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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8x29j0hm>

Journal

German Studies Review, 44(3)

ISSN

0149-7952

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Publication Date

2021

DOI

10.1353/gsr.2021.0080

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Obstinacy and Allegory in Eduard Claudius's East German Construction Novel

Menschen an unsrer Seite

ABSTRACT

This article returns to Eduard Claudius's classic 1951 East German production novel, *Menschen an unsrer Seite*, reading its deep engagement with German working-class experience and subjectivity in order to re-open the complexities of cultural production in the early GDR. Far from an affirmative celebration of socialist construction, Claudius's novel is a profound narrative meditation on the narrativity of experience in the nascent public sphere of the GDR, which must confront the multigenerational legacy of proletarianization in order to cultivate emancipated socialist laboring, while at the same time being bound to legitimate a coercive regime of labor discipline.

Although Ernst Bloch famously described Germany as the classical country of noncontemporaneity, time was particularly out of joint in early 1950s East Germany.¹ This was the period of socialist construction, or *Aufbau*, celebrated nostalgically or ironically when not gladly forgotten in Germany today, and indeed already during the German Democratic Republic (GDR) itself. By and large, the East German fifties occupy a strange zone between boredom, ridicule, and terror in popular memory, a space that recalls Frederic Jameson's insight that boredom is a form of repression, not only of the traumatic thing itself, but of the traces of its own repression "and the very memory of the intent to repress."² The building of socialism was understood at the same time, of course, at least by some, as the formation of a socialist, collectively laboring, and reciprocally

solidaristic society. Perhaps the ironically dismissive and bemused tone of such recent writings on the East German fifties as Stefan Wolle's *Der große Plan* (The Great Plan, 2013), with its implied dismissal of the very possibility of any actual intent or thought behind socialist construction other than power politics and ideological false conscious, is symptomatic of our current shared inability to image a path out of the catastrophe of global capitalism.³ This is not to glamorize the GDR, but to recognize the stresses and constraints of the postwar historical conjuncture, as well as the complicated dynamic of enthusiasm, resistance, and refusal in East German everyday life. In other words, rather than domination, the fifties turn out to be more about contestation, and this plays out in the cultural objects of the decade as well, particularly in what has become known as the *Aufbauroman*, or novel of socialist construction, a subgenre of socialist realist production novels written largely between 1951 and 1956.⁴ The industrial setting is, of course, no coincidence. "The workplace in the self-described socialist state is a telling site for investigating the contradictions within socialism," Loren Kruger writes, "since it is here that the tensions between state socialism and the socialization of working subjects... are most vividly dramatized."⁵ This article reads Eduard Claudius's exemplary 1951 construction novel *Menschen an unsrer Seite* (People at Our Side) as an attempt to not only portray, but to indeed narratively resolve such contradictions, which the novel productively fails to do. The novel's attentiveness to the fraught historical conjuncture of East German socialist construction and the obstinacy of the German working class, to borrow a term from Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, not as a political stance, but as a sedimented historical experience, frustrates such closure. This essay thus complicates the usual reading of this classic of East German socialist realism as a simple affirmation of

SED policies, reading it instead as a fractured allegorical structure, where allegory stands *both* for the work of reconciling reality with ideology and as the productively failed project of holding together nonsynchronous and discontinuous historical experiences within a single, fractured narrative framework.

The Man in the Fiery Furnace

Menschen an unsrer Seite is central to the literary history of the GDR. Considered in the GDR to be the first and most successful East German construction novel, it a prototype for an emergent socialist national literature.⁶ The literary discourse of the late 1940s and early 1950s was punctuated by the Party's call for a contemporary literature, or *Gegenwartsliteratur*, centered on the "heroes of labor" who were reshaping the nation through their work in the factories and fields of the Republic. Reemigrant authors like Anna Seghers, Willi Bredel, Hans Marchwitza, with their postwar novels of antifascist resistance and exile, were reproached for lagging behind this new reality.⁷ Claudius, at that point known largely for his Spanish Civil War novel, *Grüne Oliven und nackte Berge* (Green Olives and Bare Mountains, 1945), was himself such a reemigrant antifascist writer, but, with *Menschen an unsrer Seite*, he supplied a breakthrough in East German *Gegenwartsliteratur*.⁸ A contemporary review lauds the book for filling GDR literature's "the absence of the true contemporary novel," writing that Claudius' novel "makes the process of transformation in the consciousness of the working masses visible, so that everyone must see it."⁹ Claudius received the GDR's National Prize and the praise of Johannes R. Becher. "It turned out to be a decent book," Becher told Claudius, "in these times, none of us could have written it better."¹⁰ The novel is based on the feat of Hans Garbe, a mason at Siemens-Plania, a factory central to early efforts to rebuild East

German industry. In the winter of 1949–1950, facing substantial opposition from fellow workers, who saw his action as undermining their wages, and the factory management, Garbe repaired a thirty-six chambered industrial blast furnace chamber by chamber, thus allowing it to continue firing and significantly contributing to the success of the Two-Year Plan.¹¹ Not only had such a furnace never before been repaired without being shut down, but Garbe and his work brigade initiated, planned, and executed this exploit on their own, exemplifying from below the élan of the GDR's top down *Aktivistenbewegung*, or model worker movement.¹² Decorated as a Hero of Labor, or *Aktivist*, Garbe was widely celebrated in the press.¹³ Claudius met Garbe in August of 1950, and quickly wrote the reportage “Vom schweren Anfang” (A Difficult Beginning), which was published in the SED's daily paper, *Neues Deutschland* (New Germany), that year.¹⁴

Claudius was not the only author to be drawn to Garbe. In 1951, as literary portraits by several different authors began to appear, Bertolt Brecht noted Garbe's significance for socialist construction: “the worker gets on his feet by producing. need to examine what exactly changes in him and for him if instead of being shaped by history he begins to shape it himself—the condition being that this is not a purely personal process, since it concerns a class.”¹⁵ The Garbe-Büsching project, as Brecht's incomplete drama on this complex is known, was to be a deep historical exploration of the contradictions subtending socialist construction in the GDR, including also the events of June 17, 1953. The attribution of the name Büsching to the Garbe figure suggests an affinity between the deserter, as the Büsching character in fact was in Brecht's earlier fragment *Fatzer: Downfall of an Egoist*, and positive hero or model worker, whose fight for socialist production is carried out precisely against his fellow workers.¹⁶ This contradiction is the starting point of Heiner Müller's 1957 play

The Scab, which focuses strongly on the conflict between workers and Party over wages and norms, the contradiction of socialism without workers' democracy, and the ambiguity of the postfascist condition: Balke, Müller's model worker figure, informed on fellow workers to the Nazis.¹⁷ Whereas Brecht's broadens the historical frame, Müller's play remains focused on the factory and the repair of the ring furnace. Claudius takes a different tack in keeping with his *métier* as novelist. "Vom schweren Anfang" hewed closely to the events of Garbe's action and the style of the reportage, although it already contained novelistic elements. Fictionally clothing Garbe as Hans Aehre, *Menschen an unsrer Seite* expands its narrative framework beyond the earlier reportage, integrating other social themes on the model of Fyodor Gladkov's 1926 novel *Cement*, considered to be one of the founding texts of Soviet socialist realism.¹⁸ Claudius adopts not only the episodic principle of structure from *Cement*, but key elements of that novel's story like Aehre's conflict with his wife Katrin over her decision to go to work in the factory, which had not been present in the earlier Garbe reportage. In adopting these Soviet narrative conventions, Claudius inscribes East German socialist construction into the international socialist literary tradition. The conflict between Aehre's allow *Menschen an unsrer Seite* a broader social canvas than the factory, thematizing patriarchal attitudes about work, domesticity, and reproduction still common with the postfascist German working class on the one hand, and the struggles of women in the GDR to assert themselves in the workplace and the public sphere in a state that proclaimed the equality of the genders, but where social norms and practices often fell short, on the other.¹⁹ Additionally, Claudius builds in a subplot about the artistic crisis of the painter Andrytzki that opens the novel onto a self-reflexive meditation on the social function of art in a socialist society. Finally, Aehre's relationships with other characters allow Claudius to draw out some of the main axes of conflict in early East German culture, for example, mapping the problem of the repression and return of a capitalist-fascist mode of labor discipline through Aehre's recurring nightmares of the Prussian

landowner that humiliated his day laborer grandfather, the tension between spontaneity and consciousness, which is to say between workers and the Party, within Marxist-Leninist theory, practice, and culture through Aehre's complicated relationship to Party Secretary Wende,²⁰ or the contradiction between socialist labor as self-realization and as discipline that surface between the Hero of Labor Aehre and his factory colleagues.

Stefan Bock has described the Garbe story as a sort of foundational myth of the German Workers' and Peasants' State, writing "the Garbe material complex allowed the representation of *all* of the central elements of the GDR's first phase of development." The Garbe story, Bock notes, thematizes violence of German history, the *deutsche misère*, and the possibility of overcoming this bloody history through socialist construction.²¹ The Garbe material addressed issues that went beyond the positive example of Garbe himself, touching on the material and ideological limits of socialist construction in the GDR. The story locates not only aspects of the future in the GDR's present, but also the lingering habits and dispositions of a bloody past. Similarly, Bernard Greiner located the strong allegorical charge of the Garbe story in the early years of the GDR in this unsettling of time:

The renovation of the furnace during the firing process repeats in partial form the comprehensive task of a social renewal, which likewise cannot follow from a situation of standstill, but must instead be carried through in a society determined by opposing traditions, forms of behavior, and objectives.²²

The problem of repairing the furnace while it fires evokes Friedrich Schiller's famous analogy, also framed in the face of the impasses of revolution in Germany, of repairing

the clockwork of the state while it is still in motion.²³ Like Schiller's analogy, which turned less on the question of statecraft than that of sensibility, the question posed by the Garbe material was less one of industrial infrastructure and wage politics than it was of what Heiner Müller would later describe as "the education of feeling."²⁴ The central problem of the Garbe material, according to Müller, was "the portrayal of how a German working class disciplined by fascism could be made productive for the construction of socialism.... The problem of the GDR's development was then how to get out of this utilization and to emancipate the working class for the next phase of development." For Müller, such an emancipation lay in the transition from discipline to creativity as the driving principle of socialist labor, and in order to do that, "one must induce pleasure in productivity." Müller saw Brecht's great, frustrated project in the GDR as the cultivation of cultural forms contributing to "...making production attractive and unharnessing creativity,"²⁵ one that ran up against the concrete material, political, economic, and historical impasses of East German social construction. Müller never tired of framing this contradictory horizon of socialist construction, trapped between discipline and emancipation, through a metaphor he attributed to Brecht upon the latter's return to Germany in the late 1940s: "the cellars aren't even cleared out and already new houses are being constructed."²⁶ The question then, *apropos* Schiller, is how to clear the cellars without endangering the houses built atop them.

But what is in these cellars? Claudius shared Brecht and Müller's vision of German working-class experience punctuated by fascist disciplining, but his work reaches beyond it into the longer *durée* experience of proletarianization itself and its affective structure. The term that Claudius uses to denote this structure of experience,

obstinacy, or *Eigensinn*, links his work to a rich vein of social history and critical theory. Alf Lüdtke describes obstinacy in relation to the material confinement and claustrophobia at the core of proletarian modernity; obstinacy responds with “brusque and contrary behavior directed against ‘everybody’ and ‘everything’” to the impossibility of *avoiding* solidarity at close quarters.²⁷ Lüdtke furthermore identifies obstinacy with an “attitude of wait-and-see complaisance” and retreat into private concerns, or *Hinnehmen*, on the part of the working class, especially under fascism.²⁸ “The dominant element” of this attitude, Lüdtke writes, “was a sense of detachment: a self-distancing, fueled by independent needs, interests, and practices of one’s *own* making.”²⁹ Extending this frame, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge write in *History and Obstinacy* of “the peasant in me,” an irreducible kernel of nonsynchronism inhering within experience itself as a category of historical perception, which they theorize as a collective obstinacy and tie to the disorganization and expropriation of proletarian experience within capitalist productive relations. For Negt and Kluge, obstinacy “...emerges out of destitution. It is the protest against expropriation reduced to single point, drawn together at a single point, the result of the expropriation of one’s own senses that interface with the external world.”³⁰ In his essay on Negt and Kluge, Jameson points out:

it is not therefore some primal “self” that has *Eigensinn*, but rather a whole range of historically developed skills, drives, and capacities, each of which with its own “stubborn” demands and its own distinct “meaning.” Such forces, however, can be residual or emergent; they often fail to be used to capacity, and their unemployment generates specific pathologies, as does their equally possible repression, alienation, or diversion.³¹

The question posed by the Garbe material, in other words, is one of the conflicts between discipline and emancipation within socialist production, as Müller insists, but this conflict is in turn a nonsynchronous one, drawing upon the historically constituted qualities, desires, and capacities of the working class ossified in obstinate forms.

In *The Principle of Hope* (composed largely during Bloch US exile, but published in the GDR in the 1950s), Ernst Bloch identifies symbol and allegory as the rhetorical figures of meaning for societies in transition, each capable of negotiating the gap between the facticity of the present and the utopian tendencies materially inscribed therein. Yet, Bloch notes that because allegory tends toward the fragmentary, it “possesses a kind of wealth of imprecision as against the symbolic.”³² Readings of GDR novels as allegories have tended to focus, though, on the allegory as a strategy of reconciliation. Greiner, for example, reads *Menschen an unsrer Seite* as an allegory between an alienated present and a utopian future, which effaces the contradictions of the present through assertion of their reconciliation in an always deferred Communist future.³³ In fidelity to Bloch’s insistence on the fragmented, incomplete character of the allegory, I argue that the allegorical network of *Menschen an unsrer Seite*, is in fact much more complicated; the novel’s allegorical tension derives not only from the ideological erasure of the present by the presumptive future, but perhaps even more from, to borrow a phrase from Julia Hell, the traumatic presence of the past in the present.³⁴ The noncontemporaneity of the present renders the East German *Aufbauzeit* particularly prone to allegory in so far as it is torn by these claims of history and futurity and becomes opaque. The tension in allegory, as Jameson has pointed out, “consists in the withdrawal of self-sufficiency of meaning from

a given representation.” Jameson characterizes allegory as a sort of “reverse wound,” producing an irreducible possibility for the proliferation of meanings.³⁵ It is in fact this very possibility for overdetermined signification with which *Menschen an unsrer Seite* attempts to come to terms, putting Garbe’s furnace to work as a crucible of historical meaning, a kind of allegorical separating machine: “here at this ring furnace, by this example of a great achievement, everything would be separated, the old and the new, and that it involved much more than just the construction of the ring furnace.”³⁶

The desire for such an allegorical separating machine can be understood in the context of Claudius’ experience as an antifascist exile and partisan, and the sense, shared by many of Claudius’ contemporaries, of loss of place that seemed only to be exacerbated by the return to postwar Germany and its population, a kind of collision of obstinacies between reemigrant Communists and recalcitrant postfascist Germans. In a 1976 interview, Claudius elaborated, “...this problem of the overcoming of homelessness finds its counterpart—so to speak—in the postwar period, in the Fifties, in which we did not find, but rather had to form, a homeland.”³⁷ Claudius explicitly ties this problem of *Heimatformung* in the early GDR to that of narrative representation. Thus, *Heimat* formation refers not only to the building of socialism, but more specifically, for Claudius, to the role of literature in this process, “the question is thus posed: how can you as a writer influence the development of a new feeling of homeland? And—is that possible before you yourself have found the final homeland?”³⁸ For Claudius the contribution to “a new feeling of homeland” is not merely the representation of an object, but rather the narrative refashioning of postwar Germany into the GDR as an object of identification,

both for the population of East Germany and for Claudius himself.

Claudius describes his own creative crisis in the early 1950s in his 1968 autobiography, *Ruhelose Jahre* (Restless Years), essentially as a grasping for artistic structures and figures capable of clarifying this relation between the opportunities of the present and the persistent claims of the past, which for the Communist Claudius, would have to pass through the recalibration of people's relationship to their work together:

Events and people from the past, everything that allowed itself to be said about them and what must be said about them was on paper.... the present nevertheless brought, for the most part barely perceptible, transformations... But what relation to work would have to be found, and in what did the transformation, the new relationship, express itself? When I recall this period, it seems to me as if this problem—the person and work—was daily the topic of conversation in the plants and the factories, on the streets.³⁹

Upon meeting Hans Garbe, Claudius sensed that he had found a vehicle for just such figuration: “I felt that there was something that bore a resemblance to a ‘theme,’ or that could be a theme, to be found here. Here something I had sought for months seemed to be at hand: out of the mood of defeat, out of the torn hope, out of the scarcely present self-confidence had grown a new, a revolutionary relationship to labor.”⁴⁰

The Work of Allegory

Menschen an unsrer Seite stages these dilemmas of representation, labor, and history through the character of Andrytzki. Early in the novel, we are given a scene laying out this aesthetic crisis in an almost programmatic mode and grounding it in

regimes of labor and the division of Germany: Andrytzki, a proletarian artist from the western Ruhr industrial region, is unable to capture the human essence of Lisa, tractorist in an East German village. Andrytzki later recalls his failure, “when he drew, the lines remained without power and concentration; his compositions were without energy and significance” (39). Upon seeing the portrait, Lise, exclaims, “that’s supposed to be me? Do I really look so wretched?” She then explains where the problem lies: “you only look into yourself. Yes, that’s it. Everything that’s in you, sure, you see that. Now, I’m no painter, I don’t know how I should say it, but I think your eyes aren’t right” (41). In shame, Andrytzki flees the village for East Berlin and, after attempting to drink away the enigma of his faulty gaze, renounces his artistic vocation to become a technical draftsman at Siemens-Plania.

The tractorist portrait and the story around this artistic failure is an almost perfect literary performance of the debates on the inadequacy of art in the early GDR. In his 1951 reportage about the reconstruction of the Brandenburg Steel and Rolling Mills, “Ozeandämpfer auf dem Festland” (Ocean Liner on Dry Land), for example, Peter Nell provides such a negative example of how to represent labor in the form of oil paintings commissioned by the expropriated Flick concern and still hanging in the boardroom of what is now a Peoples Owned Enterprise:

two pictures have been set on either end into the dark, wood paneled walls of the conference room, high up close to the ceiling. The paintings, garishly tinted through generous deployment of ochre and red, portray the smelting and pouring of steel. Rather than living, the people represented there have the affect of dummies. The pictures are an allegory, they

correspond no doubt to the sentiment that commissioned them: the worker is only interesting from a commercial point of view, which is to say as a commodity, which he embodies through the capacity of his bones. Aside from that he is nothing, it isn't worth speaking of. The pictures express this very clearly. Artistically, they are worthless up there, imitations once upon a time scrawled out as a kitsch ideal for coupon-cutters.⁴¹

Reportage was a particularly important genre in the early GDR and had long been a central genre to working-class and Communist literature. As a genre at once literary and documentary, the reportage had functioned for the Communist Press of the Weimar Republic, and for well-known practitioners like “the raging reporter” Egon Erwin Kisch, as a medium for the collective self-representation and reciprocal communication of the working class.⁴² In the early GDR, as Ingeborg Münz-Koenen has shown, reportage was an important medium for aesthetic *reflexivity*, for the question of *how* socialist construction was to be represented in literature and the arts in the gap between the possibilities offered by the socialist horizon and the more prosaic difficulties of postwar life in the GDR; not so much portraying reality as occupying an pedagogical “productive-critical relation” to that reality.⁴³ In practice, this often led to a didacticism of style supported by a common set of symbols and metaphors, with depictions of collective labor reduced to spectacles of laboring bodies and socialist infrastructure. Nell's passage then is a double critique, both of bourgeois depictions of labor *and* of a specifically wooden mode of socialist realist portrayal that had become entrenched in the East German public sphere since the late 1940's. A steelworker later reminds the Nell's reporter of the paintings in the conference room and comments of East German artists, “a lot of them still paint like

this today...the giant basin, the huge crane constructions, the furnaces...that they see....”

After a hesitation, the worker continues, “The worker...the human being working...they have to show us that.”⁴⁴ The parallel drawn by the worker in the reportage itself then begs the question, what is the difference between this capitalist allegory and the tropes of socialist realism? It is clear that the subordination of the worker to the tools of labor—basin, crane, and furnace—in the Flick painting reflects the real subordination of the worker to the process of valorization of capital. The worker in industrial capitalism *is* in fact an appendage to the machine, as Marx reminds us.⁴⁵ What is less clear is what the same representational trope allegorizes under the conditions of socialist construction: Why does the worker *also* appear under socialism as a mere appendage of the process of production?

The correspondence between Andrytzki’s crisis and the discussion of “Flick art” in Nell’s reportage is clear, and *Menschen an unsere Seite* is also a wrestling with the question of how to depict “the new relationship to work... not as fact, but as process.” With Andrytzki’s sketches, as with Nell’s oil painting, we are faced with the breakdown of aesthetic discourse over and against the worker *qua* human being, in other words, the inability to artistically grasp the new relationship to labor in the GDR as a human affair in which the subjectivity of the worker is an “uncalculatable magnitude.”⁴⁶ This crisis in meaning is compounded the division of Germany. Andrytzski’s gaze is shaped by fascism, and is unhappily therefore at home in the West, where, the novel implies, the structure of feeling⁴⁷ and material conditions for fascism persist:

...But why? I had been able to give expression to what had gone on in those twelve years, the morose vegetating, the depression and the

surrender to helplessness, but here, here I failed! But why? Go home, give myself up? But Germany is cut down the middle and how am I supposed to get there? Cut down the middle, and what was is no more, and what is won't be so for long. And that—this knife cut down the Elbe that let me fail... (13)

Andrytzki, we are told, has achieved notoriety since 1945 and has a reputation as being “far ahead of his colleagues in his eye for the ruinous elements of fascism, for its inhumanity, which he had made visible in his pages” (41). Andrytzki, like Claudius, is an accomplished chronicler of the *deutsche misère*, of the depredation and desperation of proletarianized life. This obstinate structure of feeling is illustrated by Andrytzki's own earlier self-portrait, which he stumbles upon in his mother's kitchen after he has fled Berlin for the West due to the machinations of a saboteur at Siemen's Plania:

But his face, among all of these piled-up pasts, among the inadequate, the hesitant beginning, itself still inadequate and as if groping towards its own content, this portrait of a precocious youth gave everything away: the obstinacy and the bullheaded thoughts, the feeble melancholy and a sadness that one could not know the cause of.... Is this what I should have become, he asked himself. Like this (193)?

Andrytzki's final move to the GDR is as much a flight from this obstinate gaze as it is an embrace of socialism.

When the Siemens-Plania crane operator Suse Rieck journeys to the Rhineland to retrieve him, Andrytzki draws her in bed, and he gets it right. Suse grants the moment of recognition tractorist Lise had denied him. “Yes,” she tells him, “this is me” (196).

Andrytzki's success with Suse, however, remains as incomprehensible as his failure with Lise, yet

encounter with the anti-*Heimat* of the West shows Andrytzki how far he has moved from the affective dispensation inscribed in its geography. Suse Rieck voices a similar self-recognition. "I don't like a lot of what goes on with us," Suse tells Andrytzki of her feelings about the GDR, "there's a lot I don't understand, but after spending two days here, I understand a little more." Suse's deepened understanding is likewise based on realizing how circumscribed her radius of possibility had been as a housewife before the war. These limitations, which continue for women in the West, only become visible in contrast to the opportunities opened up by socialist construction in the East. "But today, who am I today? I've gone to work and I've found joy in my work, and that's made something new out of me" (195). Through Suse, Andrytzki begins to understand how to read social transformations through the individuals involved in them and to see people, in turn, as individuals in transformation.

The fact of socialist production becomes visible in these personal stories, and is thus itself incomplete without aesthetic reflection. Suse Rieck links these elements, and thereby offers Andrytzki a vision of the GDR as an aesthetic object, when she exclaims, "imagine if you painted Aehre! Painted him right, you know, the way he is. My God, what a picture that could be (198)!" Aehre's accomplishment is only complete when it is possible to inscribe it into the sphere of symbolic meaning *within* narrative itself. This scene of closure occurs in the "Epilogue that is a Prologue" of *Menschen an unsrer Seite* in the factory's new Culture House, when Aehre, his furnace renovation successfully completed, stands before a series of sketches and drawings Andrytzki has made of the events of the novel, culminating in a large oil painting of the central characters:

In the middle of the furnace hall, near an open chamber, in which Bakhans worked with two assistants, stood Wassermann, Wende and himself. He had raised his broad hands, and at first glance it could seem as if he wanted to strike out, but then his face—it was full of energy, bold and with clear, blue eyes—revealed that he was only making the hand motions

to emphasize the words he spoke to Wassermann, who stood before him.

Wassermann stood in front of him, his head straining forward to listen, the calm, clever countenance lit up with a smile, and in his eyes shown how happy he felt to be able to listen to Aehre. In the center of the painting, however, stood Wende, a little shorter than Aehre, but stockier, more restrained, the broad face powerful and confident; he listened with great interest, and it was obvious that he was pleased (275).

This painting portrays Aehre precisely as a positive hero acting out of a unified subjectivity. Yet this unity is not centered on Aehre, he is rather displaced to the side by SED Party Secretary Wende. The resolution of the novel allows the Party to usurp Aehre's catalytic function, and it also centers the novel temporally. The centering of the painting around the agency of the Party allows *Menschen an unsrer Seite* to staunch the wound of allegory, in other words, to fix the interplay of past and present within the present into a stable temporal dispensation presided over by the agency of the Party; a *tableaux vivant* representing what Greiner describes as "a statically grasped reality [that] forecloses development and in consequence sees the conversation only as self-confirmation of those who think alike or as the confirmation of the impossibility of a conversation."⁴⁸

The Work of Obstinacy

This final image is however jarringly dissonant with the novel it concludes; a dissonance apparent in the novel's depiction of Hans Aehre's own undoing in the novel, and points to the difficulties that Claudius himself experienced in narrating the emergence of "a new revolutionary relationship to labor." In one way, though, he perhaps succeeded

too well. Hans Aehre's productive marks him as just the type of exemplary positive hero often demanded by the cultural bureaucracy of the GDR in

the *Aufbau* years, "literary figures with the character of an example, whose actions and motivations serve as models and should move the reader to act

similarly in reality."⁴⁹ Claudius himself was apparently somewhat taken aback by the success of his novel and the degree to which Aehre was read by contemporaries as a socialist realist icon. In his autobiography, he describes his struggle with the novel, with its events and characters that struck him as "dry and contrived" and "shaped after pre-given models, not after life."⁵⁰ Indeed, Claudius writes, the success of this novel left him "mistrustful, also very reserved *vis-à-vis* my own work."⁵¹

A careful reading of the novel, however, presents Aehre not so much as an object of identification than as what Jameson calls a vanishing mediator, "the prophetic or charismatic individual term whose historical but transindividual function, according to the 'ruse of history,' is merely to enable the coming into being after him of a new type of collectivity."⁵² As a vanishing mediator, the positive hero is socially effective precisely to the degree that the character embodies not only the impulses of the "new," of socialism, but also of the "old" as a motivating dissatisfaction that sets the narrative in motion.⁵³ Heinz Hillmann describes a basic narrative movement of *Menschen an unsrer Seite* "that pulls people into itself, who then catch hold of others in the outer reaches of society, from where out of the distance, they all react (back) onto the center and vice-versa, such that each subject extends itself to subjectivity."⁵⁴ Aehre is the initial catalyst of this movement, but is himself finally unable to keep up, and is torn apart by the process he has unleashed. It is not the ideological closure of the epilogue, but rather the narrative structure of the novel as a whole that accomplishes this movement, which is not expressed as an identification of the characters with Aehre, but rather as the identification with the factory, and by extension, the GDR.

Wolfgang Engler points out *apropos* the Garbe story and its many retellings in the GDR that the work collective of the 1950s often has the appearance of a "permanent scene of struggle," with Communist partisans and heroes of labor attempting to inspire and coerce the skeptical and sometimes resentful working masses to higher productivity and extra shifts, coming "up against the sometimes bitter resistance" of the workers.⁵⁵ Aehre

is not a Stalinist man of steel, however, but rather an awkward, inarticulate figure, a sort of "dogged prodger," much as Loren Kruger describes the hero of

Brecht's adaptation of Erwin Strittmatter's play *Katzengraben*.⁵⁶ This doggedness provokes resentment and opposition from the other workers in the factory, as Katrin points out to him: "Aehre's always got to think up something, huh? ... Always has to think up something, and go up against everybody, right? And he thinks that everyone will love him for it" (21). Katrin's criticism is echoed by Aehre's foreman Matschat, later revealed as a saboteur: Aehre is "arrogant and excitable; he gives me no peace" (67). This incomprehensibly obstinacy gives Aehre his catalytic function, although the other characters are more annoyed than inspired by his example. Furthermore, Claudius renders Aehre as, by turns, creaturely and demonic. Descriptions of Aehre tend to emphasize his frantic and menacing mien and unbearable gaze: "these eyes...like the eyes of a rabid dog" (125). His awkwardness and obstinacy bring him into conflict with his colleagues and with the Party, particularly when he objects to his wife's work as a laboratory assistant at Siemens-Plania. Though a Party member, Aehre is suspicious and mistrustful, lamenting vis-à-vis his plan for the furnace, "no one will help me" (34). This mistrust informs Wende's criticism of Aehre's "partisan manner," his disregard for the channels of bureaucracy: "you're full of antagonism that comes from old times. You change and you don't see that everything around you is changing, the people around you too. That must be considered" (205). Aehre's obstinacy thus cuts two ways, rendering him a productive demiurge, but also—or at once—a kind of pariah.

"They run in their rut," Aehre says of the workers at Siemens-Plania, "they're used to it, being set to some sort of work, nothing to think about except whatever has to do with laying bricks. Tearing them out of this habit is worse than sitting in the furnace (95)." This ritualized attitude toward labor means that for the other workers, Aehre, the man who will not rest (21), poses a certain enigmatic threat. "What do you actually want? What do you want from us?," asks Aehre's colleague Bakhans at a key moment in the novel (118). The incomprehensibility of Aehre's behavior to his fellow workers is

revealed in Kerbel's remark, "you could have kept your wisdom to yourself...He's definitely not right in the head. Comes up with something and gives away his secret. Can make money like hay and shows everybody how they can make money too" (117). For Kerbel, it is precisely Aehre's failure to keep his advantage for himself that marks him as a traitor. Indeed, Claudius frames the question of the norms as a sort of discursive evasion of the worker's responsibility. "They try to convince me," says Kerbel, "that the factory belongs to us... but me, the factory doesn't belong to me" (166). This inability to grasp ownership in terms other than individual private property betrays not only a lack of collective identification, but also a reluctance to assume responsibility for the production process as a whole. This same subaltern obstinacy lies behind Bakhans's hostility to Aehre's plan: "Us...we should do it...without management, without engineers, without employers? My god, we're just workers after all (119)!"

Claudius ascribes the sullen grumbling of the workers and their attachment to "capitalist" ways of working to persistent fascist structures of feeling. Schadow, the Party inspector, muses apropos the withdrawn attitude of the workers toward the SED, "the forced silence and mistrustful caution from the times of fascism still stuck in their bones" (167). Thus, at the same time that *Menschen an unsrer Seite* narrates a movement where, following Hillmann, individual and private interests are pulled into the narrative space of the factory, these interests are simultaneously disqualified in the novel as moments of protofascist obstinacy and thrown back upon the individual, who is, as above, possessed of the antagonism of the old social order. Aehre is also burdened by this noncontemporaneity, which slices directly through him: "you remain behind the general level of development," Wende tells him, "although sometimes recently you've been ahead of it" (205). Indeed, Aehre is literally haunted by visions of the whip of labor discipline: a recurrent dream of his grandfather's violent humiliation at the hands of a Pomeranian landowner, the *Hauptmann*, or captain (18). Aehre's dream memory of the *Hauptmann* and his grandfather is not as a dream per se, but rather an experiential template. Witnessing his grandfather being beaten by the *Hauptmann* is Aehre's primal scene, a plebeian experience of creaturely submission. It is not only those in positions of authority upon whom Aehre's fantasy places the

mask of the *Hauptmann*, but importantly those who possess the formal education that Aehre himself lacks (33). Contemplating his plan, which he cannot properly write out, Aehre anticipates his paralysis before the ridicule of the plant management and the technicians with their *Hauptmannsgesichter*, “then he would say nothing more, know nothing more! And speak? ... His mouth would be glued shut.” Aehre’s lack of education and inability to express himself informs his mistrust of both the Party and the technical intelligentsia. Yet, the *Hauptmannsgesicht* that he projects onto others is, from their perspective, his own face.

Aehre’s obstinacy is specifically roused when Katrin accepts a job at his factory. This decision grows out of her own feelings of social exclusion as a housewife; the dissatisfaction that “the real life” of socialist construction “is passing me by.” Yet it is also a result of Aehre’s own initiative and limitations: she has to help with the calculations for his plan (189). Moved by Aehre’s initial failure to find support within the factory Party organization, Katrin writes a letter to the district Party leadership, which in turn restructures the factory SED leadership. Now not only does Aehre have the support of the Party, but Katrin attracts the attention of Party Secretary Wende, who offers her a position in the chemistry lab (88). Aehre is horrified at Katrin’s decision and this places him at odds with the Party, with her, and with himself. While insisting on his patriarchal prerogatives, he also invokes the deprivations of his own orphan childhood in protest, asking if their daughter Miele should alone grow up alone (155).⁵⁷ Behind Aehre’s question of what the Party has to do with his home life lurks the fear that Katrin will leave him (155-156), but also of being deserted by the Party—of being alone, exposed, and irrevocably left behind by the “general level of development.” Wende’s reproach to Aehre is put in the same idiom of Katrin’s desire to work: “it’s the times, and the Party that shapes these times. It’s us, each of us! Everyone stands behind himself and pushes himself forward. And if he doesn’t do it, then someone else has to push him (191).” Katrin similarly appeals directly to the authority of the Party when she tells Aehre: “You’re a socialist after all, and a socialist, until they put him in the ground, has to keep learning. (190). *Menschen an unsrer Seite* presents learning as a painful ordeal of subjective fissuring, of pushing and being pushed beyond one’s own subjectivity.

The learning process that Aehre undergoes here is simultaneously a process of renunciation, specifically of the *form* of his past, the way that the past encodes present

experience. When the bourgeois engineer Wassermann asks Aehre what gives him his will and his determination, Aehre replies that this energy had always been there, but obscured under “ten trucks full of filth.” It is the Party that shovels this filth away: “my Party clears it away, all of the trash...and I see that there’s something in me that I knew nothing about” (226). The contradiction here is that *Menschen an unsrer Seite* as a narrative itself has a very difficult time pinning down this thing that is in Aehre. We are given clues—the inner motor, the good words of the Party that Aehre contains but must learn to speak—but such clues remain essentially abstract. Instead, as the novel proceeds, Aehre becomes increasingly confused and frenzied, a development that would seem to suggest that the Party’s remediation project is in fact both disorienting and unpleasant. Instead of the positive hero, we are given an increasingly paranoid and frantic Aehre, caught between the antagonistic passivity of the old and the terror of the new. At the same time, his own experiential template increasingly breaks down, and has alienated him from himself and from Katrin:

She went forward, always further ahead, and he had leaden soles under his boots. But hadn’t he nailed them on there himself? Certainly, everything that was sluggish and clumsy about him, and the insufficient will power, to get rid of this ponderousness, was grounded in the past; but could this past be eternally called upon (203)?

The nadir of Aehre’s breakdown comes as he attempts to enter the brickworks to check on the progress of the brick he has designed. Fahle, the foreman, realizing that Aehre will only upset the work, instructs the woman at the door not to let Aehre in and to tell him to go home to his wife. This has a very definite interpellative structure; Aehre is hailed and

compelled to produce his own name, which, however fails to trigger any sort of recognition.⁵⁸ This moment is followed by one in which Aehre is reduced precisely to abstract individuality in a sort of pre-symbolic fury:

But the girl's voice couldn't say anything more, so she laughed, and he stood before the iron door, looked at his fists, and then everything on him twitched, his hands and his fists, slowly at first, then faster, and if someone could have seen him, he would maybe have had the notion that, in the middle of the night, a huge clumsy bear was dancing in front of the door to the brickworks. He screamed and began to sing, still dancing before this naked, cold door, and he felt the tears run down his face in thin streams, and he let the water come, let it come and thought only: my god...my god (242)!

Aehre's name itself is now an open signifier, a question rather than an answer: "If I've gotten stuck, if I've run so far into the woods, well, then you have to help me out, right (243)?" By the end of the novel, the obstinacy and lack of education and elocution that motivated Aehre have become obstacles excluding him from the very community constituted through this movement, left as a creature exposed, a lone swimmer in the order of socialism that he has helped to build, but in which he sees no place for himself.

Yet, in the meantime, Aehre's stubborn instance has spun an entire web of social relationships around the place of the factory, not as a thing, but as a field of subjective and social affectivity.⁵⁹ It is possible to understand the various descriptions of the factory as *Heimat*, then less as sentimental propaganda, but as the tentative narrative solution to the crisis of subjective displacement and historical indeterminacy that is so often

articulated in the literature of the 1950s. The factory thus becomes not only the scene of production in the narrow sense, but the site of the production of social relationships themselves:

Without looking at one another, silently, they walked on, and both would have liked to say: Our factory! And both saw the same thing before them, all that made up the factory: the work halls and the barracks, the brickworks and the furnace hall, the humid fumes coming from the halls, and the hazy ribbons that blew slowly across the sky from Rüdersdorf; and each knew that the other saw it as well (240).

The factory in this quote has a similar function to that of the sketches and painting in the Cultural Center, that is, it functions as a medium of mutual recognition, but now without the static hierarchical arrangement of Party, worker, and technical intelligentsia, without the muting of affect, that characterize Andrytzki's painting. The role of the factory as a site of mutual recognition is paralleled by the role of the labor process itself as a structure of harmonization, in which "one perceived not only the willingness of work but also the workers' playing off of one another that one sees in a good soccer team" (233). It is in the descriptions of the factory, as opposed to the Epilogue, that Claudius manages to harmonize to some degree proletarian obstinacy with the project of collective socialist world making. Thus Suse Rieck: "this black, dirty factory with its wild turmoil of work, with its extremely complicated, barely graspable manufacturing process, and with its thousands of people, coarse and often gruff people, this was her homeland" (233). These are the people settling into their houses upon the cellars still uncleared, to return to Müller's Brechtian metaphor; those who will be tasked with the problem posed by a

character in Erwin Strittmatter's 1963 novel *Ole Bienkopp*: "obstinacy without self-interest [*Eigensinn ohne Eigennutz*]"—there's no word yet for that" (251). The narrative, however, is forced to arrest the search for this word by virtue of the arrested character of the East German public sphere. *Menschen an unsrer Seite* is as a literary snapshot of a moment rent "between Ice Age and Commune,"⁶⁰ of a socialism that could not afford to "clear out the cellars" in the sense of a proletarian cultural revolution—for Negt and Kluge "the organized experience of the masses"⁶¹—in face of the "objective difficulties"⁶² of its fascist legacy and Cold War besiegement. Claudius's characters find themselves trying to transform their world not at the ideal time, but in real time. The novel formally registers these constraints through the static closure of Andrytzki's socialist realist *tableau* and yet undermines its finality in Katrin's closing line: "Old stories? No way! New stories, sure, but old ones, no way (276)!"

¹ Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville and Stephan Plaice (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 106.

² Frederic Jameson, "Beyond the Cave: Demystifying the Ideology of Modernism," in *The Ideologies of Theory* (London and New York: Verso Press, 2008), 415-433, 418.

³ Stefan Wolle, *Der große Plan: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1949-1961* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2013).

⁴ On the East German construction novel as a subgenre of socialist realism, see Matthias Aumüller, *Minimalistische Poetik: Zur Ausdifferenzierung des Aufbausystems in der Romanliteratur der frühen DDR* (Münster: Mentis, 2015).

⁵ Loren Kruger, *Post-Imperial Brecht: Politics and Performance, East and South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 62.

⁶ *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur v. 11: Literatur der DDR*, ed. Horst Haase, Hans-Jürgen Geerds, Erich Kühne, Walter Pallus. (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1977), 251 and Joachim Hannemann and Lothar Zschuckelt. *Schriftsteller in der Diskussion. Zur Literaturentwicklung der fünfziger Jahre* (Berlin: Dietz, 1979), 106.

⁷ "Ruf an die Künstler und Schriftsteller: Entschließung sozialistischer Künstler und Schriftsteller," in *Dokumente zur Kunst-Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED*, ed. Elmar Schubbe (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1972), 94-95. For a discussion about SED cultural policy in this period within the wider context of the transformation of the East German literary field and its function in relation to a new socialist audience, see Lenora Krenzlin, "Theoretische Diskussionen und praktisches Bemühen um die Neubestimmung der Funktion der Literature an der Wende der fünfziger Jahre," in *Literarisches Leben in der DDR 1945 bis 1960. Literaturkonzepte und Leseprogramme*, ed. Ingeborg Münz-Koenen et. al. (Berlin:

Akademie, 1979), 152-195. For a reprise of the literary-cultural debates of the 1950s, see Stephan Brockmann, *The Writers' State: Constructing East German Literature, 1945-1959* (Rochester: Camden House, 2015).

⁸ Claudius was a trained mason from the industrial Ruhr region who joined the KPD in 1932 and went into exile with the Nazi seizure of power. Between stints in Swiss internment camps for undesirable refugees, Claudius fought in the antifascist International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War and alongside Italian partisans in World War Two. After briefly returning to Munich at the end of the war, Claudius settled in Potsdam. In the GDR, in addition to his roles in the Writers Union and the Academy of the Arts, Claudius served diplomatic roles in Syria and Vietnam.

⁹ Alice Stettiner, "Der neue Mensch an unsrer Seite" in *Kritik in der Zeit. Der Sozialismus—seine Literatur—ihre Entwicklung*, Klaus Jarmatz, ed. (Halle: Mitteldeutscher, 1970), 272-3.

¹⁰ Eduard Claudius, *Ruhelose Jahre. Erinnerungen* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher, 1968) 379. Cited in Stephan Bock, "Chronik zu Brechts *Garbe* / *Büsching*-Projekt und Käthe Rülickes Bio-Interview *Hans Garbe erzählt*, sowie zu anderen Bearbeitungen des Garbe-Stoffes (Eduard Claudius, Karl Grünberg, Maximilian Scheer) von 1949 bis 1954," in *Brecht-Jahrbuch 1977* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 81-99, 89.

¹¹ Bock, "Chronik," *Brecht Yearbook*, 82.

¹² The *Aktivistenbewegung*, based on the Soviet Stakhanovite movement, was introduced in 1948 along with piece rate norms designed to stimulate labor productivity. Workers in the SBZ/GDR saw the activist movement as a method of speed-up and wage cutting. Model workers were often shunned by colleagues. The

issue of wages and norms was central to the uprising of June 17, 1953. Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: from Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 350-1. On the early labor politics of the SED and workers' reactions, see also Alf Lüdtke, "'Helden der Arbeit'—Mühen beim Arbeiten. Zur mißmutigen Loyalität von Industriearbeitern in der DDR," in *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, ed. Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 188-213.

¹³ See Bock above for a detailed account of the Garbe complex in GDR literature. Loren Kruger provides an excellent account of Brecht and Müller's work with this material in her chapter "Realism, Modernism, and Socialism in the Production Play" in *Post-Imperial Brecht* (see note 4), 56-132. On the history of Garbe and the Siemens-Plania plant, which produced graphite products for the electronics industry until it was shuttered and largely demolished after the Wende, eventually becoming a shopping center catering to Berlin's Asian community, see *Von Siemens-Plania zu Dong Xuan: Ausstellung zu einem Industriestandort mit Theatergeschichte in Berlin-Lichtenberg*, ed. Peter Badel, Holger Herschel, Karl Karau (Berlin: Theater der Zeit 2009).

¹⁴ Bock, "Chronik," *Brecht Yearbook*, 82.

¹⁵ Bertolt Brecht, *Journals, 1934-1955*, ed. John Williett and Ralph Manheim (New York: Routledge, 1993), 438. The original German reads, "wenn er von objekt der geschichte zu ihrem subject wird" or "when he moves from being an object of history to its subject." Bertolt Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal 1942 bis 1955* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp,

1974), 578. Brecht's interest in Hans Garbe was also the catalyst for a biographical

protocol, based on stenographs of interviews conducted by Brecht's assistant at the Berliner Ensemble, Käthe Rühlicke. Käthe Rühlicke, *Hans Garbe Erzählt* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1952).

¹⁶ Kruger, *Post-Imperial*, 86

¹⁷ Heiner Müller, *Der Lohndrucker*, in *Werke 3: Die Stücke 1*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2000), 27-64, 42.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the relationship between *Menschen an unsrer Seite* and *Cement*, see Anneli Hartmann and Wolfram Eggeling, "Vom Gremjatschi Log nach Katzgraben. Zum Transfer Sowjetschen Arbeitskultur und ihrer Literatur," in *Literatur der DDR, Rückblicke*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau (Munich: text + kritik, 1991), 13-17.

¹⁹ On the struggles and achievements of women in the early GDR, see Ina Merkel, *...und Du, Frau an der Werkband: Die DDR in den 50er Jahren* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1990).

²⁰ On the dialectic of spontaneity and consciousness in the revolutionary party, see VI Lenin, *What is to be Done* (New York: International Publishers, 1968). On this problem in socialist realism, see Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000 [1981]), 15.

²¹ Bock, *Literatur-Gesellschaft-Nation*, 16-7. On the thematics of the *deutsche Misère*, see Jost Hermand, "Heines Wintermärchen, zum Topos der 'deutschen Misere,'" in *Sieben Arten, an Deutschland zu leiden*, Jost Hermand, ed. (Königstein: Athenäum, 1979), 127-141.

²² Bernard Greiner, *Von Allegorie zur Idylle: Die Literatur der Arbeitswelt in der DDR* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1974), 69.

- ²³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (New York: Penguin 2016), 8.
- ²⁴ Heiner Müller, *Gesammelte Irrtümer 1: Interviews und Gespräche* (Frankfurt/Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1986) 191.
- ²⁵ Müller, *Gesammelte Irrtümer 1*, 189. On the aesthetics of production in Brecht and Müller, see David Bathrick's chapter "Affirmative and Negative Culture: The Struggle for a Tradition" in *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 87-108.
- ²⁶ Heiner Müller, "Brecht vs. Brecht," in *Germania*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer, trans. Bernard and Caroline Schulz (New York: Semiotext(e), 1990), 124-133, 127.
- ²⁷ Alf Lüdtke, "What happened to the 'Fiery Red Glow'? Workers' Experiences and German Fascism," in *The History of Everyday Life, Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 198-151, 227-8.
- ²⁸ Lüdtke, "What Happened," 199.
- ²⁹ Lüdtke, "What Happened," 204.
- ³⁰ Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *History and Obstinacy*, ed. Devin Fore, trans. Richard Langston, Cyrus Shahan, Martin Brady, Helen Hughes, Joel Golb, trans. (New York: Zone, 2014), 292.
- ³¹ Fredric Jameson, "On Negt and Kluge," in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 42-74, 51-2.
- ³² Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature, Selected Essays*, Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenberg, ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 110, 138.
- ³³ Jameson, "On Negt and Kluge, 57-64, 75-6.

³⁴ Julia Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and East German Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) 105.

³⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso 1998), 122.

³⁶ Eduard Claudius, *Menschen an unsrer Seite* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1976), 163.

³⁷ On East German construction novels as a form of regional literature directed at constituting the GDR as what we might call, with a nod to Benedict Anderson, an “imagined community” (Heukenkamp doesn’t use the term), see Ursula Heukenkamp, “Ortsgebundenheit. Die DDR-Literatur als Variante des Regionalismus in der deutschen Nachkriegsliteratur,” *Weimarer Beiträge* 42, no 1 (1996): 30-53.

³⁸ Horst Haase, “Gespräch mit Eduard Claudius,” *Weimarer Beiträge* 22, no 7 (1976): 99.

³⁹ Eduard Claudius, *Ruhelose Jahre. Erinnerungen* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher, 1968), 353.

⁴⁰ Claudius, *Ruhelose*, 356.

⁴¹ Peter Nell, “Ozeandämpfer auf dem Festland” in *Bauplatz DDR* (Potsdam: Märkische, 1951). 46.

⁴² On the reportage in the Weimar Republic, see Christoph Straub, *Proletarische Welten: Internationalistische Literatur in der Weimar Republik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 177-233. The status of reportage in Marxist aesthetics was precisely the bone of contention between Georg Lukács and the proletarian-revolutionary writers of the Weimar Republic. See Georg Lukács, “Reportage or Portrayal,” in *Essays on Realism*, Rodney Livingstone, ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 45-75.

⁴³ Ingeborg Münz-Koenen, “Zur Reportageliteratur der fünfziger Jahre,” *Weimarer Beiträge*, no. 1 (1977): 38-71, 57.

⁴⁴ Nell, "Ozeandämpfer," 55.

⁴⁵ Karl Marx. *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One* (New York: Vintage Books 1977) 614.

⁴⁶ Münz-Koenen, "Zur Reportageliteratur," 65.

⁴⁷ For Raymond Williams's notion of structure of feeling as a felt response to a historical conjuncture, see *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128-135.

⁴⁸ Greiner, *Allegory*, 75

⁴⁹ Lenora Krenzlin, "Theoretische Diskussionen und praktisches Bemühen," *Literarisches Leben in der DDR*, 180.

⁵⁰ Claudius, *Ruhelose*, 369.

⁵¹ Claudius, *Ruhelose*, 378.

⁵² Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious, Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 279.

⁵³ Heinz Hillmann, "Subjektivität in der Prosa," in *Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart. Band 11: Die Literature der DDR*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schmitt (Munich: DTV, 1983), 385-434, 386.

⁵⁴ Hillmann, "Subjektivität," 388.

⁵⁵ Wolfgang Engler, *Die Ostdeutschen, Kunde von einem verlorenen Land* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1999), 284.

⁵⁶ Kruger, *Post-Imperial*, 81.

⁵⁷ This plot line is borrowed from Gladkov's novel. In *Cement* this conflict between

the protagonist Gleb and his wife Dasha is intractable, and indeed is explicitly framed in terms of the fundamentally exploitative character of the traditional family and its incompatibility with socialism. *Menschen an unsrer Seite*, reflecting perhaps the much more sexually conservative climate of the GDR, relativizes this conflict (indeed, Gladkov's "Stalinist" revision of *Cement* in 1941 did the same). In Gladkov's original novel, Dasha's flight from the home results in the death of Dasha and Gleb's daughter in an under-funded state orphanage. The fear that their daughter, Miele, will be left to fend for herself also motivates Aehre's resistance to Katrin's going to work, but when confronted with the excellent day care facilities of the GDR, Aehre is deprived of this objection. Claudius, *Menschen*, 155, 216-220. See also Hartmann and Eggeling, "Von," note 63.

⁵⁸ On interpellation, see Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review, 1971), 85-125.

⁵⁹ On labor itself as a nexus of social relationships, see Wolfgang Engler, *Bürger, ohne Arbeit: Für eine radikale Neugestaltung der Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2005), 51.

⁶⁰ Heiner Müller, *Der Bau*, in *Werke 3*, 329-396, 393.

⁶¹ Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge. *The Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 161.

⁶² Heiner Müller, *Lohndrucker*, 39.