratives. It is crucial to note, however, that its manifestations are diametrically opposed in Anglo-American and German memory discourses.

In British and American postwar memory culture accounts which valorize the actions during the war and focus primarily on the sacrifices of their compatriots represent the dominant narratives in the winning nations of World War II. While in the United States the conflict between interventionism and isolationism was fought somewhat more fiercely – with the ultimate discursive victory clearly belonging to the affirmation of the American intervention, nonetheless – the British narrative of the fight against Nazism as the country’s “Finest Hour” has maintained its widely unchallenged status as the dominant interpretation of the British involvement in the war. The German situation, on the other hand, is characterized by the opposite development. Due to the untenability of a positive narrative immediately following the war, arguably effected more by international pressures than a truly widespread acknowledgement of responsibility among the general population, the dominant German memory narrative in the early postwar years was centrally defined more by shame than by pride. Under these circumstances, the discursive contestation of a negative focus – not necessarily by means of a positive alternative but through a gradual movement away from a narrative of guilt and towards one of victimization and powerlessness – manifested itself in a radically subjective sentimentalism, shifting the focus from the historical conditions of Nationalist Socialist rule onto ‘ordinary’

---

<sup>122</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22.

<sup>123</sup> Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove, “Introduction: Germany's Memory Contests and the Management of the Past,” in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, eds. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), 11.

Germans and their individual hardships under the yoke of the authoritarian regime. As Giesen puts it: “Faced with [...] outside observers who could not be co-opted into the coalition of silence, Germans required a new exculpatory narrative. Postwar Germany constructed this narrative by primordializing the opposition between oppressors and the people [...]”<sup>124</sup>

In the German context, the revisionist intervention into the collective memory discourse represented by these narratives should be understood from an extremely critical perspective, which calls into question the univocally progressive connotations commonly assigned to the category of counter-memory. On the one hand, their effect can be described as a shift from a macro-historical understanding of National Socialism to a micro-historical focus on the everyday lives of Germans under Nazi rule. On this aspect, Dan Diner writes that “by dissolving a process carried out mainly through a division of labor [i.e., the Holocaust] into a series of detailed, individually examined aspects [...], one runs the risk of completely overlooking the defining feature of the regime: industrialized mass murder.”<sup>125</sup> While Diner is referring directly to the so-called Historians’ Dispute (*Historikerstreit*) of the late 1980s in this passage and thus to what can be considered official contributions to collective memory, there are much more recent incarnations of this phenomenon that represent what Olick calls “socially framed individual memories.”<sup>126</sup> Examples can, again, be found primarily in fictional and non-fictional accounts, both oral and written, of German suffering during the war, surfacing already in the earliest post war years. For instance, the genre of *Heimkehrerliteratur* – with such prominent titles as Wolfgang Borchert’s drama *Draußen vor der Tür* (1946/1947), in which, as the label implies, the fate of a returning German prisoner of war provides the central focus of the story – represents an example of literary contributions which emerged almost immediately following the end of war and remain popular and widely read (and taught) to this day.<sup>127</sup> Even more interesting in this

---

<sup>124</sup> Giesen, *Triumph and Trauma*, 123. Rosenfeld makes this fundamental difference clear, as well. However, the centrality of these counter-memories for postwar memory culture in Germany and the degree to which they influenced and gradually inscribed themselves as the dominant narrative, in stark contrast to the development in the Allied nations, is not adequately addressed in his account.

<sup>125</sup> Dan Diner, “Between Aporia and Apology: On the Limits of Historicising National Socialism,” in *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians’ Debate*, ed. Peter Baldwin (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 139.

<sup>126</sup> Olick, *Regret*, 20.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Hans-Ulrich Wagner, “‘Ein Mann kommt nach Deutschland’: *Draußen vor der Tür* im Kontext der Heimkehrer-Hörspiele der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit,” in *Pack das Leben bei den Haaren! Wolfgang Borchert in neuer Sicht*, eds. Gordon Burgess and Hans-Gerhard Winter (Hamburg: Dölling & Galitz, 1996), 37-53. With regard to the nomination of the radio play version of Borchert’s drama for the “Hörspiel” contest of the Berliner Rundfunk in 1946, Wagner explains that out of 1200 contributions, an absolute majority dealt with the plight of

context, however, is the fact that the prominence of these narratives is vehemently ignored in later stories in order to lend credibility to the claim of a tabooization of German suffering in this early period. Perhaps the most well-known example of this approach is Günter Grass' *Im Krebsgang* (2002). Grass' novella begins with the suggestion that the central motif of its plot, the sinking of the German refugee ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* by a Russian submarine in 1945, had been previously omitted from German collective memory, with the very first sentence of the text raising the question: "Warum erst jetzt?"<sup>128</sup> However, as a number of critics have pointed out, the fate of the vessel and its passengers, in their majority civilians, had actually been prominently featured in several publications before: Leaving aside oral histories, the earliest example dealing with this event was Heinz Schön's eye-witness account *Der Untergang der "Wilhelm Gustloff": Tatsachenbericht eines Überlebenden* (1952), followed by the feature film *Nacht fiel über Gotenhafen* (1959) and several other fictional and non-fictional mentions in the subsequent years. And only two years before the publication of Grass' book, a film documentary, produced by Heinz Schön and Karl Höffkes, once again drew detailed attention to the story.<sup>129</sup> To be sure, Grass' narrator makes explicit mention of several of these earlier publications – Heinz Schön even features as a recurring minor character in the story – but nonetheless maintains that the incident of the sinking of the *Gustloff* could not be talked about, which is counterfactual in its own right. This significant disconnect provides an insight especially into the form and function of later counter-memory interventions, in which the predication that they are, in essence, presenting secret histories, which had been ignored or even deliberately muted in earlier decades, constitutes a central axiom. For Peter Fritzsche, such approaches betray an "anguished concern with the fate of German history after the catastrophe of the Second World War [...] and the more popular and self-serving suspicion that the world would never forgive the German people for the crimes committed by the Nazis, [which] reveal a striking self-absorption with one's own problems at the expense of the victims."<sup>130</sup> These victims are suspiciously absent from a considerable number of contemporary works in this category.

---

returning prisoners of war to Germany.

<sup>128</sup> Günter Grass, *Im Krebsgang: Eine Novelle*, 4th revised ed. (Munich: dtv, 2004), 7.

<sup>129</sup> *Triumph und Tragödie der Wilhelm Gustloff: Die größte Schiffskatastrophe aller Zeiten*, eds. Heinz Schön and Karl Höffkes (Gescher: Polar Film + Medien GmbH, 2000).

<sup>130</sup> Peter Fritzsche, "What Exactly is 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'?: Narrative and its Insufficiency in Postwar Germany," in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, eds. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), 37.

While approaches such as these are still common and also provide prominent themes for many of the Alternate Histories discussed in the following chapters, in its most recent incarnations, following German unification, German counter-memories have also realized their relativizing potential in a different way. Michael Geyer and Miriam Hansen posit that even those who want to forget “no longer ‘repress’ the past [and that] just about everyone documents/historicizes/remembers/recollects/commemorates/memorializes. The critical commentary on ‘working-through’ the German past has become one of a general ‘working-over’ that past [...]. They remember *in order to forget*.”<sup>131</sup> They are referring here to the Bitburg controversy, which is also a key aspect of the gradual “Entkonkretisierung” identified in Sabine Moller’s investigation of the treatment of Nazi past under the aegis of German chancellor Helmut Kohl.<sup>132</sup> In 1985, Kohl and American president Ronald Reagan successively visited both the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen and the cemetery for fallen German soldiers – which also included members of the SS – in the town of Bitburg, thus asserting, as many contemporary critics decried, an overall commensurability of the victims of National Socialism and the perpetrators. As specific as this event may be, the overall dynamic of this mnemonic shift – along with the importance of commemorative sites in particular – can not only be considered a significant caesura in which an (alleged) counter-memory asserted its “Definitionsmacht” over the previously established dominant narrative, it also constitutes the archetype for all subsequent reformulations of the German memory discourse. Geoffrey Hartman has called this a process of “*anti-memory* – something that displays the colors of memory, [...] but drifts toward the closure of forgetful ritualization.”<sup>133</sup>

This category of “anti-memory” aptly describes the radical changes in German memory discourse at the end of the twentieth century; changes that coincide – though not coincidentally – with a shift of political power. In 1998, the long reign of the liberal-conservative government under chancellor Helmut Kohl came to an end after 16 years. Kohl’s declared pet project had always been the normalization of the identification of the people with the German nation, which only came to pass now, at the very end of an era that had been shaped by diverse discussions of

---

<sup>131</sup> Michael Geyer and Miriam Hansen, “German-Jewish Memory and National Consciousness,” in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 176. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Moller, *Entkonkretisierung*.

<sup>133</sup> Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, 10. Emphasis in the original.

remembrance versus forgetfulness and the only mildly successful “Schlussstrich” debate. When the Red-Green government, sometimes referred to both as the “New Left” and the “New Centre,” came into power on October 26, 1998, it brought with it in its highest ranks a number of political actors that had been part of the radical student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They had aggressively and publicly criticized the old order not only for the constant attempts to smooth over the memory of the National Socialist past, but also, more directly, for being the direct successor of that very regime. Only half a year after later, on March 24, 1999, Germany, along with several other members of NATO, went to war against Serbia. This was the first military endeavour involving an active participation of German troops since 1945. When asked to justify this considerable caesura in German postwar foreign policy, Joschka Fischer, former student and peace activist and newly assigned foreign minister of the “New Left” government, explained after the fact: “Ich habe nicht nur gelernt: Nie wieder Krieg! Ich habe auch gelernt: Nie wieder Auschwitz!”<sup>134</sup> The very possibility for this position to be viable within the context of German memory debates relied on the specific moral and discursive authority of the former critics of the old order. As Bill Niven states:

Precisely because Red-Green coalition members appeared to have such moral authority in matters of coming to terms with Nazism, their declaration of Germany’s achievement of ‘normality’ was arguably interpreted by many as implying that there was no longer any need to focus largely on German perpetration when remembering the Third Reich and its aftermath.<sup>135</sup>

In discursive terms, by acknowledging the responsibility dictated by the memory of the atrocities committed by Germans during National Socialism but, in the same motion, re-signifying this responsibility as not only a legitimization but an obligation to reclaim the role of a ‘global player’ on the international political stage, the door had been opened for Germans to new ways of relating to both their nation’s past and present. ‘Nie wieder Auschwitz’ therefore can be seen here as the metonymic representation of a narrative double-bind and a new form of “anti-memory,” as this paradigmatic shift marked, at the same time, a new focus on the German past and an opportunity to overcome its previous constraints in an act of exculpatory redemption. Norbert Frei calls this development an “Umcodierung im historischen Lernprogramm der

---

<sup>134</sup> Quoted in Nico Fried, “Fischer: ‘Ich habe gelernt: Nie wieder Auschwitz’,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 24, 2005.

<sup>135</sup> Bill Niven, “Introduction: German Victimhood at the Turn of the Millenium,” in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. Bill Niven (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 9.



Deutschen” and posits that Joschka Fischer completed “damit auf der Ebene der praktischen Politik jenen Wechsel [...], der sich in der bundesrepublikanischen Gesellschaft seit längerem vorbereitet hatte – und zwar sowohl generationell als auch kulturell.”<sup>136</sup> Gerd Wiegel generally concurs by stating:

Die Erinnerung an den Faschismus wurde von der rot-grünen Regierung zur Legitimierung eines Krieges mißbraucht [und nur] die Berufung auf die Vergangenheit, verbunden mit dem Appell an antifaschistische Reflexe, konnte die breite Zustimmung der Basis von SPD und vor allem Grünen garantieren.<sup>137</sup>

However, in contrast to Wiegel’s interpretation Frei acknowledges that this shift, which is not altogether dissimilar to the creation of a new type of nationalism Anton Blok has identified in reference to Eastern European countries, was not exclusively an official intervention into and revision of central aspects of German memory narratives, but also a reflection of developments which already existed in popular discourse at the time, thus highlighting yet again the complementary relationship between individual and official contributions to collective memory. If, then, counter-memory in this sense cannot universally or automatically be considered a progressive engagement with history, what does this mean for the Alternate Histories discussed in the following?

Regardless of her unusual selection of texts and her extremely positive understanding of the category of counter-memory, Elisabeth Wesseling’s assertion that all Alternate Histories are essentially counter-memories in that they bring into question established notions of historical knowledge, raises an important point.<sup>138</sup> Alternate Histories do indeed, as the name implies, present an alternate account of the past which universally serves to highlight both the contingency of historical events and the narrative processes involved in their historiographic tradition. However, despite Wesseling’s evaluation of this mechanism as a means of a more diverse and inclusive form of remembering, this is not necessarily their function. Christoph Rodiek also suggests a fundamental connection between Alternate History and counter-memory by citing Foucault’s disavowal of the idea of historical teleology in favor of an ‘open’

---

<sup>136</sup> Frei, *1945 und wir*, 25.

<sup>137</sup> Gerd Wiegel, *Die Zukunft der Vergangenheit: Konservativer Geschichtsdiskurs und kulturelle Hegemonie – vom Historikerstreit zur Walser-Bubis-Debatte* (Cologne: PapyRossa, 2001), 230.

<sup>138</sup> See Wesseling, *Writing History*, 162ff.

understanding of history, as expressed in his concept of “effective history,” and links it directly to the counterfactual mode of allohistorical fiction.<sup>139</sup> Rodiek posits that “[i]ndem der uchronische Entwurf die Mechanismen der sozialen Memoria betont – das kollektive Gedächtnis funktioniert ja nicht zuletzt dank des Vergessens vergangener Möglichkeit –, schärft er den Blick für Prozesse sozialer Kommunikation.”<sup>140</sup> Of special note in this statement is the fact that Rodiek makes explicit mention of the importance of forgetting for the functioning of collective memory, which brings back to mind Davis and Starn’s contention that counter-memories can facilitate the remembering of specific historical circumstances as well as but their forgetting. Alternate Histories, as I will show in detail in the subsequent chapters, can perform the dialectical function of focus-shifting in a way akin to other symbols and artefacts of “anti-memory,” as this category is understood by Geoffrey Hartman; a function, which is directly related to the bi-modal nature of collective memory in general, as suggested by Jan Assmann, namely the capacity of serving at once a biographic and a founding purpose.<sup>141</sup> However, the discursive strategies employed to effect this reorientation bear similarities to those employed in public memorialisation, which is at the heart of Hartman’s argument, and to those of memory literature in general. Alternate Histories, in contrast, realize the diversion of memory not by means of creating substitutes for collective identification – through the re-evaluation of actual historical events –, but rather by providing a truly alternative narrative, which evokes a distinct link to the replaced memories but does so without an actual referent in reality. I therefore propose to call this mode of engaging history: *alternate memory*.

Traditional reactionary *counter-memory* replaces negative aspects within established memory narratives either with positive reinterpretations of the same events or, as in the case of the exemplary narrative of German victimization, shifts the focus away from a discussion of incriminating occurrences and toward an empathic (re-)identification with the collective. *Anti-memory*, instead of repressing or denying negative historical associations, utilizes them in a revised form for the purposes of unifying a contemporary collective and legitimizing its present and future actions. *Alternate memory*, now, can perform both these tasks, but the discursive means employed differ from those of the previous two categories in a distinct manner. While

---

<sup>139</sup> See Rodiek, *Uchronie*, 12-13.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>141</sup> See Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 52.

both, traditional forms of counter-memory – largely unsuccessful exceptions such as outright Holocaust denial notwithstanding – and more recent strategies of anti-memory, are bound by the constraints of reconciling their narratives with the recourse to ‘real’ history, alternate memory is not. Here, the utopian mode, namely that in order to process the premise of “that which could have been but never was,” readers first had to explore the idea of “that which is not but could be,” which Winthrop-Young posits as an original prerequisite of Alternate History, can be said to reemerge.<sup>142</sup> While it is true, as Winthrop-Young also suggests, that Alternate History fictions are increasingly reliant on historiography in order to assert their overall credibility,<sup>143</sup> the examples in the following chapters nonetheless feature alternative versions of National Socialism, German resistance or the Holocaust, which represent narratives emphatically removed from the reality of known historical events. It is a historical fact, for instance, that the so-called Morgenthau plan – a reference to a memorandum by United States Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. from 1944, according to which the defeated were to be submitted to a process of de-industrialization in order to preclude the potential for future acts of aggression – was never actually implemented. As such, it does not normally provide a viable source for the narrative of German victimization. Yet, allohistorical novels like Christoph Ransmayr’s *Morbus Kitahara* are nonetheless able to utilize this counterfactual construct to address precisely that notion. This unique quality of, on the one hand, eliciting a connection with familiar historical settings but, on the other, infusing them with counterfactual conditions, creates the potential for Alternate Histories to function as interventions into collective memory discourses unburdened by the necessity of legitimizing their position. In this sense, such alternate memories, in the guise of mere counterfactual speculations, constitute an ideal means of subverting even the most central presuppositions of collective memory. And, arguably, few contexts are better suited to illustrate this process than the case of German normalization.

## 2.5 ALTERNATE MEMORY AND GERMAN NORMALIZATION

Although it is true that the general “concept of ‘normalization’ has frequently been invoked by scholars, but [rarely] systematically defined,” the concrete dynamics that constitute the normalization of German postwar memory have, in fact, been thoroughly discussed by Norbert

---

<sup>142</sup> Winthrop-Young, “Fallacies and Thresholds,” 102.

<sup>143</sup> See *ibid.*, 114.

Frei and others.<sup>144</sup> Perhaps the reason why there is little in the way of an overarching definition of normalization on a global scale is due to the fact that collective memory processes are highly specified and, as a result, insights into the narrative strategies that are used to normalize the memory discourse of one national collective are usually difficult, sometimes impossible, to apply to another. However, an attempt at a generic definition can nonetheless be helpful here. According to Rosenfeld, for instance, “[a]t the most basic level, [...] normalization refers to the process by which a particular historical legacy (an era, an event, a figure, or a combination thereof) becomes viewed like any other” and that, “[a]s a concept, normalization implies that a given historical legacy is somehow ‘abnormal’ to begin with. It also presumes an ideal-typical condition of ‘normalcy’ towards which all pasts teleologically proceed in consciousness.”<sup>145</sup> His own study shows the usefulness of this basic definition by successfully applying it to the various effects of Alternate History fictions within the different national memory discourses of Britain, the United States and Germany.<sup>146</sup> But while there is a differentiation between the specificities of the respective normalizing trends within the memory cultures of each of these nations, a detailed delineation of the case of German normalization, in the context of which this phenomenon has arguably had the greatest impact, falls short. In order to better understand the function of alternate memory for the collective memory and the collective identity of postwar Germany, one must therefore seek to understand what constitutes German normalization in particular.

In this context, the above notion of teleology as an integral element of normalization is misleading. To be sure, the mythical quality of the concept of ‘normalcy’ is unquestionably a significant aspect, and it is certainly also true that deliberate movements towards a normalization of memory always contain an aspect of striving for a ‘better tomorrow’ for the collective. At the same time, normalization is not or, at least, not immediately, oriented towards the future, but rather represents a nostalgic vision of returning to a less burdened past. This is not to say, of course, that such an idea is any less of an ideological construct. However, one must differentiate between the narrative content and the strategic direction of normalizing trends of memory. In the

---

<sup>144</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 16.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> See *ibid.*, 17, for a breakdown of the different manifestations of normalization Rosenfeld identifies and links in particular to different historical phases of Alternate History. He discusses what he labels organic, universalizing, relativizing, and aestheticizing forms of normalization, respectively, as they pertain to the commemorative effects of allohistorical fictions.

case of postwar Germany, the process of normalization, in all of its various stages and discursive manifestations, entails an inevitable recourse to National Socialism. This illustrates the fact that, here, the implication of normalcy points *backwards*, to a time that precedes the ‘burden’ on the collective conscience represented by the crimes committed during this era. Accordingly, all historical forms of normalizing movements within postwar German memory discourse – from the relativizing traditional counter-memories in the early postwar years to the seemingly inclusive anti-memory developments following reunification – have at their narrative core an element of nostalgia for simpler, more innocent times. As discursive strategies, however, they are, at the same time, directed ahead insofar as they are ultimately aimed at restoring an unfettered national identity. While the regressive narrative content is fundamentally ideological in nature, the progressive discursive strategy is decidedly more pragmatic. Lars Rensmann contends: “Die konkreten machtpolitischen Interessen können so teils korrespondieren mit einem sozialpsychologischen Bedürfnis, das Geschehene ungeschehen zu machen, um der kollektiven Identität willen [...]”<sup>147</sup> It is therefore questionable whether it is adequate or necessary to conceptualize this movement in recourse to the category of ‘teleology,’ which emphasizes the mythical quality of an ideal future state, as opposed to the more practical and immediate enterprise of effecting a (relative) increase in political and economic power. What is of central importance – and this applies to most, if not all, normalizing trends of memory across national boundaries – is that the narrative content undergoes diachronic changes as the national and international discourses, against which these counter-memories are directed, evolve. For the German context these historical changes have already been addressed in the previous section, and older models will be relevant in the analysis of some of the texts in the following chapters whose production and publication fall into earlier periods of postwar German history. However, as I have outlined above, despite the fact that a tendency for overcoming the legacy of National Socialism already surfaced immediately after the end of the war, attesting to the existence of an ongoing project of German normalization, the discursive strategies employed have changed significantly with the reunification of Germany and, again, with the epistemological shift that accompanied the rise of former critics of this very project to political power in 1998. This has paved the way for a new form of positive nationalist identification. Not coincidentally, the term

---

<sup>147</sup> Lars Rensmann, “Politisch-psychologische Nachwirkungen des Nationalsozialismus in der Gegenwart: Zum Verhältnis von neueren Vergangenheitsdiskursen und gesellschaftlichen Einstellungen gegenüber dem Holocaust,” in *Die Lebendigkeit der Geschichte: (Dis-)Kontinuitäten in Diskursen über den Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Eleonore Lappin and Bernhard Schneider (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2001), 365.

“German normalization” is most commonly applied to denote these relatively recent developments and, also not by accident, a considerable increase in the production of German Alternate Histories can be identified for this period, as well. Let us therefore take a closer look at the specific conditions of this new era of German normalization and what it means for the development and the function of alternate memory.

A crucial event that is frequently cited as a turning point in postwar German memory culture and as a representation of the paradigmatic shift of normalization from being the project of a more overtly conservative clientele to becoming a widely established trend in the center of the political landscape of Germany, is Martin Walser’s acceptance speech for the “Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels” on October 11, 1998. In it, Walser – esteemed as a representative of critical German authorship on the issue of the National Socialist past – infamously referred to the memory of Auschwitz as a “moral cudgel,” by means of which the German people were being continually held back from re-establishing a ‘normal’ sense of national identification and pride in their achievements as a collective. A central quote from Walser’s speech reads as follows:

Im Jahr 1977 habe ich [...] eine Rede halten müssen und habe die Gelegenheit damals dazu benutzt, folgendes Geständnis zu machen: “Ich halte es für unerträglich, die deutsche Geschichte – so schlimm sie zuletzt verlief – in einem Katastrophenprodukt enden zu lassen. Und: “Wir dürften, sage ich vor Kühnheit zitternd, die BRD so wenig anerkennen wie die DDR. Wir müssen die Wunde namens Deutschland offenhalten.” Das fällt mir ein, weil ich jetzt wieder vor Kühnheit zittere, wenn ich sage: Auschwitz eignet sich nicht dafür, Drohroutine zu werden, jederzeit einsetzbares Einschüchterungsmittel oder Moralkeule oder auch nur Pflichtübung. Was durch Ritualisierung zustande kommt, ist von der Qualität des Lippengebets. Aber in welchen Verdacht gerät man, wenn man sagt, die Deutschen seien jetzt ein ganz normales Volk, eine ganz gewöhnliche Gesellschaft?<sup>148</sup>

In this brief but highly charged passage Walser manages to address a multitude of issues that had been at the heart of the engagement of Germans with the legacy of National Socialism since the earliest days of the postwar era. In an introductory move, he establishes his reputation and authority not only as a critical, but also as a neutral voice in the context of German memory debates. In quoting his own speech from 1977, in which he addressed the separation of Germany

---

<sup>148</sup> Martin Walser, “Erfahrungen beim Verfassen einer Sonntagsrede: Dankesrede von Martin Walser zur Verleihung des Friedenspreises des Deutschen Buchhandels in der Frankfurter Paulskirche am 11. Oktober 1998,” Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, [http://www.hdg.de/lemo/html/dokumente/WegeInDieGegenwart\\_redeWalserZumFriedenspreis/index.html](http://www.hdg.de/lemo/html/dokumente/WegeInDieGegenwart_redeWalserZumFriedenspreis/index.html) (accessed 10/25, 2011).

following World War II, Walser situates himself in the center of the discussions of reunification, but not in favor of simply reintegrating the GDR into the existing social structure of the Federal Republic, but rather as an impartial critic of both German states and a proponent of an entirely fresh start for the German collective. In the same sentence, he manages to relegate the events which led up to the separation of Germany and its fundamental memory contests in the aftermath to the narrative sidelines, alluding to them only with an amorphous formulation (“so schlimm sie zuletzt verlief”) reduced to a parenthetical insertion. At the same time, this mere allusion serves to effectively negate any continuities between the Nazi state and the Federal Republic, which had been a central focus of the anti-fascist criticism of the 1960s and 1970s, bridging the gap between Germany’s “bad history” and his own present with the term “zuletzt,” thus implying that, as of May 9, 1945, Germany’s sole focus had been the atonement for the crimes of the preceding twelve years or, at least, the pursuit of a “good history.” And while the blunt reference to Auschwitz as a “moral cudgel” is perhaps the most criticized element of Walser’s speech, his general reference to the upholding of the memory of the Holocaust as a “ritualization” is, in fact, much more interesting. This particular phrasing suggests that the longing for normalcy, which Walser directly evokes with his last sentence, represents not an ideological construct in itself, but rather a breaking-up of mythical discursive structures. The reference to the effectively normalized German collective of the present, finally, is once again used to re-introduce the idea of a tabooization: The formulation “In welchen Verdacht gerät man, wenn man sagt...” evokes an unsubstantiated threat that is faced by all who dare to question what Walser previously exposed as an unjust commemorative ritual. At the same time, Walser’s speech can also be interpreted as a symbolic call to arms, since, as Bill Niven points out, by “seeing in present-day references to the holocaust [sic] an unfair moral condemnation of today’s Germans, Walser makes [anyone] who makes such references into targets of legitimate criticism.”<sup>149</sup>

In his analysis of Walser’s speech and its effects on German collective memory, Lars Rensmann concludes that “[d]ie unheilvolle Perspektive liegt vorerst nicht im Abbruch des Diskurses, sondern u.a. in seiner verallgemeinerten Überführung in eine Beliebigkeit, bei der der Holocaust zu einem vergleichsweise belanglosen Gegenstand [...] mutiert.”<sup>150</sup> This view also

---

<sup>149</sup> William John Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002), 183.

<sup>150</sup> Micha Brumlik, Hajo Funke and Lars Rensmann, *Umkämpftes Vergessen: Walser-Debatte, Holocaust-Mahnmal und neuere deutsche Geschichtspolitik* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000), 165.

correlates with Andrei Markovits' and Simon Reich's assessment that "[t]hese proliferating reinterpretations of the Nazi past attempt nothing short of committing Auschwitz to the realm of history – thereby relieving, if not exculpating, the Germans' collective memory from this immense burden."<sup>151</sup> But the immediate discursive effects of Walser's stance are not the only issue of note. Particularly significant is also the person of Martin Walser as such or, rather, the moral locus from which his intervention originated. Traditionally, the call for an end of the alleged preoccupation with the legacy of National Socialism was linked to the political right. Scholars like Gerd Wiesel and Roger Woods have aptly described the nature of the attempts of Germany's New Right to overcome the Nazi past since reunification.<sup>152</sup> Such accounts are meritorious contributions to the analysis of concurrent, more overtly reactionary approaches to overcoming the past, such as the remnants of the repressive "Schlussstrichdebatte," which frequently entails positive recourses to national pride and the military during National Socialism. At the same time, they have widely proven incapable of adequately accounting for the involvement of protagonists like Walser and the emergence of the considerably more successful new narratives their reformulations represent. Wiesel, for instance, simply ignores the specificity of this paradigmatic shift and subsumes both the newly founded Red-Green government and Martin Walser under the heading "neoconservative," thus neglecting their previous status as critical and progressive voices of the postwar era.<sup>153</sup> However, the gradual ascension of such voices to the status of the dominant narrative is a central characteristic of the most recent developments in the collective memory discourse of Germany:

An increasing number of highly influential, young intellectuals, sporting superb credentials and occupying major positions of cultural and social power, have gradually begun to dismantle the Bundesrepublik's most solid consensus: that National Socialism, and the Holocaust in particular, were among the most heinous expressions of human evil in history. These are not fringe historians of the radical Right; nor are they neo-Nazis or Holocaust deniers. They are merely revisionists, relativizers, 'historicists'.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> Andrei S. Markovits and Simon Reich, *The German Predicament: Memory and Power in the New Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 205.

<sup>152</sup> See Wiesel, *Zukunft der Vergangenheit*, and Roger Woods, "On Forgetting and Remembering: The New Right since German Unification," in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, eds. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), 271-286.

<sup>153</sup> See Wiesel, *Zukunft der Vergangenheit*, 212-244.

<sup>154</sup> Markovits/Reich, *German Predicament*, 205.



But this reading is, of course, not uncontested in the context of German memory studies. For instance, Jeffrey Alexander contends that while this new discursive strategy “shifts symbolic significance, and audience attention, from the originating trauma to the traumas that follow in a sequence of analogical associations,” it does not “inevitably erase or invert the meanings associated with the trauma that was first in the associational line.”<sup>155</sup> And while Daniel Becker acknowledges that “[a]s a consequence of the Walser debate and the Kosovo War, the importance of the Holocaust in debates about German identity, or rather, German identities has receded,” he goes on to argue that this trend “does not signify that Germany returns to an unreflected nationalism oblivious of the past. Rather, it reflects the manifold social and cultural changes the country has undergone in the decades since the end of World War II.”<sup>156</sup> I would argue, however, that such optimistic interpretations fail to adequately take into account the dialectical structure of these new narratives. In line with Geoffrey Hartman’s concept of anti-memory, Andrei Markovits and Simon Reich argue that those who adhere to these new forms of commemorative exculpation “do not necessarily object to [remembering the victims of National Socialism and the Holocaust]. Indeed they welcome these activities as long as they finally liberate the new Berlin Republic from the burdens that shackled its Bonn predecessor.”<sup>157</sup> Indeed, these developments seem to leave little room for positive interpretation, since their ultimate effect is a less evident, but, at the same time, considerably more efficient version of the phenomenon which Moller already described for the pre-1998 era of normalizing counter-memory: “[Der] verbrecherische Grundcharakter des NS-Regimes schwimmt hinter einer von Zeit und Konkretem unabhängigen menschlichen Leidensgeschichte.”<sup>158</sup> In other words, the trend of remembering in order to forget facilitates, in its logical conclusion, a decontextualization of National Socialism and the Holocaust which effectively removes both events from their concrete historical, cultural, and political settings and turns them into empty signifiers which can not only be readily committed to realm of history, as Markovits and Reich suggest, but can even be called upon at

---

<sup>155</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, “On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The ‘Holocaust’ from War Crime to Trauma Drama,” in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 254.

<sup>156</sup> Daniel Becker, “Coming to Terms with ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’: Walser’s Sonntagsrede, the Kosovo War, and the Transformation of German Historical Consciousness,” in *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification German Culture*, eds. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 355.

<sup>157</sup> Markovits/Reich, *German Predicament*, 205.

<sup>158</sup> Moller, *Entkonkretisierung*, 140.

will in order to legitimize the status quo of the contemporary German collective, as in the case of the Kosovo war. This reading echoes Adorno's psychoanalytical classification of "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" in general, namely that the desire of the damaged collective narcissism does not only include the reinterpretation of the past in order to expunge the memory of the original injury, but, ultimately, the reorganization of the present in a way which reverses the injury itself.<sup>159</sup> To my mind, the best contemporary summary of the conditions that define this process is provided by Lars Rensmann, who writes:

Die Intensivierung der Vergangenheitsdiskurse führt [...] qualitativ keineswegs notwendig zu mehr Aufklärung und weniger Abwehr sowie einer Abnahme von Vorurteilen, sondern begünstigt auch teils subtile, teils sehr unverhüllte Abwehrformen. [...] Entscheidend für das Verhältnis zur Verarbeitung des kollektiven historischen Horizonts ist [...] nicht dass, sondern was und wie Geschichte zum Gegenstand wird.<sup>160</sup>

This crucial distinction between the mere fact that history is made the object of discussion and what this discussion actually entails leads us back to the category of alternate memory. Within the thus established narrative of German normalization, allohistorical fictions represent a special case. While in the development of German Alternate History, "dystopian narratives of the early postwar period had exhibited a self-critical dimension from the very beginning, the normalized accounts of more recent years have expressed a more triumphalistic sensibility, reflecting the new self-confidence produced by reunification."<sup>161</sup> In this sense, the genre, in terms of its historical evolution, can be considered similar to other manifestations of collective memory in postwar Germany. The beginnings of German-language postwar Alternate Histories are especially interesting in light of what Ceslaw Karolak posits with regard to the development of German Science Fiction, a genre which is commonly held to be the historical point of origin and still a close relative of Alternate History fictions. According to him, the majority of SF publications in Germany in the early postwar years, specifically in the 1950s, displayed a number of distinct continuities with Nazi ideology, liberally proliferating ideas of racism and expansionism in particular.<sup>162</sup> In stark contrast, early Alternate Histories in German are

---

<sup>159</sup> See Adorno, *Aufarbeitung*, 564.

<sup>160</sup> Rensmann, *Nationalsozialismus in der Gegenwart*, 367-368.

<sup>161</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 31.

<sup>162</sup> See Ceslaw Karolak, "Unbewältigte Zukunft: Kriegs- und Fortschrittsvisionen in der westdeutschen Science-Fiction-Literatur der 50er Jahre," in *Ideologie und Utopie in der deutschen Literatur der Neuzeit*, ed. Bernhard Spies

considerably more akin to the British and American paradigms in that the pursuit and realization of such reactionary ideals feature in them solely as pure nightmare scenarios. It must be noted, however, that contrary to their Anglo-American counterparts German-language Alternate Histories did not begin to surface until the mid-1960s, the first example being commonly considered to be Otto Basil's novel *Wenn das der Führer wüßte* (1966),<sup>163</sup> which describes a world in which the Nazis have not only won the war, but have, in the fictional present of the novel's setting, subjugated large parts of the globe, including the Allied nations, with the help of nuclear weapons, practically eradicated the Jews from the face of the earth and confined most other 'non-Aryan' races to the yoke of slavery or used them as guinea pigs for genetic experiments. Germany and Austria have become strongholds of grotesque pagan mysticism and, following the death of Adolf Hitler, have descended into a state of perpetual in-fighting between the different factions of the National Socialist movement that is gradually turning into a civil war. In short, Basil's vision of an alternate outcome of World War II, which Marcel Atze describes as the 'murdering' of the myth of a Nazi victory by means of depicting in abhorrent detail the realization of all explicit and implicit aspects of the National Socialist agenda, rivals any non-German speculative account in terms of the degree to which such a scenario is depicted as the worst possible turn history could have taken.<sup>164</sup> It is, however, also the only one of its kind. Not only has there not been a single other German or Austrian example in which a world has been described in even remotely as harsh dystopian terms as in the case of Basil's novel, but the production of German-language Alternate Histories overall should remain extremely limited, at best, for another three decades. The absolute majority of German and Austrian allohistorical fictions focused on the Third Reich thus far has been produced after the reunification of Germany and, therefore, in the context of the era of the accelerated, reformulated German normalization defined above. This development, I would argue, is no coincidence.

Within the new discourse of collective memory in the unified Germany, in the context of which specifically orchestrated commemorative performances serve to facilitate the overcoming of uncomfortable aspects of memory and the subversive strategies of counter-memory are

---

(Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1995), 144-150.

<sup>163</sup> See Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 162.

<sup>164</sup> See Marcel Atze, "Hitler und Holocaust im Konjunktiv: Otto Basils konjunkturalhistorischer Roman *Wenn das der Führer wüßte*," in *Otto Basil und die Literatur um 1945: Tradition, Kontinuität, Neubeginn*, eds. Volker Kaukoreit and Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler (Vienna: Zsolnay, 1998), 117-136.

employed as a means of establishing new forms of nationalist identification, the counterfactual mode of alternate memory constitutes an almost ideal narrative device. As a matter of fact, its specific aptitude for relativization can already be identified in Alternate Histories preceding this era, as the discussion of some examples in the following chapters will illustrate, but it only reaches its full potential in cohort with corresponding contemporary developments in the collective memory of the reunified Germany. In comparison to official as well as other forms of literary interventions into the discourse of collective memory, allohistorical fictions benefit from their essentially ludic engagement with historical knowledge. Remaining within the sphere of literature, other types of narratives can, at most, attempt to realize their normalizing potential *against* central tenets of established historical knowledge; Alternate Histories, on the other hand, perform the same task by positing alternate memories *in place* of real historical events. As Bernhard Giesen contends, representatives “of the old master narrative cannot deny the event that resulted in the trauma of collective identity, but they mostly try to remove it from the core of national identity and to normalize it as a deplorable side effect of historical turmoil.”<sup>165</sup> Alternate memory has the capacity of accomplishing precisely this radical denial that other forms of counter-memory cannot: It can universalize the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust by means of presenting the reader with alternative versions of these events and making them appear just as likely, thus calling into question the concrete conditions that effected them in a specific historical context and a specific national setting. It can present counterfactual tales of German heroism in resistance to the Nazi regime, thus creating the image of a historically disproportionate degree of fundamental opposition against the National Socialist order from within the general population of the Third Reich. Or it can depict the effects of alternate Holocausts perpetrated against the Germans in the aftermath of World War II and the inherent subtle reaffirmation of the narrative of commensurable German victimization. As all of these examples and the close readings in following chapters will illustrate, Alternate Histories are capable to complementing more conventional forms of revisionist counter-memory in unique and uniquely efficient ways.

In the conclusion to Rosenfeld’s study, the potential of normalization to divert the attention from real memory represents a worrisome trend only insofar as it diminishes the

---

<sup>165</sup> Giesen, *Triumph and Trauma*, 147.

public's historical knowledge on the whole.<sup>166</sup> Even if one were to argue that, to an extent, this is a necessary prerequisite in order for alternate memory to function, this concern would nonetheless fail to address central aspects of German normalization and, arguably, the dynamics of normalizing counter-memories in general. However, it is highly debatable whether this is actually the case. In light of the complementary nature of the different sources of collective memory in the context of German normalization, the success of this trend relies to a considerable extent on a silent accord between the producers of revisionist Alternate Histories and their audience, inclining the latter to accept the implications of the formers' narratives in lieu of what may well be a perfectly intact knowledge of history. That is to say, a reader of an allohistorical story, omitting the real Holocaust and instead depicting the brutal victimization of the German population, could know full well that the suffering of Germans after the war and the industrialized mass murder of Jewish and other victims preceding it cannot reasonably be considered commensurable occurrences, but still choose, in adherence to the collective counter-narrative, to tendentiously prioritize stories of German victimization in their own memory. The Alternate Histories discussed here are prone to serving such a purpose and, as such, they are exemplary representations of the potential of literature for facilitating a process of overcoming history. After all, as Geoffrey Winthrop-Young puts it: "In manchen Fällen ist die Schilderung einer kontrafaktischen Vergangenheit eine in den Konjunktiv [abgeschobene] Schilderung einer potentiellen Zukunft."<sup>167</sup> The essential function of alternate memory is to contribute to the realization of a new narrative which ensures that this potential future is a prosperous one for the national collective.

---

<sup>166</sup> See Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 392.

<sup>167</sup> Winthrop-Young, "Am Rand der Uchronie: Oswald Levett's Verirrt in den Zeiten und die Frühphase der alternate history," *Modern Austrian Literature* 34, no. 3-4 (2001): 34.

### 3. IT COULD HAPPEN ... ANYWAY: UNIVERSALIZING NAZISM

While the normalization of the memory of the Third Reich has unquestionably been an ongoing project since the earliest postwar years, the increasing discursive importance of its advancement by means of universalistic comparisons constitutes a relatively recent development. In *The World Hitler Never Made*, Gavriel Rosenfeld characterizes this phenomenon in the following terms:

Individuals and groups in society may seek to normalize the past for a variety of reasons, but they do so usually out of a sense of impatience with its continued abnormality. Advocates of this agenda may use different strategies to neutralize or redirect attention away from the past's resonant singularity. They may seek to *relativize* the past by deliberately minimizing its unique dimensions through comparisons with other more or less comparable historical occurrences. They may also attempt to *universalize* the past by explaining it as less the result of particularistic trends distinct to the era in question than of broader, timeless, social, political, or economic forces that they hope to call attention to [...]. These strategies all reflect a desire to make a given historical legacy no different from any other and can thus be seen as part of a larger attempt to reduce its prominence in current consciousness, if not render it forgotten altogether.<sup>168</sup>

The effect of such strategies on the collective memory of Germany's Nazi past differs depending on the national and historical context in which they are produced. In the context of official commemorative discourses, the universalization of the legacy of the National Socialist era as a pervasive occurrence is largely geopolitically and historically restricted. While narratives that generalize the causes and policies of National Socialism do exist outside of German debates, they typically do not represent mainstream positions within the memory debates of other countries. For several decades following the end of World War II, the same situation applied to discussions and representations of collective memory in Germany. More recently, however, the recourse to the Nazi past in comparative and ultimately relativist terms has experienced a considerable rise in German discussions. As outlined in the previous chapter, this development coincides with a series of paradigmatic shifts for which the reunification of Germany can be identified as a starting point, but in the context of which the discursive changes that accompanied the rise to power of former critics of historical revisionism in 1998 has also played a decisive role. Evidence of this trend can be found, for instance, in the debates surrounding the German participation in the war against Serbia and the strategies of legitimization employed in this context. Of this, Karoline von Oppen writes that in the newly established Berlin Republic the

---

<sup>168</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 17-18. Emphases in the original.

justification for war “was no longer a question of political responsibility but one of empathy through shared experiences” and that, in fact, “the notion of shared knowledge of suffering was used openly in the 1999 debate on the war against Serbia, in response to the Serbian treatment of Kosovo Albanians.”<sup>169</sup> After long periods of the repression or outright denial of a collective responsibility of Germans for the atrocities of National Socialism, the tendency to acknowledge but, at the same time, universalize it by situating it within an international and trans-historical tradition has since become a staple of the German engagement with the past. In the context of non-literary discourses, this can be considered a representative example of what Hartman has termed anti-memory.

An analogous trend that is considerably less exclusive to the German context can be observed much earlier in Alternate Histories of the Third Reich. At the same time, its specific implementation as a narrative strategy – especially in German counterfactual literature – also exhibits distinct differences that constitute a historical progression which can be linked to the turn in non-literary discourses. The following sections of this chapter will discuss a small selection of allohistorical fictions that represent an exemplary variety of manifestations of this universalistic theme in Alternate History, highlight the differences between their specific narrative approaches, both in terms of their national and historical setting, and illustrate the specifically German function of counterfactual universalization in the production of alternate memories.

### **3.1 THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE**

Philip K. Dick’s 1962 novel *The Man in the High Castle* is perhaps the most well-known and most discussed Alternate History to date.<sup>170</sup> Dick weaves an intricate tale of an allohistorical present-day America in which the effects of the alternate outcome of the Second World War are acutely apparent. In 1933, the attempt on the life of President Franklin D. Roosevelt – which, in real history, killed Anton Cermak, the mayor of Chicago – is successful and it falls to Vice President John Nance Garner to assume the presidency. As signs arise of impending war in

---

<sup>169</sup> Karoline von Oppen, “‘(Un)Sägliche Vergleiche’: What Germans remembered (and Forgot) in Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s,” in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), 177.

<sup>170</sup> Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (New York: Vintage Books, [1962] 1992). Hereafter cited as MHC.

Europe, Garner leads the country onto a path of non-interventionism, a policy which is then continued by Republican John W. Bricker, his successor, in 1940. Without the entrance of the American forces into the war, Nazi Germany manages to overrun its European enemies and ends the war in Europe by conquering the Soviet Union in 1941. With the United States military wholly unprepared for the fighting reaching American shores, the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor succeeds in destroying the entire US naval fleet. The virtually defenseless United States are subsequently attacked by both Axis powers on both shores, resulting in the German occupation of the Eastern part of the country and the Japanese seizing the West. The remainder of the completely outmanned and outgunned American armed forces retreats to a small section of the Rocky Mountain States which, by 1948, remains the last enclave in the former United States not occupied by a foreign power.

In accordance with what Hellekson calls a *true alternate history*, the novel's main narrative begins well after these historical alterations have occurred.<sup>171</sup> The technologically advanced Greater German Reich has conquered large parts of the globe and is even developing plans to colonize Mars. However, the story itself is primarily set in the Pacific States of America (PSA), the Japanese occupied zone, as it unfolds in the 1960s. After more than a decade of occupation, most Americans have adjusted to foreign rule and a new kind of normalcy characterizes life in San Francisco, the novel's main, but by no means only, locale. While horror stories from the German sector, still referred to as the United States of America, are present as a constant specter, the Japanese, despite having instituted a de facto racial class system, have overall proven to be relatively benevolent occupiers. As Gavriel Rosenfeld states, the complex story of *The Man in the High Castle* indeed "resists simple summary," but commonly identified as the central plotline is the story of Japanese diplomat Nobusuke Tagomi as he gradually becomes involved in a German plan for an impending attack of Japan.<sup>172</sup>

The main plot, however, is only of secondary interest to this examination. While Dick's novel has been widely discussed as an archetypical example of Alternate History, containing a diverse array of elements representing integral aspects of the genre, its most significant universalistic aspect is frequently relegated to the sidelines of the debate, although its existence is mentioned in virtually every scholarly analysis. Embedded in the novel's various allohistorical

---

<sup>171</sup> Hellekson, *Alternate History*, 5.

<sup>172</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 104.



story arcs is a second, to a large extent contrary, Alternate History: *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. This book is a metafictional story-within-the-story whose centrality for the narrative is inescapable. Written by recluse author Hawthorne Abendsen – as it turns out, the eponymous man in the High Castle –, *Grasshopper* represents a parallel allohistorical fiction in which the Germans lose World War II. At the same time, this scenario is not identical with the course of real history, but constructs a third parallel narrative, which concurrently questions both the readers' reality and that of Dick's protagonists. Although the radical metafictional character of *The Man in the High Castle* – which is not exclusively, but most centrally embodied by *Grasshopper* – has been the focus of a number of critical analyses, the actual plot of Abendsen's novel, whose key elements are spread throughout the text in form of fragments and paraphrases, has to date never been thoroughly discussed.<sup>173</sup>

Despite the existence of an obscure sub-plot which is only briefly hinted at, the overall story of *Grasshopper* lends itself to a much easier summary or, rather, reconstruction from the various passages read or recounted successively by several characters of *The Man in the High Castle*. Contrary to the events in the main narrative, in this alternate account of history, Roosevelt is not assassinated but carries out his two-term presidency and prepares the United States for an imminent war against Germany. Different from real history, however, he does not run for a third term, but is instead succeeded by Rexford Tugwell, a member of Roosevelt's inner circle and a fellow interventionist. In an act of strategic clairvoyance, Tugwell removes the American fleet from Pearl Harbor in due time and thus prevents it from being destroyed. Without the disastrous losses suffered in impending attack, the American Navy is able to muster a stronger opposition to the Japanese forces and consequently prevents Japan's domination of the Pacific, and their ultimate (allohistorical) victory against the United States, by conventional means. At the same time, a pact is forged between Britain and the Soviet Union resulting in the defeat of the German Wehrmacht on the Eastern front.<sup>174</sup> Soon after, Italy betrays the Axis and joins forces with the Allies. Following the surrender of the Japanese, the Americans enter the European theater of war and defeat Germany alongside the British. In the aftermath of the war,

---

<sup>173</sup> For the discussion of the metafictional quality of the novel, see especially Canaan (2002), Hayles (1983), and Rieder (1988). Especially Rieder's article does focus rather extensively on the function of the *Grasshopper* within the main narrative, but also does not give much room to its actual plot or its inherent universalism.

<sup>174</sup> See *MHC*, 65-69.

large parts of the globe are divided up between Britain and the United States.<sup>175</sup> Hitler is captured before he can commit suicide and is put on trial in Munich, where he is sentenced to death and subsequently executed.<sup>176</sup> Under the postwar presidency of Tugwell, a new New Deal is instituted with a focus on feeding and educating the global population (especially the far reaches of China). In the United States, a booming labor market is created as a result of this program and the Americans begin supplying the entire world with cheap satellite televisions as a means of education. Around 1960, the United States end the occupation of Japan and Chiang Kai-shek becomes the “great democratic President” of China under American administration.<sup>177</sup> As a result of the economic upswing, effected and controlled by the Americans, the China Dollar eventually becomes the new global trade currency. Meanwhile, the British Empire pursues a similar project. But in contrast to their former American allies, Britain relies on forced labor and annexed resources from Germany and the Caucasus in order to supply India, Burma, Africa and the Middle East with food and new technologies.<sup>178</sup> While race discrimination has officially ended in the United States after the end of World War II, Britain gradually begins instituting apartheid systems in the regions under its control, in particular in Singapore. The beginning of the 1960s also marks the beginning of ten years of an uneasy peace between the two remaining superpowers, with the United States controlling China and the entire Pacific, and Britain the Middle East, Africa and parts of continental Asia. As the third, but overall inferior global power, Russia remains divided between the US and Britain and ultimately passive. During this period, Britain begins setting up so-called detention preserves in several South Asian countries for alleged Chinese dissidents, as a response to the overwhelmingly pro-American position adopted by China. Having instated himself as a de facto dictator, Churchill is still in power at this time. While the United States also perform massive acts of economic expansion after winning the war against Japan, they lack the same strong leadership after the end of Tugwell’s second term in office.<sup>179</sup> The ultimate consequence, as Joe puts it in the main narrative, is that “Britain wins ...

---

<sup>175</sup> See *MHC*, 82-84.

<sup>176</sup> See *MHC*, 126.

<sup>177</sup> *MHC*, 157.

<sup>178</sup> See *MHC*, 157-159.

<sup>179</sup> See *MHC*, 159-163.

US dwindles, Britain keeps needling and poking and expanding, keeps the initiative.”<sup>180</sup>

The significance of this meta-text for the main narrative of *The Man in the High Castle* is made clear at the very end of the novel. After the character Juliana becomes obsessed with Abendsen’s novel – and, on the way, manages to kill a covert Nazi assassin sent to the independent Rocky Mountain States to track down and murder the producer of this subversive text –, she decides to confront the author and question him about the origins of his story. In Abendsen’s home – now no longer the High Castle of legend – she ultimately pressures him into admitting that he has, in fact, written the novel with the help of the *I Ching*, an ancient Chinese divination technique, which, next to the *Grasshopper* itself, is the second narrative element linking together all of the story’s characters. Already anticipating the answer, Juliana proceeds to ask of the *I Ching*, also frequently referred to as the Oracle, the reason for inspiring Abendsen to write this particular tale:

Juliana said, 'Oracle, why did you write *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*? What are we supposed to learn?' [...] 'It's Chung Fu,' Juliana said. 'Inner Truth. I know without using the chart, too. And I know what it means.' Raising his head, Hawthorne scrutinized her. He had now an almost savage expression. 'It means, does it, that my book is true?' 'Yes,' she said. With anger he said, 'Germany and Japan lost the war?' 'Yes.'<sup>181</sup>

As Rosenfeld contends, the fact that the Alternate History within the Alternate History is ultimately revealed to be the truth represents “a conclusion typical of Dick’s writing, [in which] fiction is exposed as reality and reality as fiction.”<sup>182</sup> For him this turn of events signals a conclusion “on a pessimistic note by casting doubt upon the likelihood of any escape from political oppression.”<sup>183</sup> Here Rosenfeld refers to what he interprets as the inability of the majority of characters in the main narrative – and, by symbolic extension, the majority of people in general – to recognize the fictitious nature of their world and break through the illusion. This reading would suggest, however, that Abendsen’s alternate reality represents a significant improvement over that envisioned in the remainder of the novel, which is not necessarily the case. In fact, this secondary allohistorical scenario is, in many ways, just as bleak as that of the

---

<sup>180</sup> *MHC*, 163.

<sup>181</sup> *MHC*, 257.

<sup>182</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 107.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

primary narrative of *The Man in the High Castle*. In *Grasshopper*, Germany not winning the Second World War does not result in the abolition of totalitarian control or politicized racial discrimination and does not produce a more liberal, progressive society. Instead, elements of German fascism are projected onto Britain after the end of the war, resulting in a global proliferation of racist policies and the subjugation of large parts of the world under imperialist rule. In this sense, when compared to the main plot of Dick's novel, Abendsen's Alternate History does not actually function as a redemptive alternative, but rather as a *mise-en-abîme* inversion of the real world, in which the same problems prevail only in a different constellation.

More significant, however, is the relation of this secondary counterfactual story to actual history. Here, the suggestion that the world could have turned out just as badly even if the defeat of Nazi Germany played out more or less as it did, inevitably constitutes a universalizing perspective, an aspect of the novel that, albeit without an explicit acknowledgement of the role of *Grasshopper* in this regard, has also been noted by Carl Freedman:

In a way that strongly resonates with what Horkheimer and Adorno call the dialectic of enlightenment, the novel sees Nazi atrocity as the extreme but perfectly logical extension of something typically and profoundly Western: the valorization of ceaseless activity, of agency, of expansion and acquisition and domination [...] Capitalism, after all, is necessarily driven by an expansionist and dominative dynamic, and even in its most liberal versions is inescapably dependent upon violence [...].<sup>184</sup>

As far as it applies only to the imperialist expansionism arguably inherent in the capitalist mode of production, this generalization could still be considered valid. But the universalist dimension of the narrative exceeds this singular comparison by also projecting elements of National Socialist ideology on the postwar British regime: not coincidentally, when Joe, himself a Nazi agent, tells Juliana about the British detention centers for the Chinese, he refers to them as “concentration camps.”<sup>185</sup> This type of projection clearly goes beyond a mere critique of the ubiquity and innate cruelty of Capitalism, but effectively suspends the historical specificity of the political developments in Germany that ultimately led to the singular event of the Holocaust. At the same time, this perspective must be interpreted in the context of American memory discourses at the time of the novel's production.

---

<sup>184</sup> Carl Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 2000), 171-172.

<sup>185</sup> *MHC*, 160.

Dick himself has expressed his motivation behind writing *The Man in the High Castle* as being a decidedly antifascist enterprise, saying of fascism that “[w]herever it appears ... it is the enemy.”<sup>186</sup> In this context, it seems as though his contemporary understanding of ‘wherever it appears’ happens to also potentially include the United States, of whose increasing militarism Dick was extremely critical.<sup>187</sup> From this perspective, both allohistorical tales can be read as a warning in which Germany and Britain, respectively, function as pessimistic dystopian mirror images of what the United States could become. In this sense, *The Man in the High Castle* does not necessarily, or at least not exclusively, perform “the didactic function of preserving the Germans’ crimes in memory and of vindicating America’s historic decision to intervene in World War II against them,” as Gabriel Rosenfeld suggests.<sup>188</sup> This view is particularly brought into question when considering the nearly equally as bleak present in the Abendsen’s *Grasshopper*, even after a successful American intervention. Freedman’s assessment thus seems to offer a more appropriate interpretation with the assertion that “in popular ideology, the ultimate moral sanction of the American-dominated postwar order always lay [...] in the totally successful and ethically unambiguous crusade against the Axis” and that, rather than reaffirming this belief, “*The Man in the High Castle* deeply subverts America’s moral credentials for world leadership by locating Nazi evil within the larger Western phenomenon of the dominative will.”<sup>189</sup> Accordingly, despite its universalizing strategy Dick’s novel cannot be considered an alternate memory as defined in the previous chapter because the relativization of National Socialism is here not an end in itself, but rather employed to serve as a cautionary tale. This difference becomes more apparent as we turn to the first example of German Alternate Histories.

### 3.2 SAMUEL HITLER

One of the earliest German Alternate Histories to follow Otto Basil’s dystopian nightmare, Sissini’s novel *Samuel Hitler*, in general terms also a Alternate History of a victorious Germany, represents a unique and unusual phenomenon within the context of allohistorical reimaginings of

---

<sup>186</sup> Quoted in Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 108.

<sup>187</sup> See Freedman, *Critical Theory*, 173.

<sup>188</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 100.

<sup>189</sup> Freedman, *Critical Theory*, 175.

the Third Reich in more ways than one.<sup>190</sup> The first question is whether or not this text can even be counted as a ‘German’ contribution to the genre. It is revealed in the only published review of the novel that Sissini is, in fact, the pen name of Greek economist Dimitris N. Chorafas, who has made a name for himself not as an author of fiction but as an economics professor and financial advisor, mainly in the United States and Canada since the 1960s.<sup>191</sup> A bibliographic search reveals a considerable number of non-fiction publications on a variety of topics – largely focused on global finance and computer science and exclusively in English –, but no other *belles-lettres* publications appear to exist. In *Samuel Hitler*, Chorafas’ real name appears as co-editor and as author of the foreword, praising his own text, with seeming objectivity, as a ‘provoking instrument’ for the critical analysis of history by means of a counterfactual reimagining.<sup>192</sup> Despite the fact that the book credits two translators and that Robert Neumann’s aforementioned review suggests that his correspondence with Chorafas took place in English, the German text, as published in 1973 by Melzer, remains the only existing version of the novel. It is therefore safe to assume, regardless of the author’s actual nationality and the (unascertainable) language of the original manuscript, that *Samuel Hitler* was primarily directed at a German readership and, as such, qualifies to be read in the context of postwar German collective memory.

The second issue of note is the novel’s publisher. While the majority of other texts discussed here align themselves with the previously established contemporary specificities of German alternate memory, in the sense that they can all be said to serve a deflective purpose in the context of German memory debates without being immediately situated in a particularly reactionary or right-of-centre discourse, the fact that Chorafas’ novel was published by Melzer assigns a special quality to this relationship. Founded in 1958, the Melzer Verlag (originally Cologne, now Darmstadt) first made a name for itself by publishing predominantly progressive titles, such as the first West German printing of Victor Klemperer’s famous *Lingua Tertii Imperii*

---

<sup>190</sup> Sissini, *Samuel Hitler* (Darmstadt: Melzer, 1973). Hereafter cited as SH.

<sup>191</sup> See Robert Neumann, "Wenn Hitler Jude gewesen wäre: Die Vorgeschichte eines bizarren Buches: *Samuel Hitler*," *Die Zeit*, November 23, 1973. It is interesting to note in this context that the use of pseudonyms, attributing (especially right-wing) German Alternate Histories to obscure American authors with fictional biographies, is not unheard of. See especially the so-called *Stahlfront* series and its aptly named author *Torn Chaines*. Cf. Emanuell Möbius, "Nazi-Science-Fiction: Wacker an die ‘Stahlfront’," *Spiegel Online*, June 12, 2009, accessed November 19, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/0,1518,628488,00.html>.

<sup>192</sup> SH XVI. Neumann mentions that the advance manuscript still listed Chorafas as the author, indicating that the decision to use a pseudonym was made last minute in the publication process. Nonetheless, the fact that readers of the published book did generally not have access to this information suggests that the paratextual usage of the real author’s name was not intended here as a metafictional element.

in 1966. At the same time, however, the publishing house has also been known to not only publish highly controversial titles like the German edition of British-Canadian philosopher Ted Honderich's book *After the Terror* (Nach dem Terror), but also publisher Abraham Melzer's own periodical (*Der Semit*), which – much like Honderich's treatise – routinely adopts a heightened focus on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with a near categorical condemnation of Israeli policies and an emphatically apologetic representation of Palestinian acts of terrorism. Another Melzer publication, Auschwitz-survivor Hajo Meyer's *Das Ende des Judentums* (2005), in which the author identifies Jewish culture itself as the original cause of anti-Semitism and repeatedly compares Israeli policies to those of the Nazis, was labeled anti-Semitic by Jewish-German writer Henryk M. Broder and has become exemplary evidence of the existence of Jewish anti-Semitism.<sup>193</sup> While positions such as this are not necessarily linked to or an expression of German normalization, their popularity – especially in the context of liberal *anti-memory*, where Jewish critics of Israel are frequently invoked as a legitimization for non-Jewish criticism – certainly is. Notably, all of the mentioned publications are commonly considered to be located firmly within a leftist tradition of socio-political critique and many contributors to Melzer's journal are representatives of this tradition.<sup>194</sup> In this sense, the publisher of Chorafas' novel can itself be considered a manifestation of the paradigmatic turn of German normalization in which relativist interventions into the discourse of collective memory are no longer restricted to explicitly conservative agents, but in the context of which seemingly progressive voices – even Holocaust survivors – have taken on the task of revising history. This is particularly relevant when considering the third and most central unique feature of Chorofas' novel: the alteration itself.

At first glance, *Samuel Hitler's* identification of a historical nexus event is not at all uncommon. A definitive reminder of Alternate History's SF roots, many allohistorical fictions – including three of the five texts discussed in this chapter – have to some extent imagined Nazi Germany's victory in the Second World War as the result of a greater success in the race for advanced technology in general and nuclear weapons in particular. This ultimately also

---

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Alex Feuerherdt, "Henryk M. Broder: 'Den Adolf gemacht'," *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 9, 2007, accessed November 19, 2011, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/medien/den-adolf-gemacht/1090752.html>. Meyer and Melzer, both Jews themselves, filed a lawsuit against Broder to withdraw his classification of Meyer's book but ultimately lost in court.

<sup>194</sup> See, for instance, the interview with Franco-German politician Daniel Cohn-Bendit and the article by *Die Linke* MP Norman Paech in the current issue: *Der Semit* 3, no. 5 (2011).

constitutes the most significant turning point in Chorafas' novel. What makes his rendition of this theme unusual, however, and, in fact, the only one of its kind, is the cause which effects this greater success. While the overall historical alterations in *Samuel Hitler* are (not unintentionally) subtle for the largest part of the novel, the most fundamental change is already represented by the highly suggestive, borderline stereotypical name that is its title: In the novel's alternate reality, Hitler is a Jew. At the heart of the novel's assessment of historical cause and effect – and Chorafas explicates this in the foreword – is the theory that Germany's defeat in the war ultimately came down to the Nazis' anti-Semitism. However, this is not portrayed as a moral critique but rather a strategic one. Considering the real historical exodus of Jewish scientists and intellectuals from Europe to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s, as a result of the anti-Semitic policies of the Third Reich, and the ultimate victory of the Americans in the (nuclear) arms race, the novel operates on the assumption that the tables would have been crucially turned if Germany had only found a way to avoid this 'brain drain.'<sup>195</sup> And, evidently, the only solution conceivable to Chorafas for averting the institutionalization of anti-Jewish resentment and the resulting mass emigration of Europe's Jewish intelligentsia (their mass murder is, incidentally, not an issue the novel raises) was to make the Führer himself Jewish. While, from a primarily prescriptive perspective, this choice of alteration would first and foremost make *Samuel Hitler* highly problematic with regard to its historical plausibility, it also makes it an early, prototypical example of the narrative strategies that constitute alternate memory.

Strictly speaking, Chorafas' novel must be categorized as an "alternate world" story, itself a sub-category of the Alternate History genre.<sup>196</sup> While the historical setting is very familiar, place and character names have been altered, effectively alienating the narrative from real history. In *Samuel Hitler*, Germany is *Altland*, Britain *Mercia*, the United States are *Neuland*, and so on. The names of the known historical protagonists have been changed ever so slightly, while still maintaining their recognizability. Here, however, this does not merely serve to remove them from our reality, but assumedly also to demonstratively ridicule their real historical counterparts: Göring becomes *Höring*, Goebbels *Poebbels*, and Churchill *Furchill*. Hitler is one of the few prominent characters who retains his last name, but for him, the changes are, of course, much more radical.

---

<sup>195</sup> In fact, the retention and harnessing of "brain power" (in the English phrasing) is a frequently recurring motif in the text.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Hellekson, *Alternate History*, 8.



Written for the largest part like an (alternate) biography, the novel takes the reader through various stages of the alternate Hitler's life, which are linked to four distinct incarnations of the Führer: *Hitler I* through *Hitler IV*.<sup>197</sup> Like the real Hitler, his Jewish doppelgänger (Hitler I) is born in Braunau am Inn – to where the alternate Hitler family has emigrated from Prague for 'unknown reasons' in 1856 – towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though a definitive birth date is not given.<sup>198</sup> While no mention is made of Samuel Hitler's mother, except that she died at an early age, the character of his father is of central importance. In stark contrast to Hitler's real father, Alois Hitler, Samuel's father Lazarus is a mild-mannered intellectual whose foremost function it is to instill his son with a sense of Jewish identity. An avid admirer of the political thought of Benjamin Disraeli and the political resolve of the first emperor of China, Lazarus Hitler's teachings lay the foundations for both his son's patriotic identification as a German Jew and his early aspirations of becoming a 'unifying' conqueror.<sup>199</sup> From a very young age, Samuel, who never takes up the real Hitler's first vocation of becoming a "Kunstmaler" because he is deemed too intelligent to waste his gifts on such an unproductive enterprise, is encouraged by his father to become a politician and quickly develops into a staunch 'rational' nationalist with a quasi-religious faith in the power of the German nation.<sup>200</sup> This trend continues throughout this first section of the book, with minor alterations to Hitler's personal biography, but hardly any real historical changes overall.<sup>201</sup> Far more interesting than any major historical alterations, however, are the more or less subtle acts of revisionism that are linked to the Judaism of the alternate Führer-to-be.

A key aspect of the novel is the utilization of its eponymous protagonist's Jewish perspective for the purpose of relativizing the role of anti-Semitism in Germany. While anti-

---

<sup>197</sup> In actuality, the story begins with the end, with Hitler IV and the bombing of Neuland. However, unlike other novels (especially Stephen Fry's *Making History*, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter), overall the narrative does not follow an achronological or cyclical path.

<sup>198</sup> SH 20. The family's 'unknown reasons' for leaving Prague are most likely an allusion to the budding conflict between Czech nationalists and the city's increasingly German-identified Jewish community in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>199</sup> In the text, the Chinese emperor in question is referred to as "Chine" and no explicit dates are assigned to his rule. From the context, however, this is most likely a reference to Qin Shi Huang (259 BC – 210 BC), the first emperor of unified China. Both Lazarus and Samuel acknowledge the brutality with which the process of Chinese unification was achieved, but relegate it to the status of a necessary evil in the process of building a great nation (SH 26-27).

<sup>200</sup> SH 30-31.

<sup>201</sup> For instance, after the end of World War I, Hitler attends university in Munich (although the text does not go so far as to grant him an actual degree), further emphasizing his rational, intellectual character.

Jewish resentment is not altogether eradicated in Germany and Austria, overall it does not feature as a real obstacle for an Austrian Jew of Czech origin to eventually rise to become the Führer of the Greater German Reich. In the early chapters of the book, anti-Semitism directed at the Jewish Hitler by his immediate peers only surfaces in one short paragraph, which describes the young Samuel as an outsider in school as a result of his heritage.<sup>202</sup> While this status remains, for all intents and purposes, without actual consequences, it nonetheless serves as a starting point for the alternate Hitler's future philosophy: "Die Bezwingung einer feindseligen Welt wurde zum Leitmotiv seines Lebens."<sup>203</sup> However, as already the early chapters show, in the novel's alternate reality, this 'hostile world' is generally located beyond Germany's borders. In contrast to the very brief reference to anti-Jewish hostilities immediately surrounding the protagonist, the anti-Semitism of other nations is strongly emphasized:

In der Schule hatte er natürlich von Mercia und Neuland gehört. Behandelten diese Länder ihre Juden gerecht? Er erinnerte sich daran, daß sein Lehrer so viele häßliche Dinge über sie erzählt hatte. Da Christen und Juden gemeinsam zum Aufstieg Altlands in der Wehrmacht beigetragen hatten, erwachte in anderen Weltgegenden wieder der traditionelle Judenhaß. [...] In manchen Ländern zog die Presse über die sogenannte *askenasisch-altländische Allianz* her, die angeblich überall auf der Welt Organisationen unterhielt, mit deren Hilfe sie versuchte, Banken, Konzerne, Parteien, Gewerkschaften, die Presse, ja sogar Gerichte und Regierungen unter ihre Kontrolle zu bringen.<sup>204</sup>

While the next paragraph also mentions the existence of anti-Semitic organizations in Germany, the establishment of a productive German-Jewish alliance, which also mythically features as a central aspect of the highlighted non-German hatred of Jews, nonetheless fulfills a twofold deflective function here: On the one hand, it features as a positive element of Samuel Hitler's worldview, suggesting the existence of an overall peaceful and harmonious accord between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans, despite the existence of German anti-Semitic groups, which – as a result of their effective inconsequence in the narrative as a whole – appear relatively marginalized; on the other hand, it not only projects some of the most prominent axioms of the anti-Semitic myth of Jewish world domination exclusively – at least as far as they are explicitly mentioned in the text – onto Germany's former and future enemies, but it introduces Germany

---

<sup>202</sup> SH 28.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> SH 24. Emphasis in the original.

itself as the target of this resentment. The real alteration here is, of course, not the claim that a virulent anti-Semitic ideology also existed (and still exists) in countries like England and the United States, in a more or less identical narrative as in the German anti-Jewish tradition; the central change lies in the suggestion that British and American anti-Semitism was, at the same time, directed at Germany for having forged a historical alliance with the Jews. This depiction sets the scene for the overarching universalizing narrative of the novel: It already makes clear at an early stage that, judging from the globalized hatred of Jews, the Holocaust was basically possible anywhere and, in turn, it implicitly insinuates that the institutionalization of anti-Semitism was neither a necessary nor a particularly alluring factor in the context of the rise and the success of National Socialism in Germany. At the same time, this portrayal transcends the realm of mere universalization by not only claiming that ‘it could have happened anywhere,’ but by actually making the Germans themselves victims of anti-Semitic resentment, as a result of their alleged allegiance with the corruptive influence of the Jews – a role traditionally reserved for the United States in real history. Samuel Hitler’s own racist ideology, which seems to represent that of the majority in this alternate Germany – the anti-Semitic fringe groups notwithstanding – eliminates Jewishness as a racial category altogether or, rather, subordinates it to other racial traits. This is most apparent when Samuel contrasts himself with Rosa Luxemburg (one of the few historical characters who keep their real names), whom he understands as a misguided idealist, but whose necessary inability to succeed on the German political stage ultimately comes down to race. However, it is not her Jewish heritage that is the problem here, but her Slavic roots: “Man sah Rosa Luxemburg ihre polskanisch-jüdische Herkunft an, während er schließlich ein altländischer Jude war, Sproß einer Herrenrasse.”<sup>205</sup> It is this kind of specifically revised racism which creates a sense of plausibility for Samuel Hitler’s unlikely ascension to power.<sup>206</sup>

The era of *Hitler I* is also infused with a wide variety of stereotypes of more a general revisionist hue. And, significantly, the passages in which these occur are the farthest removed from the novel’s counterfactual storyline, both in terms of narrative style and narrative content,

---

<sup>205</sup> SH 37-38.

<sup>206</sup> Certain anti-Semitic stereotypes nonetheless remain part of the narrative and, arguably, can be read as betraying the author’s own proclivities in this regard. The central-most representation of this is the design of the alternate Nazi flag, which is no longer adorned by a swastika, but instead features Samuel Hitler’s initials (SH 47). This symbol is depicted on the cover of the only edition of the novel in such a way that the S is superimposed on the H, creating dollar sign – the traditional link between Judaism and money.

and seem much more akin to Chorafas' foreword, making them appear even more as an implicit authorial commentary on real history, rather than a representation of the protagonist's alternative perspective. These passages are filled with revisionist staples such as blaming the Treaty of Versailles for laying the foundations for National Socialism ("Der Versailler Vertrag war ein Dokument der Unklugheit, das die Weltgeschichte vergewaltigte und das Gleichgewicht Europas zerstörte"<sup>207</sup>), the depiction of Western politicians as corrupt and opportunistic ("Der Präsident von Neuland, der damals Wählerstimmen suchte, benutzte den Plan eines selbständigen Polska, um sich die Stimmen der großen polskanischen Wählerschaft in Chicago zu sichern"<sup>208</sup>) and the staunch anti-Communist evocation of the threat of Soviet infiltration ("[U]nterstützt mit Propagandamaterial und geschulten Agenten, hofften die Spartakisten auf einen totalen Umsturz"<sup>209</sup>). For the whole of the alternate narrative, the last aspect is of heightened importance because, to a considerable extent, the role of the Jews as scapegoats, the necessity of which for the mobilization of the masses Samuel learned from his father, is delegated to Communists.<sup>210</sup> While anti-Communist fear mongering was, of course, an integral part of the policies and propaganda of the real Third Reich – and, in fact, was frequently linked to Judaism –, it is significant here that in the novel's alternate reality it is only the Communists without any reference to Jewish agency, to whom this role is attributed.

The remainder of this section of the text is defined mainly by the same developments the educated reader is familiar with from real history: Samuel Hitler succeeds in uniting the disparate factions of Germany's extreme Right into an increasingly powerful movement and ultimately leads the 'Kampfbund' (with the suspicious absence of Ludendorff) in the failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923.<sup>211</sup> It is the resulting prison sentence that turns *Hitler I* into *Hitler II*:

Die Monate im Gefängnis hatten Samuel Hitlers Persönlichkeit entscheidend geprägt. Ein anderer *Hitler* begann sich auf der politischen Bühne zu bewegen. *Hitler I* kennzeichnete den leidenschaftlichen, leicht erregbaren Mann, der sich für den Putsch entschied, *Hitler II* nahm die Gestalt des künftigen Kanzlers an.

---

<sup>207</sup> SH 24. See also 34-36.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> SH 35.

<sup>210</sup> See SH 46. Oddly, however, the 'Reichstagsbrand' does not occur in the story.

<sup>211</sup> It is worth mentioning, however, that this section already introduces the theme of the acceleration of technological progress (e.g., the creation of an "ultramoderne Datenbank") and its importance for the following alternative development of the Third Reich (see SH 60-61).

[...] Da ihm öffentliches Auftreten und Demonstrationen untersagt waren, verlegte er sein gesamtes Interesse in den Aufbau eines Propagandaapparates. Er kümmerte sich um alles. Er war der Chef, der Organisator, der Planer; er war der Prophet der Bewegung, aber auch der ausgleichende Vermittler; kurz, *er war der Führer*.<sup>212</sup>

This motif of an evolution of several incarnations of Hitler may here still be read as little more than a biographical quirk; however, over the course of the novel as a whole, it is revealed to be much more programmatic than this. The era of *Hitler II* constitutes the largest part of the novel and covers Hitler's rise to power from 1924 until the beginning of World War II. This section is particularly defined by a more pronounced development of the story's alternate reality and its two foremost themes: the acceleration of technological progress as a result of the retention and inclusion of Jewish intelligence and the relativization of real history by means of the counterfactual narrative mode.

Despite marginal anti-Semitic prejudice against the Jewish *Führer* from within the Nazi Party itself – the opposition and subsequent liquidations of Ernst Röhm (Föhn) and Gregor Strasser (Wasser) are attributed to their inability to accept a Jew as leader of the movement –, Samuel Hitler rises through the ranks of the political landscape of the Weimar Republic in an identical fashion as his non-Jewish counterpart and, like him, becomes chancellor of the Reich on 30 January, 1933.<sup>213</sup> Between this date and the invasion of Poland on 1 September, 1939, national politics in Germany follow the course of real history surprisingly closely. This is, of course, no coincidence, but a programmatic trait. While one obvious focus of Chorafas' narrative is the illustration of how the institutionalized anti-Semitism of the Nazis hindered scientific progress in Germany and ultimately foreclosed the possibility of winning the war, another is the proliferation of the idea that the same historical anti-Semitism did neither constitute a defining factor of National Socialism as a whole nor a particularly influential ideology among the German majority. Or, in other words: If Hitler had himself been a Jew and had experienced an entirely different upbringing, history would have progressed in an almost identical fashion, but the Holocaust would never have occurred (in Germany).

This allohistorical narrative strategy represents a prime example of alternate memory. By

---

<sup>212</sup> SH 68. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>213</sup> See SH 70-71, 78, 126-127. Slight alterations: Röhm is not executed but killed by a car bomb, Strasser's death is not explicitly mentioned, and the SA is not succeeded by the SS, which does not seem to exist in its historical form.

replacing the real Hitler with a more rational alternative in this alternate reality but preserving all other historical protagonists as characters – albeit with sillier names, arguably to stress their irrationality even further –, the novel delegates the responsibility for the outbreak of the war to other nations. The text is filled with explicit and implicit allusions to the personal and political failings of Germany’s enemies, which are implemented through various narrative devices. The incrimination of the United States (Neuland) is realized, on the one hand, through misrepresentations of actual historical developments. For instance, Roosevelt’s (Boosevelt) New Deal is described as a reactionary backlash consisting of ruthless social engineering and an all-out attack on civil liberties.<sup>214</sup> At the same time, another strategy is employed to the same effect, namely the deliberate dehistoricization of events in American history in order to contrast to them with contemporaneous developments – or, rather, the absence thereof – in the alternate Third Reich. In this context, the text moves the institutionalized displacement and murder of the American Indians forward through time into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, likewise, moves the Watergate (Landgate) scandal back to also coincide with the Nazi regime.<sup>215</sup> The Soviet Union (Rossia) receives a similar treatment through repeated mentions of its alleged mistreatment of intellectuals, who are confined to so-called sanatoriums (“Irrenanstalten”) and subsequently seek refuge in Germany, where they are embraced as part of Hitler’s “Braintrust” policy.<sup>216</sup> This rearrangement of real historical ‘Versatzstücke’ as elements of a fictional present serves as a powerful narrative instrument of projection: While in the alternate reality generated in this way, it serves to vilify Germany’s enemies above and beyond the conduct of the alternate Third Reich itself, the fact these are actual, merely reorganized occurrences also facilitates a re-evaluation of real history, condensing all the crimes of these nations into the suggestion that, perhaps, they were ‘not much better’ than Germany.

A considerably more radical form of this revisionist tendency, however, can be found in the non-German alternatives for the Holocaust itself. While even the limited number of human rights violations still attributed to Germany are presented in an extremely apologetic fashion, the institutionalization and execution of racial discrimination never actually occurs in the alternate

---

<sup>214</sup> See SH 86-87.

<sup>215</sup> See SH 104 and 216.

<sup>216</sup> See, for instance, SH 88 and 204.

Third Reich.<sup>217</sup> In fact, it is explicitly stated in the text that Samuel Hitler intends to avoid the establishment of organized hatred by all means.<sup>218</sup> Instead, genocidal policies, including in particular the persecution of Jews, are projected onto other countries and, in turn, used as a legitimizing factor for Germany's actions.

Aus der Hochburg des askenasischen Judentums in Chicago traf ein Geheimbericht ein, demzufolge Neuland auf dem Weg zu einem Polizeistaat war. In der Furcht, die innere Sicherheit könnte gefährdet sein, weil die jüdische Bevölkerung natürlicher Weise zu Samuel Hitler neigte, und voll Besorgnis, die verbleibenden Juden zu verlieren, die in der neuländischen Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft eine wichtige Rolle spielten, erließ Washington ein Gesetz zur Einrichtung von Konzentrationslagern. Sie wurden als "Internierungslager" bezeichnet, weil das Wort Konzentrationslager als Symbol des Totalitarismus diskreditiert war.<sup>219</sup>

Not only does this portrayal represent a projection of anti-Semitic practices onto Germany's enemies; with the text replacing the real historical treatment of the Japanese community in the United States during the Second World War with the counterfactual treatment of Jews at the hands of the authorities of Neuland, it also once more elicits the memory of actual Allied misconduct during the war and effectively highlights it in the fictional absence of similar crimes committed by the Nazis. At the same time, even in this mode of deflection, this passage manages to reproduce anti-Jewish ideology with the invocation of the influential American 'East Coast Jewry,' a veritable classic of traditional as well as contemporary anti-Semitic propaganda. A similar strategy is applied to both Poland and the Soviet Union, only here with the added dimension that the projections are directly invoked to legitimize German acts of war against both nations. Conveniently, as Altland is contemplating an invasion of Polska to further its "Lebensraum" program – now rendered legitimate by the continual influx of Jewish refugees from all over Europe –, reports arrive in Berlin detailing the oppression and persecution of Jews by the Polish authorities.<sup>220</sup> A recreation of the real Holocaust, but without German

---

<sup>217</sup> While Communists, who in several historical scenarios in the text take a role analogous to the Jews in the real Germany, are persecuted and ultimately effectively eradicated (see SH 94, 122) and so-called criminal elements are brutally reined in by a paramilitary police force (see SH 103), all of these actions are legitimized by a thorough vilification of the victims of state-sanctioned violence.

<sup>218</sup> SH 90.

<sup>219</sup> SH 216.

<sup>220</sup> Polska is also pejoratively introduced in this section as the "künstliche Schöpfung des Vertrags von Versailles" (SH 209).

‘participation,’ Polska has allegedly not only set up concentration camps and classified Jews as “Untermenschen,” but is currently in the process of creating “vervollkommnete Genozid-Methoden.”<sup>221</sup> And, later in the war, Operation Barbarossa is justified in a similar fashion:

Die Lage der Juden in Rossia war eine ernstere Sache. [Die] Situation verschlimmerte sich noch unter Malin [Stalin], der gesellschaftlich wie politisch eine reaktionäre Rückwendung zur Vergangenheit vollzog. Es spricht einiges für die Annahme, daß Hitler den Juden eine neue soziale Struktur bieten wollte, indem er mit den Rechten und Pflichten der neuen Generation begann und die einfacheren Menschen vom Elend jahrhundertelanger Unterdrückung befreien wollte.<sup>222</sup>

While the entire text is characterized by a relativist tone, these passages epitomize its overall universalizing strategy. By projecting the real historical anti-Semitism of the Third Reich onto other nations and contrasting it with the fictitious rationality and relative humanity of Altland, the text creates an alternate memory narrative which enables the inclined reader to harness certain aspects of this counterfactual scenario for a revision of the collective memory of National Socialism. The amalgamation of actual historical misdeeds of Germany’s enemies – be it the Jewish-Japanese transposition in the case of the United States or the narrative accentuation of the very real historical anti-Jewish resentment in the Soviet Union – develops a suggestive potential which transcends the boundaries of the alternate reality itself. It propagates nothing less than the necessity of a total re-evaluation of the character and legacy of National Socialism by suggesting that the factual historical developments between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the Second were not primarily contingent on the ideological disposition of a majority of Germans – i.e. the injured narcissism of the national collective in the wake of the defeat in World War I and traditional, widespread anti-Semitism – and its elevation to the status of official policy by the Nazis, but were rather effected much more immediately by the failings of other nations. The theory that, had a Jew become the Führer of the National Socialist movement in the Weimar Republic (in itself a relativization of the pervasiveness of anti-Jewish prejudice in Germany at the time) and abated anti-Semitism instead of fostering it, the Third Reich would have turned out to be comparatively liberal and humane, not only shifts the responsibility for the ultimate outbreak of the Second World War away from the German

---

<sup>221</sup> SH 215-216. In contrast, it is stated at an earlier point that the production of poison gas as a means of warfare – and, presumably, genocide – was “im Widerspruch zu Hitlers humanem Denken” (SH 140).

<sup>222</sup> SH 258.



conscience,<sup>223</sup> it also dehistoricizes the Holocaust into a universal phenomenon which, had it not happened in Germany, could just as well have occurred anywhere else.

This universalizing effect is, however, not only realized by the explicit revisions exemplified above, but also by the aforementioned programmatic, gradual evolution of the novel's protagonist and the analogous acceleration of technological progress. As a direct result of his own heritage, Samuel Hitler's philosemitic and philo-scientific policies turn Altland into a haven not only for Europe's persecuted Jews, but for the world's. Consequently, the Third Reich is not only able to retain leading scientific minds such as Albert Einstein (Dreistein), but even recruit Jewish scientists from other countries, such as J. Robert Oppenheimer (Penheimer) and Enrico Fermi (Vermi), whose defection from the United States is not explicitly mentioned, but who nonetheless work for Germany's budding nuclear program.<sup>224</sup> The installation of this "Braintrustpolitik," which Hitler emphatically includes in the new regime's Four-Year Plan, subsequently also leads to non-Jewish scientists – whether as refugees from persecution or simply attracted by the cutting edge scientific community being built in Altland – voluntarily immigrating to the Reich and adding to its overall increase in 'brain power.'<sup>225</sup> Not only does this development naturally provide Altland with an increasing advantage over its competitors, but the counterfactual cumulation of scientific innovators in one place and the overwhelming support they receive from the Führer, result in an overall accelerated progression of technological development. In part, this development is represented by Altland's greater success in the international arms race. Different from many Alternate Histories that feature this theme, Chorofas' novel does not describe this process in outright SF terms.<sup>226</sup> Rather, real technological developments of the era are re-arranged both temporally and nationally. With the most influential scientific minds of the 1930s now concentrated and collaborating in Altland, the most groundbreaking innovations do not only occur there before anywhere else, they also – for a large

---

<sup>223</sup> See SH 218 for another instance of commentary that appears to be stylistically removed from the main narrative: "Schuld daran, daß die Nationen in den Krieg schlitterten, fällt auf den Westen und Mitteleuropa zu gleichen Teilen."

<sup>224</sup> This alteration also extends to other academic fields and includes a number of prominent psychologists and other representatives of the Social Sciences. Perhaps the most poignant – and, from a historical perspective, most grotesque – example is the fact that the entire *Frankfurter Schule* remains a part of German academia under the alternate National Socialist regime (SH 155).

<sup>225</sup> See SH 86 and 96.

<sup>226</sup> The only real exception are the initial plans for the organization of a "Raumschiffgesellschaft." However, this is only briefly alluded to as a futuristic vision and not actually a realized technological advancement (see SH 178).

part – occur sooner than they did in real history. For instance, both the aerial warfare development and production facility in Peenemünde and the Mittelwerk GmbH – in this alternate reality, without the benefit of forced labor from concentration camp prisoners – are established years before the war and achieve serial production of new weapons technologies, such as the *Aggregat 4* rocket, well ahead of their actual completion.<sup>227</sup> However, the most central and consequential alteration in this context is the development of the atomic bomb. Due the majority of the world’s leading nuclear scientists either remaining in or immigrating to Altland, the Manhattan Project is replaced by the *Charlottenburg-Projekt*.<sup>228</sup> With Oppenheimer and Fermi as heads of the German nuclear program, its American and British counterparts, the combination of which facilitated major advancements in real history, remain disparate. Meanwhile, the cumulative efforts in Altland speed up the development and manage to successfully test the first atomic bomb on 16 January, 1943.<sup>229</sup> This acceleration enables the Luftwaffe to attack Neuland with nuclear weapons well before the historical end of the Second World War, with the first atomic bomb (*Bubi* instead of *Little Boy*) being dropped on Baltimore on 3 April, 1943 – more than two years earlier than the American bombing of Hiroshima.<sup>230</sup> A second nuclear warhead – carried by an A4 rocket fired from a U-boat that had been accordingly outfitted for this purpose in what is called “Operation Silberteller” (an allohistorical play on the Silverplate project that produced the *Enola Gay*) – is subsequently fired on Norfolk, Virginia, resulting in the unconditional surrender of Neuland.<sup>231</sup> It is significant to note that this final victory of Altland, despite being a major alteration in its own right, does not come without its share of revisionist undertones. This is represented, on the one hand, by the relativist portrayal of the aftermath of the bombing of Norfolk, in which the victims of the attack itself are altogether absent and the narrator exclusively focuses on retaliatory violence perpetrated by Americans against German

---

<sup>227</sup> See SH 143. While there is no definitive date given for the beginning of the serial production of the A4 rocket, the passage in which this is mentioned is located well before the outbreak of the war in the text. In real history, the rocket was not ready for regular use until 1944.

<sup>228</sup> See SH 243.

<sup>229</sup> See SH 299. In contrast, the first successful test in the context of the Manhattan Project was conducted on 16 July, 1945.

<sup>230</sup> SH 308-309. Even selection of Baltimore as a target comes down to Samuel Hitler’s Jewish heritage, as New York is ruled out due to the size of its Jewish population.

<sup>231</sup> See SH 312-313. An explicit date for these two events is curiously absent here, but it seems a safe assumption that the progression follows the same timeline as the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the surrender of Japan, putting them within three and nine days of the first bombing, respectively.

prisoners of war;<sup>232</sup> on the other, it takes the form of American officials, when accused of war crimes following the defeat, defending their actions by claiming that they were only following orders, thus delivering an allohistorical conclusion for the universalizing role reversal which pervades the entire text.<sup>233</sup> Unlike is commonly the case in *Alternate History*, the narrative ends shortly after this central-most nexus event and the ramifications of the alteration for the course of history are only hinted at. The short final chapter is entitled “*Civitas Solis Zwei*” and, in an allusion to Tommaso Campanella’s homonymous utopian dialogue, outlines the aspirations of the victorious Reich to create the perfect, unified world society. The novel ends with a single sentence: “Hitler IV war der neue Gott, und auch Gott war effizienter geworden.”<sup>234</sup>

Brief as it may be, this final chapter represents a significant contrast to the previous direction of the narrative. As stated above, the evolution of Hitler in Chorafas’ novel must be read as programmatic and is constructed in analogy to the technological advancements featured in the story. As a matter of fact, *Hitler IV* is no longer Samuel Hitler at all, but an advanced artificial intelligence programmed with his memories and theories to emulate his consciousness: a Führer-Computer. After *Hitler II* had turned into *Hitler III* with the outbreak of the Second World War, he is killed in an allohistorical assassination plot executed by General Lavin on 31 January, 1943.<sup>235</sup> Samuel’s memories, however, had previously been transferred into a highly advanced computer, which had originally been devised to act as an intelligent war machine to coordinate aerial defense systems.<sup>236</sup> For the reader, this SF turn of events does not actually not come as a surprise. *Hitler IV* is, in fact, the first incarnation we encounter in the text, coordinating the bombing of Baltimore in the proleptical first chapter. More importantly, however, in the narrative as a whole, this is not a sudden, but a gradual development. The only stark contrast between Hitler’s ongoing ‘computerization’ and its ultimate completion in the last chapter lies in its narrative representation. The final chapter displays distinct aspects of anti-modern angst, pessimistically foreshadowing a dystopian future in which technology will claim

---

<sup>232</sup> See SH 312.

<sup>233</sup> See SH 314.

<sup>234</sup> SH 327.

<sup>235</sup> Lavin is most likely a cross between Wolfram von Richthofen, whose biography is primarily used in earlier discussions of this character (commanding officer of the Legion Condor during the bombing on Guernica) and Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, as the central figure of the failed attempt on Adolf Hitler’s life, which, despite the date difference, is clearly reenacted in this passage (Hitler is killed by a briefcase bomb left in a conference room).

<sup>236</sup> SH 297.

the status of religion and machines will become the new gods. While the fear of such a dehumanized society is represented in a small number of passages in previous parts of the novel, both the acceleration of technological progress in general and Samuel Hitler's symbolic 'computerization' in particular are presented much more positively overall and frequently serve as evidence of a heightened state of rationality, enlightenment even, in the alternate Germany under Jewish rule.

The development of advanced computer systems is, without question, the most important technological allohistorical motif and by far the most significant scientific acceleration in the text. As early as the mid-1930s, the Third Reich implements a de facto automatization of the lower ranks of government with a database processing information in ways and dimensions far ahead of its time.<sup>237</sup> By 1934, computers can be employed to predict political decisions;<sup>238</sup> by 1937, they are used to perform complex data analyses and serve as reliable war simulators.<sup>239</sup> In what may well be read as a metonymical allusion to the counterfactual character of the narrative itself, simulation, in this context, is described as being based on "Eigenschaftsähnlichkeit, aber nicht Identität."<sup>240</sup> By early 1939, computers have penetrated all levels of Altland's society, fundamentally influencing and, in part, replacing human decision making processes in economic and military matters.<sup>241</sup> This accelerated development ultimately culminates, by 1943, in the development of the advanced artificial intelligence which is not only capable of emulating the mind of the Führer, but which actually becomes the new leader of Altland: "Am 1. Februar 1943, um 7.30 Uhr, wurde *Hitler IV*, der Supercomputer, zum Herrn über das Schicksal Altlands, Europas und später der Welt gewählt."<sup>242</sup>

Geoffrey Winthrop-Young writes that "when dealing with tachychronias [accelerations of history] or bradychronias [decelerations of history], it quickly becomes apparent that not all domains of society have evolved faster or slower. Therefore the question arises: Which sectors of

---

<sup>237</sup> See SH 89.

<sup>238</sup> See SH 132.

<sup>239</sup> See SH 174-175. Notably, the Third Reich's computer development is headed by an alternate version of John von Neumann (von Leumann), the actual father of modern computer technology. It is not mentioned whether he is recruited from the United States or never leaves Europe in the first place.

<sup>240</sup> SH 175. See Füger's definition of "Allotopia" and Booth's characterization of "modal narratives" in Chapter 1.

<sup>241</sup> See SH 205-206.

<sup>242</sup> SH 298.

society are said to be so important that their relative acceleration or deceleration allows for a characterization of the overall rate of social change?”<sup>243</sup> As his argument outlines, traditionally in Alternate History the respective allohistorical developments of society and technology have frequently been diametrically opposed, evolving from decelerated pre-modern dystopias in spite of the existence of modern technology, over what Jeffrey Herf calls “reactionary modernism” – the reconciliation of accelerated technological progress with a deceleration or even regression of social mores – to more recent examples in which “forces of technology rule and the social superstructure is subservient.”<sup>244</sup> To an extent, Chorafas’ novel also features this dualism, when considering the disconnect between the final chapter and the rest of the text. For the largest part of the narrative, however, the acceleration of technology directly facilitates the improvement of society; a generic anomaly that can most likely be explained by the fact that, in contrast to the majority of Alternate Histories of the Third Reich, in Chorafas’ account, a victorious and prosperous Nazi Germany is not necessarily “the worst of all possible worlds.”<sup>245</sup>

The foremost representation of this is Samuel Hitler’s biography, which portends the progressive rationalization of society through technology. Already his adolescence is defined by a target-oriented process of rational self-construction: “In seiner Jugend hatte er die Struktur seiner Ziele und Fähigkeiten entworfen, am Anfang seines zwanzigsten Lebensjahres konstruierte er das Gerüst seiner Persönlichkeit, um es allmählich auszufüllen.”<sup>246</sup> In the next evolutionary step, the progression from Hitler I to Hitler II is centrally characterized by Samuel’s increased self-rationalization with regard to information processing:

Um seine Position an der Spitze der Informationspyramide zu festigen, unterstrich Hitler die Bedeutung der Kommunikation. Da er stets über die Meinung der Menschen informiert war, konnte er geplante Manöver seiner Gegner vereiteln. Seine durch stetiges Training entwickelte Gedächtniskraft ermöglichte es ihm, komplizierte politische Anordnungen, technische Einzelheiten, Gesetzesparagrafen und lange Listen von Namen und Daten stets gegenwärtig zu haben.<sup>247</sup>

---

<sup>243</sup> Winthrop-Young, “Third Reich,” 886.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 890. A pertinent summary of the category of “reactionary modernism” can be found on pp. 888-889.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 886.

<sup>246</sup> SH 92.

<sup>247</sup> SH 89.

As Altland moves toward war, Hitler is the first to propagate, in a foreshadowing of the imminence of virtual simulations, the importance a rationalistic ‘computer strategy’ in the context of foreign policy and military planning: “Im Krieg und in der Außenpolitik gewinnt man einen Vorteil, wenn man aus vielen Alternativen, ob sie nun attraktiv oder unangenehm sind, die entscheidende wählt, indem man die Daten des gesamtstrategischen Ziels herausdestilliert.”<sup>248</sup> In all these evolutionary steps, Samuel Hitler’s ‘computerization’ is predominantly portrayed as both an intellectual and a strategic advantage. His rationality is positively contrasted with the irrational and ideological decisions made by Altland’s enemies abroad and it is not until the final chapter, and the actual advent of a fully digitalized mind, that the process of computers enhancing “die Intelligenz des Menschen zur Vervollkommnung seiner Art”<sup>249</sup> is described exclusively as a process of dehumanization.

In this sense, the last chapter of the novel can only be read as a caveat against the dangers of an over-rationalization. In the text as a whole, however, the Führer’s superior rational intellect and its symbolic representation by means of the computer analogy distinctly serve to further the overarching relativist narrative. The pairing of the allohistorical revisions, which portray the real Germany’s enemies as morally inferior to Altland, its alternate counterpart, with the theme of the latter’s heightened state of intellectual progress, effectively reinforces the perpetuated universalistic notion that the development of National Socialism, with all the horrors it entailed, was not a necessary product of the historical specificities of interwar German society. As such, Chorafas’ novel can be considered a prototypical example of alternate memory, constructing a fictional storyline seemingly far removed from reality but, at the same time, using this fictional alternate history to implicitly validate revisionist sentiments.

### 3.3 MAKING HISTORY

British writer Stephen Fry’s novel *Making History* from 1996 takes a different approach towards the reimagination of the legacy of National Socialism and thus falls into a different category in Rosenfeld’s thematic model.<sup>250</sup> Here, it is not the victory of Nazi Germany that is the center of

---

<sup>248</sup> SH 191.

<sup>249</sup> SH 178.

<sup>250</sup> Stephen Fry, *Making History* (London: Hutchinson, 1996).

allohistorical attention, but rather the different course history could have taken had Hitler never existed in the first place. In fact, very few Alternate Histories of the Third Reich have taken this premise quite as literally as Fry's.

The story is told on two narrative levels, covering two alternative timelines. The primary narrative centers on two main protagonists: The British history student Michael Young and the German physicist Leo Zuckermann. At the outset of the plot, Michael is in the process of completing his doctoral thesis at Cambridge on the topic of Adolf Hitler's early years, entitled *From Braunau [sic] to Vienna: The Roots of Power*. The specific historical knowledge this particular field of research has afforded him is put to advantageous use – after his dissertation is vocally rejected as prosaic tripe by his supervisor – when he accidentally meets Leo Zuckermann, an elderly German physicist and Cambridge fellow. Leo takes great interest in Michael's topic, which both Michael and the reader initially assume is the result of his Jewish heritage. It is soon revealed, however, that Leo is in fact not a Jew at all, but actually the son of a high-ranking Nazi by the name of Dietrich Josef Bauer – first assistant to the real historical 'Lagerarzt' Johann Paul Kremer – who served as a physician in Auschwitz, overseeing exterminations and experimenting on living inmates. As the German defeat became foreseeable, Leo's father supplies his wife and infant son, whose real name is Axel, with fake identities – stolen from Jewish prisoners, whom he personally sent to the gas chambers – in order to protect them from retaliation. Due to his young age, Leo only learns the truth of his actual heritage and the atrocities committed by his father as an adult, through his mother's (unrepentant) confession on her death bed. As a result of this realization, he is plagued by such immense guilt that he becomes obsessed with the past and eventually develops a device to see backwards through time – the Temporal Imaging Machine, or TIM. While TIM is no time machine in the strictest sense, Michael and Leo eventually discover that they are able to use the device as a transmitter for very small objects. Due to the fortuitous coincidence that Michael's chemist ex-girlfriend has recently developed an irreversible male contraceptive and with his specific knowledge of the circumstances of Hitler's birth, they decide to prevent Adolf Hitler from ever being born. After turning Leo's Temporal Imaging Machine into a Temporal Interface Machine, they transport the sterilizing pill into a well in Braunau am Inn, from which the Hitler family takes all their water and end the rise of Hitler before it ever begins. The second level of the narrative, which is presented intermittently with Michael and Leo's story, describes the early life of Hitler himself, beginning with his earliest childhood and skipping gradually ahead to an occurrence in World

War I that resulted in the death of the universally-liked officer Rudolf Gloder. As the reader learns later in this timeline, the entire passages about Hitler's life are actually taken directly from Michael's doctoral thesis.

After the alteration effected by Hitler's complete removal from history, Michael wakes up in a haze and eventually realizes that he is no longer a student at Cambridge, but at Princeton University in the United States, as everyone around him marvels at his eerily convincing British accent. Despite a general sense of confusion and disorientation, Michael initially feels victorious after realizing that history has changed as a result of his and Leo's actions. Regardless of his personal situation, the fact that Hitler never lived, he naturally assumes, must mean that the world has been altered for the better. It is only gradually that he realizes his error. Again, the reader is presented with a second narrative, which is now presented from the perspective of Rudolf Gloder. An excessively charming and well-educated man, Gloder, the "physical, spiritual and intellectual embodiment of all [...] Aryan ideals,"<sup>251</sup> has risen through the ranks of the German military in no time and, towards the end of the First World War, is in line to be promoted to Hauptmann. Virtually worshipped by his men for his honorable personality and camaraderie that appears to know no rank, in this alternate timeline, Gloder evades death as a result of the risky maneuver Hitler had dared him into in the previous timeline by sending a willing subordinate in his stead. After this event, it is finally revealed that Gloder is merely acting the part of the likeable comrade to foster his own advancement and that he is indeed a cunning careerist who literally leaves dead bodies in his trail on the way to the top. As the story progresses, Gloder follows a similar path as Hitler in real history, only with much greater success at every step, as a result of his particular intellectual and social talents. Meanwhile, in Princeton, Michael quickly learns that the alternate history he created is not actually improved at all. As it turns out, his British parents have fled Europe as a result of the German conquest of the entire European continent and the beginning of the US-German Cold War. Michael soon realizes that history has, in fact, turned out much worse through the removal of Hitler. The NSDAP is still formed under Gloder in 1921, "by the early 1920s [membership] had swelled to a flood," and by 1925 it has become the third largest political party in Germany.<sup>252</sup> In the following years, Gloder not only manages to achieve a greater degree of unification among the disparate political factions

---

<sup>251</sup> *Making History*, 246.

<sup>252</sup> *Making History*, 245.



of the Weimar Republic, but also he also advances his “belief [...] that the good faith of the scientific community is essential for the future of Germany,” resulting in a rapid acceleration of technological development.<sup>253</sup> To this effect, Gloder even “[swallows] his natural anti-Semitism [and goes] out of his way to court the physicists of Göttingen University and other centres of scientific excellence, where developments in atomic and quantum physics were reaching far ahead of any comparable institutions outside Germany.”<sup>254</sup> In 1932, the NSDAP is elected to the Reichstag and Gloder manages to renegotiate the Treaty of Versailles. Internationally, he fosters the image of a cosmopolitan benevolent statesman, resulting in mutual trade agreements with Great Britain, and in 1937 even receives the Nobel Peace Prize. Finally, in 1938, the world realizes that Gloder has harbored a secret agenda all along. Immediately after the announcement that the Göttingen Institute has succeeded in weaponizing nuclear power, and despite the existence of a non-aggression pact with the USSR, the German military detonates atomic bombs in Moscow and Leningrad, eliminating the entire *Politburo*. In the wake of the attack, the Wehrmacht occupies nearly all of Eastern Europe, as well as Turkey and Greece. A short time later, the Western European nations surrender without a fight and Germany strikes a cooperative agreement with the United States. In 1939, Germany establishes a so-called Jewish Free State in an area between Montenegro and Herzegovina and deports all Jews from the Greater German Reich to this location. In response, the United States sever diplomatic relations and a rebellion breaks out in Britain, which is brutally quashed by German forces. By 1941, the United States have also developed atom bombs, marking the beginning of the Cold War with the New Reich. Rumors emerge from the Jewish Free State about systematic killings of its inhabitants, causing the United States to threaten war on the German Reich, which does not break out, however, due to American fears about the development of superior German weapons systems. Both countries return to a state of Cold War, which is still going on in 1996, the story’s present.<sup>255</sup>

As a result of this perpetual state of confrontation, the negative effects of this alternate history are not restricted to German-dominated Europe, but have also affected US society, which appears like a grotesque snapshot of America in the 1950s. Homosexuality is still a crime in the

---

<sup>253</sup> *Making History*, 246.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> A breakdown of all these dates can be found on pp. 243-249 and pp. 260-260 (Fry, *Making History*).

contemporary United States,<sup>256</sup> and racial segregation is still the pervasive status quo.<sup>257</sup> The most severe failure of the attempt to improve history, however, is the fate of the Jewish population of Europe. In response to Michael's question "The Jews, what about them?", his new best friend (and later lover) Steve answers matter-of-factly: "There aren't any. Not in Europe."<sup>258</sup> By far the most drastic instance of the motif of history repeating in the generally – down to the narrative structure – circular story is the alternate account of Leo's father. While initially it appears that, in the second timeline, at least Auschwitz did not exist, the reader later learns that, instead of a concentration camp, the town of Auschwitz was home to a German research facility in which Dietrich Bauer and Johann Kremer conducted experiments on a very special substance. Kremer had previously become aware of a strange case of localized infertility in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Austrian town of Braunau am Inn. After a period of relentless research, they finally discover that an unknown chemical in the water is the cause for the inability of Braunau's male population to produce viable sperm. At the Auschwitz facility, it ultimately is Leo's father who manages to isolate and reverse-engineer the compound for mass production. On the orders of Gloder, the 'Braunau water' is then distributed to the inhabitants of the 'Jewish Free State,' sterilizing and eventually wiping out the entire Jewish population of Europe. Upon learning that the Holocaust did not only also occur in the alternate timeline, but that it constituted a genocide of an even larger scope than in real history, Michael and Leo decide to reverse history yet again, ironically stating: "Now he and I were preparing to make the world a better place by ensuring that Adolf Hitler lived and prospered."<sup>259</sup> Because they cannot remove the sterilizing pill from the well in Braunau, they instead transport a dead, decomposing rat backwards through time to ensure that none of the residents drink the polluted water. At this point, the circular narrative finally comes full circle, because, as the careful reader remembers, the stench from the decaying rat carcass is the first impression conveyed in the original timeline's first visit to Hitler's birthplace. The novel ends with 'real' history all but restored – only Michael's favorite band never existed – and the resigned realization that "History sucks."<sup>260</sup>

---

<sup>256</sup> *Making History*, 252.

<sup>257</sup> *Making History*, 306-307.

<sup>258</sup> *Making History*, 263.

<sup>259</sup> *Making History*, 371.

<sup>260</sup> *Making History*, 382.

Without question, Fry's alternate version of history – which actually constitutes what Hellekson call an *anti-Alternate History*, that is “alternate histories that always revert back to reality”<sup>261</sup> – represents a relativist view in the sense that the real Holocaust is ultimately deemed acceptable in light of an even greater atrocity. Rosenfeld comments on Fry's novel, asserting that “[a]ll historical narratives that portrayed history as no better in Hitler's absence by such figures as Stephen Fry [...] reflected the role of contemporary events in diminishing the horror of the Third Reich and universalizing its overall significance.”<sup>262</sup> In contrast, Rosenfeld himself subsequently also states:

Alternate histories that have portrayed Hitler's elimination from history as making it worse can also be seen as providing a useful service. While such tales have clearly de-demonized the dictator, they have prevented us from blaming him alone for the rise of the Third Reich and have reminded us of the German people's contribution to it.<sup>263</sup>

In the concrete case of *Making History*, however, he acknowledges that this may indeed also have been Fry's motivation, but refuses to include the text into this category, referring to its “comic tone” and “lighthearted intent” and concluding that his “ultimate decision to restore history to its rightful course [...] suggests that the writer was driven by a much more positive assessment of the contemporary world.”<sup>264</sup> Yet, there are integral aspects of Fry's narrative which merit a re-evaluation of Rosenfeld's categorical verdict. One of these is the in-depth description of the grueling details of the dehumanizing routine of Auschwitz, culminating in the unsurpassably cynical act with which Leo's father turns his son into a Jew, tattooing him with the number of an inmate whose march to the gas chamber he himself supervised.<sup>265</sup> Another is the scene at the death bed of Leo's mother, who speaks one of her last sentences with the collective voice of postwar German apologetics: “No one understands now. The Jews were a threat. A real threat. *Something* had to be done, everyone thought so. Everyone.”<sup>266</sup> These are passages in which Fry's “lighthearted” tone falters and which are therefore much more prone to being read as

---

<sup>261</sup> Hellekson, *Alternate History*, 9.

<sup>262</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 380.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>265</sup> *Making History*, 127-134.

<sup>266</sup> *Making History*, 137. Emphasis in the original.

an indictment of the German majority, their complicity in the rise of National Socialism and the callousness with which so many participated in its crimes. After all, the one constant in the two timelines is the widespread resentment of the German population, which the text explicitly emphasizes at various occasions. An example is this exchange between two German soldiers in the trenches during World War I after the removal of Hitler from history:

‘It’s talk that is losing us this war.’ ‘For God’s sake, Ernst!’ Hans looked about him nervously. ‘We’re not losing this war. Militarily we are doing well, we have a clear advantage, everyone knows that. It is only on the home front that we are losing. Morale is being fucked by the Bolsheviks, the pacifists and the artist queers.’<sup>267</sup>

But most of all, there is Michael’s ultimate realization as to why their plan of creating a better version of history by simply removing Hitler had to fail:

[I]n my arrogance I thought I’d generated a better one. I thought if Hitler wasn’t born the century would have less to be ashamed of. I suppose I should have known better. The circumstances were still the same in Europe. There was still a vacuum in Germany waiting to be filled. There was still fifty years of anti-Semitism and nationalism ready to be exploited.<sup>268</sup>

This passage represents quite the opposite of a “philosophy of history [that] de-emphasized free will in favor of something akin to predestination,” as Rosenfeld sums up Fry’s approach.<sup>269</sup> Rather, there are several clear indicators that not only acknowledge, but in fact highlight the responsibility of the German people for the legacy of National Socialism and the Holocaust. In conclusion, the same claim can be made with regard to Fry’s novel that also applied to Dick’s, namely that it is the national context of its production and primary reception which constitutes a significant factor for analysis. Like Dick, Fry does not direct his narrative at a German audience and he does not partake in the popular normalizing trends of postwar Germany. Rather, his narrative is targeting the forgetfulness of his compatriots, of those who would allow revisions of history to go unchallenged. This group is represented in the text itself by the reaction of the two CIA agents interviewing Michael, as representatives of the last remaining opponent of (the alternate) Nazi Germany, when one of them dismisses the previously secret information about

---

<sup>267</sup> *Making History*, 172.

<sup>268</sup> *Making History*, 258-259.

<sup>269</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 303.

the elimination of the entire European Jewry with the words: “It’s history. It’s over. What’s done, is done.”<sup>270</sup>

### 3.4 AUSFLUG

Like Fry’s novel, Hans Pleschinski’s short story “Ausflug,” published in 1983 in the literary periodical *Der Rabe* (1982-2001), centers on the allohistorical question of how history would have turned out, had Adolf Hitler never ascended to power.<sup>271</sup> In direct contrast to the portrayal of the ensuing alterations in *Making History*, however, Pleschinski’s story purports the idea that the fate of Germany – and, by extension, the world – would have been considerably improved as a result.

As the title (“Excursion”) implies, the entire story is a description of a casual journey. Carl, the protagonist, a student of political science at the University of Munich, decides to visit Luise, his cousin, in Dresden. In the earliest passages, the reader learns that Luise, a journalist, is currently working on a series of articles entitled “Hitler an der Macht,” a subject of which she quickly growing tired.<sup>272</sup> Carl boards the train in Munich and sets out on a journey across Germany. Already the spontaneity of his travel plans and the casual agreement between him and Luise must have appeared strange to a contemporary reader, with an increased awareness of the bureaucracy involved in travelling from West to East Germany in 1983. And, indeed, as Carl’s journey progresses, it gradually becomes clear that the Germany he is traversing is a very different place. Throughout the story, Carl continuously reflects on the past and present of this alternate Germany beginning with subtle remarks and passing observations, ultimately building to a radical externalization of aspects of real German history onto other countries.

A large part of the historical changes in the text are mentioned in the context of dialogues, whether direct or overheard, with fellow travellers on the train. It is in this fashion that the reader is informed of the narrative’s central alteration: On the way from Munich to Nuremberg, Carl listens in on a conversation between an elderly French couple and a group of teenage Hungarian

---

<sup>270</sup> *Making History*, 295.

<sup>271</sup> Hans Pleschinski, “Ausflug,” *Der Rabe: Magazin für jede Art von Literatur*, 4 (1983): 24-38.

<sup>272</sup> Towards the end of the story, the reader learns that the rise to power of National Socialism in Germany can itself only be imagined in this reality as an unlikely dystopian Alternate History (see “Ausflug,” 36).

“Globetrotters.”<sup>273</sup> The French passengers turn out to be Jews en route to an annual antiracist conference in Nuremberg. The woman recounts for the teenagers her memories of being discriminated against as a Jew and attacked in a hotel in Berlin, “damals ein paar Wochen vor dem Verbot der NSDAP.”<sup>274</sup> Since neither the woman’s age nor the date of the incident are explicitly stated, there is still a certain degree of subtlety to this ‘establishing shot,’ which lays the foundations for the entirety of the historical changes to follow: The reader could, of course, at this point still assume that the woman is talking about the temporary ban of the NSDAP in real history, following the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923. This potential for misinterpretation, however, is gradually removed as the story progresses. Another notable change laid out in this passage is the exchange between the French man and the Hungarian teenagers, when they speak about their travels across Europe and state that they are currently also headed for Nuremberg to stay with friends. The altered fate of Nuremberg is already hinted at by the young travellers explaining that their friends live in a four hundred year-old gothic loft “unter der Burg.”<sup>275</sup> As most readers would be aware, the Nuremberg Castle, like much of the historic center of the city, was almost completely destroyed in repeated air raids during the Second World War and only partially rebuilt after 1945. The teenagers’ routine invocation of the city’s historic character therefore represents another indirect, but clearly noticeable, allusion to the fact that some aspects of the story do not quite match up with actual historical developments. This impression is immediately furthered by the French man’s reply: “Was Modernes wird man in Nürnberg wohl kaum finden, [...] die Leute müssen ja teilweise ihr Wasser noch auf der Straße pumpen.”<sup>276</sup> This statement now clearly establishes that Nuremberg, in 1983, remains not only intact in its original form, but that technological progress and the implementation of modern amenities have been considerably decelerated here, leaving the city virtually suspended in time. The teenagers respond that it was precisely this historic character that attracted them in the first place.

After passing Nuremberg, this image is reversed when Carl encounters a drunk Silesian man, who monologizes about his irritation with the modernizing efforts of the local government

---

<sup>273</sup> “Ausflug,” 25.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

of his home city of Breslau.<sup>277</sup> The realization that the city of Wrocław was evidently not ceded to Poland in the aftermath of World War II represents a threshold in the narrative: From here on in, there can no longer really be any question about significant changes to history as the reader knows it. At the same time, even more so than historical German cities like Nuremberg escaping destruction, this alteration represents a crucial link between the narrative and central tenets of the collective memory of postwar German ‘trauma.’ As already established in the first chapter, one of the earliest and most influential discourses of German suffering after 1945 centered on the fate of expellees from former German territories that were lost as a result of the defeat. The capital of Lower Silesia and a center of German cultural life in Eastern Europe prior to 1945, Breslau has traditionally been a focal point in the debates about the loss of ‘Heimat’ in the Federal Republic. Consequentially, its casual integration into the story – establishing not merely the fact that the city presently still belongs to Germany, but implying more generally a state of German normalcy – indirectly, but efficiently, addresses this status and thereby caters to a position that is, at best, equally as concerned with the suffering of Germans as a result of the loss of the war as with the suffering of their victims in the twelve years prior.

In the following pages, the perspective shifts mainly to Carl’s own memories and observations, which propagate the same impression of a changed German reality as the dialogical passages. While changing trains in Hof, he encounters a large group of students on a school trip waiting on the platform and, subsequently, three buses from which senior travellers emerge in droves.<sup>278</sup> The students speak with a heavy Saxonian accent and the buses, Carl notes, are all from Chemnitz. Aside from the revealing reference to the city that was actually Karl-Marx-Stadt in the GDR, the utter normalcy that is conveyed in the description of this encounter once more constitutes a key aspect of its description. Like the forfeiture of German territories in the previous passage, this episode addresses an essential element of postwar discourses of German loss: the division of Germany. While the existence of two separate German states constituted a general paradigm of the way in which the Second World War negatively affected the German population, the freedom of movement of the citizens of the GDR or, rather, the absence thereof, has always featured as an especially significant tenet – both in pre-1989 West Germany and in post-unification debates – of the integral demonization of East Germany in official and popular

---

<sup>277</sup> See “Ausflug,” 26.

<sup>278</sup> See *ibid.*

pleas for German reunification.<sup>279</sup> The portrayal of the presence of East German travellers in West Germany in 1983 as a perfectly ordinary occurrence takes up this commemorative archetype and furthers the supposition that Germany would have been better off in the historical absence of National Socialism. In the same passages, however, Carl's reflections on the current state of the country once more evoke an overall sense of deceleration, both socially and technologically, as he describes the passing villages of the Thuringian forest as "Nester für den altdeutschen Geist" and characterizes this alternate Germany as fundamentally non-revolutionary.<sup>280</sup> At the same time, his own critical, sarcastic perspective on these impressions establishes himself as a representative of more a more modern, a more progressive Germany, effectively guarding against potential allegations of over-idealizing German traditions.

On the next train, Carl meets another fellow traveller en route to the Leipzig Book Fair. The man introduces himself as a professor of Romance literature from the university of "Bonn, bei Köln," a brief reference which further sets the allohistorical scene – apparently, in this alternate Germany, which never experienced division, the city of Bonn never achieved any kind of special prominence.<sup>281</sup> The dialogue between these two characters represents the first instance of an externalization of fascist atrocities. Carl and the Professor from Bonn (near Cologne) discuss the history of Spanish literature following the Francoist coup in 1939, during which the German government remained neutral.<sup>282</sup> In response to the fascist takeover, many members of the literary community of Spain fled the country and sought refuge, as it turns out, in the much more liberal Germany. This creative and political liberalism is further substantiated by a concrete discussion of the career of Spanish émigré Fernando Garcia in Berlin during the 1940s. Garcia is clearly an allohistorical representation of Federico García Lorca, whose Marxist allegiances, socio-political criticism and homosexuality resulted in his murder in 1936 in real history. In Pleschinski's alternate history, his Doppelgänger thrived in 1940s Berlin, where he famously cooperated with Kurt Weill at the *Proletarian Theater Wedding*, further emphasizing the political

---

<sup>279</sup> In a recent interview, Pleschinski, who actually never lived in East Germany himself, describes life in the GDR – to which he refers, in reference to Ronald Reagan, as "Reich des Bösen" – like this: "Menschen werden im 20. Jahrhundert gegängelt. Sie müssen hinter Stacheldraht leben und sind in einem politischen System gefangen." See Alexandra Hagen, "'Man besuchte eine Welt – Wie eine Titanic kurz vor dem Untergang': Kulturgeschichtliche Reminiszenzen über die deutsch-deutsche Grenze mit dem Schriftsteller Hans Pleschinski," *Focus on German Studies* 15 (2008): 199-201.

<sup>280</sup> "Ausflug," 26-27.

<sup>281</sup> "Ausflug," 28.

<sup>282</sup> See *ibid.*



openness of German society.<sup>283</sup> The motif of the thriving left-wing intellectual is repeated, this time applied to contemporary Germany, on the next page: Carl reads in the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* that composer Hans-Werner Henze – a gay Marxist who in reality was shunned in postwar Germany and subsequently emigrated to Italy in the 1950s – is appointed artistic director of the world-renowned Thomanerchor boys’ choir in Leipzig.<sup>284</sup>

Pleschinski establishes a similar theme here as we have already seen in Sissini’s *Samuel Hitler*: Not only is Germany without the reign of the (real) Nazis a better place to live for its own intellectuals and thus manages to retain their full creative potential – as exemplified here by the non-emigration of the Communist Jew Weill –, it also becomes a haven for Europe’s progressive refugees, looking to evade persecution in their (unaltered) home countries. The fact that even the Weimar Republic was not free of – sometimes militant – resentment against non-conformists and ‘Others’ in general and that the widespread anti-Semitism fostered by the Nazis had a long-standing tradition in the German population, are effectively erased in this depiction. During their discussion, the train has reached Leipzig, situated in what is indirectly referred to as “Mitteldeutschland.”<sup>285</sup> What remains altogether unmentioned, and is all the more striking in its absence, is a border crossing. In the alternate Germany, the trip from Munich to Leipzig is unhindered by any effects of the real historical division of Germany. In Leipzig, Carl watches as a train en route from Krakow to Ostende pulls into the station and notes that the train cars are adorned by the Polish white eagle, signifying that – while the Soviet regime is still in power in Russia – Communism “has not spread to Eastern Europe.”<sup>286</sup> In fact, the Czech Republic is already a member of the European Community in 1983, ten years ahead of real history, and an active proponent of European neutrality in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union – a position which is not yet shared by a majority of member states, but for which Carl explicitly expresses his sympathies.<sup>287</sup> As the train moves on, Carl is lost in memories which once more casually redraw the map of Central Europe, with recollections of trips to Königsberg and Karlsbad in the Sudetenland, which has remained a health resort for affluent

---

<sup>283</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> See “Ausflug,” 29.

<sup>285</sup> “Ausflug,” 29.

<sup>286</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 279. On the same page (see “Ausflug,” 29), Carl reads about current arms talks between the European Community and Soviet Russia.

<sup>287</sup> See “Ausflug,” 30.

Germans and Czechs alike.<sup>288</sup>

It is on this leg of Carl's allohistorical excursion that the universalistic narrative of the story is developed to its full extent. While seated in the dining car, Carl is joined by a middle-aged Italian woman who instantly notices the textbook on fascism in Italy that he is reading. Commenting on the portrait of Benito Mussolini on the front cover, she introduces herself with the exclamation: "Ach, die alte Bestia!"<sup>289</sup> In the ensuing monologue, the unnamed woman recounts an abbreviated history of the Mussolini regime, at once as a subjective memory and in form of quasi-objective generalized statements. While the overall historical development – that is, the time and circumstances of the rise and fall of Italian fascism – remain largely unchanged, some key characteristics are tellingly altered. But most centrally it is the emotional subjectivity of her recollections that drive the narrative. Over the course of several pages, the account of life under and, more importantly, in the aftermath of the fascist regime, is described and a number of essential elements of postwar German 'trauma' are projected onto an Italian experience which has been subtly, but significantly altered to fit the part. The woman's earliest memories are of her membership in fascist youth organizations – a membership that was, of course, forced – and their cheering on of the Italian military immediately before the outbreak of the Second Italo-Abyssinian War in 1935.<sup>290</sup> This memory is seamlessly followed by another, this time jumping directly to the public celebrations following Mussolini's execution in 1945, which she remembers fondly.<sup>291</sup> Over her family history, which she remembers as being defined by living in fear of the authorities, the account goes on to comment on the racist policies of the regime:

Wir mußten, stellen Sie sich das einmal vor, im sogenannten Biologieunterricht anhand von Menschenschädeln auswendig lernen, im Chor, was die Merkmale des Untermenschen sind. Sie, wie Sie hier vor mir sitzen, als Deutscher, also als Nördlicher Hordentyp, hätten eher zu den Ratten als zu den Menschen gezählt. Allein römische Abstammung gab das Anrecht, sich wertvoll zu fühlen. Der Rest: biologischer Unrat.<sup>292</sup>

This passage is at once a crucial historical alteration and an effective means of projection with

---

<sup>288</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> "Ausflug," 31.

<sup>290</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> See "Ausflug," 32.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

regard to the implementation of racism as a paradigm of European fascism. While the Italian fascist system did include racist and anti-Semitic elements, they did not develop a significant status in the policies and propaganda of the regime until the formation of the Axis in the wake of the German intervention into the war in Abyssinia in support of the Italian forces. It was Hitler's subsequent political and ideological influence on Mussolini, who had previously been staunchly opposed to this aspect of German National Socialism, which ultimately led to the elevation of racial theories into the canon of the Italian fascist movement and Italy's cooperation in the persecution of Jews and other racially defined minorities.<sup>293</sup> It is a symptomatic feature of the universalistic narrative of "Ausflug" that, in this alternate reality, the Italian fascists developed this characteristic not only without the influence of their German counterparts, but that the racist discrimination was, in fact, directed at Germans, as well. The reference to Roman descent as the exclusively acceptable racial type in the context of fascist ideology is clearly a projection of the fanatic 'Aryanism' of the Nazis onto the Italian regime, which reinforces its allegorical nature. This quality of Italy serving as a stand-in for Germany becomes all the more apparent as the focus shifts from the experiences of the Italian population under fascist rule to its legacy and the "trauma" of the postwar era.<sup>294</sup>

Carl's reaction to the previous details of the woman's account comes in the form of disbelief and the failure to comprehend: "Daß all die Jahre hindurch 50 Millionen Italiener das hingenommen haben! Man kann es ja wirklich kaum verstehen[.]"<sup>295</sup> The keyword here is, of course, "hingenommen." The idea that fascism – and, by allohistorical extension, National Socialism – was something that was merely begrudgingly accepted by the general population represents a fundamental axiom of normalizing counter-memory discourses in postwar Germany. Much like the woman's initial exclamation ("Bestia!") and its inherent reduction of the responsibility for the atrocities committed in the name of Italian fascism onto the person of Mussolini, the tendency to focus the guilt of National Socialism and the Holocaust on Hitler (and his most immediate circle) and, accordingly, understand German fascism as something that was not carried by, but rather forced on a majority of the German people, is a characteristic feature of narrative strategies aimed at a relativization of the Third Reich. Pleschinski's story is itself a

---

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Aaron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>294</sup> "Ausflug," 32-33.

<sup>295</sup> "Ausflug," 32.

representation of this approach, with the arrest of Hitler – who ultimately dies in a mental institution in Buchenwald –<sup>296</sup> and the ban of the NSDAP, still in its infancy in 1923, effecting the seamless development of Germany into a largely progressive, liberal nation. Without the legacy of an essentially extrinsic ideology weighing on their collective conscience, the alternate Germans enjoy freedoms that the Italians are denied, the foremost of which is a positive national identity.<sup>297</sup> This difference is explicitly acknowledged by the Italian woman, who expresses her envy for Carl, as representative of the German people, by marveling:

Wie anders, wie unbelastet von solchem Trauma ist es hier [...] Sie haben mehr Glück gehabt als wir [...] Sie können in die Welt gehen, können, wenn Sie wollen, ‘Deutschland’ sagen und müssen nicht im selben Moment die Lippen ein wenig zusammenkneifen. Sie können, wenn Ihnen danach ist, in Ihre Geschichte zurückblicken, Ihre Traditionen begutachten und können sich in einem Land beheimatet fühlen, das sich rechtzeitig besonnen hat.<sup>298</sup>

The relative subtlety of the previous passages is finally abandoned here. In these lines, the projection of German ‘shame’ onto the alternate Italy is inescapable and, at the same time, the motivations behind this narrative strategy are at their most apparent. Much more so than the material loss of ‘Heimat’ – as represented by the earlier invocations of Breslau, Königsberg and Karlsbad – this passage bespeaks the fact that the real suffering of Germans in the postwar era, especially that of the second generation and beyond, is caused by a metaphysical loss of identity. Pleschinski acknowledges this prioritization himself, in an e-mail interview with Gavriel Rosenfeld, by stating that his main impetus behind writing “Ausflug” was the “revulsion against the Nazi contamination (*Verdreckung*) of [our] national history.”<sup>299</sup> Accordingly, the Italian woman’s lament that she is unable to proudly assert her nationality as a descendant of the fascist regime, is also characteristic for the discourses that constitute German normalization. It exposes this specific kind of ‘trauma’ as utterly narcissistic, insofar as the concrete engagement with historical suffering is no longer concerned with the original victims of the injured collective at all, but focuses exclusively on the negative ramifications for the defeated perpetrators and their descendants. This shift is especially heightened in Pleschinski’s story because, here, the

---

<sup>296</sup> See “Ausflug,” 37.

<sup>297</sup> See “Ausflug,” 33.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Quoted in Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 280. Italics in the original.

traditional recourse to actual German hardships – such as the fire bombings of German cities and the expulsions from the East that are at the core of most non-allohistorical literature dealing with this topic – has no equivalent in the recollections of the Italian woman, but is exclusively represented as a negative, by the fact that these events did *not* occur. Consequently, the symbolic suffering caused by the inability to openly relate to one’s nation remains as the only form of victimization and is, at the same time, the ultimate erasure of the memory of the real victims of National Socialism, as a result of the complete dissolution of historical cause and effect. Therefore, the overall generalizing impact of the story’s fundamental suggestion that, on the one hand, the development of National Socialism in Germany was, in essence, a random occurrence which, on the other hand, could just as easily have happened in an identical fashion in another country, transcends the realm of mere universalism. By keeping the memory of German victims intact, by means of an allegorical surrogate, but expunging the Holocaust from the historical record altogether, “Ausflug” does not merely equalize the Germans and their victims, it effectively prioritizes the suffering of the former in the absence of the latter. In this sense, Pleschinski’s story represents a prime example of alternate memory. The counterfactual mode specifically enables this kind of casual, selective historical elision and permits it to function, at the same time, as a source for the formation of new memories that ultimately facilitate an overcoming of the real legacy of the fictionally omitted events.

### **3.5 REQUIEM FÜR EINEN STÜMPER**

Published not only after reunification but after the paradigmatic changes outlined in the first chapter, Sabine Wedemeyer-Schwiersch’s short story “Requiem für einen Stümper” represents the first example of a new type of German Alternate Histories.<sup>300</sup> Though set in 1975, “Requiem” was written in 1999, at the onset of the newly revised renaissance of German normalization, and the significance of this specific historical location becomes apparent when comparing it to the two previously discussed examples of German alternate memory narratives.

On the surface, Wedemeyer-Schwiersch’s story takes a similar allohistorical starting point as Pleschinski’s “Ausflug.” At the core of the alternate reality imagined in “Requiem” are the idea that Adolf Hitler never ascended to power and the speculation about the ramifications this

---

<sup>300</sup> Sabine Wedemeyer-Schwiersch, “Requiem für einen Stümper,” in *Alexanders langes Leben, Stalins früher Tod und andere abwegige Geschichten*, ed. Erik Simon (Heyne: München, 1999), 243-250.

alteration would have had on the historical development of Germany. In this story, however, this central change is not effected by Hitler's arrest and the ban of the National Socialist movement before it could acquire sufficient political influence to assert a dominant role. Rather, here Hitler never enters the sphere of politics at all, but instead realizes his adolescent dream of becoming a professional painter. After the real historical two failed attempts, the alternate Hitler decides to apply for admission into the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna for a third time and is finally accepted.<sup>301</sup> He spends four years honing his skills but his works remain obscure, overshadowed by the contemporary aesthetic preeminence of Expressionism.<sup>302</sup> In 1914, Hitler suspends his artistic career to enlist in the German military to fight for the Fatherland in World War I. In counterfactual retrospect, these years of patriotic heroism are described as having a profound influence on the development of his later style.<sup>303</sup> Following the end of the war, Hitler settles in Stuttgart, where he rents a small studio and returns to the task of perfecting his artistic skills. Despite remaining so unsuccessful for over a decade that he is constantly barely able to pay his rent – albeit avoiding the real historical stint in a homeless asylum – he finally, in a turn of counterfactual providence (“Vorsehung”), meets the wealthy, young industrialist Albert Häberle, who is so taken with Hitler's work that he instantly decides to become his patron.<sup>304</sup> Häberle is the sole heir to the presidency of the gargantuan Häberle-Werke, a multinational (but inherently Germanic) corporation which, by the mid-1930s, not only operates franchises across the globe, including Japan and Stalinist Russia, but which is implicitly credited with single-handedly averting the German economic crisis of the 1920s.<sup>305</sup> Under Häberle's patronage, Hitler experiences a meteoric rise. As the newly appointed head of the artistic division of the Häberle-Werke, Hitler enters what is known in the story's fictional present as his “brown period,” creating hundreds of vastly successful paintings representing heroic scenes from Germanic mythology as well as depictions of the everyday life of the German worker.<sup>306</sup> His work becomes so preeminent that, soon, every German household owns at least one ‘Hitler’ and that the narrator suggests: “In gewisser Weise kann man sagen: Auch wir [i.e. all Germans] sind Werke Adolf

---

<sup>301</sup> See “Requiem,” 244.

<sup>302</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> “Requiem,” 244-245.

<sup>305</sup> See “Requiem,” 245-246.

<sup>306</sup> See “Requiem,” 246-247.

Hitlers.”<sup>307</sup> Following his overwhelming success as a painter, Häberle assigns Hitler to also collaborate with Albert Speer, the head of the company’s architecture department, in designing a series of grandiose buildings to reflect the size and ever-growing global influence of the Great Häberle-Werke. Speer and Hitler subsequently design the company’s new headquarters in Stuttgart, which elicits vocal admiration even from US president Richard Nixon who, upon seeing it for the first time, exclaims that “America is great, but this building is gorgeous!”<sup>308</sup> Hitler’s artistic genius continues to spread the awareness of German greatness to all parts of the world and, upon his death at 85 in 1974, Häberle commissions the creation of a museum in his honor.<sup>309</sup>

The alternate course of history summed up above is relayed to the reader exclusively in form of a speech given at the opening ceremony of the Adolf-Hitler-Museum in 1975 and forms the present of the story. Gavriel Rosenfeld asserts that the “allohistorical significance of Wedemeyer-Schwiersch’s short story lies in its contention that German history would have turned out much better had Hitler never gone into politics but rather had become an artist” and explicitly likens it to Pleschinski’s “Ausflug” in this regard.<sup>310</sup> However, there is a considerable problem with this reading. The narrative structure of “Requiem” is organized on two levels, typographically separated in the text. The speech itself is characterized by the unadulterated admiration of Hitler and Häberle that Rosenfeld refers to, unequivocally lauding both men’s accomplishments as great innovators in their respective fields and benefactors of the German people, as outlined above. By itself, this level of the narrative may indeed be taken to imply that German society experienced considerable improvements as a result of the fact that Adolf Hitler never ascended to political power. At the same time, however, this impression is undermined by the narrator’s internal commentary on his own speech, printed in italics in the text. Rosenfeld acknowledges the existence of this critical voice, but not the fundamental impact it has on the speech itself. According to his assessment, the highly sarcastic passages that are continually subverting the main narrative are the result of the author’s specific historical situation, in contrast to writers like Pleschinski, both in a relatively recently reunified Germany and in an increasingly

---

<sup>307</sup> “Requiem,” 247.

<sup>308</sup> “Requiem,” 248.

<sup>309</sup> See “Requiem,” 249.

<sup>310</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 284.

globalized word, and should be read as a form of universalism that understands contemporary problems in German society in a larger international scope.<sup>311</sup> While all of these observations are accurate, in sum they nonetheless fail to take into account the full extent of the contrarian effect produced by means of the secondary narration. Indeed, the overall function of the story is universalistic in nature and the specificities of its narrative strategies are unquestionably linked to the discursive changes in the wake of German reunification, but counter to Rosenfeld's interpretation, this is not the result of an overly positive depiction of the alternate Germany. Only an examination of both layers of the narrative in combination reveals the meticulous generalizations at work in the text and calls into question the seamless comparisons with earlier German Alternate Histories of the Third Reich.

When reading the narrator's auto-commentary, it quickly becomes clear that, despite the exuberant image officially propagated to the fictional audience, the alternate historical development of Germany depicted in the story is, in fact, not so far removed from our reality at all. Already the first of the narrator's comments implies the existence of totalitarian control, when he questions his role in the celebration of Hitler's achievements:

Wieso habe ich mich bloß dazu breitschlagen lassen, diese verdammte Rede zu halten, noch dazu vor diesem geschmacklos gigantomanischen Kasten! Na ja, was wäre mir anders übriggeblieben? Zurück ans Fließband? Wo ich es endlich zum leitenden Angestellten in der Kulturabteilung gebracht habe? Vielleicht sollte ich auswandern.<sup>312</sup>

The narrator outs himself as an opportunistic collaborator, who, despite his obvious distaste for Hitler's fascist aesthetic, has agreed to give the opening speech in his honor in the sole interest of maintaining his status within the company. The alternatives for this choice, however, are significant here. As this passage suggests, the only other options, other than total acquiescence to the will of the 'Great Director,' are either professional and assumedly social demotion or emigration. In the speech, it is established that the Häberle-Werke have long since assumed control of German politics.<sup>313</sup> The commentary, which engenders a sense of ubiquitous social coercion, foreshadows this realization and emphasizes its extent at the same time, suggesting that Häberle's control not only exceeds the immediate confines of his company, but encompasses the

---

<sup>311</sup> See Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 285.

<sup>312</sup> "Requiem," 243.

<sup>313</sup> "Requiem," 246.



whole of society. This impression is further reinforced by one of the following italicized passages, which mentions the narrator's father. In contrast to his conformist son, he is described as a "dissident" whose unspecified disagreement has indeed landed him back at the assembly line of the Häberle-Werke. Being a professional art historian – which, the reader can assume, is also the narrator's vocation –, it is implied here that this career change was not voluntary and seemingly without alternative.<sup>314</sup> The choice of the term "dissident," as well as the establishment of the narrator's previously expressed fear of the ramifications of a refusal to adapt as fact, additionally advance the realization that Alfred Häberle is evidently in a position of near absolute political power and capable of exerting the kind of pervasive control over the lives of citizens commonly associated with totalitarian regimes.

The second aspect revealed in the commentary passages is the de facto cultural 'Gleichschaltung' of German society. While the speech only indirectly refers to expressionist and post-expressionist art – which, in the story's present, exists only as "exotische Kuriositäten"<sup>315</sup> – as a hindrance for Hitler's early success, it is the secondary narrative which explicates the full extent of the homogenization of contemporary German culture: "Eine Schande ist das! Wir sollten uns lieber offen zu Macke bekennen, zu Beckmann, Dix und all den wirklich großen Künstlern. Und was haben wir stattdessen? Hitler, nichts als Hitler!"<sup>316</sup> And, once more, the reflections on the narrator's non-conformist father add a distinctly political dimension to this portrayal: "Na ja, mal ehrlich: Wenn Vater nicht Dissident gewesen wäre, hätte ich dann jemals etwas anderes als Hitler kennengelernt?"<sup>317</sup> Not only do these two passages bespeak the comprehensive propagation of Hitler's art in Häberle's Germany, but they also imply that all other art, especially abstract forms, has been relegated to a status akin to that of 'entartete Kunst' in the Third Reich. The fact that the narrator questions whether he would ever have been introduced to the mentioned representatives of German expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, had it not been for his dissident and subsequently censured father, suggests that these artists' works are not merely inaccessible to the general public, but that it evidently constitutes a punishable offense to circumvent this prohibition. This situation alone bears strong resemblances

---

<sup>314</sup> "Requiem," 247.

<sup>315</sup> "Requiem," 244.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> "Requiem," 247.

to the cultural policies of the Nazis, but at the same time also supports the readers' growing awareness of Häberle's political influence, since they must assume that it was his patronage of Hitler that effected this restrictive practice. This socio-political dimension of cultural 'Gleichschaltung' is later echoed by another one of the narrator's comments: "Albert Häberle, Deine Werke sind wir, noch mehr als Hitlers Werke, und das weißt du nur zu gut!"<sup>318</sup>

The third and final regard in which the commentary passages are significant is their critical exposition of German expansionism. As mentioned above, already the speech itself refers to the global influence wielded by Häberle. This aspect is revisited in the commentary when the narrator once more wonders why he has not simply left Germany in order to escape the omnipresence of Hitler's art and what it represents. The answer is this: "Aber wer weiß, vielleicht hat man in London und New York auch nur noch so ein Zeug hängen? Gar nicht so unwahrscheinlich, wo Häberle sogar schon die Aktienmehrheit von Rolls Royce und Chrysler hält!"<sup>319</sup> The concrete reference to Rolls-Royce and Chrysler is, of course, a jab at the real international expansion of such behemoths of the postwar German economy as Volkswagen (which acquired Rolls-Royce Motors in 1998) and Daimler (which until recently held the majority of Chrysler shares). More significant, however, is the link of this contemporary situation with the inherent suggestion of a very real possibility that the economic expansion of Germany also denotes an expansion of Häberle's political influence over other countries, symbolized by the narrator's vision of Hitler's paintings now also dominating the art scenes of London and New York, as they already do in Berlin and the rest of Germany. This idea of endless expansion and prospective global domination again engenders distinct associations with the Third Reich. In parallel with the speech itself, the critical commentary thus serves to accentuate the thinly veiled negative aspects of the alternate Germany within the laudatory whole and echoes the real memory of National Socialism sometimes subtly, sometimes less so. After all, Häberle is at one point comically referred to as "GröDaZ" and the short story's last line, typographically marked as part of the official speech, reads: "Heil Häberle!"<sup>320</sup>

The overall image developed of the alternate Germany in this way is far removed from the

---

<sup>318</sup> "Requiem," 249.

<sup>319</sup> "Requiem," 247.

<sup>320</sup> "Requiem," 250. The title of "GröDaz" is, of course, a pun on the ironic 'acronymization' of Hitler as "GröFaZ" (Größter Feldherr/Führer aller Zeiten), and here accordingly stands for "Größter Direktor aller Zeiten."

positive portrayal Rosenfeld suggests. Even in the absence of the Holocaust, the text evokes considerable similarities to the society of historical Nazi Germany, which far exceed a critical assessment of the interactions between corporatism and politics in the era of heightened globalization that was reportedly the author's aim. In an e-mail message to Rosenfeld, Wedemeyer-Schwiersch herself attests to this, explaining that "Germany is hardly the only country dominated by enormous corporations, being in good company with Japan, Great Britain, France, and Switzerland as well."<sup>321</sup> Considering this intent and the overall narrative strategy of the text, "Requiem" can therefore nonetheless be read as a universalistic parable. The de facto rule of Häberle bears significant resemblances to that of Hitler – evidenced by the effective 'Gleichschaltung' of Germany, the seemingly exclusive ubiquity of a fascist aesthetic, the totalitarian control of the population (albeit by different means), and Germany's relentless expansionism – and is clearly portrayed in a negative light by the narrator. At the same time, this is precisely what enables the narrative to function as an alternate memory. As the discussion of Fry's *Making History* has shown, the description of an alternate Germany in which Hitler never rose to power, but which can still – for all intents and purposes – be considered a fascist regime, can serve to foreground the historical complicity of the German people in the rise and sustainment of National Socialism. In contrast, "Requiem" shows that the same counterfactual premise can just as easily be framed in such a way that shifts the focus away from real German history and the specific culpability of Germans both prior to and during the era of the Third Reich. Wedemeyer-Schwiersch creates a quasi-fascist Germany which does not merely resemble the actual Nazi Germany, but which is at the same time recognizably and intentionally linked to the political economy of contemporary globalized Capitalism, in which international corporations wield immense political power. This specific methodology – no longer bound by the discursive crutches of pre-unification universalist counter-memories, but rather capable of utilizing even negative representations of German history for redeeming narratives – characterizes "Requiem" as a new form of alternate memory. Different from the earlier manifestations of the same theme, which largely rely on a prioritization of real historical German suffering and a decidedly positive depiction of an alternate Germany as a means of shifting the mnemonic focus away from the legacy of guilt, Wedemeyer-Schwiersch's narrative avoids this

---

<sup>321</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 285 (quotation paraphrased by Rosenfeld). One can only speculate as to why the United States are absent from this list, seeing as they are commonly the representation of choice in popular criticisms of globalization. However, the fact that Wedemeyer-Schwiersch suggests such a broad selection of analogues only emphasizes the universalistic direction of her allohistorical approach.

necessity of having to present Germany without the Führer in a idealized manner. Instead, the revisionist modus operandi of “Requiem” is defined by its equalizing focus on the similarities between the quasi-totalitarian Germany of Alfred Häberle and, at least according to the author, any other contemporary economic superpower. It purports the subtle suggestion that, as bad as real history may have been and as badly as it might still have turned out without Hitler as the Führer, the case of Germany should not be considered a unique historical phenomenon.

The exemplary texts in this chapter illustrate in detail the ways in which Alternate Histories can perform the function of universalizing the legacy of National Socialism. The contrast between Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* and Stephen Fry’s *Making History* and all three German-language stories illustrates the importance of understanding counterfactual literature in a national context. While the two non-German stories approach the premise of a German victory in the Second World War from very different angles, the discursive functions they perform are overall rather similar. Both novels present universalizing narratives: Through the novel-within-the-novel, fictional author Hawthorne Abendsen’s *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, Dick’s story realizes this effect in a twofold manner. On the one hand, the main narrative presents the reader with the notion that the defeat of the United States would not have necessarily resulted in a dystopian society. By depicting life in the Japanese-occupied Western states as characterized by a relative normalcy, the novel questions the hegemonic American memory narrative of World War II as the fight against an absolute evil. On the other hand, the second alternative course of history portrayed in the fragmentary elements of *Grasshopper* suggests that a victory over the Nazis need not have necessarily been a preferable outcome. Despite the relatively scarce critical attention this second narrative level has received, this is where Dick’s story develops its full universalistic potential: In exploring the notion that totalitarianism and institutionalized racism could have prospered in the West even after the defeat of Nazi Germany, *The Man in the High Castle* disassociates characteristics commonly ascribed to National Socialism and projects them onto the allohistorical United States and Britain. However, while this narrative technique unquestionably represents a universalization of elements of German fascism by suggesting that they were not exclusive to the Nazi regime in its specific historical setting, it does not effectively relativize National Socialism itself. Rather, in the context of Dick’s novel, this strategy is predominantly focused on the American context and thus only serves to further the self-critical position of the main narrative. Stephen Fry’s *Making History* also contains an introspective element in the form of the implicit suggestion that the British majority would likely have turned

into collaborators in the event of a Nazi victory. But here the primary focus is not on British but on German society. Fry's narrative bespeaks the fact that the universalization of National Socialism need not necessarily be a reactionary endeavour. By imagining the removal of Hitler from history as the cause for an even greater success of the Nazi movement, *Making History* emphasizes the socio-political conditions from which it drew its power. The proliferation of German fascism in the absence of the real historical Führer highlights the complicity of the German people in its rise to power. In this sense, both non-German Alternate Histories in this chapter contain universalizing elements, but do not provide an exculpatory narrative that revises the causes and effects of real historical events.

Conversely, this is precisely the function of all three German-language examples in this chapter. Sissini's *Samuel Hitler* universalizes and relativizes National Socialism at the same time in its allohistorical envisioning of a world in which Hitler was born a Jew. On the one hand, the suggestion that the Third Reich would have taken a similar shape under the aegis of a Jewish Führer not only erases the central significance of anti-Semitism within the Nazi ideology and its popularity among the German population at that time but also effectively removes its historical specificities by likening it to other totalitarian ideologies. On the other hand, the depiction of Samuel Hitler's alternate Third Reich as a relatively benevolent regime and the removal of the Holocaust from history obscure the complicity of the German collective in the crimes of the Nazis, suggesting that they would never have occurred without the real Hitler as the leader of the Reich. Finally, the projection of real historical atrocities committed by Germans onto Germany's enemies creates a counterfactual outlet for German guilt by propagating the idea that the same events could have occurred in much the same way under only slightly altered (global) conditions. Hans Pleschinski's short story "Ausflug" works in a similar, albeit more subtle way. Here, too, the complicity of the German population in the rise of National Socialism is obscured by suggesting that the arrest of Hitler and a small number of his early collaborators would have resulted in Germany developing unhindered into a tolerant and open society. At the same time, the historical crimes committed in the name of the Third Reich are once more projected onto other nations. The character of the Italian woman functions as a stand-in for the guilty conscience of postwar Germans and the counterfactual exaggeration of the atrocities committed by the Italian fascists conceals the specific historical conditions that produced the Holocaust. Finally, Sabine Wedemeyer-Schwiersch's short story "Requiem für einen Stümper" represents the most subtle approach to this theme and thus illustrates the discursive evolution of alternate

memory and its correlation to the paradigmatic shifts in German collective memory overall. This is evident especially in the fact that, like non-literary forms of anti-memory, this narrative no longer relies on a denial of German guilt by externalization, but predominantly on situating it within a relativist framework. Unlike the previous two stories, “Requiem” does not imagine German society as considerably improved without (the real) Hitler as the Führer. Instead, the narrative is aimed primarily at cultivating the notion of a universal commensurability of National Socialist ideology. Here, envisioning Germany under a different leader as more successful but just as authoritarian as the Third Reich does not serve to foreground the socio-political conditions that led to the rise of National Socialism. Rather, it serves as a parable in which the alternate quasi-fascist Germany is no different from any other authoritarian system and in which the specific characteristics of German fascism are dissolved into a reductionist critique of globalized Capitalism. In this sense, the revised narrative strategy of Wedemeyer-Schwiersch’s story ultimately performs the same universalizing function as the previous two examples and is, once again, diametrically opposed to the non-German treatment of the almost identical theme represented by Fry’s novel.

#### 4. COUNTERFACTUAL HEROES: THE ‘GOOD GERMAN’

In 1994, in response to the national commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the failed attempt on Adolf Hitler’s life on July 20, 1944, German satirist Wiglaf Droste offered a scathing polemic titled “War Hitler Antifaschist?,” in which he ridiculed what he called the “Erbengemeinschaft Widerstand e.V.”:

Ob Militaristen, Sozialisten, Kommunisten, Christen, Seifenkisten: Jede Lobby hat ihre oder wenigstens ihren Toten. Das ist gut fürs Selbstverständnis, fürs Gefühl und fürs Image; wer die Leichen von gestern hätschelt, braucht sich um die von heute nicht zu scheren. Die Deutschen, die ein Drittes Reich ebenso wenig verhindert haben, wie sie das bei einem eventuellen Vierten tun werden, sind durch den postumen Zugriff auf ein paar Handvoll Widerstandskämpfer in den Genuß der Kollektivunschuld gelangt.<sup>322</sup>

The celebration of and identification with the militant resistance against Hitler is one of the central components of the narrative device that has become known as the ‘good German.’ Although relatively scarcely represented in scholarship, this motif has a long-standing tradition in the collective memory of the Second World War in general and narratives of German self-exculpation in particular, surfacing not only in the context of official commemorative culture, but also as a popular staple of literature and film since the earliest postwar years.<sup>323</sup> To some degree, even outside of the context of Alternate History the disproportionate significance assigned to any and all manifestations of German dissidence under National Socialism can arguably be said to display a certain counterfactual quality. After all, the resistance movement was not only, as Gordon A. Craig puts it, “long on paper and short on action,” but its size and prevalence in the relation to the German population as a whole generally tends to be substantially exaggerated.<sup>324</sup> To a certain extent, the psychology behind the metonymic identification of the vast, compliant majority of Germans with a small number of seemingly valiant heroes is understandable and, for the most part, harmless. However, as Tobias Ebbrecht argues, there is a distinct potential for the notion of the ‘good German’ to be used in a revisionist context:

---

<sup>322</sup> Wiglaf Droste, “War Hitler Antifaschist?,” in *Sieger sehen anders aus* (Hamburg: Nautilus, 1994), 7.

<sup>323</sup> For a brief history of German resistance in the context of literature, cf. Karl Prümm, “‘Die Zukunft ist vergeblich’: Der antifaschistische Widerstand in der deutschen Literatur nach 1945,” in *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich*, ed. Hans Wagener (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977), 33-68. For a more recent overview of its cinematic representation, cf. Tobias Ebbrecht, *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis: Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011).

<sup>324</sup> Gordon A. Craig, “Good Germans,” *The New York Review of Books* 39, no. 21 (1992): 44.

Dort aber, wo die Figur als Stereotyp verfestigt wird, besteht die Gefahr, dass es zu einer Verschiebung [...] kommt. Der Retter wird dann zu einer kollektiven Identifikations- und damit Erlöserfigur. Als Ersatz für das unterlassene Handeln der Mehrheit kompensiert die Figur damit die mit Zweifeln besetzte Position der Zuschauer und Mitläufer.<sup>325</sup>

This development seems to have been further facilitated by a generational shift, that is, the evaluation of the conduct of Germans during the era of the Third Reich strictly from the vantage point of postmemory. Harald Welzer refers to this phenomenon as “cumulative heroization,” which “implies the restoration of the handed-down, widespread belief that Nazis and Germans were two different groups of people and that the Germans were a seduced, misused group, robbed of their youth, and themselves victims of National Socialism.”<sup>326</sup>

This process may also explain the increased prominence of the ‘good German’ in more recent Alternate Histories of the Third Reich and can be read in accordance with those shifts in German collective memory, posited by Frei, that have enabled Germans to reformulate the guilt of historical compliance to function as a motivator for contemporary agency. Arguably, already the non-allohistorical replacement performed in this way – what Ebbrecht explicitly refers to as “Ersatz” – could be considered a form of alternate memory. Within the context of Alternate History, however, the capacity of the memory of German resistance to act as an exculpatory narrative is taken a step further with the counterfactual envisioning of successful and consequential acts of opposition against the Nazis. While the motif of the ‘good German’ does not carry the entire narrative in at least two of the following texts, it constitutes a subtle underlying narrative which represents a defining feature that unites the three exemplary stories in this chapter. In each case, the basic premise is the representation of instances of German resistance against the National Socialist regime that did not exist, or did not have the same impact, in real history. In contrast to both other chapters, the concrete individual implementations of this premise are much more varied here, that is, the same motif is incorporated into three very different allohistorical scenarios. At first glance, this may not seem to be the case, as all three texts are ultimately Alternate Histories of a victorious Third Reich, but both the realization of this central alteration and the relation in which the ‘good German’ protagonists stand to this development diverge in some very crucial respects. In Robert Harris’ *Fatherland*, the German

---

<sup>325</sup> Ebbrecht, *Geschichtsbilder*, 279.

<sup>326</sup> Harald Welzer, “The Collateral Damage of Enlightenment: How Grandchildren Understand the History of National Socialist Crimes and their Grandfathers’ Past,” in *Victims and Perpetrators*, 291.



victory has been won by ordinary means, not effected by an act of German intervention from within, and the main plot centres around the protagonist's gradual unearthing of the carefully buried secret of the Holocaust. Siegfried Langer's *Alles bleibt anders* explores various parallel worlds in which history has taken a different turn, with the protagonists' ultimate goal of overcoming the effects of a victorious Nazi regime in the present of their own reality. And, finally, in Christian von Dittfurth's *Der 21. Juli*, German dissidence is an integral aspect of the original alteration of history, with the story imagining a victorious German Reich after the successful assassination of Adolf Hitler. The concept of German resistance and the importance of 'good Germans' play very different roles in all three narratives and, once more, clear distinctions can be made between the British and the German variations of the same theme.

#### 4.1 FATHERLAND

Robert Harris' *Fatherland* (1992)<sup>327</sup> is the most successful Alternate History of the Third Reich to date.<sup>328</sup> Achieving both critical acclaim and commercial success in Britain and the United States and serving as the basis for an equally popular film adaptation in 1994, the novel also generated a considerable amount of international controversy following its publication and remains an object of contention to this day.<sup>329</sup> Set in 1964, *Fatherland* tells the story of a victorious Third Reich preparing for the festivities of the *Führer*tag, Hitler's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. Germany has defeated the Soviet Union in 1944 with a successful summer offensive launched against Moscow, reached a peace accord with a pro-German British government in 1944 (after Churchill has been run out of the country and fled to Canada), and has entered into a state of perpetual Cold War with the Americans in 1946, as a result of the establishment of mutually assured nuclear destruction.<sup>330</sup> Although "the brutality of the Forties has given way to a somewhat milder authoritarian regime of the older Hitler," present-day National Socialism is still crucially defined by authoritarianism and expansionism.<sup>331</sup> Or, as Sara Anelli puts it: "Despite

---

<sup>327</sup> Robert Harris, *Fatherland* (New York: Random House, 1992). Cited in the following as FL.

<sup>328</sup> See Winthrop-Young, "Third Reich," 884.

<sup>329</sup> See Bardo Fassbender, "A Novel, Germany's Past, and the Dilemmas of Civilised Germans," *Contemporary Review* 265, no. 1546 (1994): 236.

<sup>330</sup> See FL 76.

<sup>331</sup> Fassbender, "Dilemmas," 241.

being a continuance of the Reich and showing differences in the distribution of power, Harris's Europe bears in fact an alarming resemblance to the post-war international landscape."<sup>332</sup> Over the past two decades, the German Reich – now known as Germania – has thrived and succeeded in shaping Europe into a supranational construct under German rule, nominally a European Community, but factually subservient to Germany.<sup>333</sup> Luxembourg, Austria and most of Eastern Europe have been annexed as parts of the expanding Reich, while most of Western Europe forms a European trading bloc, politically, economically and even culturally dominated by German interests.<sup>334</sup> In a recent development, the United States, represented by pro-German president Joseph Kennedy, have made advances to the German Reich and a treaty of mutual cooperation is expected as the result of Kennedy's state visit in honour of the Führer's birthday.

Against this counterfactual background, Harris develops a crime thriller of literally historic(al) proportions. What begins with the discovery of an unidentified dead body quickly expands into a story of a widespread conspiracy to cover up the German past. Xavier March, the novel's protagonist, is a police detective (with the SS-rank of Sturmbannführer) in Berlin. Utterly disillusioned with National Socialism, he is brought in to investigate a drowning death near Schwanenwerder, a residential island for the Nazi elite in the Havel river on the outskirts of Berlin. The initially anonymous body is soon identified as Josef Buhler [sic], a high-ranking Party official. March soon learns that another prominent Nazi, Wilhelm Stuckart, is also dead – allegedly by his own hand but under suspicious conditions. In the course of his investigation, March meets Charlie Maguire, an American reporter who had been secretly in contact with Stuckart, who has promised her the story of a lifetime. Through the involvement of the Gestapo the two discover that there is a third man, Martin Luther, who is connected to the other two but has disappeared. In spite of repeated interference by the Gestapo and a story about the three men being involved in an international art theft ring, which quickly turns out to be a ruse, March and Maguire follow their leads to a bank in Zurich, where they find proof that Luther is still alive. Back in Berlin, Luther contacts Charlie and they agree on a meeting, but Luther is shot by a sniper before he can divulge any information. March manages to track down Luther's luggage

---

<sup>332</sup> Sara Anelli, "Counterfactual Holocausts: Robert Harris' *Fatherland* and Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow*," *Textus: English Studies in Italy* 20, no. 2 (2007): 417.

<sup>333</sup> The renaming of Germany as Germania constitutes one of several slight historical errors on the part of Harris. Hitler's plan was not to rename the entire Reich, but its capital as Germania. Cf. Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier: 1941-1942*, ed. Andreas Hillgruber (Munich: dtv, 1968).

<sup>334</sup> See FL 175-176.

and finds a stack of documents inside. Previously, March had already been able to link the three dead Nazis to a conference held in the Wannsee district of Berlin in 1942, but could find no additional information on that meeting. With Luther's documents March and Maguire retreat to the abandoned mansion where the conference took place and here learn the whole truth about the planning and the execution of the 'Final Solution' in the context of the Wannsee conference. In preparation for the treaty with the Americans, the regime had been trying to finally tie up all loose ends of this secret by eliminating everyone involved, explaining the deaths of Buhler, Stuckart and Luther. March and Maguire decide to smuggle the documents out of the country via the neutral Switzerland in order to disclose the information to the public. Maguire takes on a false identity and leaves for the Swiss border, but March is betrayed by his indoctrinated son and arrested by the Gestapo. He is subsequently freed by a seemingly friendly Gestapo officer and helped by Arthur Nebe, the head of the *Kriminalpolizei* in Berlin, but quickly realizes that it was only a set-up in order to find Maguire and the documents. He leads his old colleagues eastward, in the wrong direction, not only to give Charlie time to cross the border, but also in search of any material evidence of the Holocaust. The novel ends with March's discovery of the overgrown ruins of the Auschwitz concentration camp, proving that the documents were real, and the uncertain hope that Charlie will escape Europe and reveal the truth to the world.

Despite the fact that, on the surface, *Fatherland* reproduces the narrative that 'ordinary' Germans were not aware of the genocidal practices under National Socialism, Harris' novel was the cause for much controversy in Germany. Bardo Fassbender mentions that "Twenty-five German publishing houses rejected" the German translation, which was ultimately – and somewhat ironically, given the plot – picked up by the Swiss Haffmans Verlag, and he describes a flurry of scathing reviews in the German *feuilletons*.<sup>335</sup> The novel's premise riled liberal and conservative German critics alike: the former for its alleged trivialization of the Holocaust, the latter for its insistence to draw attention to the German past and, especially through its popularity abroad, as an obstacle for German normalization.<sup>336</sup> A common critique was also the allegation that Harris' plot could be interpreted as an allegorical indictment of the contemporary Federal Republic due to its imagining the success of a victorious Third Reich as bearing unmistakable similarities to Germany's present-day status within the European Community – a reading that the

---

<sup>335</sup> Fassbender, "Dilemmas," 236-237. Fassbender also notes that the novel ultimately also became a bestseller in Germany, but that a not insignificant part of that success was due to its popularity with a Neo-Nazi audience. See *ibid.*, 241.

<sup>336</sup> See *ibid.*, 238-239.

author himself did little to dispel.<sup>337</sup> However, while there can be no question that “fascist Germany may stand in for other Germanys,” it remains surprising to a certain degree that German critics had so relatively little to say about the character of Xavier March in particular.<sup>338</sup> After all, despite his status as a member of the SS, “March is a ‘good German,’ who fought with honour in the War and now averts his eyes from the excesses of the Nazi state, or ignores them as an unpleasant and immutable part of daily routine.”<sup>339</sup> Evidence of March’s cynical detachment from National Socialism is disseminated throughout the novel, but it is highlighted especially with an excerpt from his service file:

A glittering career. And then it all starts going wrong. No police promotions for ten years. Divorced, 1957. And then the reports start. Blockwart: persistent refusal to contribute to Winter Relief. Party officials at Werderscher-Markt: persistent refusal to join the NSDAP. Overheard in the canteen making disparaging comments about Himmler. Overheard in bars, overheard in restaurants, overheard in corridors...<sup>340</sup>

While similar redemptive images of honourable German soldiers, who only cooperated begrudgingly with the Nazis but never truly embraced their cause, are a relatively uncommon motif in the context of British and American Alternate Histories of the Third Reich, they proliferated in German postwar memory discourses.<sup>341</sup> Why, then, did this character go so unappreciated by many German readers?

The answer may already lie in the name. Although widely unaddressed in discussions of the novel, the name Xavier March sticks out of the text like the proverbial sore thumb. Whereas all other German characters, many of which represent actual historical personae, are assigned obviously German names, the protagonist remains conspicuously Anglophone. So much so, in

---

<sup>337</sup> In an interview with CNN, Harris said: “[T]here are things that the Germans would have achieved if they’d won in 1945 which have come true in 1992, in particular the economic domination, and so on.” Quoted in Fassbender, “Dilemmas,” 243. In contrast, Gavriel Rosenfeld notes that Harris has also gone on record with more apologetic statements. See Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 423n188.

<sup>338</sup> Winthrop-Young, “Third Reich,” 884.

<sup>339</sup> Hardesty, “Alternate Nazis,” 85.

<sup>340</sup> FL 131.

<sup>341</sup> Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle*, for instance, also features a sympathetic Nazi character with the benevolent SD agent Rudolf Wegener, but March represents the only (positive) German main protagonist in a non-German Alternate History of the Third Reich. Nonetheless, Harris’ choice refutes Klaus Geus’ categorical stipulation of a quasi-natural link in the Alternate History genre between the nationality of an author and his chosen topic. See Klaus Geus, “Hitlers Vergeblicher Kampf: Ein Beitrag zum Thema Nationalismus und Science Fiction,” *Kopfgebirten* 7 (1996): 31.

fact, that his name was changed in the subsequent German translation to Xaver März, while all other character names were kept. This may seem like a small detail, but it nonetheless already bespeaks the fact that by positing the existence of a ‘good’ Nazi, Harris “aims by no means at rehabilitating Nazism.”<sup>342</sup> The initial distance generated by the English name is furthered by March’s position within the society of the fictional Germany. He is not only a loner in terms of his personality, but also in a political sense. Although the narrative mentions a growing dissatisfaction among the younger generation with the policies of National Socialism, there is not a single adult German in the novel – with the sole exception of March’s old friend Halder – who shares his inward and, later, outward resistance against the system.<sup>343</sup> On the contrary, the remaining German characters are all either openly devout Nazis or covert conspirators working towards upholding the status quo and maintaining the secrecy of the Final Solution – not because it is, as Anelli suggests, an “unsustainable moral burden,” but because it would endanger the agreement with the Americans and thus the future of the Reich.<sup>344</sup> Even the three dead Party officials who tried to release the incriminating information about the Wannsee Conference do so not out of remorse, but to save themselves from persecution. March may therefore be a ‘good German’ – a motif which, in a different narrative context, could function as an apologetic device – but the uniqueness of his position in this allohistorical German Reich actually serves more to highlight how deeply the National Socialist and overall nationalist ideology is still rooted in the German collective. In accordance with this function, it is ultimately also March who refutes the myth that the Holocaust proceeded entirely unbeknownst to the German public, when even the Gestapo henchman torturing him after his arrest claims that he simply did not know:

“Of course you knew! You knew every time someone made a joke about ‘going East,’ every time you heard a mother tell her children to behave or they’d go up the chimney. We knew when we moved into their houses, when we took over their property, their jobs.”<sup>345</sup>

Nonetheless, the construction of the Final Solution as a closely guarded secret which, after all, provides the novel with its most fundamental theme, remains problematic. And it is further reinforced by the implicit suggestion that the elimination of a handful of high-ranking co-

---

<sup>342</sup> Anelli, “Counterfactual Holocausts,” 418.

<sup>343</sup> See FL 16.

<sup>344</sup> Anelli, “Counterfactual Holocausts,” 419.

<sup>345</sup> FL 311.

conspirators could have sufficed to prevent the truth from becoming known. At the same time, however, this is mitigated by two central factors. The first is the fact that, in contrast to both German Alternate Histories discussed in this chapter, in which the revelation of the secret genocide holds a potential for liberation, in *Fatherland* it is clearly marked as a threat. The disclosure of the secret of the Shoah does here not represent the promise of turning the previously oblivious Germans against the Nazis, but rather of turning the world against them. The second factor is that it is ultimately not a German – good or otherwise – who reveals or, at least, has the chance of revealing the damning information to the world. Despite the fact that it is made quite clear that virulent anti-Semitism is not an exclusively German phenomenon – in fact, President Kennedy himself is exposed as an unofficial supporter of the Nazi genocide – the power and the responsibility to tell the truth finally fall to Charlie, the American.<sup>346</sup> The concurrently presented criticism of the conduct of Germany’s enemies during and after the war notwithstanding, what the text reproduces in this counterfactual scenario is the real historical inability or unwillingness of the German people to oppose National Socialism and the continuance of this moral deficit well into the postwar era. The allohistorical conclusion represents a mirror image of the fact that the Nazis were not deposed by an antifascist resistance from within, but by the outside forces of the Allies and the Soviet Union. In this sense, the ultimate question posed by *Fatherland* is: “If democracy, the rule of law, and tolerance toward those who are different have been brought to the Germans from the outside rather than genuinely grown in Germany itself, how stable are these institutions today [...]?”<sup>347</sup> And, notably, it is this very question and the attempt to use the theme of counterfactual German resistance to make up for this historical lack of emancipation from within that is at the core of the following text.

## 4.2 ALLES BLEIBT ANDERS

Compared to Harris’ novel, in which the counterfactual mode serves as an allegorical indictment of the afterlife of National Socialism in postwar Germany overall, the first German Alternate History centrally employing the motif of the ‘Good German’ presents a very similar allohistorical scenario, but with a diametrically opposed narrative strategy. In Siegfried Langer’s *Alles bleibt anders*, published in 2008 by Atlantis, the counterfactual world in which the Nazis won the war

---

<sup>346</sup> Charlie first calls Kennedy an anti-Semite in a private conversation with March (FL 105), but his knowledge of and sympathy for the planned Final Solution is later revealed in Luther’s documents (FL 270-271).

<sup>347</sup> Fassbender, “Dilemmas,” 243.

figures as the polar opposite of our world and our history.<sup>348</sup> In fact, this is quite literally the case, given that Langer's novel is, for the largest part, a classic example of a *parallel worlds story*.<sup>349</sup>

The narrative comprises four levels: The main world in the (relative) fictional present, two alternate worlds that correlate to the temporal setting of the first, and – in a deviation from the typical *parallel worlds* model – an earlier version of the main world. The textual structure of the novel correlates directly with this: it is also divided into four distinct sections. The spatial and temporal levels are not, however, arranged in a linear chronological or hierarchical order in these sections. The first part of the story begins *in medias res* in one of the alternate worlds. Frank Miller, the main protagonist, finds himself standing disoriented in the middle of the tracks of the Görlitzer Bahnhof in Berlin, with anachronistically dressed passengers waiting for their train (as opposed to the U-Bahn) staring at him in disbelief. After escaping this situation, Frank, who has lost his memories (including the knowledge of his own name), makes his way outside to find Berlin in a state that suggests a historical setting around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Horse-drawn carriages, buses and trams, with fares costing “2 Groschen,” more people in archaic garb, and the streets full of coal merchants and ‘Colonialwarenläden.’<sup>350</sup> This first impression is soon made concrete as Frank receives bank notes issued by the Bank of Prussia.<sup>351</sup> It is further revealed that no one in this world appears to be familiar with the Swastika symbol.<sup>352</sup> All of these indicators initially lead the reader to believe that Frank has traveled backwards through time. However, the year is actually 2008.<sup>353</sup> Frank soon learns that, in this world, he officially died in a train accident, in the very spot he just found himself in, on May 23, 2005.<sup>354</sup> He also discovers that he is wearing a silver pendant, containing the letters ‘SG’ and a single button.<sup>355</sup> Through encounters with several other characters, more of his personal history gradually becomes clear: Frank Miller was a student of medicine at the Charité hospital in Berlin and had

---

<sup>348</sup> Siegfried Langer, *Alles bleibt anders* (Stolberg: Atlantis, 2008). Cited in the following as AbA.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Hellekson, *The Alternate History*, 47-61.

<sup>350</sup> See AbA 15, 21, 22, 50.

<sup>351</sup> See AbA 34.

<sup>352</sup> See AbA 49.

<sup>353</sup> See AbA 20.

<sup>354</sup> See AbA 24, 30.

<sup>355</sup> See AbA 15.

proposed to his girlfriend, Claire, one day before his accident.<sup>356</sup> In an attempt to rekindle his memories, Frank tries to reconnect with Claire, and through her meets Dieter Wiegand, Claire's husband, a surgeon and, more significantly, a founding member of the just established NSDAP.<sup>357</sup> As Claire gradually warms to Frank, he finds himself watched and pursued by an unknown man.<sup>358</sup> When he suspects Dieter, who has falsely introduced himself to both Claire and Frank's mother as an old friend, and confronts him, he is attacked by Dieter and his henchman. During the fight, Frank discovers the letter 'A' under Dieter's arm – the customary blood type tattoo of the SS.<sup>359</sup> Outnumbered and confused, Frank flees the scene to recover the pendant he previously buried and presses the button.<sup>360</sup>

The second section is set four years earlier, in 2004, and in an alternate reality, which represents the novel's main level. Frank Miller is just arriving at Oxford University, which has been reduced to a British branch of the Reichsuniversität in Germana, the capital of the German Reich, of which England is a part.<sup>361</sup> Over the course of the story, it is revealed that the Allied invasion of Normandy, which occurred a day earlier than in real history (June 5, 1944), failed in this world and that this failure caused the United States to withdraw their troops.<sup>362</sup> As a result, Europe was overrun by Germany. Due to the disintegration of the Western front, the Wehrmacht was able to launch another attack on Stalingrad in 1945 and defeat the Red Army, ultimately forcing the Soviet Union into unconditional surrender and ending what is now known as the German War.<sup>363</sup> Just like large parts of Russia and Northern Africa, the German Reich annexed all of Western Europe, including the successful invasion of Great Britain, ending with the public execution of Winston Churchill in Germana in 1948. In Eastern Europe, Poland has been dissolved and all Poles exterminated. Apart from an ongoing cold war against the now isolationist United States, only the region east of the Urals is still in a state of constant warfare and it is from here that Frank is just returning after three years of mandatory service in the

---

<sup>356</sup> See AbA 39, 42.

<sup>357</sup> See AbA 64.

<sup>358</sup> See AbA 44-45, 58.

<sup>359</sup> See AbA 70.

<sup>360</sup> See AbA 71.

<sup>361</sup> See AbA 76.

<sup>362</sup> See AbA 136-137.

<sup>363</sup> See AbA 76-77, 222.



Wehrmacht.<sup>364</sup> In the meantime, the development of the German Reich has been greatly accelerated, putting the first man on the moon in 1971 and currently preparing for the first mission to Mars for the following year; ten million people inhabit the capital of Germania.<sup>365</sup>

At Oxford, Frank is soon inducted into a clandestine group consisting of the brilliant physics professor Robert Gothaer (or Gothare, prior to the Germanization of British surnames), Frank's childhood friend Karen, the computer genius Tristan – and Dieter Wiegand. Gothaer has discovered a way to not only detect parallel worlds, but to travel between them.<sup>366</sup> With this technology, the group's aim is to find a world in which National Socialism does not exist in the present. While the so-called *Gothaer corridor* is not yet capable of time travel, the ultimate plan is to learn what prevented the dominance of the Nazis in the other world, then travel backwards through their own history and reproduce those conditions.<sup>367</sup> Like Frank, who has witnessed the cruelty of the Nazis first hand at the Eastern front, all of the members of the group have their own personal horror stories of how National Socialism has affected their lives, motivating them to help with Gothaer's plan. The professor explains that this was one reason for choosing them; the other being the fact that the dimensional travel currently still requires a "Resonanzkörper," the existence of alter egos in the other world whom the travelers temporarily replace. The fact that all four students are from Germania, the nerve centre of the German Reich, therefore makes them ideal candidates.<sup>368</sup> Secretly racing against the competition of the Nazis, to whom Gothaer was forced to divulge at least the basics of his discovery, by the following year the group finally discovers two different parallel worlds in which the Nazis are not in power in 2005 and all four candidates have alter egos. In one, the divergence from their own history occurred in 1399 (the *1399-level*), in the other in 1944 (*the 1944-level*).<sup>369</sup> Due to the specific date of the divergence in the latter (June 5, 1944), the group instantly realizes that the nexus event must have been the Allied invasion of Normandy, which in their world had been the decisive turning point in the war, and decides to investigate. After shipping the necessary equipment to Germania under the

---

<sup>364</sup> See AbA 77-78, 128-129, 200.

<sup>365</sup> See AbA 81, 112, 128-129.

<sup>366</sup> See AbA 105, 109.

<sup>367</sup> See AbA, 109-110, 122. One interesting detail here in terms of the generic dynamics of Alternate History is the original nexus event specified by Gothaer in his search for alternate realities: The changes he is looking for must have occurred prior to March 14, 1999 – his own discovery of dimensional travel.

<sup>368</sup> See AbA 116-118.

<sup>369</sup> See AbA 136.

guise of attending an academic conference, Frank and Dieter (as there are only two dimensional travel devices) are sent to the parallel world, equipped with “Signalgeber” – the mysterious silver pendant from before – to initiate their return. Frank never arrives, however, because Dieter, who is actually a Nazi infiltrator and has manipulated the device to send them to the *1399-level* instead, where he plans to establish National Socialism himself, kills Frank’s alter ego by pushing him in front of a train at Görlitzer Bahnhof immediately after his arrival in the alternate Berlin.<sup>370</sup> Frank is stuck between the worlds and only materializes three years later, in the very spot where his “Resonanzkörper” died.

In the third section, he is rescued by Karen, who – together with Gothaer and Tristan – has joined a small resistance group and restarted the project. They eventually discover that the alteration in this world was brought about by the prevention of Johannes Gutenberg’s birth and the delayed invention of the printing press setting history back roughly 100 years.<sup>371</sup> While trying to rescue Frank’s (alternate) fiancé, they are captured by Dieter who wants the ‘Signalgeber’ to return to their world to inform the (unnamed) Führer of his success. After Karen and Dieter shoot each other, Frank and the dying Karen return to the main level, where, after Karen’s death, he and Tristan travel to the *1944-level* – our world. Here, they learn that the invasion of Normandy was delayed for one day based solely on the advice of James Stagg, Eisenhower’s chief meteorologist, and was successful as a result of improved weather conditions.<sup>372</sup> Upon their return, Gothaer has finally succeeded in solving the time travel problem, and he and Frank travel back to June 3, 1944 – the brief fourth level of the narrative and the fourth section of the novel. Here, they manage to persuade Stagg to stand up to Eisenhower and get him to delay the invasion by a day.<sup>373</sup> Stagg succeeds, but the plan ultimately fails, as Frank and Gothaer are transported back to their own time and find nothing changed. While, scientifically, their failure is ascribed to too many variables – chaos theory plays a prominent role in the entire story – the moral conclusion is that history can never really be changed, but that changes have to be effected in the present. Consequently, Frank travels back to the *1399-level* to fight the budding National Socialism, while the rest of the group vows to bring

---

<sup>370</sup> See AbA 146-147, 164-165, 188.

<sup>371</sup> See AbA 169, 193.

<sup>372</sup> See AbA 209, 220.

<sup>373</sup> See AbA 229, 236.

down the Nazi regime in their own world.<sup>374</sup>

Despite ending with the call for resistance and the noble, positively altruistic decision of the main protagonist to assume responsibility for the effects his actions have had on a world that is not his own, the novel establishes a concrete frame for this nobility from the outset. It begins with an epigraph, taken from Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans*: "Was ist unschuldig, heilig, menschlich gut, wenn es der Kampf nicht ist ums Vaterland."<sup>375</sup> Albeit subtly, this motto reverberates through the entire text, in which resistance is, first and foremost, a calling pursued not only exclusively by Germans, but also, to a considerable extent, for Germans. On the surface, society has returned to a state of relative normalcy in the six decades since the end of the German War. The signs of destruction have disappeared all across the core regions of the Greater German Reich, technology has made significant advancements – which, however, do not overall bear futuristic connotations –, and the people of Central and Western Europe live seemingly ordinary lives, despite pervasive state control. However, the evils of National Socialism still exist, but only in secrecy and, literally, at the margins, and are introduced exclusively by way of the special knowledge of the students in the group. Frank has horror stories to report from the Eastern front, where Slavic partisans are not only slaughtered mercilessly by the thousands, but are exploited as involuntary organ donors by Nazi doctors and subsequently sterilised.<sup>376</sup> Dieter informs the group about horrendous experiments on living patients conducted in the bowels of the Charité, hidden from the eye of the public.<sup>377</sup> The personal story of Tristan, who did not learn to speak until an unusually high age and still stutters, represents the survival of the Nazi's Aryan ideology. Despite the fact that he physically embodied all the pertinent ideals (blond hair, blue eyes, athletic build), his speech defect caused his devout Nazi parents to ultimately disavow him and commit him to the foster system.<sup>378</sup> Karen's situation, finally, bespeaks the prevailing reactionary social conditions by highlighting the regressive gender roles in the Reich, where less than 10% of all university students are women, who are still expected by the regime and the public to be mothers and homemakers exclusively.<sup>379</sup> What is immediately striking in this scene is the fact

---

<sup>374</sup> See AbA 239-240.

<sup>375</sup> AbA, epigraph (n.p.)

<sup>376</sup> See AbA 101-102.

<sup>377</sup> See AbA 99.

<sup>378</sup> See AbA 95-96.

<sup>379</sup> See AbA 82.

that the students' stories create the impression of a quantitative balance between the suffering of others, represented by Frank and Dieter's accounts, and the suffering of Germans under National Socialist rule, illustrated by Karen and Tristan's personal hardships. Unlike in the Alternate Histories discussed in the next chapter, however, this portrayal does not culminate in a focus on Germans as victims. Rather, it performs two fundamental functions in the text.

The first function is immediately linked to the generic structure of the *parallel worlds story*, which allows for the essential juxtaposition of a bad Germany and a good Germany. While the *1399-level* is depicted as a relatively benevolent, but ultimately irrelevant historical deviation, the main level and the *1944-level* function as opposing models. The students' accounts serve as the primary source of information about the main world, thus setting it up as a dystopian landscape, characterized on the surface by a rigid authoritarianism which radically curtails the freedoms of the citizens of Reich themselves, and the even more atrocious fates of non-Germans that occur in secrecy.<sup>380</sup> In direct contrast, the *1944-level* is described in overwhelmingly positive terms. The section of the novel that is defined most prominently by a rekindled resistance against the Nazis is introduced with another telling epigraph, a quote from a *Comedian Harmonists* song entitled "Ein neuer Frühling wird in die Heimat kommen":

Ein neuer Frühling wird in die Heimat kommen,  
schöner noch, wie's einmal war.  
Ein neuer Frühling wird in die Heimat kommen,  
alles wird so wunderbar.  
Und man wird wieder das Lied der Arbeit singen,  
g'rade so, wie's einmal war.  
Es geht im Schritt und Tritt auch das Herz wieder mit  
und dann fängt ein neuer Frühling an.<sup>381</sup>

Not only does this selection, much like the initial quote from Schiller, highlight the fact that the fight against the Nazis is first and foremost a fight for a better Germany, an improved *Heimat*, it also provides a foreshadowing of what the travellers will find in the second parallel world. Frank and Tristan's comparatively brief visit to this reality begins once more at Görlitzer Bahnhof,

---

<sup>380</sup> It should be noted here that Langer could evidently not resist linking the authoritarian culture of the allohistorical German Reich to real historical contemporary developments in the United States. At one point in the story, the narrator explains the heightened security measures at the Berlin Airport with the fact that there had been a terrorist attack on the so-called DEST (Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke) Towers in 2001, a less than subtle invocation of the 9/11 attacks in New York. It is also suggestively alleged that travellers arriving from the East are treated more rigidly than those arriving from the West. See AbA 130.

<sup>381</sup> AbA 149. The effect of this quote is, of course, furthered by the history of the *Comedian Harmonists*, three of whose original members were Jewish and forced to flee Germany a year after the release of this song in 1933.

which is defunct in the present of the *1944-level* and situated in a sprawling park. The first thing they notice is the chaos and overall disorderly state of the scene they encounter:

Für die zwei Männer, die einem System entstammten, zu dessen obersten Prinzipien die Ordnung, die Sauberkeit und die Disziplin gehörten, war der erste Eindruck ein erschreckender. Müll und Abfall waren allgegenwärtig. Trotz der schlechten Lichtverhältnisse war der Unrat nicht zu übersehen.<sup>382</sup>

Upon their return to the main level, even this initial culture shock is given a positive connotation as a sign of freedom in the absence of overarching state control.<sup>383</sup> But it is only the first, indirect impression of a better world. The disoriented travellers marvel at the apparent multiculturalism of this alternate Berlin, in which representations of Turkish culture are among the first things they encounter.<sup>384</sup> The entire passage is also set in a pronounced comedic tone, exemplified here already by Frank and Tristan wondering whether the abundance of ‘Turkishness’ in this world may be a result of that fact that Turkey, as in their reality, is also a vassal state of the German Reich in this one. This humorous slant, which demonstratively sets off this section from the predominantly sombre tone that defines the rest of the novel and thereby also distances this world even further from their own, characterizes every single one of their encounters on this level. At the same time, the displays of positivity become almost obtrusive from here on in. Still in the park, the two meet a black boy whom they ask for directions to the nearest library. Not only has neither of them actually ever met a black person before, but they are entirely taken aback when the boy begins to speak in the most stereotypical Berlin dialect, telling them how to get to the “Amerika-Jedenk-Bibliothek.”<sup>385</sup> This they naturally have some trouble finding – comically reproducing verbatim the boy’s pronunciation, which apparently has been eradicated in their world –, but they are helped on their way by a couple of friendly Punks, who even give them money for a subway fare.<sup>386</sup> Upon their arrival at the Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek, Frank and Tristan first marvel at the dedication plaque and the fact that, in this reality, Germany and the United States appear to be allies. Again, with the help of some excessively friendly Berliners, the two eventually find the historical information that they were looking for and return to their world

---

<sup>382</sup> AbA 209.

<sup>383</sup> See AbA 224.

<sup>384</sup> See AbA 210.

<sup>385</sup> See AbA 210-211.

<sup>386</sup> See AbA 214.

to report. Their findings are resoundingly positive: The chaotic conditions of the alternate Berlin initially shock the others as well, but one of their fellow resistance fighters concludes: “Demokratie ist Chaos [...] Ordnung ist Diktatur.”<sup>387</sup> Accordingly, Frank and Tristan sum up the recent history of the *1944-level*. The victorious Americans, they claim, have become friends to the German people and were welcomed by them as liberators from the start.<sup>388</sup> Yet, this is immediately followed by an anti-American notion:

Die U.S.A. ist eine Art selbsternannte Weltpolizei geworden, mit allen positiven und negativen Konsequenzen. Personenkult und Patriotismus sind im dortigen Europa so gut wie ausgestorben, auch aufgrund der eigenen Geschichte. In den U.S.A. dagegen erleben sie eine Blütezeit und Kritiker sehen hier sehr wohl eine Wiedergeburt des Nationalismus.<sup>389</sup>

Also, in the same passage, it is suggested that, in the aftermath of the war in the parallel reality, the Soviets have proven themselves to be as inhumane as the Nazis, if not more.<sup>390</sup> Although both aspects are ultimately dismissed as secondary (and as an acceptable price to pay for preventing a Nazi victory), this immanent contrast serves as an additional vindication of the parallel Germany. What makes this portrayal significant is the fact that the *1944-level* level is unmistakably marked as our world. The excessive use of local colour – from the *Hühnerhaus* at Görlitzer Park, over the *Motz* vendor on the subway, to the Jefferson quote on the plaque in the Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek – constitutes an unambiguous identification of this alternate Berlin as the real historical Berlin to a degree which is unusual for Alternate History narratives. While, commonly, the superiority of real history is merely evoked *ex negativo*, here the readers are confronted with an explicit and unequivocal affirmation of their own world. This concrete reference to reality provides one of two central elements that define Langer’s novel as an alternate memory: Through the revisionist suggestion that the evils of National Socialism have ceased to exist in Germany with the end of World War II and the concurrent externalization of its only remnants to the (historical) Soviet Union and the (contemporary) United States, the text performs a cleansing of German postwar memory. It effectively celebrates the present state of German society while stripping it of all negative features through a de facto denial of the existence of historical continuities.

---

<sup>387</sup> AbA 224.

<sup>388</sup> See AbA 223.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> See AbA 222.

This effect is complemented by an additional factor, the second function of the students' role: the motif of the 'good German.' This is represented in the text by three narrative elements: The central significance of the "Resonanzkörper," the repeated invocations of the secrecy of allohistorical Nazi atrocities, and the pervasive importance of *Heimat*. Implied by the necessity of localized "Resonanzkörper" and the consequent selection of German candidates exclusively is the suggestion that National Socialism can only be averted by Germans. Out of context, this could be read as a subtle indictment of the historic failure of the vast majority of Germans to oppose the Nazis – when, in fact, they actually widely embraced them –, as is the case in *Fatherland*. In Langer's novel, however, this narrative device instead counterfactually elevates the significance of widespread German resistance and, in turn, discredits the real historical overthrow of Nazi Germany by the Allies and the Red Army. The latter aspect is unmistakable in this text, as represented by the aforementioned unparalleled criticism of the Americans and the Soviets in the context of the *1944-level*; the former is reinforced by the characterizations of the four candidates. Here, it becomes clear that the horror stories experienced and conveyed by the students do not primarily serve to mark them as victims of the Nazis. Rather, they denote them as upstanding Germans on the one hand and provide individual motivations for resistance on the other. This strategy is most apparent in Frank's biography. His explanation that he never wanted to serve in the Wehrmacht but was forced to enlist due to the corrupt nature of National Socialist regime, in which the only chance for someone without Party contacts to attend university is through military service, functions as a double exculpation: It is at once established that he has no ties to the NSDAP and that it was conditions beyond his control that landed him in the service of the German Reich.<sup>391</sup> And even though he feels responsible for the crimes committed by German soldiers in the East, it is made clear that he did not actually participate in them.<sup>392</sup> Underneath the acknowledgement of the involvement of the Wehrmacht in the execution of the inhumane policies of the Nazis, this reproduces the narrative of a silent majority of honourable German soldiers, caught up in these crimes against their will.

The significance of this specific motif in German postwar memory will be discussed in greater detail in the context of Dirlfurth's novel, in which the resistance of Wehrmacht officers against the Nazis plays a much more central role. Here, it is only subtly alluded to, but

---

<sup>391</sup> See AbA 77, 81.

<sup>392</sup> See AbA 124.

nonetheless provides the motivation, after the fact, for Frank to oppose the regime.<sup>393</sup> At the same time, it can be seen to also contain the second aspect of the ‘Good German’ theme. The fact that Frank, like all other candidates, has specific knowledge that is not shared by the majority of the German population, promotes the idea that the atrocities of the Nazis remain largely unknown to the public. The embedding of this theme in this concrete narrative context constitutes a distinct contrast to its use in *Fatherland*. Whereas in Harris’ novel the secret history of the Holocaust figures primarily as a threat to the German people, in Langer’s it holds the promise of liberation. Contained in the fact that the acquisition of a clandestine knowledge of the ongoing atrocities perpetrated in the name of National Socialism has driven all four students to radical opposition – Dieter’s betrayal notwithstanding – is the implication that this opposition would grow, if only more Germans gained the same insights. In this portrayal, therefore, the contemporary, allohistorical Germans function in a twofold manner as allegorical representations of their real historical counterparts: On the one hand, the motif of the failure to mount a widespread and effective resistance from within the German population as the result of widespread oblivion with regard to the crimes of the Nazis represents both one of the earliest and one of the most prominent axioms of the exculpatory narratives of German normalization. On the other hand, the centrality of counterfactual German resistance effectively elevates the status of its limited real historical occurrence in the context of collective memory, adding to its repertoire alternate tales of an unadulterated heroism that never existed in this form.

However, it is evident throughout the text that the allohistorical resistance portrayed in *Alles bleibt anders* is, at the same time, not altogether altruistic. The third aspect of the specific implementation of the ‘good German’ motif is the fact that it entails not merely an increased agency by Germans, but also a distinct focus on the potential improvements for Germans. The theme originally set up by the Schiller quote, and repeated by the Comedian Harmonists’ quote as a lead-in for the second half of the novel, is reproduced on several other occasions. For the most part, this occurs by means of subtle phrasings, such as the purported notion that Germans are “forced” to live under the yoke of National Socialism or the expression of the desire to eliminate it from “our” history.<sup>394</sup> But it is made explicit in the form of Frank’s final, solemn mission statement:

---

<sup>393</sup> See AbA 102.

<sup>394</sup> See AbA 102 and 109, respectively.



“Wir wollen keine Konzentrationslager im Jahr 2008,” flüsterte Frank, “keine Rasse, die sich zur Herrenrasse über die anderen erhebt. Wir wollen keine Menschenversuche, keine Völkermorde, keine Morde an Menschen, die einer Minderheit angehören. Die Diktatur muss ausgetilgt werden. Unterdrückte Menschen ins ganz Europa assoziieren Not, Elend, Willkür und Tod mit den Deutschen: das muss ein Ende haben. Ein für allemal. Kein Nationalsozialismus auf dem deutschen Boden des Jahres 2008.”<sup>395</sup>

As the conclusion in this passage makes unambiguously clear, all the noble ideals and causes preceding it are ultimately directed at the improvement of the image of Germany in Europe and the entire world. In part, the narrative fundamentally aligns itself here with the contemporary anti-memory trend of German normalization outlined in the first chapter. Here, too, the commemoration of guilt is not an end in itself, but rather a means for overcoming it. However, the specific quality of alternate memory takes this motion one step further: Through the combination of the juxtaposition of a (counterfactual) bad Germany with the revised image of a real, good Germany and the allohistorical elevation of German resistance, the inherent vindication of German postwar history effectively relieves contemporary Germans of the responsibilities derived from the legacy of National Socialism. The heroic call to improve the present remains firmly rooted in Alternate History, as there is no need for it in the real world.

### 4.3 DER 21. JULI

*A true alternate history*, Christian von Ditfurth’s novel *Der 21. Juli*, published in 2001, abandons the good vs. bad Germany contrast that Langer realized through the concept of multiple realities, but it maintains the central elements of the ‘good German’ motif.<sup>396</sup> As the title suggests, Ditfurth’s story is centrally concerned with the effects of the successful assassination of Adolf Hitler on July 20, 1944. The plot takes place on two separate temporal levels: One leading up to and immediately following Hitler’s death and another, set in 1953, envisioning Germany nearly ten years after the loss of its Führer. At the centre of the plot, on both levels, is Knut Werdin, Sturmbannführer in the SD, the foreign intelligence section of the SS, by day and a spy for the Soviet and, later, the American government by night. The reader first encounters Werdin in 1953, living secluded in the Californian desert under a false name. He is reactivated by the CIA and informed that the German Reich, which over the last decade has been able to establish itself as

---

<sup>395</sup> AbA 224.

<sup>396</sup> Christian von Ditfurth, *Der 21. Juli* (Munich: Knauer, 2001). Cited in the following as DEJ.

the world's third superpower, is on the brink of forming an alliance with the Russians.<sup>397</sup> This the Americans want to prevent at all cost. Consequently, Werdin – motivated to transcend his acquired cynical apathy by the disclosure that his former love Irma is not only alive, but raising his son – is smuggled back into Germany with the objective of killing Heinrich Himmler, whose still powerful SS is secretly pulling the strings of Germany's officially civilian leadership.<sup>398</sup>

The main part of the novel is told in form of an extensive flashback. Knut Werdin works as an SD agent under Walter Schellenberg in Berlin. A disgrace to his antifascist parents, the reader soon learns that Werdin has long been a secret Communist and only enlisted in the SS to infiltrate the National Socialist apparatus and pass along information to the Soviet NKVD (a precursor to the infamous KGB), headed by Lavrentiy Beria.<sup>399</sup> The year is 1944 and history has thus far progressed as expected, with the Red Army approaching from the East and the Allied invasion of Normandy imminent. Werdin has heard rumours about an assassination plot being prepared by high-ranking officers of the Wehrmacht in collusion with civilian representatives, and he recruits the disgruntled veteran Rettheim to infiltrate the conspirators and act as his informant. Rettheim soon reports back about the concrete plans of the group around Stauffenberg to kill Hitler and his inner circle with a bomb.<sup>400</sup> As in real history, the plan accelerates when the successful Allied invasion makes it clear that, under the current conditions, Germany's defeat has become inevitable. Werdin relays the information of the impending assassination to the Russians, but, out of fear of a German-American "Separatfrieden," is given the order to ensure that Hitler lives.<sup>401</sup> Disillusioned with the Soviet bureaucracy and afraid of what may happen to Germany if the war continues, he devises a plan of his own to end the war but at the same time prevent an alliance between the Reich and the United States. Through Rettheim's connections, Werdin sets up a personal meeting with Stauffenberg and convinces him to go ahead with the plan to kill Hitler, but – in direct contrast to the real historical plan – to spare Himmler's life in the process.<sup>402</sup> This solution, he believes, will enable the Wehrmacht to end the war, but with the SS still intact, the Americans will not agree to cooperate with the Germans in the aftermath, thus

---

<sup>397</sup> See DEJ 44, 44, 67, 79.

<sup>398</sup> See DEJ 46, 53.

<sup>399</sup> See DEJ 120, 157.

<sup>400</sup> See DEJ 122-158.

<sup>401</sup> See DEJ 172, 205, 215.

<sup>402</sup> See DEJ 228.

averting an international military alliance against the Soviet Union. The plan succeeds and Stauffenberg's bomb kills Hitler on July 20, 1944.<sup>403</sup> The conspirators immediately initiate *Valkyrie*, arresting high-ranking Nazi officials and assuming leadership of the Reich under Carl Friedrich Goerdeler as chancellor and Göring as a figurehead president. In the ensuing program of national reconciliation (*Nationale Versöhnung*), the Gestapo is disbanded, with Heinrich Müller defecting to Moscow, Goebbels, Kaltenbrunner and Streicher are arrested, the popular and opportunistic Schellenberg is promoted to head of the RSHA, and the SD and the last remnants of the Gestapo are dissolved into the *Abwehr* to capitalize on the impeccable reputation of its commander, Admiral Canaris.<sup>404</sup>

Despite these successes, however, the war has not ended, but the advance of Germany's enemies has merely been slowed. On secret orders from Himmler, Schellenberg, who has since found out about Werdin's betrayal, initializes *Unternehmen Götterdämmerung*, the accelerated development of nuclear weapons in a secret facility in Southern Germany, and dispatches Werdin as a liaison.<sup>405</sup> The German scientists make giant leaps and, in spring of 1945, Werdin is informed that thirteen atom bombs are ready for deployment.<sup>406</sup> Unaware of the devastating nature of the weapon he is transporting, Helmut von Zacher – elite pilot of the Luftwaffe and also a co-suitor for the affections of Werdin's girlfriend Irma – is given the mission to drop the first bomb on Russia. The detonation takes place on May 7, 1945, obliterating the city of Minsk and driving both the Soviets and the Allies to accept a truce, in fear of Germany's remaining nuclear arsenal.<sup>407</sup> Realizing that he has been exposed as a traitor and afraid of punishment from both the Germans and the Russians, Werdin and Irma flee west to seek asylum from the Americans. He succeeds, but Irma is hit by a German bullet while crossing the Rhine and seemingly drowns.<sup>408</sup>

Eight years later, the world has changed considerably. Under the civilian leadership of Goerdeler and with the economic genius of Ludwig Erhard, Germany has successfully recovered

---

<sup>403</sup> See DEJ 243.

<sup>404</sup> See DEJ 279, 292, 300-301.

<sup>405</sup> See DEJ 284, 290, 316, 354.

<sup>406</sup> See DEJ 360.

<sup>407</sup> See DEJ 375-378.

<sup>408</sup> See DEJ 391-396.

from the war and has cemented its status in Europe. Joining Austria, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein have voluntarily allowed themselves to be annexed by the German Reich, and France, Belgium and the Netherlands have by 1947 become its sovereign but dedicated allies.<sup>409</sup> With Churchill in exile in Canada, Britain has ceased cooperation with the United States, now under the presidency of Joe McCarthy, and with the ongoing occupation of the Channel islands by the Wehrmacht, another invasion via the Atlantic has been rendered virtually impossible.<sup>410</sup> In the East, Poland has been divided up in accordance with the Hitler-Stalin Pact and remainder of Eastern Europe is being exploited by Germany for its natural resources.<sup>411</sup> In Russia, Beria is competing with Khrushchev for the succession of the recently deceased Stalin and, presumably because of the weakened position of the Soviet Union, the Chinese Revolution has not yet occurred and Mao Zedong is still fighting a guerrilla war against the government of Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>412</sup> In the meantime, Germany has advanced its program of national reconciliation and publicly denounced Hitler not only for his bad military judgement, but also for his treatment of the Jews: Eichmann is tried and executed in Berlin and Himmler has reportedly become a recluse on the Wewelsburg, indulging in his private obsession with Germanic mysticism.<sup>413</sup>

In this allohistorical present of 1953, Himmler and Beria are preparing to meet in Germany to discuss a bilateral treaty between the Reich and the USSR, with which both are hoping to advance their status in their respective countries. Meanwhile, Werdin has made his way from the Dutch coast to Berlin and has reconnected with Rettheim, who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the coup he helped make possible and thus agrees to once again aid Werdin in the assassination of Himmler. In what qualifies as the story's 'big reveal,' Schellenberg, who has been informed of Werdin's return to Germany, discloses that he used him as a pawn in 1945, deliberately assigning him to *Unternehmen Götterdämmerung* to supply him, and by extension the enemies of the Reich, with false information about the size of the German nuclear arsenal. In reality, the scientists at the Haigerloch facility were only able to produce a single working atom bomb by the time the Western front began disintegrating and it was only Werdin's unwitting misinformation about the existence of a dozen more nuclear weapons which led the Russians and

---

<sup>409</sup> See DEJ 434.

<sup>410</sup> See DEJ 44, 86, 415-416.

<sup>411</sup> See DEJ 85.

<sup>412</sup> See DEJ 426.

<sup>413</sup> See DEJ 17, 84.

the Allies to agree to a truce and allowed Germany to recoup its strength.<sup>414</sup> As Beria and Himmler meet to sign their mutual agreement on the Wewelsburg, Werdin seeks out his son and Irma, who has since married Zacher, who – as the hero of the Reich – was the only one able to save her from execution after her failed escape. Zacher himself is deeply traumatised as a result of his involuntary mass killing of the population of Minsk and has retired from active service.<sup>415</sup> Unable to shake his SS pursuers, Werdin is captured and detained upon leaving Irma and his son and thus unable to carry out his mission. Instead, Zacher learns of Himmler’s summit and his plans for *Unternehmen Thor* – the deposition of the traitorous government and ultimate destruction of the enemies of the Reich – and decides to atone for his guilt by bombarding and finally crashing his plane into the Wewelsburg.<sup>416</sup> The attack kills the entire SS leadership, while Beria manages to flee, only to be arrested for high treason upon his arrival in Moscow. Following Himmler’s death, the civilian government finally disbands the Waffen-SS and the SD and turns the remainder of the SS into a private organisation, prohibited from engaging in political activities and bearing arms.<sup>417</sup>

As stated in the beginning, *Der 21. Juli* does not employ the same kind of valorization of the real Germany as is found in *Alles bleibt anders*. This is not merely a result of the absence of a better parallel version, but rather, more akin to the approach in *Fatherland*, of the repeated illustration of the participation of the majority of the German population in the crimes of National Socialism, which effectively precludes the possibility of reading the negative portrayal of the alternate course of events as a vindication of real historical developments. The narrative contains manifold references to ‘bad Germans’ and their role in the success of the Third Reich and, implicitly, their importance for the survival of Nazi ideology after the war. The sympathetic character of Rettheim is by far the most vocal and most radical critic of the Germans and, significantly, does not shy away from including himself in that group:

“Wir sind die größten Mörder aller Zeiten. Wir ermorden die Juden, die Polen, die Russen, die Zigeuner. Haben Sie schon mal an einer Judenerschießung teilgenommen? [...] Die dürfen ein riesiges Massengrab ausheben, dann wird die erste Reihe an den Rand gestellt, dahinter die Helden der SS, die schießen den Juden ins Genick, dann kommt die nächste Reihe dran und so weiter und so

---

<sup>414</sup> See DEJ 489-490.

<sup>415</sup> See DEJ 464.

<sup>416</sup> See DEJ 545-546, 553.

<sup>417</sup> See DEJ 554-555, 558, 560.

weiter. Im Osten hausen wir wie die Hunnen.”<sup>418</sup>

Despite this knowledge there is an omnipresent worry that the Wehrmacht, especially the parts of it deployed on the Eastern front, will riot against the new government if Hitler is killed and, even more so, an awareness of the Führer’s standing with ‘ordinary Germans’:

Es müsste längst jedem klar geworden sein, dass Hitler nicht die Erlösung brachte, sondern den Untergang. Und doch war der Führer für die meisten immer noch der liebe Gott oder wenigstens sein Vertreter auf Erden. Nach seinem Tod würde er es noch mehr sein als zu Lebzeiten.<sup>419</sup>

These last lines are even taken from an internal monologue of a loyal member of the SS, not by one of the conspirators, adding yet another level of meaning, and emphasizing that the survival of Nazi ideology beyond Hitler’s death is here not stated as an opinion, but as an inevitable fact. This position of unconditional faith is personified in one scene by an elderly devout ‘Hitlerian,’ whom Zacher encounters upon his first visit to Irma’s home:

“Sagen sie, Herr Hauptmann, Sie müssen es doch wissen, wann kommen unsere Wunderwaffen?” “Bald,” sagte Zacher. [...] Die blassblauen Augen der Frau glänzten. “Wusste ich es doch, unser Führer lässt die Feinde ganz nah kommen, um sie dann auf einen Schlag zu vernichten. Wie sollen wir die Russen schlagen, wenn die sich hinterm Ural verstecken? [...] Dann hat der Doktor Goebbels ja wieder genau den richtigen Ton getroffen. Ja, in der Haut der Amis und der Russen möchte ich jetzt nicht stecken. Sie sind ja selber schuld, hätten sie uns nur das lassen sollen, was uns mit historischem Recht zusteht.”<sup>420</sup>

Accordingly, the leaders of the coup d’état are still seen as traitors in 1953 by large parts of the German people, while the Himmler and the SS are esteemed as their saviours, who – with the production and timely deployment of the ‘miracle weapon’ – averted the catastrophe towards which Goerdeler and Stauffenberg had steered the Reich.<sup>421</sup> At the same time, the conspirators are also criticized from a different perspective. Although he does not consider Stauffenberg in particular a part of the same nationalist faction as Goerdeler,<sup>422</sup> for Werdin the representatives of the sudden dissidence within the Wehrmacht are, on the whole, “braune Preußen” and chiefly

---

<sup>418</sup> DEJ 141. My emphasis.

<sup>419</sup> DEJ 259.

<sup>420</sup> DEJ 219.

<sup>421</sup> DEJ 48.

<sup>422</sup> See DEJ 147.

motivated by opportunism.<sup>423</sup> Here especially, the text displays a heightened awareness of critical historical assessments which posit that in “the construction of a substitute resistance, it was widely ignored that many members of the German resistance against Hitler (e.g., Stauffenberg and Moltke) did not have democratic ideas in mind when they planned for the new Germany to come after the successful overthrow of Nazi rule.”<sup>424</sup> Rather, even “the von Stauffenberg bomb plot against Hitler's person in July 1944 was triggered as much by pragmatic concern for the conduct of the war as by morality.”<sup>425</sup> But this critical perspective is limited. Although most characters in the novel are relatively ambivalent and Ditfurth offers biting criticism of the Germans as a whole and individual historical figures like Stauffenberg alike, there still remains the fundamental importance of the ‘good German,’ most prominently represented by the fact that both the original historical alteration and its ultimate correction are effected by a single, upstanding German. But Werdin and Zacher are by no means the only ‘good Germans’ in the story. And it is precisely this abundance of German dissidence and willingness to actively resist that sets Ditfurth’s novel apart from the similar scenario developed by Harris and that denotes it as an alternate memory. While Werdin and his comrade Fritz, a genius radio operator who until the last moment manages to relay messages to the Russians, are the only two characters who are described as always having been in (secret) opposition to the Nazis, several others join their cause over the course of the story. Again, Rettheim is perhaps the most pronounced character in this regard and, notably, it is his prominent metonymic role which also significantly softens the blow of the other passages criticizing the complicity of the Wehrmacht in the crimes of National Socialism. Although originally introduced as a dejected, hopeless drunk, Werdin ultimately comes to hold the invalid veteran in the highest esteem, precisely because of what he represents:

Es gab nicht viele, die den Kommissarbefehl verweigerten und Gefangene anständig behandelten. Werdin zweifelte nicht, dass Rettheim ein Offizier von Format war. Rettheim hatte nur in Andeutungen über die Zeit vor seiner Verwundung gesprochen, aber die Andeutungen hatten genügt. Was aber noch wichtiger war, Rettheim hasste den Krieg und die Leute, die ihn angezettelt hatten. Er hasste noch mehr diejenigen, die im Krieg den noch erbarmungsloseren Vernichtungskrieg führten gegen Juden und Slawen, gegen Kommunisten und

---

<sup>423</sup> See DEJ 153.

<sup>424</sup> Giesen, *Triumph and Trauma*, 119.

<sup>425</sup> Hardesty, “Alternate Nazis,” 85.

Despite his undeniable disgust at the atrocities committed in the name of Germany, however, it is also clear where Rettheim's primary allegiance lies, namely with the Germans themselves. Accordingly, his earlier quote does not end with decrying the murder of Jews, Poles and other victims on the Eastern front, but culminates in this statement: "Hitler ist der Mörder seiner Soldaten. Jeder, der fällt, fällt umsonst oder nur dafür, dass der Irre ein bisschen länger lebt."<sup>427</sup> And Werdin, in the same conversation, goes one step further to convince Rettheim that it is not only Wehrmacht soldiers who favour a quick end to the war: "In der SS gibt es nicht nur Massenmörder. Viele Kameraden im SD wollen so schnell Schluss machen wie möglich. [...] Es gibt nur einen, der diesen Krieg bis zur Selbstvernichtung Deutschlands führen will, und das ist Hitler."<sup>428</sup> Even the SS investigator Reitberg, when questioned about Werdin's service record, suggests that disagreement with the Nazi ideology was a common occurrence within the SS: "Der Mann hat exzellente Dienstbeurteilungen, nur mit der Weltanschauung haperte es. Aber da war er ja nicht der Einzige."<sup>429</sup> In passages like these the text not only reintroduces the idea of the innocent Germans who both kill and die in spite of themselves, ultimately the victims of a single madman. It also reveals that, similar to Langer's protagonists, it is not the foremost mission of the story's 'good Germans' to save the world from Germany, but to save the Germans from themselves – or, rather, from what they have become under Hitler's rule. Werdin himself explicitly attests to this on several occasions. In a conversation with Irma's father, another 'good German,' he states:

"Zuerst habe ich mir eingebildet, für unser Land zu arbeiten. Inzwischen tue ich es. [...] Ich habe geglaubt, Deutschland zu nutzen, wenn ich seinen größten Feind bekämpfe und mich dazu mit dessen Feind zusammentue. Um Hitler zu verhindern, wurde ich Kommunist. Bis ich begriffen habe, dass meines Feindes Feind nicht mein Freund sein muss."<sup>430</sup>

And later, in a moment of introspection, Werdin revisits this notion and its consequences: "Er hatte für Stalin spioniert gegen die Nazis, weil er glaubte, dies sei für Deutschland das Beste.

---

<sup>426</sup> DEJ 504.

<sup>427</sup> DEJ 141.

<sup>428</sup> DEJ 144.

<sup>429</sup> DEJ 74-75.

<sup>430</sup> DEJ 268.



Nun fühlte er sich heimatlos.”<sup>431</sup>

In a similar way as the characters of Rettheim, Werdin and Zacher, who also questions the war and the government long before his fateful flight to Minsk, serve to mitigate the criticism otherwise directed at the German military and the SS, others relativize the culpability of the ‘ordinary’ German population.<sup>432</sup> In addition to Irma herself, who already in her first meeting with Zacher is introduced as having no respect for authority, this role is primarily assigned to her parents. Not only do they offer unequivocal assistance to Werdin when he is being hunted by the Gestapo, but both Herr and Frau Mellenscheidt also assume additional narrative functions.<sup>433</sup> While Irma’s father primarily represents a silent, middle-class disagreement with National Socialist policy, the character of Irma’s mother, who is initially introduced only as a good-hearted, innocent woman, scared of every encounter with representatives of the Nazi regime, is later used to propagate another theme.<sup>434</sup> In a shocked response to Werdin’s admission that Germans have been killing hundreds of thousands of Jews, Poles and Russians in the East and her husband’s reminder that their son, who also serves in the Wehrmacht, had also previously told them about the murder of innocent civilians, she replies: “Aber doch nicht von Massenmord. Ich dachte, das wären Einzelfälle, Übertreibungen im Kampf gegen Partisanen.”<sup>435</sup> Here, the novel lends another innocent voice to a notion that had already repeatedly been advanced by Werdin himself, suggesting that not only ‘ordinary’ Germans, but even members of the SS were not prone to the information about the Nazi genocide. In response to the disclosures about the massacres on the Eastern front in Werdin’s first conversation with Rettheim, the narrator explains: “Im Osten sollte es richtig gehende Vernichtungslager geben, das hatte Werdin *munkeln* hören.”<sup>436</sup> And later, in a meeting following Hitler’s death, when Schellenberg contends that the Nazis may have “overdone it” when it came to the Jews, the theme of not knowing is revisited even more explicitly:

Die Verschleppung der Berliner Juden hatte Werdin mit eigenen Augen gesehen, von den Deportationen in Frankreich, Belgien und Holland wusste er durch die

---

<sup>431</sup> DEJ 290-291.

<sup>432</sup> See DEJ 113, 220.

<sup>433</sup> See DEJ 269.

<sup>434</sup> See DEJ 167-168, 266-269

<sup>435</sup> DEJ 312.

<sup>436</sup> DEJ 145-146. My emphasis.

Berichte seiner V-Männer. Aber was mit den Juden geschah, wusste er nicht. Er war froh, es nicht zu wissen. Manchmal überkamen ihn böse Ahnungen.<sup>437</sup>

In a notable contrast, however, the possibility of this widespread unawareness is refuted by the SS-man Krause, who highlights the intentionality behind such blissful ignorance to which Werdin only alludes: “Man konnte nicht ein paar Millionen vergasen, erschießen oder totschiagen, ohne das die Menschen etwas mitkriegten. Aber die meisten wollten es nicht wissen.”<sup>438</sup> Perhaps one can attest the narrative a certain schizophrenia in these instances, but perhaps it is not entirely coincidental that – in direct contrast to *Fatherland*, where it is March who ultimately rebukes the myth of an oblivious German population – in Ditfurth’s story the notion of the deceived masses is most radically questioned by a predominantly negative character, while the heroic protagonist firmly upholds this claim. In any case, the sheer quantity of ‘good Germans’ presented in the text, in combination with the counterfactual historic significance of the actions of Werdin and Zacher, as their two most prominent representatives, ultimately “satisfie[s] the fantasy of the Germans being able to rehabilitate their nation themselves with no outside assistance” and thus inevitably results in a devaluation of the role of those who brought about the end of the Nazi regime in real history.<sup>439</sup>

This effect is by no means accidental, as the manifold examples of overt anti-Communism and anti-Americanism throughout the narrative attest. Werdin’s descriptions of the Americans exhibit many of the common resentments that have already appeared in the previous chapter and will also be of elevated importance in the next: The alleged opportunism of the campaign against the Third Reich; the unjust propagation of the Germans’ collective guilt; the disproportionate suffering caused by the Allied air raids; and the baseless vindictiveness following Germany’s defeat.<sup>440</sup> Considerably more significant, however, is the characterization of the Russians, not only by Werdin, but by the narrative as a whole. In some respects, Stalinist Russia is depicted as being even worse than Nazi Germany and it is explicitly stated early on that the Russians feared Stalin even more than Hitler and that Beria is responsible for more deaths than the Nazis.<sup>441</sup> But for the most part, the narrative demonization of the Soviets is realized by

---

<sup>437</sup> DEJ 288.

<sup>438</sup> DEJ 411.

<sup>439</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 322.

<sup>440</sup> See respectively DEJ 44; 45; 32, 95, 284 and 320; 344.

<sup>441</sup> See DEJ 20, 358.

equating the two regimes. In this context, the massacre of Katyn, in which the Red Army murdered thousands of Poles, is mentioned as a direct analogy to the German crimes in Eastern Europe.<sup>442</sup> But the most consequential representation of this narrative strategy is arguably the link between Beria and Himmler. Not only is Beria initially described in detail as a depraved pervert, who draws pleasure from abusing women and then sending them off to the Gulag, which arguably implicitly corresponds with Himmler's characterization as a deranged maniac obsessed with racial purity and obscure Germanic mysticism.<sup>443</sup> Their effective equivalence is also stated explicitly when Retheim refers to Beria as Himmler's "Bruder im Geist und im Blut."<sup>444</sup> Ultimately, however, the main criticism of both the Soviet Union and the Americans is that they do not care about what happens to the Germans, but are only interested in their own gain.<sup>445</sup> In light of the establishment of Communism and National Socialism as two sides of the same ideological coin, Werdin's renunciation of the former already serves as an additional emphasis on his 'goodness,' but this fundamental contrast between the heroic 'good Germans' and the egotistical 'Others' finally cements the importance of an intervention from within. Although it does not propose a blanket vindication of German postwar society in the same way that Langer's novel does, Ditfurth's narrative nonetheless functions as an alternate memory. By casting doubt on the intentions and thereby implicitly diminishing the impact of the real historical victors of World War II, and the concurrent exaggeration of German resistance by means of the counterfactual mode, *Der 21. Juli* offers its readers the redemptive alternative of imagining the existence of an unsung but widespread opposition of 'good Germans' who, under only slightly altered circumstances, could have and would have overcome National Socialism of their own accord.

The motif of the 'good German' and the specific implementation of this narrative device in the Alternate Histories of the Third Reich discussed in this chapter again serves to highlight the importance of national differences. Robert Harris' novel *Fatherland* represents the only non-

---

<sup>442</sup> See DEJ 299-300. It is noteworthy here that both the text's general preoccupation with Communist transgressions and Werdin's disillusionment with Stalinist *Realsozialismus* bear a connection to Ditfurth's own biography – he was an active member of the KPD, but ultimately cut all ties with the Communist party – and also play a significant role in several of his other works. Such as, for instance, another Alternate History novel which explores the possibility of the reunification of Germany in favour of the GDR as a nightmare scenario. See Christian von Ditfurth, *Die Mauer steht am Rhein: Deutschland nach dem Sieg des Sozialismus* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1999).

<sup>443</sup> See DEJ 17, 76-77

<sup>444</sup> DEJ 509.

<sup>445</sup> See DEJ 45, 225.

German Alternate History which features a ‘good German’ protagonist at the centre of its story. As the majority of analyses of this text have concluded, one primary focus of the narrative lies in the indirect self-critical portrayal of British collaboration with the victorious Nazi Germany. However, the character of Xavier March also functions as an indictment of Germans. In *Fatherland*, this is realized by showing the protagonist as virtually the only German character who is both detached from National Socialist ideology and invested in bringing the truth about the Holocaust to light. The fact that he is faced by an overwhelming majority of devout Nazis who are hostile to his cause stresses the real historical complicity of Germans in the crimes of the regime. At the same time, the text manages to turn the problematic notion of the Holocaust having been conducted almost in complete secrecy into an incriminating narrative by portraying it as a threat to the future of Germany. In this way, Harris’ novel utilizes the motif of the ‘good German’ as an accusation not only against the past crimes of the German collective, but also, symbolically, against the continuities of the ideology that effected them in the democratic society of postwar Germany.

In contrast, both German Alternate Histories employ the ‘good German’ as a redemptive narrative. This is already evidenced by the fact that in both Siegfried Langer’s *Alles bleibt anders* and Christian von Dittfurth’s *Der 21. Juli* the reader is not merely presented with a singular ‘good German’ but with an entire group. Although these two texts develop very different plots, their narrative strategies are almost identical. A central feature of both texts is the counterfactual exaggeration of German resistance. In direct opposition to *Fatherland*, both prominently feature the myth of a widespread obliviousness with regard to the crimes of the Nazis as an exculpatory element. And in both allohistorical scenarios the agency of ‘good Germans’ is instrumental in the fall of the Third Reich. Langer’s novel embeds these themes in the construction of a parallel worlds story which contrasts an idealized image of the real contemporary Germany with a dystopian alternative. It thereby erases the continuities of National Socialism in postwar German society and promotes the notion of a complete rehabilitation of the German population from within. Dittfurth’s approach is more subtle insofar as it does not propagate an unambiguously positive portrayal of present-day Germany. It also presents a distinctly critical appraisal of real historical resistance efforts against the Nazi regime, which are frequently celebrated in the context of non-literary counter-memories. But underneath this critical surface, *Der 21. Juli* nonetheless reproduces exculpatory themes. The relative abundance of ‘good Germans’ in the story promotes the notion of a widespread silent opposition to National Socialism and the fact that both the end of World War II and the prevention of World War III are achieved through the

actions of dissident Germans produce a narrative of consequential German resistance. In this way, both stories create similar alternate memories that supplant actual memories of the overall ineffectual and relatively scarce defiance of the National Socialist apparatus from within with fantasies of counterfactual German heroism.

## 5. ALTERNATE HOLOCAUSTS: VICTIMIZING THE PERPETRATORS

The theme of German victimization represents the most prominent element of the discourse of German normalization. Stories of Germans as victims have proven prolific across all historical phases of the postwar period and, especially in the present era of the Berlin Republic, across seemingly opposing political camps. As the vast majority of scholars of German postwar memory posit, the fate of German expellees and refugees from Eastern Europe in the final days of World War II, as well as that of German prisoners of war following the defeat, did not only begin to surface en masse in the earliest postwar years, they in fact dominated the first two postwar decades, until the gradual shift of the commemorative focus onto the victims of Nazi Germany in the second half of the 1960s. In contrast to some accounts, represented most prominently by Aleida Assmann's studies on German postwar trauma, scholars such as Ruth Wittlinger assert that "a clear continuity of the victims' theme in the post-war history of the Federal Republic can be established."<sup>446</sup> A relative consensus exists, again, on the impact that German reunification and the paradigmatic shift accompanying the political and generational changes effected by the establishment of the Berlin Republic have had on the quality and quantity of narratives of German suffering. Assmann herself notes that while "German suffering was a topic of discourse immediately after the war in the private and political sphere [...], the intensity of the unexpected return of these issues [in the current context] and their wide social resonance among different classes and generations" constitute a novel development.<sup>447</sup>

There is little (scholarly) debate about the fact that the amount of popular treatments of German suffering due to the events and the after-effects of the Second World War has dramatically increased in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Following the paradigm shift of 1998, a new focus on the victimization of Germans – driven to a considerable degree by the intentional transgression of the supposed previous tabooization of this issue – began to gradually emerge. The resurgence was initially spearheaded by such illustrious names as W. G. Sebald and his controversial essay *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (1999) that expounded a radical indictment of the alleged failure of postwar German society to acknowledge the suffering especially of the victims of Allied

---

<sup>446</sup> Ruth Wittlinger, "Taboo Or Tradition?: The 'Germans as Victims' Theme in West Germany Until the Early 1990s," in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. Bill Niven (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 75.

<sup>447</sup> Aleida Assmann, "On the (in)Compatibility of Guilt and Suffering in German Memory," *German Life and Letters* 59, no. 2 (2006), 187.

bombings, and Günter Grass, whose aforementioned novella *Im Krebsgang* (2002) highlighted the hardships of German refugees during the final stages of the war. The comparatively scarce amount of controversy generated by Grass' novella already foreshadowed a new quality of normalization that has characterized the years since. In its wake, ever more popular and ever less critical treatments of the theme surfaced, represented especially by a host of cinematic interpretations, such as Sönke Wortmann's *Das Wunder von Bern* (2003) and Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Der Untergang* (2004), as well as TV productions like *Dresden* (2006), *Die Flucht* (2007), and *Die Gustloff* (2008). All of these titles enjoyed both commercial and relative critical success as well as very favourable reactions from the German public overall, with critical assessments growing increasingly marginalized with every release.

At the same time, the quality of these engagements with the German past has also experienced significant alterations. Although it was arguably always true of the postwar preoccupation of Germans with their own suffering that this type of selective memory generally tended towards a decontextualization of the Holocaust and the guilt originating from it, as Dan Diner suggests, its more recent incarnations perform this task in new ways.<sup>448</sup> A central change lies in the publicization and politicization of memory. With regard to the entirety of the postwar era, Aleida Assmann's suggestion that private (family) memories of suffering endured by Germans during and after the war had never before garnered any real public interest is demonstrably false.<sup>449</sup> At the same time, it is true that the period between the late 1960s and the early 1990s was more dominated by the commemoration of the Holocaust and its immediate victims than by public discussions of German trauma. In recent years, however, it has in turn been "private family memory, standing up to the official historical consciousness, which finds an outlet in the new German victims' discourse".<sup>450</sup> As a result of the altered discursive conditions of German national identity and national pride under the aegis of the Red-Green government, this type of family memory now "feels even more confident to express itself in the context of the

---

<sup>448</sup> See Dan Diner, "Der Holocaust im Geschichtsnarrativ: Über Variationen historischen Gedächtnisses," in *In der Sprache der Täter: Neue Lektüren deutschsprachiger Nachkriegs- und Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. Stephan Braese (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), 29.

<sup>449</sup> See Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: Beck, 2006), 193; 199.

<sup>450</sup> Stefan Berger, "On Taboos, Traumas and Other Myths: Why the Debate about German Victims of the Second World War is Not a Historians' Controversy," in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, 223.

discourse of ‘normality’ which has brought forth a new patriotism in the reunified Germany.”<sup>451</sup>

In accordance with this normalizing trend Helmut Schmitz posits:

One of the most striking features of recent representations of German suffering is that they appear to be in competition with the legacy of the Holocaust. That is to say, they frequently borrow from Holocaust imagery and tropes in order to attain gravity and legitimacy. Through this rhetorical operation, German victims are allocated a status similar to that of Holocaust victims.<sup>452</sup>

Specifically, Schmitz is referring here to popular historical accounts of German suffering such as Jörg Friedrich’s *Der Brand* (2002) and *Brandstätten* (2003), in which the author explicitly borrows terminology previously used in the commemoration of the Holocaust (e.g. German bomb shelters as ‘crematoria’). However, in a less overt way this practice can generally be observed in a large number of other works. In popular accounts of German victimization the actual victims of the National Socialist apparatus – that is, the Jews, ‘Gypsies,’ Homosexuals, Handicapped, Communists and other ‘subhumans’ or enemies of the state – are not only largely absent from the story, but also replaced by Germans, who in turn are presented not merely as victims of the Allied bombings, the atrocities of the advancing Red Army, or the forced expulsions at the hands of the previously occupied Eastern Europeans, but as victims of the Nazis themselves. Robert Moeller identifies this as an overarching tendency of the commemorative theme of German victimization, asserting that “[i]n both East and West, rhetorics of victimisation laid the groundwork for analyses of the past in which victims could not be guilty, and the only real perpetrators were a handful of fanatics.”<sup>453</sup> And, indeed, this separation into ‘ordinary’ Germans and Nazis, with the former figuring as the ‘first victims’ of the latter, represents a central tenet of narratives of German normalization since the end of the war. According to Schmitz, by means of such “empathetic representations of ‘German’ wartime suffering, the victims are configured on an axis of German-ness that is frequently divested of the taint of Nazism.”<sup>454</sup> This denial of the complicity of the majority of the German collective in the

---

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Helmut Schmitz, “The Birth of the Collective from the Spirit of Empathy: From the ‘Historians’ Dispute’ to German Suffering,” in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, 103-104.

<sup>453</sup> Robert G. Moeller, “The Politics of the Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimization in East and West Germany,” in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, 41.

<sup>454</sup> Helmut Schmitz, “The Return of Wartime Suffering in Contemporary German Memory Culture, Literature and Film,” in *A Nation of Victims?: Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, ed. Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 15.



atrocities of National Socialism turns, as Samuel Salzborn argues, “the victim-perpetrator paradigm [...] to the advantage of the Germans insofar as the remorse expressed in this attitude relates only to the destruction and extermination of the Germans’ own character and desires,” effectively creating alternate catastrophes while the victims of the Holocaust are relegated, at best, to the status of a historical referent in comparison to which Germans can narrate their own trauma.<sup>455</sup> Bill Niven sums up this narrative strategy in no uncertain terms: “At the same time as the boundaries of the ‘perpetrator collective’ are being shifted to embrace the Allies, those of the ‘victim collective’ are being altered to encompass the Germans. What this amounts to is a complete reinterpretation of the Second World War.”<sup>456</sup>

Advocating a memory culture in which the remembrance of German guilt and German suffering may harmoniously coexist, Aleida Assmann argues that “various levels of heterogeneous memory can exist side by side if they are contained within a normative frame of generally accepted validity.”<sup>457</sup> The question, however, cannot be whether this *could* be the case under ideal social and political circumstances, but if such a conceptualization can reasonably be applied to the *current* conditions under which the remembering (and selective forgetting) of National Socialism takes place. That these two discourses can exist side by side, which they unquestionably do, does not preclude the possibility that the relegation of one type of memory to the margins constitutes an essential element of another. While it may not be a discursive necessity, in many (and arguably the most prominent) cases, the act of superimposing the memory of German suffering on the memory of German guilt is not incidental, but programmatic. After all, Assmann herself concedes this tendency by observing that in cases of the “perpetrator renounc[ing] his guilt by asserting the memory of himself as a victim – we are dealing [...] with the pattern of an argument that has gained a perpetually recurrent and almost ineradicable status. According to this age-old strategy of self-exculpation, one guilt is set against the other and thereby reduced to zero.”<sup>458</sup> And Karoline von Oppen and Stefan Wolff concur that “[a]lthough not in all cases, it is certainly often the case that this shift [of broader societal

---

<sup>455</sup> Samuel Salzborn, “The German Myth of a Victim Nation: (Re-)Presenting Germans as Victims in the New Debate on their Flight and Expulsion from Eastern Europe,” in *A Nation of Victims*, 96.

<sup>456</sup> Bill Niven, “Introduction: German Victimhood at the Turn of the Millenium,” in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, 15.

<sup>457</sup> Assmann, “Guilt and Suffering,” 187.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

recognition of German victimhood] is intended as a deliberate counterbalance to the supposed dominance of Holocaust-centred memory in the Federal Republic.”<sup>459</sup> Assmann’s optimism therefore springs from a certain degree of self-imposed naiveté, which expresses itself as a peculiar form of biased interpretation. On the one hand, she identifies the popularity of narratives of German suffering in the immediate postwar years as a form of political instrumentalisation. On the other hand, she uncritically understands their post-unification renaissance – what she calls the “look[ing] back in empathy” of the first and second postwar generations – as a quasi-disinterested expression of authentic (post)memory.<sup>460</sup> This selectiveness is epitomized in her reference to Erika Steinbach as a positive (or at least neutral) example of negotiating the divide between private and public/political remembrance.<sup>461</sup> Steinbach, who has been the president of the Federation of Expellees since 1998, was born in Rumia (Poland), where her father had been stationed in 1941 as part of the German occupation. As many critics have argued, her self-fashioning as an expellee from a ‘homeland’ to which her family had come as hostile occupiers a mere two years prior to her birth exemplifies the systematic forgetfulness of the discourse of German expulsions. Volker Hage sums up in simple, yet concise, terms why it is precisely this type of programmatic omission which makes the majority of discourses of German victimization so problematic: “It makes a difference whether writers (or others) address experiences of suffering without first attempting to acknowledge the suffering Germans inflicted on virtually the entire world.”<sup>462</sup>

The Alternate Histories discussed in the following reflect the same issue, but in a way that is specific to the strategies of alternate memory. The first thing that is apparent in comparison with the previous chapters is the fact that here no non-German texts have been chosen to represent this theme. Not least, this highlights the difference between what I am calling a theme of *alternate Holocausts* and Gavriel Rosenfeld’s similar category of ‘hypothetical Holocausts,’ in which he includes two of the texts discussed here (Thomas Ziegler’s *Die Stimmen der Nacht* and Christoph Ransmayr’s *Morbus Kitahara*), as well as a number of British and

---

<sup>459</sup> Karoline von Oppen and Stefan Wolff, “From the Margins to the Centre?: The Discourse on Expellees and Victimhood in Germany,” in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, 209.

<sup>460</sup> See Assmann, “Guilt and Suffering,” 190-192.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>462</sup> Volker Hage, “To Write Or Remain Silent?: The Portrayal of the Air War in German Literature,” in *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification German Culture*, eds. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 110.

American examples. In contrast, I am not interested in this chapter in stories in which the real Holocaust was either averted, carried out in full, or subsequently avenged – the three themes which characterize the non-German texts in his selection. Rather, what will be of primary interest here is the counterfactual imagination of truly alternate catastrophes, in which Germans themselves feature as victims. Such stories do not exist in the British and American contexts but, as the exemplary selection in this chapter will show, do represent a prominent theme in German-language Alternate Histories. The three novels discussed under this heading all envision an alternate present in which Germany has been turned into a dystopian wasteland as a result of the Morgenthau plan and focus exclusively on the ramifications for the German (and Austrian) postwar population.<sup>463</sup> Ian Foster delivers a concise summary of this program:

The Morgenthau plan itself, entitled ‘Program to Prevent Germany from Starting a World War III,’ called, among other things, for the complete demilitarization of Germany, the removal and destruction of key industries needed to produce military strength, the partition of the state into a number of smaller states and internationally administered zones, and a complete suspension of education until suitable new officials had been appointed.<sup>464</sup>

While counterfactual realizations of this ominous proposal feature prominently in all three texts, the theme of victimization differs in terms of its narrative status in the text. In Thomas Ziegler’s *Die Stimmen der Nacht* (1984), the suffering of Germans as a result of the de facto destruction of their society functions as both a central object of the plot and as an omnipresent backdrop for other narrative elements. In Christoph Ransmayr’s *Morbus Kitahara* (1995), the dire lives of the rural population of Austria in the wake of the country’s demise provide the exclusive narrative focus. Finally, in Oliver Henkel’s *Im Jahre Ragnarök* (2009), the disastrous effects of the first and second Morgenthau plan feature only, albeit ubiquitously, as the setting for a more classical SF tale of time-travelling Nazis.

A key aspect of these novels’ character as alternate memories and their function in the

---

<sup>463</sup> In Ransmayr’s novel, the name Morgenthau has been changed to Stellamour – assumedly to reduce the anti-Semitic connotations involved in the discussion of this spectre of Jewish vengeance and prominent element of German *angst*, which still features prominently in the propaganda of neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers today –, but the terms in which the renamed program and its effects are described remain clearly recognizable.

<sup>464</sup> Ian Foster, “Alternative History and Christoph Ransmayr’s *Morbus Kitahara*,” *Modern Austrian Literature* 32, no. 1 (1999): 113. That Henry Morgenthau’s contemplations were never actually anything closely resembling a ‘plan’ intended for actual implementation and that much of what the German public believes to know about them actually can, in fact, be traced back not to Morgenthau himself, but rather to his pre-emptive condemnation in Goebbels’ propaganda, has been shown in great detail by Bernd Greiner. Cf. Bernd Greiner, *Die Morgenthau-Legende: Zur Geschichte eines umstrittenen Plans* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995).

context of German normalization is their narrative strategy of portraying German victimization in terms similar to those in which the suffering of the victims of National Socialism has traditionally been portrayed in memory literature. As Helmut Schmitz has suggested for non-fictional types of revisionist counter-memories replacing the victims of Germany with German victims, the imagery and tropes used to illustrate the suffering caused by the Morgenthau plan are, at times very obviously, borrowed from the discursive traditions of remembering the Holocaust. This constitutes what Bill Niven calls cases of an “implicit equation” of suffering.<sup>465</sup> As is characteristic for alternate memories, this task is facilitated by the counterfactual nature of the narratives, in which the allohistorical implementation of the Morgenthau plan functions as a symbolic stand-in for a real historical German trauma. In this sense, the texts do not only borrow their imagery from the commemorative legacy of the Holocaust, but also from that of non-allohistorical narratives of German victimization, with both explicit and implicit representations of air raids, expulsions, and even the Treaty of Versailles. They thus manage to present a criticism of German suffering while avoiding the need to mention it directly. Much more so than contemporary non-allohistorical German novels concerned with German wartime suffering, of which Stuart Taberner states that they “engage not only (and often not even primarily) with the events themselves but also participate in a series of related discussions [...]”<sup>466</sup> these Alternate Histories therefore succeed in creating a “performative representation of trauma,” which “sets upon readers an ethical obligation to empathize with the victims and share their sufferings [...] by preserving the truth of trauma in its literariness, and transmitting it to others in a traumatic and traumatized account.”<sup>467</sup>

The following sections will explore the specific strategies by means of which the individual texts perform this mnemonic shift. Overall, it can already be said that, while the general premises of all three novels are strikingly similar, there are both differences and unifying elements in this regard. A central unifying theme, for instance, is the inherent anti-Americanism featured in all three texts. As Bernhard Giesen asserts, “[t]he social construction of victimhood presupposes an outside actor who is at least partly responsible for the misfortune of

---

<sup>465</sup> Bill Niven, “Implicit Equations in Constructions of German Suffering,” in *A Nation of Victims*, 107.

<sup>466</sup> Stuart Taberner, “Literary Representations in Contemporary German Fiction of the Expulsions of Germans from the East in 1945,” in *A Nation of Victims*, 243.

<sup>467</sup> Adami, *Trauma Studies and Literature*, 46.

the victim [...].”<sup>468</sup> This fact is doubly reflected in all three novels – including Ziegler’s, which features an American protagonist – in the sense that their characters (and the German population in general) are portrayed both as victims of Nazi madness and of the ruthlessness of specifically American politicians and military leaders. Other similarities include the strategy of creating an air of objectivity by distancing the narration from the victimized Germans by means of non-German protagonists (Ziegler and Henkel), an emphasis on the differentiation between ‘ordinary’ Germans and insane Nazis (all three, but especially Ziegler and Henkel), the establishment of South America as a refuge (Ziegler and Ransmayr), the theme of extreme technological deceleration and even regression (Ransmayr and Henkel), and the stipulation of a necessary link between the destruction of Germany and the decline of the rest of Europe (implicit in all three, but explicit especially in Ziegler and Henkel). The differences comprise obvious elements such as the setting of Ransmayr’s novel in Austria and thus in the specific context of Austrian collective memory and the fact that Ziegler’s and Ransmayr’s texts are *true alternate histories*, while Henkel’s is, on the surface, a traditional time travel story. But less immediate factors also play a role, such as the fact that only Ziegler’s novel features a distinct scenario of ‘reactionary modernism’ (technological acceleration vis-a-vis social regression), while the more recent texts – somewhat in contrast to Winthrop-Young’s delineation of the theme’s narrative evolution – depict technology and society as equally in decline. Not least, only Henkel relies on an almost complete omission of pre-Morgenthau German crimes, while Ziegler and Ransmayer find ways of reconciling the task of emphasizing German suffering with an at least partial acknowledgement of German guilt. In the following pages, I will analyse these similarities and differences in greater detail and illustrate how these specificities play into the unifying theme of promoting the narrative of German victimization as an alternate memory.

## 5.1 DIE STIMMEN DER NACHT

Thomas Ziegler’s novel *Die Stimmen der Nacht*, published in 1984, represents the first instance of a German Alternate History envisioning the effects of the defeat of the Third Reich under altered circumstances.<sup>469</sup> While the small number of previously published examples had all imagined the ramifications of a counterfactual German victory in World War II, Ziegler’s novel

---

<sup>468</sup> Giesen, *Triumph and Trauma*, 47.

<sup>469</sup> Thomas Ziegler, *Die Stimmen der Nacht* (Frankfurt a.M.: Ullstein, 1984). Cited in the following as SdN.

creates the image of a postwar world which presents itself as no less dystopian than those scenarios which enabled the Nazis to overcome their enemies and carry out their diabolical agenda.<sup>470</sup> Instead of using their newly established secret weapon against the Japanese, the United States, still under Roosevelt, drop an atom bomb on Berlin in 1945, killing Hitler in the Führerbunker and ending the war. Following the defeat of the German Reich, Roosevelt is ‘persuaded’ – as the novel portrays it – by Henry Morgenthau to adopt his eponymous plan and not only withhold all restorative measures, but dismantle what remains of Germany’s industry and infrastructure and ship it to Poland, the Soviet Union, and, notably, Israel as a form of reparations. While the country is left to lie in ruins, a program is instituted facilitating the remaining population’s emigration to South America, where, over the next four decades, the ‘Latino-Germans’ succeed in building a new society. Along with ‘ordinary’ Germans, many of the surviving members of the former Nazi elite also find their way to South America and, as a result, the new Reich built in the jungles of Brazil, with its capital Germania, becomes a new haven for National Socialist ideology under the control of the Martin Bormann and his ODESSA organization.<sup>471</sup> While the new Reich thrives – defined by the kind of ‘reactionary modernism’ that Geoffrey Winthrop-Young describes as the embracing of “twentieth-century hardware while rejecting its eighteenth-century software”<sup>472</sup> – and quickly manages to rebuild its resources at an accelerated speed to a point where it once again becomes an economic, technological and military force to be reckoned with, the old Reich, and with it large parts of Europe, fall into a deep decline. The only remaining inhabitants of Germany are fanatic followers of the ‘Werewolf’ cult, guerrilla groups at constant war with the American occupiers, holding out for the return of a new Führer to restore the wasteland that Germany has become to its former greatness.

This is the setting for the novel’s main narrative in the fictional present of the 1980s. The protagonist, American television host Jakob Gulf, is asked by the CIA to travel to the old Reich to consult on a worrisome new development of which he has unique knowledge. A few years earlier, Gulf’s wife committed suicide on live television and has since been haunting him in the

---

<sup>470</sup> Prior to 1984, there were a total of four German texts dealing explicitly with alternative histories of the Third Reich: Otto Basil’s *Wenn das der Führer wüsste* (1966), Sissini’s *Samuel Hitler* (1973), Helmut Heißenbüttel’s “Wenn Adolf Hitler den Krieg nicht gewonnen hätte” (1979), and Arno Lubos’ *Schwiebus* (1980), all of which feature scenarios of Germany winning the Second World War.

<sup>471</sup> ODESSA stands for “Organisation der ehemaligen SS-Angehörigen.” Its existence in real history has never been definitively proven, but it has been repeatedly suggested in a number of popular historical accounts that this organization was elemental in the escape of high-ranking Nazis to South America following World War II.

<sup>472</sup> Winthrop-Young, “Third Reich,” 889.

form of an electronic ‘Klette,’ a tiny robotic device the shape and size of a fruit fly, originally designed by scientists in Germania as a tool for espionage. The ‘Klette’ follows Gulf everywhere he goes and speaks to him with the voice (and the knowledge) of his dead wife Elizabeth, constantly blaming him for her death. In a recent discovery, the same disembodied voices have been heard in the ruins of the destroyed Dom in Cologne. Here, however, the ‘Kletten’ speak with the voices of Hitler and Goebbels and other dead Nazi leaders and are inciting the remaining Germans to fight against the occupation and restore the supremacy of the German *Volk*. Despite protestations that he also does not know how the ‘Kletten’ actually work and why they speak with the voices that they do – it has been discovered that their memory banks are actually empty –, Gulf is brought to Cologne to investigate. After he encounters the Nazi ‘Kletten’ in the Dom, his party is attacked by ODESSA-funded Werewolf units, when they try to bring Gulf and the disembodied Nazis to German-America, but Gulf manages to retreat to a boat and head for the Netherlands. On board, Gulf notices that the Nazi ‘Kletten’ are now following him in the same way Elizabeth does and it soon turns out that the New Reich had hoped precisely for this development. In a power play against the ODESSA, Gulf is ultimately abducted by agents of the PSE (Policía Secreta del Estado), the not-racially-pure secret police of the New Reich, and brought to Germania, where Bormann is secretly preparing for nuclear war. While the leader of the PSE had hoped that, with the help of the ‘Kletten,’ Gulf would be able to dissuade Bormann from this apocalyptic plan, the arrival of the voices of the Führer and the lost comrades has the opposite effect on the remaining Nazi elite. Bormann orders the German-American fleet to head for Europe and retake the old Germany from the Allies. The situation quickly escalates and Bormann authorizes the use of nuclear warheads against the British embargo off the coast of the old Reich. As nuclear World War III breaks out, the old Nazis retreat to an underground city they have built below the Andes and Gulf, who refuses to join them, dies, alone with the voice of Elizabeth, as Bormann’s bunker is destroyed by an American atom bomb.

Although it may appear on the surface as though the disastrous effects of the Morgenthau plan serve merely as a backdrop for the main plot of Nazi survival and the continuing quest for world domination, a closer look reveals that this specific narrative of German victimization actually constitutes a key element which, in fact, figures as a direct motivator for the events of the story. By including *Die Stimmen der Nacht* in his category of ‘hypothetical Holocausts,’ Rosenfeld also acknowledges this fact. However, the parameters with which his study ultimately interprets all of the Alternate Histories in his extensive selection do not sufficiently capture the

specific role the effects of the Morgenthau plan play in the context of German normalization. Rosenfeld writes:

Many moral compromises were made [...] in the process of rebuilding Germany after World War II, ranging from the Allies' failure to purge ex-Nazis from the German society, to their recruitment of war criminals to aid in the Western fight against communism. Ziegler's novel, however, diverted attention from these moral shortcomings by showing how much *worse* history would have been if a more moralistic, punitive peace had been imposed on the Germans.<sup>473</sup>

However, the assessment that the novel's primary deflective strategy consists of an affirmation of the real historical status quo fails to recognize the symbolic quality of the allohistorical construction of Germans as victims in Ziegler's story. To be sure, the affirmation of real history in the form of the restoration of Germany in accordance with the Marshall plan does appear *ex negativo* in the narrative, for instance when Gulf laments the impossibility of reconciliation under the current (allohistorical) conditions: "Die Möglichkeit für einen milden Frieden ist längst vertan. In einem Land, in dem keine Zeit fließt, kann sie auch keine Wunden heilen [...]"<sup>474</sup> But the story as a whole evokes a different kind of sentiment.

While it is certainly possible to read the repeated references to the abject suffering in and the disastrous destruction of Germany as an endorsement of real historical decisions, approaching the text as an alternate memory opens up another perspective. The manifold depictions of the effects of the Morgenthau plan conjure up an array of images that bear a striking familiarity with prominent elements of narratives of Germans as victims in German collective memory. Such instances are found in even the most unlikely contexts. For, instance, when Gulf reflects on the characteristic of the 'Multisensbrille,' a piece of advanced aviation technology also produced by German-American scientists:

Ein weiteres Produkt jenes Heeres aus Naturwissenschaftlern, Ingenieuren und Facharbeitern, die nach dem Krieg, im Großen Exodus, das besiegte Reich verlassen hatten, auf der Flucht vor Hunger, Armut und Arbeitslosigkeit, um in Südamerika ganze Städte aus den Urwäldern zu stampfen und ihre V-2 weiterzuentwickeln.<sup>475</sup>

In this passage, two prominent narratives are represented. On the one hand, the passing reference

---

<sup>473</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 351. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>474</sup> SdN 51.

<sup>475</sup> SdN 11.



to Germans fleeing hunger, poverty and widespread unemployment directly evokes associations with the real historical state of German society immediately following the war, before the beginning restoration. The dire lives of Germans in the rubble of destroyed cities in the early years of the postwar period figured, for instance, as one of the most prolific themes in German postwar literature, the so-called *Trümmerliteratur*. On the other hand, the theme of the loss of Germany's great minds through (forced) emigration both during and after the Second World War constitutes an element of collective memory which, in turn, conforms to the traditional narrative of the German people as victims of the Nazis, and – both in real and in this alternate history – represents an essential hindrance for the restoration of Germany. This portrayal is the first exemplary representation in the text of the narrative strategy of dual victimization outlined in the introduction to this chapter. Through the combination of elements of German suffering and disenfranchisement that implicitly lays blame on both the Allies and the Nazis, the story establishes 'ordinary' Germans as innocent victims caught, through no immediate fault of their own, between these two antagonistic factions. Performing this task by means of the implicit evocation of real historical components of German collective memory effectively turns this allohistorical description into an exculpatory narrative.

This strategy is repeated and reinforced throughout the text. Before arriving in the old Reich, Gulf addresses the situation of Europe, in a way which already foreshadows another element of the novel's inherent revisionist strategy: “[D]rüben in Europa, in diesem absurden, verschlafenen Gespensterreich mit seinen Trümmerstädten, längst von Gras und Unkraut überwuchert, seinen armseligen Einöddörfern und den unzähligen kleinen Gehöften, verteilt über das ganze Land.”<sup>476</sup> Next to the aspects concretely linked to the allohistorical setting, represented by the references to de-urbanization as part of the Morgenthau plan, there is once again the invocation of ruined cities, evoking memories of German suffering not immediately related to the historical alteration. At the same time, the fact that Gulf does not restrict his description to Germany alone, but explicitly refers to the desolate state of Europe, opens up an additional dimension. The idea that other European nations were equally adversely affected by the downfall of Germany, implicitly purports the nationalistic notion that the fate of the entire continent hinged on the fate of Germany. While this could once more be read as indirect praise of the real historical developments, it also serves as an indictment of Germany's former enemies, who, with

---

<sup>476</sup> SdN 17.

their attacks on the Third Reich, ultimately risked the demise of all of Europe. In both readings, this portrayal arguably constitutes a tendentious exaggeration of Germany's role in Europe prior to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is actually explicitly formulated in the text: "Man kann nicht mitten in Europa ein Grab schaufeln, ohne daß sich der ganze Kontinent in einen Friedhof verwandelt."<sup>477</sup> More importantly, however, by assigning the responsibility for the decay of Europe to those who victimized the German people – in this case, primarily the Allies – the historical reality that it was actually the Germans themselves who laid waste to large parts of Central and Eastern Europe during World War II is replaced with the identification of another perpetrator. This image reoccurs several times in the text, for instance when Gulf reflects on the current state of France, which has effectively returned to an absolutist regime in the wake of the destruction of Germany, and which not only brutally quashes any opposition among its own population, but, in another case of victimization, has also made a habit of executing German rebels in the Saarland.<sup>478</sup>

As the narrative progresses, the links between the allohistorical and real historical aspects of the memory of German victimization become more apparent. Upon seeing the ruins of Cologne, Gulf is reminded of a (fictional) song by Paul McCartney, entitled "Hamburg in Twilight," prompting him to remember the fate of that city in particular: "Wie seltsam, dachte Gulf, ein Lied über eine Stadt zu schreiben, die von Morgenthau's Deutschland-Plan vielleicht am schlimmsten heimgesucht wurde. Wie schrecklich muss es sein, selbst für ein Stadt, selbst für Stein und Asphalt, die ganze Welt zu Gast zu haben, um dann zu verkümmern, zu zerfallen [...]."<sup>479</sup> Next to Dresden and Berlin, the destruction of Hamburg represents perhaps the most central element of the discourse of German victimization with regard to the Allied air raids towards the end of the war. The text does not merely draw here on this commemorative axiom, but expands it with the subtle implication of a counterfactual future loss. The fact that Gulf thinks of Hamburg only via the memory of a McCartney song is not incidental, but invokes the city's real historical status as a cultural hotspot, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. This status, it can be inferred, was put at risk by its ruthless destruction at the hands of the Allied forces. After all, Gulf feels the need to qualify his reference to Paul McCartney as the Englishman who also

---

<sup>477</sup> SdN 35.

<sup>478</sup> See SdN 28-30.

<sup>479</sup> SdN 37-38.

composed the theme song for his own television show (*Abenteuer Live*), suggesting that, in this alternate reality, the Beatles either never existed or never gained any real success without their formative Hamburg years – an implied cultural tragedy of global proportions, the responsibility for which is also ascribed to the Morgenthau plan and, by extension, to the needless devastation of Germany, especially at the hands of the Americans.<sup>480</sup>

After Gulf is abducted by a Werewolf unit on his way to Cologne and brought to their village, the American occupying force launches a full-scale attack in order to rescue him. The description of this attack is perhaps the most obvious and most detailed invocation of the Allied air raids, featuring a variety of elements commonly used in this particular memory discourse of German victimization. Before the attack commences, the village and its people are thoroughly described as utterly archaic, made up largely of malnourished children and feeble elderly, characterized by social and technological regression, and dominated by backward Nordic mysticism.<sup>481</sup> This detailed account directly sets the scene for the following assault of the American forces, which is, in turn, defined by bringing to bear the full brunt of modern military technology, attacking the village with automatic weapons on the ground and helicopters from the air. These crassly contrasting depictions implicitly reproduce the lingering belief that the bombings of German cities during the Second World War were disproportionate acts of force against a largely defenseless civilian population, indiscriminately murdering women, children and seniors. This sentiment is explicated by the single sentence denoting the beginning of the attack: “Am Morgen begann das Morden.”<sup>482</sup> And in the following passages, the parallels between this allohistorical assault and the real historical bombings are made even stronger: “Plötzliches Sterben und wahlloses Morden, ziellose Zerstörung und Todesschreie in der Nacht. Im Dorf, dachte Gulf, großer Gott, die Frauen und Kinder im Dorf, schlafend in den Betten, als die Hubschrauber kamen ... O Gott!”<sup>483</sup> At the same time, the allegation of indiscriminate destruction, and the inherent suggestion of futility, is furthered by the fact that no evident precautions are being taken by the American strike team to ensure Gulf’s safety during the offensive, which is, in fact, portrayed as complete mayhem. This in itself represents another

---

<sup>480</sup> See SdN 37.

<sup>481</sup> See SdN 44-52.

<sup>482</sup> SdN 52.

<sup>483</sup> SdN 53-54. Given the nationality of the protagonist, this may of course also be read as a reference the American trauma of the Vietnam war.

aspect of the same narrative, as one common criticism of the air raids was the accusation that the bombings also killed those they were supposedly intended to protect.<sup>484</sup> Finally, as frequently the case in dramatizations of German victimization, the American aggressors are profoundly vilified and presented as unscrupulous war machines devoid of any emotion or empathy. Here, however, the text also uses this particular trope to set up an additional motif that can be traced throughout the story. When the Americans attack, Gulf notes: “Die Soldaten der ACF hatten ebensowenig Gefühle gezeigt bei der Zerstörung des Dorfes wie die Werwölfe beim Überfall auf den französischen Armeekonvoi.”<sup>485</sup> This specific type of relativism, effectively equating not only the actions but the mindset of Nazis and Americans, and situating the rest of the world, including an alleged innocent majority of ‘ordinary’ Germans, between these two antagonistic forces as uninvolved victims, represents another key feature of the alternate memory narrative generated by the novel.

In the aftermath of the attack, Gulf muses on the causes behind the ongoing hostilities between what remains of the old Reich and the German-American New Reich on the one side and the United States and the Jews on the other and conclusively laments: “Dieser Haß .... Dieser tödliche Haß auf beiden Seiten.”<sup>486</sup> This discursive dissolution of cause and effect, in which the German hatred and the hatred of Germans are represented not as consequential but as concurrent phenomena, can be identified as an integral narrative strategy. In several instances, it is metonymically represented by the comparison between Hitler and Morgenthau. Like Adolf Hitler in the Dom, the deceased Henry Morgenthau has been resurrected as a disembodied voice, as another ‘Klette’ haunting the White House. The American General who led the rescue of Gulf relates to him afterwards:

“Er spricht, Jakob,” sagte der General leise. “Im Weißen Haus, im Oval Office spricht er. Seit gestern morgen. Wir haben uns die Aufnahmen via Satellit überspielen lassen. Morgenthau spricht, und er ist tot und hat Deutschland nicht vergessen. All seine Worte kreisen um Deutschland und die Deutschen und um

---

<sup>484</sup> This ‘altruistic’ view was not necessarily shared by the people invoked in this argument, the actual victims of the Germans, many of whom actually welcomed the bombings as an act of liberation: see Gilad Margalit, “Dresden and Hamburg: Official Memory and Commemoration of the Victims of Allied Air Raids in the Two Germanies,” in *A Nation of Victims*, 127.

<sup>485</sup> SdN 53.

<sup>486</sup> SdN 57.

das, was sie der Welt angetan haben [...]”<sup>487</sup>

While the resurgence of the voice of Morgenthau is here initially only implicitly linked to Gulf’s preceding statement regarding the mutual hatred between (Jewish) Americans and Germans, a very brief statement in a later passage makes this relativization more apparent. As Gulf is en route to the airport to be flown back to Washington, the agent accompanying him remarks: “Falls sich die Gespenster wieder melden sollten, glaube ich nicht, daß man Sie ins Weiße Haus läßt. Schließlich – niemand weiß, was geschieht, wenn Morgenthau und Hitler aufeinandertreffen.”<sup>488</sup> The amorphous fear of catastrophe implied by these lines effectively posits Hitler and Morgenthau as two sides of the same equation, eternal adversaries whose irrational, unpredictable hatred for each other has the potential to drag the world down along with it. But not only can no clear outcome of the speculative meeting between these two antipodes be foreseen, the repeated complete absence of the causes of their conflict reduces it to the status of a Manichean confrontation and thus serves as a reinforcement of the notion of the Germans and their enemies as equally culpable parties locked in an essentially irrational battle.

This sense of irrationality is reflected also in less overt manifestations of this relativist narrative. In a flashback scene in which Gulf returns to a discussion he had with his wife prior to her suicide, this contest between rational, forward-looking forgiveness and an irrational dwelling on the past is reflected implicitly. Elizabeth has long been fascinated with the German-American ‘Wirtschaftswunder’ and the Latino-Germans’ success of rebuilding their society from nothing. After a trip to Germania, she relates her positive impressions to Gulf, who reacts with aggressive rejection. In response to her assertion that German-America is nothing like the Third Reich, he replies:

“Natürlich nicht [...]” Ein böser Zug entstand um seinen Mund. “Natürlich sind die Latinodeutschen keine Nazis. Auch wenn sie Hitler ein Denkmal errichtet und in den argentinischen Pampas ihre gigantischen Totenburgen aufgetürmt haben, für die Gefallenen großdeutscher Feldzüge. Bormann regiert die Gaustaaten, aber sie sind keine Nazis. In Germania haben Indios, Neger, Mischlinge, Juden und andere Untermenschen keinen Zutritt und die letzten Pogrome liegen gerade ein Jahrzehnt zurück. Aber die Deutschen sind keine Nazis. Die Schergen dieses wahnsinnigen ODESSA-Generals gehen alljährlich auf Indiohatz, und wer im Staatsdienst, in der Armee oder in deutschgeführten Unternehmen etwas werden

---

<sup>487</sup> SdN 58.

<sup>488</sup> SdN 114.

will, braucht einen Ariernachweis des Volksdeutschen Instituts für Rassenhygiene. Rassenschande wird mit Zwangsarbeit oder dem Tod bestraft, und jeder Latinodeutsche, der im Suff einen Mulatten erschlägt, wird im *Exilvölkischen Beobachter* als Held gefeiert. Aber Deutsch-Amerika ist kein Nazi-Kontinent, natürlich nicht, es ist nur ein zu groß geratenes Disneyland für putzige braune Buben.<sup>489</sup>

To this polemic onslaught, Elizabeth quietly replies: “Überall gibt es Licht und Schatten” and in turn chastises Jakob: “Du bist auch nicht besser als all diese verbohrteten Exil-Nazis.”<sup>490</sup> The tone of the entire conversation and Gulf’s explicated aggressive demeanor, in contrast to Elizabeth’s quiet collectedness, makes clear how the positions of rationality and irrationality are distributed in this encounter. The fact that Jakob’s arguments concerning the immediate continuities between the old Reich and the new, which remain unrefuted, are actually perfectly sound, is glossed over with the suggestion that his focus on the past prevents him from embracing a better future, again metonymically equating Americans and Nazis. Elizabeth’s insistence that he simply does not know what German-America is really like and that not everyone there is a Nazi, embodies the novel’s programmatic narrative strategy: Relativism is propagated in the guise of pluralism and the majority of Germans are effectively removed from the Nazi collective and consequentially relieved of the responsibility for the crimes of this “handful of fanatics,” as Robert Moeller put it. As a result, both their allohistorical situation as global pariahs and their real historical suffering appear as an injustice, perpetuated well into the present by those who, in their blind hatred, can neither differentiate nor forget. The most grotesque manifestation of this narrative can be found in the contribution of a prominent representative of ‘the other side.’ After his abduction by agents of the German-American secret police and their subsequent liquidation at the hands of the ODESSA, Gulf is picked up by no other than Josef Mengele himself. During their conversation on the way to meet Martin Bormann in his secluded Andes fortress, Gulf passes judgment on Mengele for his criminal experiments on human subjects during the time of the Third Reich. Mengele reacts unfazed and compares his actions with the dropping of the atom bomb on Berlin:

“Immer wieder diese alten Geschichten. Was fasziniert euch Amerikaner so daran? Gibt es bei euch zu Hause nicht genug Grausamkeiten, um euch diesen lüsternen Schauer über den Rücken zu jagen? Aber was ist mit der Bombe? Mit der ersten Atombombe, die ihr auf Berlin geworfen habt, obwohl der Krieg längst für uns verloren war, und mit den Hunderttausenden, die von der Hitze gegrillt

---

<sup>489</sup> SdN 85.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

wurden? Sie sagen, ich hätte experimentiert, mit Menschen experimentiert? Glauben Sie nicht, daß der Abwurf der ersten Atombombe ebenfalls ein Experiment war, ein Experiment im größeren Rahmen? Ich kenne diese Doppelzüngigkeit, Mr. Gulf. Ich bin oft von Journalisten aus Ihrem Land gefragt und angeklagt worden, doch über die Bombe wollte keiner sprechen.”<sup>491</sup>

Despite the fact that these lines are spoken by one of the most prominent Nazi criminals, they function in the text as another example of ‘reasonable’ relativism, as an indictment of the inability or unwillingness of the victors to also face up to their own crimes and acknowledge the status of Germans as victims. And as crude as Mengele’s comparison may seem, it actually represents one of the more obvious instances in the text in which the allohistorical suffering of Germans acts as a symbol for the real historical (mis)conduct of the United States in World War II. Unquestionably, the counterfactual atom bomb on Berlin is used here as an immediate stand-in for the actual first atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. This is made clear by the mentioning of the fact that there was supposedly no strategic necessity for the use of such a devastating weapon because the alternate Germany, much like the real Japan, had effectively already lost the war – an allegation frequently brought against the United States in the context of historical debates on the subject of the war in the Pacific. At the same time, this once more serves to vilify both allohistorical and real Americans, and the suggestion that the United States are a society obsessed with gratuitous violence and horror – a recurring aspect of the novel’s underlying anti-Americanism and a popular resentment of the contemporary ‘American way’ in general – only emphasizes this impression.<sup>492</sup>

Mengele’s replies, which go altogether unopposed, also epitomize what is perhaps the most overtly revisionist quality of the allohistorical scenario of the punitive Morgenthau plan and, at the same time, the one that most clearly illustrates the symbolic nature of this narrative device. Throughout the text, a variety of characters expose what the novel purports as the most fundamental flaw of the Morgenthau plan: The fact that it single-handedly foreclosed the possibility of overcoming National Socialist ideology once and for all. By unduly punishing the German people after the war and thus generating lingering resentment, so the argument goes, Morgenthau – as the representative of both the Americans and the Jews – effectively forced a

---

<sup>491</sup> SdN 151-152.

<sup>492</sup> The most prominent example of this dual critique is represented by the description of Gulf’s show, *Abenteuer Live*, and the recollection of the most gruesome stunts performed on that program, which also managed to garner the highest amount viewers, without fail. See SdN 75-76.

survival of Nazism at a time when a more benevolent peace could have allowed the beaten Germans to embrace democracy in the founding of a new society. This aspect represents the closest approximation to Rosenfeld's interpretation of the novel in its uncritical affirmation of real history, postulating the suggestion that the postwar restoration of Germany in accordance with the Marshall plan effected a thorough renunciation of National Socialism. And, indeed, the selective view with which the social and political continuities between the Third Reich and the Federal Republic are glossed over in this depiction are well worthy of such criticism. However, this limited critical perspective disregards the fact that, at the same time that the text is propagating this affirmative stance, it is itself reproducing elements of the very ideology it claims would have been eradicated in the socio-political conditions under which the novel was actually produced. In the same meeting with Gulf as before, Mengele says on the issue of Morgenthau:

“Wissen Sie, das war die wahre Geburtsstunde des Nationalsozialismus. Natürlich hat es vor dem Krieg Millionen Parteigenossen gegeben, auch vor der Machtübernahme, aber der Morgenthau-Plan hat Nationalsozialismus und Deutschtum verschmolzen. Für alle Welt waren die Deutschen Nazis und sie bekannten sich dazu. Was blieb ihnen auch anderes übrig, diesen Vertriebenen?”<sup>493</sup>

But Mengele's statement is only the last in a long line of similar sentiments. When Gulf first arrives in the old Reich, Splitz, his local CIA contact, delivers his opinion on the effects of the destruction of Germany, to which he assigns the loaded label of “Schande”:<sup>494</sup>

“Diese Ruinen – sie sind das eigentliche Problem [...]. Jesus, zumindest Berlin hätte man wieder aufbauen können. Trotz der Bombe vom Februar '45, die Hitler samt Führerbunker, Reichskanzlei und Regierungsviertel in Staub verwandelt hat. Kein Grund, um Berlin auf ewig in Trümmern liegen zu lassen. Das war der Hauptfehler, Jakob, wenn Sie mich fragen. Alles hätten uns die Deutschen verziehen, einfach alles; den verlorenen Krieg, die Auflösung des Reiches, die Gebietsverluste, [sogar] den erzwungenen Exodus nach Südamerika hätten uns die Deutschen verziehen, aber nicht diese Sache mit Berlin. [...] Und Berlin war nur eine von Ihren vielen Städten.”<sup>495</sup>

Splitz also claims that the Nazis are today much worse than ever before, and also foreshadows Mengele's later suggestion that the majority of Germans only became Nazis *after* the war, as a

---

<sup>493</sup> SdN 154.

<sup>494</sup> SdN 20.

<sup>495</sup> SdN 19-20.



result of their ruthless victimization. He explicitly states: “Sie hassen uns Amerikaner [...] Sie hassen uns aus tiefster Seele, wegen Morgenthau und dem, was er aus dem Reich gemacht hat [...].”<sup>496</sup> Finally, during his capture in the Werewolf village and under the impression of the desolate image of regression it represents, Gulf himself gives his interpretation of the effects of the Morgenthau plan:

Die Zeit, dachte Gulf benommen, die Zeit ist hier in Krautland stehengeblieben. Nicht, weil Hitler in den verfallenen Gemäuern Kölns herumspukt, weil Göring und Goebbels auch im Tode noch nicht schweigen können [...]. All das hat nichts damit zu tun. Denn Hitler ist erst vor kurzem auferstanden; hier ist er nie gestorben. Er hat seit dem Krieg in diesen Menschen fortexistiert [und] Splitz hatte wahrhaftig recht: Wir träumen, ohne erwachen zu können, aber die Deutschen leiden unter einem weit schlimmeren Schicksal – sie leben und sie sind dennoch tot, wiederholen auf ewig die Gedanken und Worte und Gesten der Vergangenheit.<sup>497</sup>

The overall tenor of these passages, from Gulf to Mengele, is acutely evident: The majority of Germans were originally not Nazis, but were turned into Nazis only as *result* of their victimization at the hands of their enemies, who refused to acknowledge the innocence of ‘ordinary’ German people in the crimes committed by the National Socialist regime. Furthermore, in both Gulf’s and Mengele’s portrayal, this process of compulsory Nazification in itself represents an act of victimization. The ‘ordinary’ Germans did not choose to become Nazis, but they were left with no other option than to join the Nationalist Socialist cause, because the Americans, the Jews, and ultimately – in Mengele’s words – the entire world forced them into this role against their will. In this sense, the postwar punishment of the Germans made them into victims in a twofold manner: On the one hand, the destruction of their society resulted in the desolation of their material existence; on the other hand, the deprivation of the possibility of redemption forced them into a symbolic crisis by robbing them of their identity and leaving Nazism as the only remaining chance at salvation. What is reproduced in this description of the effects of this counterfactual case of dual German victimization is a very real historical narrative strategy. In this scenario, the exculpatory stance derived from the Morgenthau plan becomes reminiscent of the popular explanations of National Socialism derived from the “long-standing nationalist discourse after the Treaty of Versailles.”<sup>498</sup> In the same manner in which many of the

---

<sup>496</sup> SdN 22-23.

<sup>497</sup> SdN 50-51.

<sup>498</sup> Andreas Huyssen, “Air War Legacies: From Dresden to Baghdad,” in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the*

characters of Ziegler's novel cite the multiple ways in which Morgenthau turned the Germans into victims as a defence for their embracing of National Socialism, real historical deflections of an innate responsibility of the German population for the rise and success of Nazism have repeatedly invoked Versailles as a catalyst, if not the exclusive cause, for this development. These apologetic arguments, according to which the victimization of Germans figures as the origin of their widespread support of the Nazis, effectively externalize the burden of guilt, removing it from the German conscience and placing it instead on their enemies.

Much as this historical reversal of the roles was accompanied by a deep resentment of the signatories of the despised treaty, the narrative shifting of the blame in *Die Stimmen der Nacht* is characterized by the defamation of Henry Morgenthau, in particular, and the vengeful nature of Jews, in general. While, overall, anti-Americanism is the more pronounced ideology in the text, this dynamic also manifests itself in the form of crude anti-Semitic tropes. In Splitz' portrayal of Morgenthau, for instance, he has all the stereotypical attributes of the scheming Jew, manipulating the ailing Roosevelt into supporting his diabolical plan and acting as a spearhead for obscure economic interest groups seeking to benefit from the destruction of Germany.<sup>499</sup> And Gulf, remembering a heated discussion with his Jewish producer about a Latino-German contestant on their show, assigns the Jews in general a quality of unforgiving irrationality by asserting: "Man sollte sich nie mit einem Juden über Deutsch-Amerika unterhalten [...]."<sup>500</sup> In conclusion, he even equates the Jews with the Nazis in this respect, repeating the same allegations also brought against the Americans: "Den Juden ergeht es genau wie den Latinodeutschen: Sie können nicht vergessen."<sup>501</sup>

All of these elements combine into one central discursive strategy, the criticism of memory itself. Especially in the light of the discovery of their empty data cores, the novel's most central narrative devices, the 'Kletten,' serve as a metaphorical representation of the inability to transcend history without a willingness to forget about the past: "Die Klette kommt wieder [...] Die Kletten kommen immer wieder. Es liegt in ihrer Natur, anhänglich zu sein. Sie verschwinden

---

*Past in Contemporary Germany*, 184.

<sup>499</sup> See SdN 35-36.

<sup>500</sup> SdN 70.

<sup>501</sup> SdN 71.

nie. Sie folgen dem, für den sie bestimmt sind.”<sup>502</sup> And it is ultimately also the Kletten, in their symbolic function of preventing an overcoming of the past, that are the cause for the beginning of the Third World War, plunging the already insane Nazis into a fatal frenzy by reuniting them with the voices of their beloved Führer,<sup>503</sup> culminating in what Hans-Erwin Friedrich calls the collapse of the universe in entropy.<sup>504</sup> The symbolic function of the ‘Kletten’ unifies the story’s diverse narrative components into one singular deflective message, which Ziegler himself has unabashedly summed up in the statement that “too much memory is as dangerous as forgetting the ... Holocaust.”<sup>505</sup> Rosenfeld acknowledges this direction by positing that “[b]y blaming memory for (the allohistorical) Germany’s enduring commitment to Nazism, *Die Stimmen der Nacht* created a useful foil that vindicated (the real historical) Germany’s early postwar evasion of its Nazi past.”<sup>506</sup> What remains problematic about this interpretation is the fact that he reduces the evasion of guilt via the proliferation of the narrative of German victimization to a phenomenon characteristic only of the early postwar era. This assessment fails to take into account the commemorative and deflective specificity and longevity of the theme of German suffering, which especially in the context of the 1980s, when this theme was comparatively less popular, functioned as a powerful counter-memory. Since 1998, however, it has become more popular than ever, making Ziegler’s novel something of a precursor of this type of alternate memory, in which a counterfactual tale of German victimization, along with the concurrent demonization of both the Nazis and their enemies and the indictment of the act of ‘excessive’ remembering itself, displaces the memory of the responsibility of ‘ordinary’ Germans for the crimes of the Third Reich.

---

<sup>502</sup> SdN 87.

<sup>503</sup> See SdN 168-170.

<sup>504</sup> See Hans-Edwin Friedrich, “‘Das deutsche Volk schief schlecht seit dem größten Sieg seiner Geschichte:’ Drittes Reich und Nationalsozialismus im alternativhistorischen Roman (Otto Basil, Helmut Heißenbüttel, Thomas Ziegler),” *Literatur für Leser* 29, no. 4 (2006): 273.

<sup>505</sup> E-mail message from Thomas Ziegler, quoted in Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 351.

<sup>506</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 352.

## 5.2 MORBUS KITAHARA

To a certain extent, Christoph Ransmayr's *Morbus Kitahara*, published in 1995, presents a similar approach as Ziegler's text. The novel's central focus also lies on the dynamics of perpetration and victimization during and after the Second World War and their afterlife in the collective memory of the postwar period. Like Ziegler, Ransmayr creates a dystopian world in which the tables have been turned and the former perpetrators have been turned into victims as the result of the ongoing systematic Draconian punishment implemented by the victors. There are, however, significant distinctions between the two texts, which ultimately characterize *Morbus Kitahara* as a very different engagement with these themes.

An important divergence to observe, without the consideration of which the novel cannot be adequately understood, is rooted in the fact that Ransmayr is writing from an explicitly Austrian perspective. This is already reflected in the story's geographical setting. While all locales immediately featured in the text are fictional, many informed readers have noted that Ransmayr's detailed descriptions give them away as representations of real places in the Austrian Salzkammergut, more specifically the region immediately surrounding the Traunsee. Perhaps most importantly, the quarry – the most prominent site of dual victimization in the plot – has repeatedly been identified as Ebensee, an outpost of the Mauthausen concentration camp, in which, much as in the novel, inmates were routinely worked to death under abysmal conditions and subsequently burned in the main camp's crematoria. Ransmayr himself has supported this identification in an interview with Sigrid Löffler.<sup>507</sup>

This localization is not incidental, it situates the narrative within the specific context of Austrian postwar memory, which – especially in terms of the question of victimization and moral responsibility – was characterized by a significantly different narrative than German engagements with the Nationalist Socialist past. In the aftermath of World War II, the official self-fashioning of Austria defined the nation and its people as the 'first victim' of Nazi Germany. In a proclamation on April 27, 1945, the newly formed Austrian government described its country as "the first free country, that fell victim to Hitler's aggression" and the annexation (Anschluss) as forced on the Austrian people in the form of a "war-like military occupation,"

---

<sup>507</sup> Christoph Ransmayr, "...das Thema hat mich bedroht": Gespräch mit Sigrid Löffler über *Morbus Kitahara* (Dublin 1995)," in *Die Erfindung der Welt: Zum Werk Christoph Ransmayrs*, ed. Uwe Wittstock, (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1997), 214.

thus establishing the so-called ‘Opfertheorie’ as a central axiom of Austrian identity.<sup>508</sup> Wolfgang Neugebauer states:

Schon in [der] antifaschistischen Phase [i.e. 1945-1946, GS] wurde die Auffassung von Österreich als dem ersten Opfer des Nationalsozialismus vertreten, indem die entsprechende Passage aus der durchaus ausgewogenen Moskauer Deklaration der Alliierten von 1943 einseitig hervorgekehrt und die Mitverantwortung der Österreicher für das NS-Regime und dessen Verbrechen ausgeblendet wurde.<sup>509</sup>

This portrayal dominated the postwar memory discourse in Austria for decades to come and did not even subside as a result of the Waldheim affair of 1986, in the context of which the National Socialist past of Austrian president Kurt Waldheim became a matter of public knowledge and debate. As Neugebauer goes on to explain: “Das offizielle Österreich wies im Sinne der ‘Opfertheorie’ von Anfang an und bis zu Beginn der neunziger Jahre jede Schuld oder Mitverantwortung für die NS-Verbrechen von sich und sah daher auch keine Verpflichtung zur ‘Wiedergutmachung.’”<sup>510</sup> Heidemarie Uhl points especially to the international debates about the postwar compensation of victims of the Nazis and recalls the Austrian government’s position, which directly reflected this self-image: “[Als] ein von den Deutschen besetztes Land [trage] Österreich auch keine moralische Verantwortung, da die Verbrechen an den Juden von Deutschen begangen worden wären.”<sup>511</sup> Since the early 1990s, the ‘Opfertheorie’ has been thoroughly criticized and what had previously been the widespread understanding of Austrians of their own role in the atrocities committed in the name of National Socialism, was now, by the time of the writing of *Morbus Kitahara*, (officially) reduced to a position propagated primarily by the extreme Right. However, the memory of this lost innocence, particularly as a narrative of collective identity that was not available to Germans in the same way, was still fresh in the minds

---

<sup>508</sup> See “Proklamation,” in *Staatgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, May 1, 1945, accessed January 16, 2012, [http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgbPdf&Dokumentnummer=1945\\_1\\_0](http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgbPdf&Dokumentnummer=1945_1_0). My translation.

<sup>509</sup> Wolfgang Neugebauer, “Zur Problematik der Aufarbeitung der NS-Vergangenheit in Österreich,” in *Die Lebendigkeit der Geschichte: (Dis-)Kontinuitäten in Diskursen über den Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Eleonore Lappin and Bernhard Schneider (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2001), 107.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>511</sup> Heidemarie Uhl, “Das ‘erste Opfer’: Das österreichische Gedächtnis und seine Transformationen in der Zweiten Republik,” in *Die Lebendigkeit der Geschichte: (Dis-)Kontinuitäten in Diskursen über den Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Eleonore Lappin and Bernhard Schneider (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2001), 37.

of Austrians in 1995 and thus must be reflected when analyzing Ransmayr's text.<sup>512</sup>

This becomes especially relevant when considering the second difference between this and both of the other texts in this chapter. In contrast to Ziegler and Henkel, in Ransmayr's novel the narrative of victimization and the memory thereof constitute the primary theme of the story. While *Die Stimmen der Nacht* and, as will become apparent in the next section, *Im Jahre Ragnarök* both use descriptions of a people being haunted by and punished for their past crimes as a backdrop for the main narrative, albeit to varying degrees, *Morbus Kitahara* places the focus almost exclusively on this issue, which dominates virtually all other aspects of the story. At the same time, the negotiation of the victim-perpetrator dynamic is considerably more nuanced and multi-faceted than in both other novels. Contrary to the assertion that "*Morbus Kitahara* can [...] easily be read as a conservative critique" and that "in struggling to balance the competing demands of remembrance and normalcy, Ransmayr [tends] to favor the latter over the former," an inherent, unequivocal exculpatory stance cannot be identified in the same way for Ransmayr's narrative as it has been established for Ziegler's.<sup>513</sup> Finally, in stark contrast to both other stories, *Morbus Kitahara* adopts what can be called a microscopic, rather than a macroscopic perspective on its topic. Whereas *Die Stimmen der Nacht* and *Im Jahre Ragnarök* turn the readers' attention to the allohistorical postwar conditions of Germany and, to some extent, Europe as a whole, the absolute majority of the plot of *Morbus Kitahara* is limited to a single rural Austrian village. Ian Foster observes the effect created by this limited scope: "The overall effect in the novel is of a nightmarish condensation, as if the whole weight of the Holocaust were conflated in one remote village."<sup>514</sup>

*Morbus Kitahara* is easily the most complex and multivocal text in this study.<sup>515</sup> As such,

---

<sup>512</sup> The fact that, incidentally, the early 21<sup>st</sup> century saw a considerable increase in the political success of far-right positions in Austria, first and foremost with the entrance of the FPÖ into the federal government, may be a testament to the fact that, unofficially, many Austrians were not as keen on letting go of their status as victims as official statements made it seem (cf. Uhl).

<sup>513</sup> Rosenfeld, *Hitler*, 357.

<sup>514</sup> Foster, "Alternative History," 122. Although it is hinted at that the effects of the punitive 'Peace of Oranienburg' apply to all of Germany and Austria (see MK 396-400), the reader never receives any actual information (with the exception of the American base in Brand) about the situation beyond the borders of Moor.

<sup>515</sup> Many critics have noted the multiplicity of perspectives in the novel, as well as its postmodernist style in general, and thus situated it within the larger context of Ransmayr's oeuvre as a whole. See, for instance, Amir Eshel, "Der Wortlaut der Erinnerung: Christoph Ransmayrs *Morbus Kitahara*," in *In der Sprache der Täter*, 253. James Martin explicitly applies Bakhtin's model of *heteroglossia* to the diversity of voices represented in the text. See James Martin, "A World Turned Upside Down: Role Reversals in the Victim-Perpetrator Complex in Christoph Ransmayrs

a linear synopsis of the plot is bound to fall short. Nonetheless, a brief summary of the events of the novel is necessary and helpful for the discussion of its function in the context of discourses of alternate memory. As far as the timeline of the story is concerned, no explicit dates are given but, as Foster points out, the historical positioning of the narrative relies exclusively on situating the events “so many years ‘after the Peace of Oranienburg’ [and that dates] given in this way would seem to indicate that the main action of the novel is set in the late 1960s.”<sup>516</sup> While it appears, therefore, that the defeat of the Nazis occurred roughly in temporal accordance with real history, the war against Japan raged on for another twenty years and only ends with the dropping of an atom bomb on Nagoya towards the middle of the story.<sup>517</sup> Twenty years earlier, the country in which the narrative unfolds – unnamed but easily identifiable as Austria – is defeated in an equally unnamed war and subsequently subjected to the punitive ‘Peace of Oranienburg.’ The effects of this accord are described in detail only as they apply to the novel’s main locale, the rural village of Moor, which during the time of National Socialism (which is also not explicitly mentioned in the text) had been the site of a labor camp to which inmates of the near concentration camp were sent to work (and die) in the quarry. As a result of this history, Moor becomes the target of the Allied forces, who bomb the village in an air raid in the final days of the war. This is the very night that Bering, one of the novel’s three main characters, is born.<sup>518</sup> During the bombing, Bering’s pregnant mother is saved from certain death by a foreign forced laborer, who also helps deliver her baby. As soon as the baby is born, however, the woman begins a ferocious prayer in which she welcomes the attack on Moor as a divine punishment for its people’s crimes, which emotionally scars Bering’s mother for life.<sup>519</sup> Bering’s father, meanwhile, is fighting as a soldier of the Reich in Africa, where he – seemingly concurrently – receives a physical scar of equally consequential proportions.<sup>520</sup> After the end of the war and a brief occupation by the Red Army, the Americans arrive in Moor and, under the leadership of the brutal Major Elliot, implement the conditions established in the ‘Peace of Oranienburg,’ “advanced by Lyndon Porter Stellamour, whose administration is, if anything, yet harsher and

---

*Morbus Kitahara*,” in *Victims and Perpetrators*, 182-183.

<sup>516</sup> Foster, “Alternative History,” 114.

<sup>517</sup> See MK 321.

<sup>518</sup> See MK 9

<sup>519</sup> See MK 11-13.

<sup>520</sup> See MK 10.

more punitive than that imagined by Morgenthau.”<sup>521</sup> Over the next two decades, life in Moor is characterized by extreme regression, as the American occupiers deprive the villagers of nearly all forms of technology and subject them to continual rituals of repentance, which are most prominently represented the bizarre “Stellamour’s Parties,” when the inhabitants of Moor are forced to reenact the harsh life of the former inmates of the labor camp.<sup>522</sup> As the narrator observes: “Unaufhaltsam glitt Moor durch die Jahre zurück.”<sup>523</sup> While the majority of Moor’s inhabitants begrudgingly accept these abject conditions, they also give rise to the formation of gangs of marauding Nazi thugs. While these gangs are depicted in a similar fashion as the ‘Werewolves’ in Ziegler’s story, they don’t target the American occupiers directly, but instead regularly terrorize the entire region, stealing whatever they can get their hands on and brutally killing whoever gets in their way. During an attack of a group of these brigands on Bering’s home he commits his first murder, shooting one of the invaders with his father’s (illegal) old military sidearm.<sup>524</sup>

It is ultimately this act of violent bravery, along with an innate ability for fixing machinery that officially never existed in his world, that leads directly to Bering’s relationship with the novel’s second main character, Ambras. Major Elliott, as a former victim of the Nazis and inmate of the labor camp, has symbolically installed Ambras as the overseer of the quarry and given him use of the Villa Flora, an estate that had been forcibly expropriated from its Jewish owners under the Nazis, as well as his old Studebaker, one of the only working machines in the village. When Ambras’ car crashes on the dilapidated roads of Moor, Bering, who has taken over as the village’s blacksmith from his invalid father and the only one with enough knowledge of machines, not only fixes it, but gives it a new intimidating appearance, thus gaining Ambras’ trust.<sup>525</sup> When Ambras later discovers that Bering can also shoot, he gives him a gun (“ein Werkzeug zur Verbesserung der Welt”) and makes him his personal bodyguard.<sup>526</sup> After Bering also takes residence at the Villa Flora – which Ambras has turned into a sanctuary for

---

<sup>521</sup> Foster, “Alternative History,” 113. A message by Stellamour, addressing the residents of Moor and giving a rudimentary outline of his plan, can be found at MK 42.

<sup>522</sup> For a description, see MK 45.

<sup>523</sup> MK 43.

<sup>524</sup> See MK 56-58.

<sup>525</sup> See MK 84-98.

<sup>526</sup> MK 104.



stray dogs, earning him the title of “Dog King” among the locals – he soon learns that Ambras needs more than just a bodyguard. As a result of his gruesome treatment in the camp, where he was interned as a result of committing acts of “Rassenschande” with a Jewish woman during the time of Nazi rule, he can no longer lift his arms above his head.<sup>527</sup> To maintain his position of authority, Ambras does not want the villagers to know about his condition, therefore Bering becomes more of a caretaker for him, instead of just being his driver and bodyguard – a role with which Bering grows increasingly discontented.

Through his relationship with Ambras, Bering meets the third main character of the story. Lily is introduced as smuggler who is the only resident of Moor brave enough to regularly leave the relatively safe confines of the village and risk encounters with the marauding gangs of skinheads and thieves on her trips to the American army base in the town of Brand across the mountains. Only after her initial introduction is it revealed that she is actually a refugee. After the end of the war, multitudes of Austrians began a trek to the coast with the ultimate goal of re-settling in South America – another link with both the collective memory of the expulsions and Ziegler’s novel – in fear of the advancing Red Army. Among these were also Lily’s parents. On their journey north, their band of refugees passes Moor in the hopes of temporarily acquiring some food and shelter. Here, Lily’s father is recognized by a travelling Jewish salesman, who remembers him as one of the soldiers who oversaw his deportation from Bessarabia, and is violently detained and given over to the Red Army as a prisoner of war.<sup>528</sup> Instead of continuing on their way to Brazil, Lily’s mother decides to wait in Moor for the return of her husband, a return that never comes. She dies one year before the events of the story, leaving Lily to fend for herself.<sup>529</sup> Through Ambras, Lily’s only semblance of a friend in Moor, she also meets Bering, for whom she gradually becomes a love interest, creating even more tension in the already uneasy relationship between him and Ambras.

When Major Elliot eventually announces that the depleted quarry is to be closed and all machinery shipped to Patano in Brazil – along with many villagers as forced labourers – he chooses Ambras to oversee the process, who, in turn, decides to bring along Lily and Bering.

---

<sup>527</sup> See MK 173. A recollection of Ambras’ arrest can be found on MK 211. His torture at the hands of the Nazis, as the origin of his debilitating disability, is described in graphic detail on pages 173-175.

<sup>528</sup> See MK 114-121.

<sup>529</sup> See MK 122.

Separate from Ambras, the two make their way across the mountains to join up with him at the Brand army base to begin their journey to the coast. On the way, Bering commits his second murder, when he shoots and kills a fleeing thief on the plateau of the ‘Stony Sea’ with one of Lily’s rifles. This time around, he acts not only in cold blood, but with the express fantasy that he is shooting at Ambras.<sup>530</sup> When the three finally arrive in Patano, the narrative comes full-circle: Not coincidentally, ‘Patano’ is the Portuguese translation of the German ‘Moor’ and the final scenes of the novel take place in the ruins of an abandoned prison.<sup>531</sup> Lily, who has become increasingly estranged from Bering since the incident on the ‘Stony Sea,’ decides, after her first and only night spent with Ambras, to leave the two men behind and continue on her own. Before she boards a fishing boat to leave the prison island – which bears the name ‘Dog Island,’ another parallel to life in Moor, where Ambras was the ‘Dog King’ – she gives her camouflage coat to Murya, a Brazilian girl who has accompanied them. While Bering is waiting for Murya at the beach, he looks through the sight of his rifle and sees Lily, whom he has secretly watched in bed with Ambras the previous night, in the distance – and shoots. Frantic after this third murder and not knowing it was actually Murya whom he killed, he goes out looking for her to help him. Instead, he finds Ambras, who has ultimately been overwhelmed by the memory of his torture at the hands of the Nazis. Roped together, the two climb up a steep flight of stairs, hammered into the rock, to get back to the beach. Finally, the hallucinating Ambras steps off the ledge and plunges to his death, pulling Bering down along with him to ground below, where both their bodies are consumed by a ferocious jungle fire.<sup>532</sup>

This very last image of the chronological plot is actually the first of the novel.<sup>533</sup> Foster interprets this cyclical motion as a “Nietzschean ‘Wiederkehr des Gleichen’” and argues that the “plot restates the notion that those who seek to escape history are condemned to repeat it.”<sup>534</sup> This notion of the futility of trying to escape the past constitutes the central theme of *Morbus Kitahara*, which Lynne Cook describes like this:

---

<sup>530</sup> See MK 312-313

<sup>531</sup> See MK 402.

<sup>532</sup> See MK 426-440

<sup>533</sup> See MK 7.

<sup>534</sup> Foster, “Alternative History,” 117.

Humankind has returned to the Garden; but it is a garden, evocative for Ambras of the labor camp in which he has been tortured; for Bering the symbolic ruins of a personal prison, a personal heritage out of which he has attempted to climb. However, because of Bering's moral 'blind spots,' the Morbus Kitahara of his inheritance, he fails to do so.<sup>535</sup>

Nicolas Pethes concurs that Ransmayr's narrative is fundamentally characterized by society's progressive descent into entropy and the negation of all hope of counteracting this downward motion.<sup>536</sup> While this specific terminology, being similar to that of Friedrich's reading of *Die Stimmen der Nacht*, may evoke associations with the previous text, the direction is a different one: In Ziegler's novel, the impossibility of a restoration of history is clearly marked as the result of human failure (too much memory), whereas in Ransmayr, it is the inevitable conclusion of a quasi-natural development of devolution. Markus Oliver Spitz has ascribed this implicit portrayal to an overall anti-modern tendency inherent in all of Ransmayr's works.<sup>537</sup> The most prominent motif representing this theme in the text is the condition from which the novel derives its title.

Morbus Kitahara, also known as *Chorioretinitis centralis serosa*, describes a syndrome in which small hematoma on the retina result in darkened areas or 'blind spots' in the field of vision.<sup>538</sup> Bering contracts this disease and is affected by it to varying degrees throughout the narrative, its metaphorical quality made explicit by the narrator himself, who mentions Bering's own awareness "daß das Loch in seiner Welt nur der lächerliche Fetzen einer größeren Dunkelheit war, nur einer von unzähligen blinden Flecken, die ihn umwirbeln und über ihm zusammenschießen zu einem einzigen Abgrund, einer einzigen Finsternis."<sup>539</sup> This motif reappears at and even symbolically represents crucial junctures of the story. For instance, when Bering shoots the thief on the 'Stony Sea,' he is not only aiming at the blind spot in his vision, but using it as a device that enables his fantasy that he is, in fact, shooting at Ambras.<sup>540</sup>

---

<sup>535</sup> Lynne Cook, "The Novels of Christoph Ransmayr: Towards a Final Myth," *Modern Austrian Literature* 31, no. 3-4 (1998), 235.

<sup>536</sup> See Nicolas Pethes, "Naturgeschichte der Zerstörung: Evolution als Narrativ für die 'Stunde Null' bei W. G. Sebald und Christoph Ransmayr," in *Finis: Paradoxien des Endens*, eds. Peter Brandes and Burkhardt Lindner (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), 187.

<sup>537</sup> See Markus Oliver Spitz, *Erfundene Welten-Modelle der Wirklichkeit: Zum Werk von Christoph Ransmayr* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 131ff.

<sup>538</sup> See MK 349-350.

<sup>539</sup> MK 252.

<sup>540</sup> See MK 313.

Accordingly, James Martin asserts that the “gradual darkening of sight is interpreted in the novel as the expression of individual obsessions [...]”<sup>541</sup> At the same time, however, “there is also the propensity to see in it the image of submission to [...] historical forgetting.”<sup>542</sup> Both aspects of the metaphor seemingly come full-circle when Bering’s condition starts to gradually improve as the three protagonists prepare to leave their old lives behind and travel to the ‘new world.’<sup>543</sup> At the same time, this development questions the text’s reading as a fatalist narrative, an aspect that is reinforced when, immediately before the three commence their journey, it becomes clear that Bering’s condition is inherently psychosomatic, commonly afflicting soldiers and, especially, entrenched snipers, who can no longer cope with the stress of staring at the same spot for a seemingly infinite amount of time.<sup>544</sup> Moreover, Foster notes that, while the syndrome unquestionably “stands for partial, imperfect recollection, [...] there is no suggestion that it is permanent or incurable.”<sup>545</sup> The fact that Bering will “initiate the chain of events that lead to his own death” as a result of his own resentment, could therefore be read as an indication that here, too, the focus is on human failure and that a complete, non-selective engagement with the past could prevent its repetition.<sup>546</sup> But the spots return, if only symbolically, as the cause for his third murder and a reminder of the inescapability of memory when he sees Lily’s camouflage coat in the sight of his rifle: “Flecken. Wo Lily ist, sind immer Flecken. Tarnflecken, blinde Flecken, immer ist da etwas, das ihn an Moor und an das erinnert, was er überstanden hat.”<sup>547</sup> This return to fatalism supports Holger Mosebach’s proposal that, as a symbol, Morbus Kitahara does not only signify errors in dealing with concrete guilt, but, perhaps more fundamentally, represents an inability to embrace progress and thus a link back to the underlying theme of anti-modernism.<sup>548</sup>

But not the entire narrative is characterized by this level of abstraction. References to the story’s specific historical situation, which can by no means be considered arbitrary or

---

<sup>541</sup> Martin, “Role Reversals,” 194.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> See MK 405-406 and

<sup>544</sup> See MK 349.

<sup>545</sup> Foster, “Alternative History,” 119.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> MK 435.

<sup>548</sup> See Holger Mosebach, “Anthropologische Zweifel: Zum Erzählwerk Christoph Ransmayrs,” *Trans: Internet-Zeitschrift Für Kulturwissenschaften* 15, no. 5.16 (2003), n.p.

inconsequential, should not be ignored. Amir Eshel describes the conditions in postwar Moor in very critical terms: “In der Beschreibung dieses Friedens spiegelt sich die abgenutzte deutsche Nachkriegsmetaphorik wieder [...].”<sup>549</sup> Indeed, the ‘Peace of Oranienburg’ displays clear parallels not only to the Morgenthau plan, but to prominent elements of postwar German (and Austrian) *angst* and the ensuing discourse of victimization. In the case of Ransmayr’s novel and its specific setting, these aspects gain a special significance, because – while not at all dissimilar from the German context – they had for a long time held a very different status within the collective identity of the Austrian people. As outlined above, overt portrayals of Austrians as (historical) perpetrators were still relatively new in 1995, when many were still clinging to their former role as the ‘first victims’ of the Nazis, rather than as willing accomplices to their crimes. In this perspective, *Morbus Kitahara*, in which the involvement of Austrians in the atrocities of National Socialism figures as an unequivocally established premise, could be considered an almost radical intervention into the changing narratives of Austrian collective memory. At the same time, the harsh counterfactual conditions to which the residents of Moor are subjected in the text also allow for a retreat back into the very same fantasy of Austrians as victims. In the novel itself, the revanchist nature and the immediate effects of the ‘Peace of Oranienburg’ are arguably the most unambiguous elements of the story. Even the otherwise demonstratively detached narrator describes the punitive provisions as “Standrecht einer siegreichen Armee,” thus making clear that this is not a case of (moral) justice, but strictly of (amoral) victor’s justice.<sup>550</sup> And much as Morgenthau’s name has long come to possess an almost mythical quality, reflected in both other texts in this chapter, the name Stellamour also acquires a superhuman character:

Seit den Tagen, in denen Major Elliotts Pioniere die Bahnlinie ins Tiefland zerschlagen hatten und Moor aus den Fahrplänen verschwunden war, hatten die Bewohner in einem langen Prozess der Demontage und Verwüstung allmählich begriffen, begreifen müssen, daß *Lyndon Porter Stellamour* nicht bloß irgendein Name aus dem Heer und Regime der Sieger war, sondern der einzige und wahre Name der Vergeltung.<sup>551</sup>

That the aim of Stellamour’s decrees is indeed not reparation but retribution is made abundantly clear when Major Elliott addresses the people of Moor during one of the many ‘Stellamour’s

---

<sup>549</sup> Eshel, “Wortlaut der Erinnerung,” 231.

<sup>550</sup> MK 17.

<sup>551</sup> MK 39. Emphasis in the original.

Parties' after the American take-over. Significantly, the contents of the plan are disclosed to the reader only in the form of fragments, interspersed with harsh insults directed at the villagers:

*Gesinde! ... Feldarbeit! ... Heuschober statt Bunker ... knackte und rauschte es aus den Lautsprechern ... keine Fabriken mehr, keine Turbinen und Eisenbahnen, keine Stahlwerke ... Armeen von Hirten und Bauern ... Erziehung und Verwandlungen: aus Kriegstreibern Sautreiber und Spargelstecher! Und Jaucheträger aus den Generälen ... zurück auf die Felder! ... und Hafer und Gerste zwischen den Ruinen der Industrie ... Krautköpfe, Misthaufen ... und auf den Trassen eurer Autobahn dampfen die Kuhfladen und wachsen im nächsten Frühjahr Kartoffeln ...!*<sup>552</sup>

Even from this disjointed excerpt, it is apparent that Ransmayr's imagined 'Peace of Oranienburg' incorporates all the central aspects of the Morgenthau myth: from the radical dismantling of the existing industry to the forced regression to the level of a strictly agrarian society. And to erase even the slightest doubts about the villagers' future from the start, Elliott begins his address with the words: "Zurück! Zurück mit euch! Zurück in die Steinzeit!"<sup>553</sup>

Even in the absence of a concrete delineation of the punitive measures, the mercilessness reflected in this utter contempt of the losers of the war represents an inversion of victims and perpetrators. Yet, the text does not perform this allohistorical role reversal at the expense of the real historical victims. While, in the other two novels discussed in this chapter, the fictional narratives of victimization all but erase the memory of the suffering that went before, *Morbus Kitahara* maintains it both implicitly and explicitly. Even though, as Konrad Liessmann contends, Ransmayr avoids "die Adaption gängiger und gewohnter Opferpsychologien," the majority of the scarce references to real history – or even the real world, for that matter – are references to the Holocaust.<sup>554</sup> Not only are the crimes of the Nazis constantly present in the narrative as a fundamental premise,<sup>555</sup> but terms like *Lager*, *Zwangsarbeit*, *Judenverfolgung*, *Täter*, *Opfer* and *Überlebende* act as a constant reminder of the real atrocities that preceded and motivated this alternate society.<sup>556</sup> Eshel describes the way in which these factual components

---

<sup>552</sup> MK 42. Italics in the original.

<sup>553</sup> MK 41.

<sup>554</sup> Konrad Paul Liessmann, "Der Anfang ist das Ende: *Morbus Kitahara* und die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will," in *Die Erfindung der Welt*, 152.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>556</sup> See Andrea Kunne, "Heimat und Holocaust: Aspekte österreichischer Identität aus postmoderner Sicht: Christoph

are integrated into the counterfactual plot:

Die Shoah steht der *Historie* gegenüber, wird keiner allumfassenden Bedeutungswillkür nach postmodernistischen Mustern ausgesetzt. Ihre Orte werden benannt, der Vernichtungsmechanismus weitgehend frei von Stilisierung umrissen. Sie bleibt in diesem durch und durch fiktiven Rahmen unverkennbar, in eine Allegorie verwoben, dabei nicht allegorisiert. Sie stellt die *andere Historie* dar.<sup>557</sup>

Moreover, where the other stories equate what little of the suffering of the victims of National Socialism they preserve with that of the Germans, *Morbus Kitahara* implicitly sustains a perpetual state of incommensurability. Indicative of this is, on the one hand, the Villa Flora as a reclaimed place of victimhood, forcibly expropriated from its Jewish owners – who, the text implies, ended up in the crematoria of Mauthausen – but subsequently returned to Ambras, as another personified reminder of the same crimes,<sup>558</sup> on the other hand, it is represented by the prominence of scars as a signifier of different kinds of suffering:

Die Narbe des Vaters gleicht nicht der von Ambras oder der Narbe des Juden aus Bessarabien. Diese sind, ebenso wie der unterschiedliche Blick der Figuren – und für alle hat die optische Wahrnehmung der Welt eine beachtliche Signifikanz –, entlang der Linien der Differenz zu lesen.<sup>559</sup>

At the same time, the identity of the only two Jews in the story is merely established metonymically: the abducted residents of the Villa Flora are recognizable only by their last name (Goldfarb) and the former victim of Lily's father by his origin (Bessarabia).<sup>560</sup> This symbolic indeterminacy is a subtle symptom of the novel's ultimate failure to negotiate the divide between actual and counterfactual victimization.

Despite Ransmayr's obvious attempt at crafting a balanced allegory of universal suffering as the result of a progressive decline of civilization as a whole,<sup>561</sup> he is unable to avoid reproducing some of the most central tenets of the revisionist narrative strategies that define the

---

Ransmayr's Roman *Morbus Kitahara*," in *Postmoderne Literatur in deutscher Sprache: Eine Ästhetik des Widerstands?*, ed. Henk Harbers (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 319.

<sup>557</sup> Eshel, "Wortlaut der Erinnerung," 228.

<sup>558</sup> See MK 70. See also Eshel, "Wortlaut der Erinnerung," 234.

<sup>559</sup> Eshel, "Wortlaut der Erinnerung," 244.

<sup>560</sup> See *ibid.*, 236.

<sup>561</sup> See Liessmann, "Der Anfang ist das Ende," 155.

discourse of German and, belatedly, Austrian normalization. As Foster posits, “[one] of the weaknesses of the novel is that it devotes too much space to working out the aspects of its dystopian metaphor.”<sup>562</sup> And, indeed, the detailed descriptions of the abject lives and harsh treatment of the residents of Moor encompass a multitude of more or less overt representations of alternate memory. One early example is the description of the train that returns Bering’s father from captivity:

Der Zug, der schließlich im Schrittempo in das zerbombte Gemäuer des Bahnhofs einfuhr, bestand aus geschlossenen Viehwaggons und glich auf den ersten Blick jenen Elendszügen, die in den Kriegsjahren mit Zwangsarbeitern und gefangenen Feinden vollgepfert zumeist im Morgengrauen in den Steinbruch von Moor gerollt waren: das gleiche Stöhnen aus dem Inneren der Waggons [...]. Der gleiche Gestank, als die Schiebetüren endlich offenstanden.<sup>563</sup>

Here, the equation of victims normally avoided by the text manifests itself in its full relativist potential. And, significantly, this is not a comparison of actual and allohistorical victimization, but a juxtaposition of two kinds of real historical suffering, suggestively construed as corresponding occurrences. In a similar vein, the challenge to the memory of the victims of National Socialism is represented by the narrator’s questioning of the Bessarabian Jew’s capacity of identifying his former tormentor:

Niemand konnte später sagen, ob ein ehemaliger Weißwarenhändler aus Bessarabien der einzige unter den Zwangsarbeitern war, der an diesem Abend in einem Flüchtling aus Wien einen seiner Peiniger aus den Kriegsjahren wiederkannte [...]. Vielleicht hatte auch jeder der Befreiten in Lily’s Vater eine andere Erinnerung vor sich. Zu erinnern gab es genug: War das nicht der vom *Eisfest*? Der hatte auf einem winterlichen Appellplatz nackte Gefangene mit Wasser übergossen, bis sie wie unter Glas im Frost lagen. Oder war es der *Heizer*, der die tödlich verwundeten Opfer einer Geislerschießung noch lebend in die Glutgrube warf ...?<sup>564</sup>

Despite the recounting of Nazi atrocities, this passage functions as a means of relativization in two ways at once. Not only does the characterization of Lily’s father as a refugee in this scenario once more constitute an equalizing perspective in which the former perpetrator is marked as much as a victim as those he previously mistreated, but this depiction additionally introduces a

---

<sup>562</sup> Foster, “Alternative History,” 114.

<sup>563</sup> MK 23.

<sup>564</sup> MK 116.



narrative strategy which is also an integral part of Ziegler's novel: The portrayal of the victim's memories as inherently unreliable denotes their trauma and, ultimately, the punishment of the perpetrators as irrational. This impression is advanced even further in the extremely graphic description of the attempted lynching of Lily's father that follows. Here, the role reversal is complete, as the former tormentor becomes the tormented at the hands of a crazed mob, driven into a mad, murderous frenzy by their individual subjective memories, which – as the previous passage has established – are not immediately connected to the past actions of their victim.<sup>565</sup> In this scene, the former Nazi – identified only by the black uniform he wore, both in the memory of the Bessarabian Jew and in a photograph treasured by Lily's mother – becomes himself a scapegoat, punished in an outburst of irrational vengeance for the crimes of the collective. This, in turn, reflects another popular trope of German victimization: the postwar suffering as a result of the 'Kollektivschuldthese'.

As the polar opposite of the categorical differentiation between Nazis and 'ordinary Germans,' the supposition of a collective guilt borne by the whole of the German people – despite the fact that it was never an official position adopted by the victors of World War II – constituted one of the most prominent postwar motifs with which Germans illustrated their unjust treatment. With a growing awareness of their immediate involvement in the crimes of National Socialism, it stands to reason that the fear of a blanket inclusion into the perpetrator collective also haunted many Austrians in the early 1990s.<sup>566</sup> This would certainly explain the frequency with which negative representations of assumed collective guilt appear in *Morbus Kitahara*. Aside from the cited passage and the (renamed) Morgenthau plan, as the story's counterfactual foundation, there is another notable instance in which this trope is employed, which corresponds to a more recent incarnation of the same discourse.<sup>567</sup> The subjection of the postwar generation, the children of Moor, to a punishment for crimes they did not commit, is portrayed as perhaps the most tragic effect of Stellamour's campaign. It is, in this light, most likely no coincidence that two of the novel's three main characters are representatives of this

---

<sup>565</sup> See MK 117-119.

<sup>566</sup> “[Im Falle von Österreich] haben wir es mit einem Land zu tun, das lange als eines der ersten Opfer von Hitlers Aggressionspolitik gegolten hat. [...] In dem Geschichtsverständnis der Österreicher prägte sich denn auch namentlich die Opferrolle ein.” Kunne, “Heimat und Holocaust,” 314-315.

<sup>567</sup> Spitz sums up the significance of the ‘Peace of Oranienburg’: “[Die stetige Erinnerung an die Auswirkungen des Krieges] ist ein deutlicher Indikator für das explizite Desinteresse der Besatzer an einer Normalisierung der Lebensumstände sowie implizit für den Gestus der Kollektivanklage. Der Leser ist aufgefordert, eine Analogie zum Vorwurf der Kollektivschuld des deutschen Volkes herzustellen [...]” Spitz, *Erfundene Welten*, 123.

generation, but the associations do not stop there. One passage, towards the middle of the novel, reads as follows:

Aber Moors Kinder langweilten die Erinnerungen an die Zeit vor ihrer Zeit. Was hatten *sie* mit den schwarzen Fahnen am Dampfersteg und mit den Ruinen am Schotterwerk zu schaffen? Und was mit der Botschaft der Großen Schrift im Steinbruch? Die Kriegskrüppel und *Heimkehrer* mochten sich über eine Stellamour-Party empören und gegen die *Wahrheit der Sieger* protestieren – für Bering und seinesgleichen waren die Rituale der Erinnerung, ob sie nun von der Armee befohlen oder von den Sühnegesellschaften gepflegt wurden, nur ein düsteres Theater. [...] *Hier liegen elftausendneunhundertdreundsiebzig Tote.* Gewiß. In jeder Erde liegen Tote. Aber wer wollte im dritten Jahrzehnt des Friedens noch Leichen zählen?<sup>568</sup>

These extrinsic memories – the ‘past that will not pass’ –<sup>569</sup> are characterized as an insurmountable obstacle to the children of Moor making a better future for themselves. They are cast in a role of double victimization, exemplified by the dismissive mentioning of both the occupiers and the ‘atonement societies’ as proliferators of a commemorative culture that does not pertain to them: They are at the same time the innocent victims of their parents’ crimes and of the unyielding, indiscriminate insistence of the victors on their commemoration. In this sense, the children of Moor function as yet another metonymy insofar as the immanent contradiction between their blameless status and their inability to escape history epitomizes “the failure of rituals of remembrance,” the central conflict of the story.<sup>570</sup> This portrayal thus becomes the narrative’s most efficient plea for normalization, ultimately positing the suggestion that the crimes of the parents should be relegated to the realm of history in order to enable the children to transcend a past that was not theirs and finally live in an untainted present.

In an interview with Sigrid Löffler, Ransmayr has stated the following with regard to the memory of the victims of National Socialism and the calls for drawing a line under the debates about the past: “Es kann doch nicht sein, daß der eine sagt: Vergessen wir’s! während der andere immer noch an den Torturen leidet, an seinen Narben [...]”<sup>571</sup> This conviction echoes Adorno’s previously cited dictum that the act of ‘moving on’ can only be initiated by those who have

---

<sup>568</sup> MK 176-177. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>569</sup> MK 176.

<sup>570</sup> See Foster, “Alternative History,” 117.

<sup>571</sup> Ransmayr, “Gespräch mit Sigrid Löffler” 215.

experienced injustice, not those who committed it. Yet, his novel contains distinct elements that promote this very type of unilateral forgetting. And while James Martin may wonder whether “this is the only acceptable aesthetic position for a writer born after the fact and in the land of the ‘guilty’ to address the memory of the Holocaust,” other authors from the first, second or even third postwar generation have shown that this is certainly not a poetological necessity.<sup>572</sup> In contrast to both Ziegler’s and, as the next section will show, Henkel’s novel, the invocation of Germans or, in this case, Austrians as victims in *Morbus Kitahara* cannot overall be identified as a systematic narrative of exculpation. In fact, as most critics have noted, the opposite is the case. Its basic allohistorical premise notwithstanding, the text does, for the largest part, indeed attempt to avoid the deflective strategies, discursive relativism and de facto apologism that are the common features of alternate memory and programmatic for a majority of other Alternate Histories of the Third Reich. Despite this fact, however, there are clearly discernable elements in the story where this attempt fails and ends up implicitly reproducing precisely the kind of imagery Ransmayr explicitly states he wanted not only to avoid but actively critique. As a result, even his novel *can* function as an alternate memory for the so inclined reader. If nothing else, this may stand as a testament to how deeply the narrative of the victimization of the perpetrators is rooted not only in the collective memory of both Germans and Austrians in general, but in the discourse of normalization in particular.

### 5.3 IM JAHRE RAGNARÖK

Oliver Henkel’s novel *Im Jahre Ragnarök*, published in 2009, is at the same time the least complex story in this selection and the one in which the narrative of German victimization is the most pronounced – not to say blatant.<sup>573</sup> The year is 1962 and the hapless British agent John Tubber has just returned to London from a failed mission in India, which remains under colonial rule. As a punishment for his incompetence, his commanding officer dispatches him to Germany to investigate an art theft at the behest of the Americans, of whom Britain is a de facto vassal state. The Germany of 1962 lies completely in ruins. In 1945, Stalin’s death from the flu plunges

---

<sup>572</sup> Martin, “Role Reversals,” 186. For two contrasting examples, see the novels *Nahe Jednew* (2005) and *Mara Kogoj* (2007) by Kevin Vennemann. A German author, born in 1977, Vennemann has created fictional stories dealing with the crimes and the legacy of National Socialism (in the case of *Mara Kogoj*, its legacy in Austria) that take a very different approach – one in which the lines between victims and perpetrators remain clearly drawn at all times.

<sup>573</sup> Oliver Henkel, *Im Jahre Ragnarök* (Stolberg: Atlantis, 2009). In the following cited as JR.

the Soviet Union into civil war. As a result, the Red Army turns back before ever crossing the Oder.<sup>574</sup> At roughly the same time, however, General Franco changes allegiances and joins forces with the Americans, leaving Nazi Germany to fight on yet another front.<sup>575</sup> For this, the Wehrmacht was apparently so unprepared that the Germans lose anyway, bringing World War II to an only slightly belated end in July 1945, with the Allied invasion of Berlin.<sup>576</sup> While the fate of Hitler is uncertain – the unspecific reference to his death in the text suggests he went the same way as in real history – Göring and Himmler manage to successfully evade capture, their whereabouts unknown.<sup>577</sup> Following the war, the Allies – with the Americans under J. Edgar Hoover, who succeeded Charles Lindbergh as president in 1949, as the main driving force –<sup>578</sup> lay waste to the defeated Germany by subjecting it not only to one, but two subsequent Morgenthau plans. While the specifics of the first plan are not explicitly stated, the current state of Germany paints a vivid picture of what it entailed: All of its major cities devastated and partially abandoned, extreme decay and technological regression characterize its infrastructure and its contemporary population is stated as amounting to no more than twenty million people, of whom, at best, a thousand are able-bodied young men.<sup>579</sup> Politically, Germany is divided up into an American and a British occupation zone (although the Americans are effectively in control of both), which together form the *Bund deutscher Länder*, a chimera of a German state, made up of 28 individual regional states and led by a figurehead federal government, that is actually controlled by the Allied powers.<sup>580</sup> In a Western section of the former Germany, the Rhenish Republic – evocative of, but obviously not identical to the real historical region state of the 1920s – has been established under President Konrad Adenauer, with Cologne as its capital and

---

<sup>574</sup> See JR 23.

<sup>575</sup> See JR 138.

<sup>576</sup> See JR 25.

<sup>577</sup> See JR 94 and 105.

<sup>578</sup> See JR 40. The choice of Lindbergh as the previous American president is unclear in this context. Lindbergh's isolationist convictions and pro-German sympathies were well-known facts and, not least, the subject of another recent Alternate History. Cf. Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

<sup>579</sup> The first images of ruined cities can be found on p. 20, with the description of Hamburg (which is explicitly said to have been destroyed as a result of the second Morgenthau plan), and Kassel on p. 44. The technological regression is apparent in the appearance of the wood-fired steam engine taxi (JR 22) and the state of the infrastructure is evident in the fact that the train ride from Hamburg to Göttingen takes over 12 hours (JR 34). Explicit mention of the population numbers, finally, can be found on p. 43 and p. 60, respectively.

<sup>580</sup> See JR 24.

effectively controlled by France.<sup>581</sup> On the decree of Hoover, carried out by military governor General Patton, the Allied-occupied Germany has been stripped bare of its resources and left in a state of progressive decay.

As an agent for the British Joint Intelligence Service (JIS), Tubber travels to this forsaken country to investigate the black-market resurgence of a number of paintings that had been considered long lost. Begrudgingly accompanying him is the German policeman Dünnebrot, who works for the American-controlled *Ordnungsdienst*. When the two stumble on the body of an art smuggler who carries with him a painting by Albrecht Dürer which had been considered destroyed, they gradually begin to unearth a conspiracy of gigantic proportions. It turns out that Himmler has retreated to an abandoned fortress in Eastern Germany, hidden from Allied patrols by an anthrax contamination scam that the Nazis concocted in the final days of the war in order to create a sanctuary the occupying forces would not dare enter.<sup>582</sup> Thus hidden, he has rebuilt the SS with the force of a small army of surviving as well as newly recruited Nazis. What Tubber originally suspects to be a plot to retake Germany by force turns out to be a much more fantastic plan. With the help of a brilliant scientist, the Nazis have succeeded at building a time machine (Freya), which allows them to travel to any point in the past.<sup>583</sup> Up this point, they have been using time travel solely to retrieve priceless art from earlier points in history in order to sell it on the black market. However, the proceeds have all gone towards the preparation of a much more diabolical scheme. Unbeknownst to anyone but his inner circle, Himmler has been building a second, much larger time machine (Balduur) in the Harz. With this, he plans to transport one thousand men back to a specific point in time: the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. At no other point in history, Himmler argues, were all of the world's Jews concentrated in such a small space as during their crossing of the temporary ford in the Red Sea. Since they cannot turn around, because of the pursuing Egyptian soldiers, his plan is to await them on the other side and, with the advanced weapons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, eliminate the Jews from history. This he calls 'Project Ragnarök.'<sup>584</sup> With the help of a handful of good (and two self-interested) Germans, Tubber and

---

<sup>581</sup> Ibid.

<sup>582</sup> See JR 148.

<sup>583</sup> See JR 152. In a display of historians' humor, the only notable exception is the frequent inaccessibility of any dates between 614 and 911 AD, an homage to the 'phantom time hypothesis,' according to which the existence of this era is the result of a deliberate falsification of the calendar in the Middle Ages (see JR 154).

<sup>584</sup> See JR 160-164.

Dünnbrot eventually manage to foil Himmler's plan by exploding the dam under which the Baldur time machine has been built, drowning the entire new SS and instead eliminating all remaining Nazis once and for all.<sup>585</sup>

As is evident from this summary, Henkel's novel represents a very different case than the previous two texts. While the Morgenthau plan – or, rather, two of them – also feature prominently in the story, it does so in a different fashion than in Ziegler's and Ransmayr's narratives. Whereas in *Die Stimmen der Nacht*, the devastation of Germany and the victimization of its people figures as a central motivator of the plot and, in *Morbus Kitahara*, they *are* the plot, *Im Jahre Ragnarök* initially appears to use this theme merely as a backdrop for a classical time travel story. As far as the events that form the main narrative are concerned, the setting in Germany after Morgenthau or, for that matter, after the end of the war seems more or less arbitrary. That is, the same story of time-travelling Nazis on a quest to eliminate the Jews from history would be perfectly conceivable in a setting that pre-dates 1945 and in which the time travel itself constitutes the alteration. This should not be taken to mean, however, that this specific allohistorical scenario chosen by Henkel is inconsequential. If anything, the fact that it is not immediately required for the development of the main storyline accentuates the abundant representations of the theme of German victimization in the text. In this perspective, the question of their function becomes all the more crucial.

Two things are overly apparent in Henkel's narrative in comparison to the previous two texts: One, the extreme crudeness with which similar motifs of German suffering are presented in the narrative and, two, the complete and utter absence of any references to the atrocities committed by Germans before 1945. While, arguably, Project Ragnarök constitutes a hypothetical Holocaust in Rosenberg's sense, the real Holocaust is mentioned exactly one time in the entire novel.<sup>586</sup> The truly *alternate* Holocaust here, which figures as the exclusive repertoire of images and memories of historical violence, is the victimization of Germans at the hands of the Americans. Accordingly, a virulent anti-Americanism characterizes the tone of the novel, which, in its ubiquity, far exceeds similar sentiments in the texts by Ziegler and Ransmayr. This is not only, but most prominently, represented by the descriptions of the effects of especially the second Morgenthau plan, implemented in 1949, and realized in part by the same apocalyptic

---

<sup>585</sup> See JR 210-211.

<sup>586</sup> See JR 163.

imagery that has already been shown to be common in this context. However, Henkel is at the same time more thorough and more stereotypical in his endeavor to portray Germans as victims. Both the implicit and explicit references to the Allied air raids, for instance, read as if they had been taken directly from Jörg Friedrich's playbook. Here, the attacks in general become the "Feuersturm der Bombenächte" and, in the case of the bombing of Potsdam, an "Inferno."<sup>587</sup> The ruins of Hamburg, Kassel and Berlin are described in great graphic detail and the city of Halle becomes a "steinerne Leiche."<sup>588</sup> And, of course, the destruction of Dresden features prominently with the Frauenkirche as the centre of attention.<sup>589</sup> It almost seems as though Tubber's unlikely crisscross journey through the ruined Germany primarily served to highlight the most prolific sites of German trauma.

But the destruction of German cities is not the only imagery that is invoked here. Both the loss of German lives and the continual suffering of the survivors make up another set of themes. No description of any of the novel's locales is complete without a comment on the abject desolation of the people inhabiting it. The manifestation of this technique that is perhaps the most grotesque, and yet very telling in its utter irrelevance, is the image of a deathly thin Gerd Fröbe, whom Tubber and Dünnbrot encounter on a film set in Berlin.<sup>590</sup> The most consequential motif, however, is unquestionably that of the 'Schocker.' Here, the novel concentrates all its inherent anti-Americanism and its exclusive focus on the suffering of Germans in one narrative device. Dünnbrot informs Tubber about the history of the 'Schocker' program early on in the story:

"Der Ordnungsdienst musste zu Beginn der fünfziger Jahre die Drecksarbeit für die *Schocker* erledigen. Das heißt die Menschen aus ihren Häusern zerren und auf Sammelplätzen zusammentreiben, damit die *Schocker* ihnen zu Tausenden Schnellbehandlungen mit Elektroschocks verpassen konnten. Viele sind daran gestorben, noch mehr wurden zu Wracks, zu sabbernden Schwachsinnigen. Um nicht zu verhungern, haben wir uns zu Handlangern von Irren machen lassen."<sup>591</sup>

---

<sup>587</sup> See JR 31 and 69, respectively.

<sup>588</sup> See JR 20, 44, 87, and 198, respectively.

<sup>589</sup> See JR 105 and 133.

<sup>590</sup> See JR 80. The film starring Fröbe is – incidentally and equally pointless – a film about Nazi-Zombies, written and directed by none other than Ed Wood. Scenes like this are most likely attempts at humor, but they nonetheless speak volumes about the overall direction of the narrative.

<sup>591</sup> JR 45. Italics in the original.

In a radical role reversal, this atrocious counterfactual program of de-nazification is, in turn, used to ‘nazify’ the Americans. When Dünnbrot later realizes that the novel’s most central and most stereotypical representation of the evil, brutish American – Agent Smith – was, in fact, a ‘Schocker’ himself, all of the self-loathing manifested in the passage above turns back against the American perpetrator in an act of cathartic violence.<sup>592</sup> But already here it is made quite clear that the German’s anger is not directed at his own crimes, but at the fact that he was *forced* – by the amoral authority of the Americans and out of fear of starvation – to participate in this injustice, thus marking Dünnbrot himself as a victim of American coercion. Also echoed in this description – in what is perhaps the most subtle narrative strategy in the entire novel – is the distinction between ‘ordinary’ Germans and the Nazis. The formulation “wir haben uns zu Handlangern von Irren machen lassen” and the resulting self-hatred symbolically represent the myth of the reluctant silent majority of Germans, who let themselves be used for the diabolical ends of a small group of fanatics and are now condemned to pay the price. This implicit analogy works all the more seamlessly in the absence of any form of recollection of the real historical crimes committed prior to the implementation of the Morgenthau plan and, as result, allows Dünnbrot to stand metonymically for the victimization of Germans – even after his past as a member of the SS is revealed.<sup>593</sup> This exculpatory role reversal by means of a complete decontextualization of events, characterized by the replacement of suffering of the real historical victims of the Germans with the counterfactual suffering of the Germans themselves, thus constitutes a prime example of alternate memory.

But the ‘Schocker’ motif is only the culmination of a long list of allohistorical scenarios in which innocent Germans, seemingly without a past, are victimized by the Americans. Another especially crass example is the story about the Americans, in the process of unscrupulously exploiting all of Germany’s resources, routinely working German forced laborers to death in the Eastern uranium mines, which is once more described in gruesome detail, yet without any mention of the real history of German labor and concentration camps.<sup>594</sup> But perhaps the most consequential is the scene in which Tubber and Dünnbrot board the train from Hamburg to Göttingen, where an American soldier initially refuses to let the German enter the train car with

---

<sup>592</sup> See JR 135.

<sup>593</sup> See JR 147.

<sup>594</sup> See JR 124.



Tubber, telling him that he belongs in the back of train.<sup>595</sup> Not only is this a blatantly apparent attempt at the conflation of the history of American racism and segregation with the, at best, implicitly evoked memory of the exclusion of Jews in National Socialist Germany, it also constitutes the first of many occurrences in which the German and the Englishman – functioning here again as representatives for the entirety of their compatriots – strike a reluctant covenant for the greater good of opposing the superior authority of the (equally metonymical) American bully. The same motif is repeated in various encounters with the brutish Captain Smith, whose ignorance is routinely contrasted especially with Tubber’s quick, dry British wit and the refined book learning of Dünnbrot.<sup>596</sup> On Tubber’s side, this British-German solidarity is motivated by his own wounded nationalist pride over the fact that the Americans have become the de facto rulers of the United Kingdom, following the technological and social decline of all of Europe in the wake of the downfall of Germany – a theme already encountered in *Die Stimmen der Nacht*.<sup>597</sup> But the novel’s vilification of the Americans does not stop short of the ultimate reversal: turning the Americans themselves into Nazis. An initial hint could already be seen in the fact that Francoist Spain defected so easily from its alliance with Hitler and joined forces with the United States, which – in light of the narrative as a whole – appears to imply that the difference between the two was, in fact, not that great. The text contains a number of similar implications. They range from the highlighted anti-Semitism of General Patton, over an absurd meeting with Jack Kerouac and Buddy Holly – who have both been forced to become GIs after violating the quasi-fascist ‘Public Decency Act’ with their respective (degenerate) art – to the fact that Patton and one of the main Nazi antagonists in the story condemn a popular history book, written by Tubber, for exactly the same reason.<sup>598</sup>

Consequently, the story ends with the four surviving characters – Tubber and Dünnbrot have each found a new love interest – agreeing to emigrate to Australia, as the only (civilized) place left in the world brave and resourceful enough to withstand the destructive supremacy of the American way.<sup>599</sup> In the light of all this, the initial impression of the novel is reversed.

---

<sup>595</sup> See JR 32.

<sup>596</sup> See, for instance, JR 51-52 and 110-111.

<sup>597</sup> See JR 14-15.

<sup>598</sup> See JR 73-74, 130, and 143, respectively.

<sup>599</sup> See JR 17 and 213.

Ultimately, it is not the various representations of German victimization and the concurrent vilification of the Americans that constitute the secondary, arbitrary aspects of *Im Jahre Ragnarök*, but rather the conventional plot itself, which seems to act as little more than a pretence for the development of Henkel's relativist narrative.

In focusing on the theme of German victimization – one of the most prolific and long-lived German counter-memories that does not exist in British and American Alternate Histories – the exemplary analyses in this chapter once more highlight the significance of differentiating between national narrative traditions. At the same time, they illustrate that distinct yet similar discourses as in Germany persist in the collective memory of Austria. In all three texts, the suffering of the German and Austrian populations in the aftermath of the defeat of the Nazis represents a central aspect, but the implementation of this theme in the respective stories varies considerably. While all three novels envision dystopian landscapes as a result of the counterfactual deployment of the Morgenthau Plan, in both Thomas Ziegler's *Die Stimmen der Nacht* and Christoph Ransmayr's *Morbus Kitahara*, this punishment does not fall on an innocent people. In both texts, references to the Holocaust feature prominently and National Socialist ideology has survived the loss of the war. However, both texts also portray this persistence not as a development that occurred in spite of the harsh conditions created by an allohistorical punitive peace accord, but as its direct result. The consequence is the effective obscuration of the continued existence of these tenets in Germany and Austria despite the restorative measures initiated by the Marshall Plan in actual history. In contrast, Oliver Henkel's *Im Jahre Ragnarök* erases the memory of the atrocities committed by Germans as the cause for their punishment altogether. Although the ramifications of not one, but two incarnations of the Morgenthau Plan only provide the backdrop for a more conventional time-travel story in this text, the fact that the extensive descriptions of the destruction of Germany and the abject suffering of its remaining inhabitants are entirely decontextualized emphasizes the notion of an unjust punishment to a considerably greater degree. It thus realizes the revisionist potential of alternate memory most radically. Whether implicitly or explicitly, all three examples ultimately equate the suffering of the victims of National Socialism with that of the former perpetrators in the aftermath of its downfall and, in doing so, serve as allohistorical representations of one of the most prominent exculpatory narratives in German and Austrian postwar collective memory.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As the examples in the last three chapters have shown, understanding Alternate Histories as representations of and contributions to collective memory discourses facilitates a deeper understanding of the narrative specificities of counterfactual literature. However, as the symptomatic close readings of the selected texts have revealed, the ways in which these interactions occur cannot be generalized across the boundaries of national literatures and cultures of remembrance. In Britain and the United States, allohistorical counter-memories that question established memory narratives usually take the form of an introspective self-critique, aimed at the destabilization of popular tenets of national identity, and represent fringe phenomena on the commemorative whole. The opposite is true in Germany and Austria, where deviations from canonical aspects of the collective memory of the Third Reich do not only frequently serve to proliferate a positive national identity, but where such redemptive counter-narratives are gradually supplanting traditionally accepted assessments of the past.

In understanding this development, the category of alternate memory has proven beneficial. In their ludic engagement with history, Alternate Histories have the unique potential of harnessing existing themes of revisionist counter-memory and utilizing them within their specific narrative framework to effectively replace memories of real historical events with counterfactual scenarios. As has been shown, this potential is realized in distinctly different ways and with opposite political implications in different national settings, which points to a blind spot in previous scholarly investigations of the genre of Alternate History. Even extensively comparative approaches like Rosenfeld's have failed to adequately recognize the fundamental importance of the particular discursive conditions that allow allohistorical fictions to function as alternate memories in the German and Austrian contexts but not in Britain and the United States. The absolute majority of scholarship on Alternate History has thus far overlooked the significance of these national specificities altogether. In this regard, this dissertation provides an innovative contribution to its field by not only exposing this critical shortcoming, but developing an exemplary theoretical framework that facilitates the analysis of the concrete national and cultural foundations of alternate memory. The presented readings of allohistorical fictions as specific manifestations of and interventions into commemorative discourses have emphasized their intimate connection to non-literary expressions of collective memory. This does not only highlight the relationship between literature and memory in general, it also contributes to the

understanding of the process of German normalization as an inherently narrative phenomenon. At the same time, the distinctly revisionist nature of the counter-memories discussed here has effectively brought into question the widespread consensus that discursive deviations from canonical interpretations of history necessarily represent progressive interventions. This insight is neither limited to Alternate Histories nor to the German context, but this combination has proven particularly suitable for illustrating the employment of counter-memories as reactionary narrative strategies.

The themes discussed in each of the three main chapters of this thesis correspond directly to central axioms of postwar German collective memory. All of them represent a tradition of self-exculpation aimed at mitigating the involvement of the German (and Austrian) public in the rise and the crimes of the National Socialist regime. Chapters Three and Four have highlighted the national specificities of these themes in direct comparison with British and American Alternate Histories by delineating how they employ similar allohistorical scenarios to distinctly different discursive ends. In Philip K. Dick's and Stephen Fry's novels, the universalization of National Socialism serves at once as an element of self-criticism and, especially in *Making History*, as an indictment of the culpability of the German people which directly counteracts deflective distinctions between Nazis and 'ordinary Germans.' In contrast, the German exemplary texts adopt this theme as a means of relativization by externalizing responsibility and obscuring historical cause and effect. A similar distinction applies in the case of the motif of the 'good German' in Chapter Four. Robert Harris' *Fatherland* depicts German resistance against the Nazi apparatus as a solitary endeavour faced with overwhelming opposition and resolves the problematic suggestion that the Holocaust was perpetrated unbeknownst to the German majority by portraying the disclosure of this secret as a threat. Conversely, the German examples exaggerate the opposition against the Nazis from within by not only presenting it as a widespread phenomenon, but also devising allohistorical scenarios in which German heroism is instrumental in overcoming the National Socialist regime. Chapter Five examined three exemplary German-language Alternate Histories which centrally feature the theme of victimizing the perpetrators, foregrounding German and Austrian suffering after the war in the form of alternate Holocausts. This selection is significant in stressing the importance of a nationally specific reading insofar as this theme is unique to the German-language context.

The compilation of texts in this study is not intended to dispute the existence of counterfactual literary accounts of the Third Reich by German and Austrian authors that do not

conform to the narrative strategy of alternate memory. In fact, with Otto Basil's irredeemably dystopian Alternate History *Wenn das der Führer wüsste*, one of the most well-known examples of German-language allohistorical writing does not reproduce any discernible exculpatory narratives. Nonetheless, these strategies can be identified in a large number of German Alternate Histories, and their prevalence has increased in the wake of the paradigmatic shifts that occurred in German memory culture over the past two decades. Therefore, while the texts discussed in the context of this dissertation should only be taken as examples of a potential function of Alternate History in connection with the discursive dynamics of German normalization, the intricate ways in which they interact both with other literary and with non-literary redemptive counter-memories bespeak the merit of this critical approach. Understanding Alternate Histories as alternate memories and submitting them to nationally specific interpretations produces insights into the functionality of counterfactual literature that are not accessible without the application of this particular perspective. Furthermore, this approach and the findings of this study serve to counteract the relative disregard for popular literature as a valid object of scholarly enquiry in general. This issue is of particular significance in the context of German literary studies, in which the complexity and social and political relevance of so-called 'Trivialliteratur' has long been widely ignored. The example of Alternate History shows that understanding popular literary genres as mere forms of escapism does not adequately capture the potential political relevance of such texts, which is facilitated precisely by the popularity of their themes. The unique capacity of allohistorical fictions, in taking the shape of alternate memories, to not only reflect, but actively re-imagine essential axioms of collective memory, illustrates the fact that the cultural and political impact of so-called trivial literature can be just as profound as that of seemingly more 'serious' narrative forms.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Der Semit* 3, no. 5 (2011).

“Proklamation.” In *Staatgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*. May 1, 1945. Accessed January 16, 2012. [http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgblPdf&Dokumentnummer=1945\\_1\\_0](http://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgblPdf&Dokumentnummer=1945_1_0).

*Gespräch mit dem Biest - Conversation with the Beast*. Directed by Armin Mueller-Stahl, Germany/USA: 1996.

*Triumph und Tragödie der Wilhelm Gustloff: die größte Schiffskatastrophe aller Zeiten*. Produced by Heinz Schön and Karl Höffkes. Gescher: Polar Film + Medien GmbH, 2000.

Adami, Valentina. *Trauma Studies and Literature: Martin Amis's Time's Arrow as Trauma Fiction*. Anglo-American Studies. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2008.

Adorno, Theodor W. “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit.” In *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 10.2, 555-572. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998.

Aldiss, Brian W. “Swastika!” In *Nova I: An Anthology of Original Science Fiction*, edited by Harry Harrison, 73-81. New York: Delacorte, 1970.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. “On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The ‘Holocaust’ from War Crime to Trauma Drama.” In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, 196-263. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Alkon, Paul. “Alternate History and Postmodern Temporality.” In *Time, Literature and the Arts: Essays in Honor of Samuel L. Macey*, edited by Thomas R. Cleary, 65-85. Victoria: University of Victoria, 1994.

Amis, Martin. *Time's Arrow, Or, the Nature of the Offense*. New York: Harmony Books, 1991.

Anderson, Benedict R. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Anelli, Sara. “Counterfactual Holocausts: Robert Harris’ *Fatherland* and Martin Amis *Time's Arrow*.” *Textus: English Studies in Italy* 20, no. 2 (05/20, 2007): 407-432.

Assmann, Aleida. *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. Munich: Beck, 1999.

———. *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. Munich: Beck, 2006.

———. “On the (in)Compatibility of Guilt and Suffering in German Memory.” *German Life and Letters* 59, no. 2 (2006): 187-200.

- Assmann, Aleida and Ute Frevert. *Geschichtsvergessenheit - Geschichtsversessenheit: vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999.
- Assmann, Jan. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. Munich: Beck, 1992.
- Atze, Marcel. "Hitler und Holocaust im Konjunktiv: Otto Basils konjunkturalhistorischer Roman *Wenn das der Führer wüßte*." In *Otto Basil und die Literatur um 1945: Tradition, Kontinuität, Neubeginn*, edited by Volker Kaukoreit and Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, 117-136. Vienna: Zsolnay, 1998.
- Basil, Otto. *Wenn das der Führer wüsste. Roman*. Wien, Munich: Molden, 1966.
- Beattie, Andrew H. "The Victims of Totalitarianism and the Centrality of Nazi Genocide: Continuity and Change in German Commemorative Politics." In *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Bill Niven, 147-163. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Becker, Daniel. "Coming to Terms with 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung': Walser's Sonntagsrede, the Kosovo War, and the Transformation of German Historical Consciousness." In *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification German Culture*, edited by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner, 337-361. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006.
- Benford, Gregory. "Preface: Imagining the Abyss." In *Hitler Victorious: Eleven Stories of the German Victory in World-War II*, edited by Gregory Benford and Martin H. Greenberg, 1-10. New York; London: Garland, 1986.
- Berger, Stefan. "On Taboos, Traumas and Other Myths: Why the Debate about German Victims of the Second World War is Not a Historians' Controversy." In *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Bill Niven, 210-224. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Blok, Anton. "Reflections on 'Making History'." In *Other Histories*, edited by Kirsten Hastrup, 121-127. London; New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Booth, Charles, Michael Rowlinson, Peter Clark, Agnes Delahaye, and Stephen Procter. "Scenarios and Counterfactuals as Modal Narratives." *Futures* 41, no. 2 (2009): 87-95.
- Borchert, Wolfgang. *Draussen vor der Tür: Ein Stück, das kein Theater spielen und kein Publikum sehen will*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1947.
- Brandstädter, Mathias. *Folgeschäden: Kontext, narrative Strukturen und Verlaufsformen der Väterliteratur 1960 bis 2008: Bestimmung eines Genres*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010.
- Brenner, Wolfgang. *Führerlos: Roman*. Berlin: Edition q im be.bra Verlag, 2008.

- Brockmann, Stephen. "‘Normalization’: Has Helmut Kohl’s Vision been Realized?" In *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, edited by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke, 17-29. Rochester: Camden House, 2006.
- Brumlik, Micha, Hajo Funke, and Lars Rensmann. *Umkämpftes Vergessen: Walser-Debatte, Holocaust-Mahnmal und neuere deutsche Geschichtspolitik*. Schriftenreihe Politik und Kultur. Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000.
- Cajani, Luigi. "Die Zeitmaschine: Anmerkungen zu einem Benutzerhandbuch." In *Was Wäre Wenn: Alternativ- und Parallelgeschichte: Brücken zwischen Phantasie und Wirklichkeit*, edited by Michael Salewski, 54-63. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999.
- Canaan, Howard. "Metafiction and the Gnostic Quest in the Man in the High Castle." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 12, no. 4 (2002): 382-405.
- Chamberlain, Gordon B. "Afterword: Allohistory in Science Fiction." In *Alternative Histories: Eleven Stories of the World as it might have been*, edited by Charles Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg, 281-300. New York: Garland, 1986.
- Chapman, Edgar L. "Introduction: Three Stages of Alternate History Fiction and the ‘Metaphysical if’." In *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Fiction*, edited by Edgar L. Chapman and Carl B. Yoke, 1-28. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.
- Collins, Joseph William. "Paths Not Taken: The Development, Structure, and Aesthetics of Alternative History." Ph.D. diss., University of California Davis, 1990.
- Cook, Lynne. "The Novels of Christoph Ransmayr: Towards a Final Myth." *Modern Austrian Literature* 31, no. 3-4 (1998): 225-239.
- Craig, Gordon A. "Good Germans." *The New York Review of Books* 39, no. 21 (1992): 38-44.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon and Randolph Starn. "Introduction." *Representations* no. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989): pp. 1-6.
- Deighton, Len. *SS-GB: Nazi-Occupied Britain, 1941*. London: Cape, 1978.
- Demandt, Alexander. *History that Never Happened: A Treatise on the Question, what would have Happend if...?*. Jefferson: McFarland, 1993.
- Dick, Philip K. *The Man in the High Castle*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- Diner, Dan. "Between Aporia and Apology: On the Limits of Historicising National Socialism." In *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians’ Debate*, edited by Peter Baldwin, 135-145. Boston: Beacon Press, 1990.
- . "Der Holocaust im Geschichtsnarrativ: Über Variationen historischen Gedächtnisses." In *In der Sprache der Täter: Neue Lektüren deutschsprachiger Nachkriegs- und*



- Gegenwartsliteratur*, edited by Stephan Braese, 13-30. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998.
- von Ditfurth, Christian. *Der 21. Juli*. Munich: Droemer, 2001.
- Droste, Wiglaf. "War Hitler Antifaschist?" In *Sieger sehen anders aus*. Hamburg: Nautilus, 1994.
- Ebbrecht, Tobias. *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis: filmische Narrationen des Holocaust*. Film. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011.
- Eshel, Amir. "Der Wortlaut der Erinnerung: Christoph Ransmayrs *Morbus Kitahara*." In *In der Sprache der Täter: Neue Lektüren deutschsprachiger Nachkriegs- und Gegenwartsliteratur*, edited by Stephan Braese, 227-255. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998.
- Fassbender, Bardo. "A Novel, Germany's Past, and the Dilemmas of Civilised Germans." *Contemporary Review* 265, no. 1546 (11, 1994): 236-246.
- Ferguson, Niall. *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*. London: Papermac, 1998.
- Feuerherdt, Alex. "Henryk M. Broder: 'Den Adolf gemacht.'" *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 9, 2007. Accessed November 19, 2011. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/medien/henryk-m-broder-den-adolf-gemacht/1090752.html>
- Foster, Ian. "Alternative History and Christoph Ransmayr's *Morbus Kitahara*." *Modern Austrian Literature* 32, no. 1 (1999): 111-125.
- Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, 139-164. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Fox, Thomas. "Writing Dresden Across the Generations." In *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification German Culture*, edited by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner, 136-153. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006.
- Freedman, Carl. *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 2000.
- Frei, Norbert. *1945 und wir: Das Dritte Reich im Bewusstsein der Deutschen*. Munich: Beck, 2005.
- Fried, Nico. "Fischer: 'Ich habe gelernt: Nie wieder Auschwitz'." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 24, 2005.
- Friedrich, Hans-Erwin. "Das deutsche Volk schlief schlecht seit dem größten Sieg seiner Geschichte": Drittes Reich und Nationalsozialismus im alternativhistorischen Roman (Otto Basil, Helmut Heißenbüttel, Thomas Ziegler). *Literatur für Leser* 29, no. 4 (2006): 255-273.
- Fritzsche, Peter. "What Exactly is 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'? Narrative and its Insufficiency in Postwar Germany." In *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature*,

*Film, and Discourse since 1990*, edited by Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote, 25-40. Rochester: Camden House, 2006.

Fry, Stephen. *Making History*. London: Hutchinson, 1996.

Fuchs, Anne and Mary Cosgrove. "Introduction: Germany's Memory Contests and the Management of the Past." In *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, edited by Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote, 1-21. Rochester: Camden House, 2006.

Füger, Wilhelm. "Streifzüge durch Allotopia." *Anglia* 102 (1984): 349-391.

Ganeva, Mila. "From West-German *Väterliteratur* to Post-Wall *Enkelliteratur*: The End of the Generation Conflict in Marcel Beyer's *Spione* and Tanja Dücker's *Himmelskörper*." *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 43, no. 2 (2007): 149-162.

Geus, Klaus. "Hitlers vergeblicher Kampf: Ein Beitrag zum Thema Nationalismus und Science Fiction." *Kopfgeburten* 7 (1996): 30-35.

Geyer, Michael and Miriam Hansen. "German-Jewish Memory and National Consciousness." In *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, edited by Geoffrey H. Hartman, 175-190. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

Giesen, Bernhard. *Triumph and Trauma*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004.

Gillette, Aaron. *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Grass, Günter. *Im Krebsgang: Eine Novelle*. 4th revised ed. Munich: dtv, 2004.

Greiner, Bernd. *Die Morgenthau-Legende: Zur Geschichte eines umstrittenen Plans*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995.

Hage, Volker. "To Write Or Remain Silent?: The Portrayal of the Air War in German Literature." In *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification German Culture*, edited by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner, 91-113. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006.

Hagen, Alexandra. "'Man besuchte eine Welt — wie die Titanic kurz vor dem Untergang': Kulturgeschichtliche Reminiszenzen über die Deutsch-Deutsche Grenze. Ein Gespräch mit dem Schriftsteller Hans Pleschinski." *Focus on German Studies* 15 (2008): 199-207.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

Hardesty, William H. "Toward a Theory of Alternate History: Some Versions of Alternate Nazis." In *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Fiction*, edited by Edgar L. Chapman and Carl B. Yoke, 71-92. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.

Harris, Robert. *Fatherland*. New York: Random House, 1992.

- Hartman, Geoffrey H. *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Hayles, N. B. "Metaphysics and Metafiction in the Man in the High Castle." In *Philip K. Dick*, edited by Martin Harry Greenberg, Joseph D. Olander and Barry N. Malzberg, 53-71. New York: Taplinger, 1983.
- Heer, Hannes and Ruth Wodak. "Kollektives Gedächtnis. Vergangenheitspolitik. Nationales Narrativ." In *Wie Geschichte gemacht wird*, edited by Hannes Heer, 12-23. Wien: Czernin, 2003.
- Helbig, Jörg. *Der parahistorische Roman: Ein literarhistorischer und gattungstypologischer Beitrag zur Allotopieforschung*. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1988.
- Hellekson, Karen. *The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time*. Kent: Kent State University Press, 2001.
- Henkel, Oliver. *Im Jahre Ragnarök*. Stolberg: Atlantis-Verl., 2009.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Humble, Malcolm. "How Trivial is 'Trivalliteratur'? The Exploitation of the Nazi Past in the British and American Bestseller since 1945." In *Anglistentag 1984: Vorträge*, edited by Manfred Pfister, 206-217. Gießen: Hoffmann, 1984.
- Husemann, Harald. "When William Came; if Adolf had Come: Speculative Novels on the Military Conquest of Britain by Germany." In *Anglistentag 1984: Vorträge*, edited by Manfred Pfister, 335-350. Gießen: Hoffmann, 1984.
- Huysen, Andreas. "Air War Legacies: From Dresden to Bagdhad." In *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Bill Niven, 181-193. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Post-Contemporary Interventions. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.
- Jarausch, Konrad. "Normalization Or Renationalization?: On Reinterpreting the German Past." In *Rewriting the German Past: History and Identity in the New Germany*, edited by Reinhard Alter and Peter Monteath, 23-39. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1997.
- Karolak, Ceslaw. "Unbewältigte Zukunft: Kriegs- und Fortschrittsvisionen in der westdeutschen Science-Fiction-Literatur der 50er Jahre." In *Ideologie und Utopie in der deutschen Literatur der Neuzeit*, edited by Bernhard Spies, 144-150. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1995.
- Kattago, Siobhan. *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity*. Westport: Praeger, 2001.

- Korthals, Holger. "Spekulation mit historischem Material: Überlegungen zur Alternate History." In *Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft: Grundfragen Einer Besonderen Disziplin*, edited by Rüdiger Zymner, 157-169. Berlin: Schmidt, 2001.
- Kühn, Dieter. *Ich War Hitlers Schutzengel: Fiktionen*. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 2010.
- Kunne, Andrea. "Heimat und Holocaust: Aspekte österreichischer Identität aus postmoderner Sicht: Christoph Ransmayrs Roman *Morbus Kitahara*." In *Postmoderne Literatur in deutscher Sprache: Eine Ästhetik des Widerstands?*, edited by Henk Harbers, 311-333. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.
- Langer, Siegfried. *Alles Bleibt Anders*. Stolberg: Atlantis, 2008.
- Liessmann, Konrad Paul. "Der Anfang ist das Ende: *Morbus Kitahara* und die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will." In *Die Erfindung der Welt: Zum Werk von Christoph Ransmayr*, edited by Uwe Wittstock, 148-157. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1997.
- Lipsitz, George. "Myth, History, and Counter-Memory." In *Politics and the Muse: Studies in the Politics of Recent American Literature*, edited by Adam J. Sorkin, 161-178. Bowling Green: Popular, 1989.
- Lorey, David E. and William H. Beezley. *Genocide, Collective Violence, and Popular Memory: The Politics of Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Wilmington: SR Books, 2002.
- Margalit, Gilad. "Dresden and Hamburg: Official Memory and Commemoration of the Victims of Allied Air Raids in the Two Germanies." In *A Nation of Victims?: Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz, 125-140. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- Markovits, Andrei S. and Simon Reich. *The German Predicament: Memory and Power in the New Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Martin, James. "A World Turned Upside Down: Role Reversals in the Victim-Perpetrator Complex in Christoph Ransmayrs *Morbus Kitahara*." In *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification German Culture*, edited by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner, 178-196. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006.
- McKnight, Edgar V. "Alternative History: The Development of a Literary Genre." PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1994.
- Möbius, Emanuell. "Nazi-Science-Fiction: Wacker an die 'Stahlfront'." *Spiegel Online*, June 12, 2009. Accessed November 19, 2011. <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/0,1518,628488,00.html>.
- Moeller, Robert G. "The Politics of the Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimization in East and West Germany." In *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Bill Niven, 26-42. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

- . *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Moller, Sabine. *Die Entkonkretisierung der NS-Herrschaft in der Ära Kohl: Die Neue Wache, das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, das Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Hannover: Offizin, 1998.
- Mosebach, Holger. "Anthropologische Zweifel: Zum Erzählwerk Christoph Ransmayrs." *Trans: Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 15, no. 5.16: n.p.
- Neugebauer, Wolfgang. "Zur Problematik der Aufarbeitung der NS-Vergangenheit in Österreich." In *Die Lebendigkeit der Geschichte: (Dis-)Kontinuitäten in Diskursen über den Nationalsozialismus*, edited by Eleonore Lappin and Bernhard Schneider, 105-118. St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2001.
- Neumann, Robert. "Wenn Hitler Jude gewesen wäre: Die Vorgeschichte eines bizarren Buches: *Samuel Hitler*." *Die Zeit*, November 23, 1973.
- Niven, Bill. "Implicit Equations in Constructions of German Suffering." In *A Nation of Victims?: Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz, 105-124. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- . "Introduction: German Victimhood at the Turn of the Millenium." In *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Bill Niven, 1-25. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Niven, William John. *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Olick, Jeffrey K. *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- . "What does it Mean to Normalize the Past?: Official Memory in German Politics since 1989." In *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, 259-288. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Olick, Jeffrey K., Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy. *The Collective Memory Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Onega, Susana. "'A Knack for Yarns': The Narrativization of History and the End of History." In *Telling Histories: Narrativizing History, Historicizing Literature*, edited by Susana Onega, 7-18. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995.
- Oppen, Karoline von. "'(Un)Sägliche Vergleiche': What Germans Remembered (and Forgot) in Former Yugoslavia in the 1990s." In *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, edited by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke, 167-180. Rochester: Camden House, 2006.

- Oppen, Karoline von and Stefan Wolff. "From the Margins to the Centre?: The Discourse on Expellees and Victimhood in Germany." In *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Bill Niven, 194-209. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Pethes, Nicolas. "Naturgeschichte der Zerstörung: Evolution als Narrativ für die 'Stunde Null' bei W. G. Sebald und Christoph Ransmayr." In *Finis: Paradoxien des Endens*, edited by Peter Brandes and Burkhardt Lindner, 169-187. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009.
- Pfister, Manfred and Monika Lindner. "Alternative Welten: Ein typologischer Versuch zur englische Literatur." In *Alternative Welten*, edited by Manfred Pfister, 11-38. Munich: Fink, 1982.
- Picker, Henry. *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier: 1941-1942*, edited by Andreas Hillgruber. Munich: Seewald Verlag, 1968.
- Pleschinski, Hans. "Ausflug." *Der Rabe* 4 (1983): 24-38.
- Prager, Brad. "The Good German as Narrator: On W. G. Sebald and the Risks of Holocaust Writing." *New German Critique: An Interdisciplinary Journal of German Studies* 96 (2005): 75-102.
- Prümm, Karl. "'Die Zukunft ist vergeßlich': Der antifaschistische Widerstand in der deutschen Literatur nach 1945." In *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich*, edited by Hans Wagener, 33-68. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977.
- Quinn, Daniel. *After Dachau: A Novel*. New York: Context Books, 2001.
- Ransmayr, Christoph. "'...das Thema hat mich bedroht': Gespräch mit Sigrid Löffler über *Morbus Kitahara* (Dublin 1995)." In *Die Erfindung der Welt: Zum Werk Christoph Ransmayrs*, edited by Uwe Wittstock, 213-219. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1997.
- . *Morbus Kitahara: Roman*. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1995.
- Ransom, Amy J. "Alternate History and Uchronia: Some Questions of Terminology and Genre." *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 32, no. 87 (Spring, 2003): 58-72.
- Rensmann, Lars. "Politisch-psychologische Nachwirkungen des Nationalsozialismus in der Gegenwart: Zum Verhältnis von neueren Vergangenheitsdiskursen und gesellschaftlichen Einstellungen gegenüber dem Holocaust." In *Die Lebendigkeit der Geschichte: (Dis-)Kontinuitäten in Diskursen über den Nationalsozialismus*, edited by Eleonore Lappin and Bernhard Schneider, 336-369. St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2001.
- Rieder, John. "The Metafictive World of *the Man in the High Castle*: Hermeneutics, Ethics, and Political Ideology." *Science-Fiction Studies* 15 (1988): 214-224.

- Ritter, Hermann. "Kontrafaktische Geschichte: Unterhaltung versus Erkenntnis." In *Was Wäre Wenn: Alternativ- und Parallelgeschichte: Brücken zwischen Phantasie und Wirklichkeit*, edited by Michael Salewski, 13-42. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999.
- Robin-Maire, Régine. "The Bifurcations of Memory." In *Politics of Collective Memory: Cultural Patterns of Commemorative Practices in Post-War Europe*, edited by Sophie Wahnich, Barbara Láštiová and Andrej Findor, 29-42. Berlin: LIT, 2008.
- Rodiek, Christoph. *Erfundene Vergangenheit: Kontrafaktische Geschichtsdarstellung (Uchronie) in der Literatur*. Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1997.
- Rosenfeld, Gavriel. "Why Do We Ask 'What if?'" Reflections On the Function of Alternate History." *History and Theory* 41, no. 4, Theme Issue 41: Unconventional History (Dec., 2002): 90-103.
- . *The World Hitler Never made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Roth, Philip. *The Plot Against America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.
- Salewski, Michael. *Zeitgeist und Zeitmaschine: Science Fiction und Geschichte*. Munich: dtv, 1986.
- Salzborn, Samuel. "The German Myth of a Victim Nation: (Re-)Presenting Germans as Victims in the New Debate on their Flight and Expulsion from Eastern Europe." In *A Nation of Victims?: Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz, 87-104. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- Santner, Eric L. "History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts in the Representation of Trauma." In *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, edited by Saul Friedländer, 143-155. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Sarban. *The Sound of His Horn*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1960.
- Schaffeld, Norbert. *Die Darstellung des nationalsozialistischen Deutschland im englischen Roman*. European university studies. Series XIV, Anglo-Saxon language and literature. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1987.
- Schenkel, Elmar. "Die Macht des Ungeschehenen: Phantastische Geschichtsschreibung in alternative histories." In *Fantasy in Film und Literatur*, edited by Dieter Petzold, 127-141. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1996.
- Schmitz, Helmut. "The Birth of the Collective from the Spirit of Empathy: From the 'Historians' Dispute' to German Suffering." In *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Bill Niven, 93-108. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

- . *On their Own Terms: The Legacy of National Socialism in Post-1990 German Fiction. New Germany in Context*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2004.
- . “The Return of Wartime Suffering in Contemporary German Memory Culture, Literature and Film.” In *A Nation of Victims?: Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz, 1-30. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- Schön, Heinz. *Der Untergang der “Wilhelm Gustloff”*: Tatsachenbericht eines Überlebenden. Göttingen: Goltze, 1952.
- Sissini. *Samuel Hitler*. Darmstadt: Melzer, 1973.
- Spitz, Markus Oliver. *Erfundene Welten-Modelle der Wirklichkeit: Zum Werk von Christoph Ransmayr*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004.
- Stableford, Brian. “The British and American Traditions of Speculative Fiction.” In *Contours of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Eighth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, edited by Michele K. Langford, 39-47. New York: Greenwood, 1990.
- Steinmüller, Karlheinz. “Zukünfte, die nie Geschichte wurden: Zum Gedankenexperiment in Zukunftsforschung und Geschichtswissenschaft.” In *Was Wäre Wenn: Alternativ- und Parallelgeschichte: Brücken zwischen Phantasie und Wirklichkeit*, edited by Michael Salewski, 43-53. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999.
- Suvin, Darko. “Victorian Science Fiction, 1871 -85: The Rise of the Alternate History Subgenre.” *Science Fiction Studies* 10 (1983): 148-169.
- Taberner, Stuart. “Literary Representations in Contemporary German Fiction of the Expulsions of Germans from the East in 1945.” In *A Nation of Victims?: Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, edited by Helmut Schmitz, 223-246. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.
- Tachibana, Reiko. *Narrative as Counter-Memory: A Half-Century of Postwar Writing in Germany and Japan*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- Thomann, Jürgen. “Leben im Konditional: Alternative Welten und ihre Relevanz. Einführung in das Genre der Alternate History.” *Kopfgeburt* 7 (1996): 5-20.
- Uhl, Heidemarie. “Das ‘erste Opfer’: Das österreichische Gedächtnis und seine Transformationen in der Zweiten Republik.” In *Die Lebendigkeit der Geschichte: (Dis-)Kontinuitäten in Diskursen über den Nationalsozialismus*, edited by Eleonore Lappin and Bernhard Schneider, 30-46. St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2001.
- Uhl, Heidemarie. “Memory Culture - Politics of History: Some Reflections on Memory and Society.” In *Politics of Collective Memory: Cultural Patterns of Commemorative Practices in Post-War Europe*, edited by Sophie Wahnich, Barbara Lášticová and Andrej Findor, 57-65. Wien: LIT, 2008.



- Van Rjndt, Philippe. *The Trial of Adolf Hitler*. New York: Summit Books, 1978.
- . *Die Mauer steht am Rhein: Deutschland nach dem Sieg des Sozialismus*. Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1999.
- Wagner, Hans-Ulrich. “‘Ein Mann kommt nach Deutschland’: *Draußen vor der Tür* im Kontext der Heimkehrer-Hörspiele der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit.” In *‘Pack das Leben bei den Haaren’: Wolfgang Borchert in neuer Sicht*, edited by Gordon Burgess and Hans-Gerhard Winter, 37-53. Hamburg: Dölling & Galitz, 1996.
- Walser, Martin. “Erfahrungen beim Verfassen einer Sonntagsrede: Dankesrede von Martin Walser zur Verleihung des Friedenspreises des Deutschen Buchhandels in der Frankfurter Paulskirche am 11. Oktober 1998.” Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Accessed October 25, 2011. [http://www.hdg.de/lemo/html/dokumente/WegeInDieGegenwart\\_redeWalserZumFriedenspreis/index.html](http://www.hdg.de/lemo/html/dokumente/WegeInDieGegenwart_redeWalserZumFriedenspreis/index.html).
- . *Ein springender Brunnen: Roman*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1998.
- Wedemeyer-Schwiersch, Sabine. “Requiem für einen Stümper.” In *Alexanders langes Leben, Stalins früher Tod und andere abwegige Geschichten*, edited by Erik Simon, 243-250. Munich: Heyne, 1999.
- Welzer, Harald. “The Collateral Damage of Enlightenment: How Grandchildren Understand the History of National Socialist Crimes and their Grandfathers’ Past.” In *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification German Culture*, edited by Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner, 285-295. Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 2006.
- Welzer, Harald, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall. *Opa war kein Nazi: Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis*. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2002.
- Wenk, Silke. “Sacrifice and Victimization in the Commemorative Practices of Nazi Genocide After German Unification: Memorials and Visual Metaphors.” In *Sacrifice and National Belonging in Twentieth-Century Germany*, edited by Greg Eghigian and Matthew Paul Berg, 196-226. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002.
- Wesseling, Elisabeth. *Writing History as a Prophet: Postmodernist Innovations of the Historical Novel*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1991.
- Wiegel, Gerd. *Die Zukunft der Vergangenheit: Konservativer Geschichtsdiskurs und kulturelle Hegemonie – vom Historikerstreit zur Walser-Bubis-Debatte*. Cologne: PapyRossa, 2001.
- Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey. “Fallacies and Thresholds: Notes on the Early Evolution of Alternate History.” *Historical Social Research* 34, no. 2 (2009): 99-117.
- . “The Third Reich in Alternate History: Aspects of a Genre-Specific Depiction of Nazi Culture.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 39, no. 5 (10, 2006): 878-896.

———. “Am Rand der Uchronie: Oswald Levetts *Verirrt in den Zeiten* und die Frühphase der *alternate history*.” *Modern Austrian Literature* 34, no. 3-4 (2001): 21-43.

Wittlinger, Ruth. “Taboo Or Tradition?: The ‘Germans as Victims’ Theme in West Germany Until the Early 1990s.” In *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, edited by Bill Niven, 62-75. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Woods, Roger. “On Forgetting and Remembering: The New Right since German Unification.” In *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990*, edited by Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote, 271-286. Rochester: Camden House, 2006.

Ziegler, Thomas. *Eine Kleinigkeit für uns Reinkarnauten*. Windeck: Blitz, 1997.

———. *Die Stimmen der Nacht*. Munich: Heyne, 1993.