

Escape from Germany: Disappearing Bodies  
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in Christian Kracht's Prose . . . . . RICHARD LANGSTON 50

Kracht's novels *Faserland* (1995) and *1979* (2001) identify Germany as a locus of postmodernity, where images replace reality and time and space collapse to produce global simultaneity. These novels not only map the effects of this borderlessness directly onto the material body, but also explore ways out of this conundrum using spatial displacement and corporeal invisibility. *Faserland* explores modern strategies for securing the body against the postmodern proliferation of the abject that blurs borders between self and world. *1979* catapults this flight eastward and unveils the disastrous consequences of trying to reverse the postmodern condition through an ascetic orientalism. *1979* also presents an alternative escape rooted in imagining and inhabiting temporal autonomous zones unencumbered by postmodern forces that dematerialize and destroy bodies.

Postmodernism and the Place of Nostalgia in  
Ingeborg Bachmann's *Franza* Fragment . . . HEIDI SCHLIPPHACKE 71

Theorists have often pointed to the regressive nature of what Svetlana Boym calls the "historical emotion" of nostalgia. Especially in the German-language context, nostalgia is often associated with longing for a lost *Heimat*, an idealized German or Austrian nation that supercedes the unpleasant memory of fascism. Yet recent discussions suggest that, especially in European literature and art, nostalgia might conjoin irony and affect. Bachmann's *Franza* fragment (1965–1966) engages with postmodernism by merging citation, nostalgia, and historical reflection. Bachmann's fragment recuperates Wilkie Collins's literary villain "Percival Glyde" (*The Woman in White*, 1860), performing an ironic displacement of literary nostalgia. This intertext recasts Franza's idealized father figure, Glyde, as a predecessor to the Nazi father ubiquitous in Bachmann's works. Hence, nostalgia is simultaneously recuperated and displaced.

Debris and Remembrance: Anna Seghers's "Ausflug" and  
Walter Benjamin's "Engel der Geschichte" . . . BIRGIT MAIER-KATKIN 90

This article reveals a confluence of thought in the work of Anna Seghers and Walter Benjamin. Close textual analysis of Seghers's *Ausflug der toten Mädchen* and Benjamin's "Engel der Geschichte" demonstrates that during the 1940s both authors engaged in a related literary, social, and political discourse about the *Trümmer* and history of their time. Both texts focus on imagery of rampant physical destruction and merciless death, while also deriving concepts of remembrance from a dialectic of debris and recovery. By raising awareness of lost and hidden moments of a vanished past, Benjamin and Seghers challenge readers to recognize the past in present experience and to identify spatial or temporal continuities that link past and present generations.

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RICHARD LANGSTON

*The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

## **Escape from Germany: Disappearing Bodies and Postmodern Space in Christian Kracht's Prose**

Postmodernism, Fredric Jameson claims, has brought about “the transformation of reality into images” (125). This postmodern apotheosis of the visual has, according to Martin Jay, led not only to a visual hypertrophy but also to the denigration of sight (543, 546). Certainly the most concise if not renowned account of the postmodern frenzy of the visual, Jean Baudrillard’s genealogy of the image, employs the relationship of a map to a landmass to illustrate how visible signs have severed themselves from their referents such that they themselves now pass for reality itself. In effect, the difference between cartographic abstraction and the actual territory it maps disappears such that we are left with only a hyperreal world of simulations. Along with this triumph of illusions over their referents, the cartographer’s object of study, the terrain itself, has also vanished from view. In spite of the existence of lingering vestiges of reality, Baudrillard insists that the dominion of images is complete and unassailable. Even the most violent provocations like hijackings or armed robbery—forms of agency designed by a few individuals to strike at a locus of power and rematerialize the real—are nostalgic and ineffectual, for what they seek is nowhere to be found (*Simulacra* 20–21). Primarily concerned with establishing the structure and function of simulacra as globalized systems of domination, Baudrillard provides no answers for his readers as to how to orientate themselves in a world that is both spectacular and vanishing before their eyes. The postmodern hall of mirrors is an endless labyrinth without an escape hatch.

While postmodern simulacra have played deceptive tricks on the mind and the eye, postmodernity has instigated others to embrace iconoclasm, blindness, and disappearing acts as guidelines for re-orientation and agency. Jay cites Jean-François Lyotard as identifying in absence, nothingness, and formlessness the possibility of accessing a “postmodern sublime” (573–84). Lyotard’s anti-ocularcentrism refrained from reconciling the postmodern split between “the senses and what makes sense” and instead suggested that the wandering de-materialized body constituted the precondition for negotiating the continuously shifting phantasmagorias of the postmodern (Jay

584, 586). With an eye on the abject body in contemporary art, Hal Foster proffers the view that critical responses to postmodernity have not necessarily jettisoned the body's materiality but rather have locked on to corporeal sites and conditions that espouse formlessness and non-being (149). From this perspective, putting the broken boundaries of the material body on display rejects the simulacrum's knack for whitewashing the real and staging its own virtuality. In Foster's engagement with Julia Kristeva, the abject—any phantasmic substance that is both foreign and intrinsic to the subject and that must therefore be expelled in order to preserve the subject's integrity—can exceed modernism's ability to sublimate the abject's blurring of borders and obfuscation of identities (Foster 153, 165; Kristeva 207). Under the sign of postmodernity, the abject has proliferated and intensified such that it proves capable of shattering the illusions of the simulacrum and arriving at the real.<sup>1</sup> The abject can also backfire and obliterate the body entirely. In this case, the corpse occupies a position of radical negation where "power cannot penetrate"; but this comes at the price of pushing agency into the realm of nihilism (Foster 166–68). While Lyotard and Foster advance divergent approaches for grappling with the simulacra, both make convincing cases that the eye is no longer reliable; the fight against the simulacrum must transpire in and on the material body.

This quagmire—the body as a site of domination and resistance within the postmodern apotheosis of the visual—figures centrally in the narratives and public personae of Christian Kracht. Take, for example, his incendiary pronouncements from late September 2001: "Ich möchte ein Bilderverbot haben, ein radikales, islamisches Bilderverbot" (Reents). Kracht failed to garner the public outrage that Karl Heinz Stockhausen sparked when he declared 9/11 "das größtmögliche Kunstwerk was es je gegeben hat."<sup>2</sup> His assertions were nonetheless scandalous:

Der einäugige Mullah Omar, Führer der Taliban, ist [...] eine viel stärkere Figur, weil es ihn nicht auf Fotos gibt. Mullah Omar lässt sich nicht fotografieren, im Gegensatz zu Bin Ladin, der ein durchamerikanisiertes Symbol geworden ist wie Bart Simpson oder Ronald McDonald, das man wahlweise und beliebig negativ aufladen kann oder nicht. Bin Ladin denkt, er kann die Bilder von sich selbst benutzen, um etwas zu erreichen, deshalb wird er scheitern. Mullah Omar, der meinen vollen Respekt hat, ist unsichtbar, sein selbst auferlegtes Verschwinden, das Nie-dagewesen-Sein wird ihn zum Märtyrer machen. (Reents)

Surely a repugnant position to many readers, Kracht's claim illustrates above all his carefully calculated (mis)use of alterity endemic to the abject in order to veil his message. As is often the case in his writing, the surface of Kracht's statement agitates, disgusts, confuses, and distracts, for it employs the abject (in this case embodied by the Taliban) to convey his point. Strip his statement of its charged language and the remaining key terms (partial blindness and strength, the image taboo, invisibility, and invisibility versus the image) make

clear Kracht's overriding concern for the visual field, its global reach, its powerful sway over the individual, and the possibility of agency. Kracht grounds his wish for a prohibition of images in the conviction that being seen is to be caught within the simulacrum and thus rendered powerless. Conversely and more importantly, invisibility derives from the conscious and willful abstention from the transnational network of images (which he metonymically subsumes under the sign of McDonalds) and accordingly promises an escape. Call it an abject illustration of his image politics, Kracht's utilization of Mullah Omar's iconoclasm emanates from an overriding desire to challenge Baudrillard's cultural pessimism by resurrecting the possibility of escape in spite of postmodernity's foreclosure of any such deterritorializing move. However, Kracht's solution raises several red flags. By equating iconoclasm with individual strength and identifying martyrdom as the final mark of triumph over the postmodern order of images, Kracht casts this fateful drama like a postmodern update of the Baroque mourning-play. Far more curious, the central bifurcation in Kracht's blueprint for an escape out of postmodernity goes beyond pairing the visible with the invisible. It also delineates an idealized and vanishing Orient from the decrepit and ever-present Occident. Surprisingly, all but a few of his readers have failed to charge Kracht and his prose with orientalism.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the lure of a mystical East was precisely what mesmerized a great many readers of Kracht's second novel entitled *1979*.

The story of a gay couple's misfortune during their journey into Tehran on the eve of the Iranian Revolution, *1979* signaled in the minds of critics a turn from the West. At one end of the interpretative spectrum *1979* was heralded as the end of German pop literature, which first gained notoriety in the mid-1990s. These critics saw in *1979* a signal that the consumer-oriented, aesthetically-obsessed, and hedonistic values celebrated in Kracht's pop debut *Faserland* from 1995 had run their course. In other words, *1979* killed the superficial pleasures of *Faserland* and in their place erected something more earnest and unquestionably more literary (Jähner). Other critics distilled from Kracht's second novel a much needed life lesson at a sudden moment of uncertainty in the Occident. According to these readings, *1979* transcended hermetic matters like literary aesthetics by rallying against "die Dekandenz und moralische Verrottung des Westens" (Spiegel). Similarly, *1979* unveiled the preeminent Eastern sources of happiness in a Western world under siege: asceticism, spiritualism, and a collective consciousness. For this reading, the timeliness and cultural relevance of Kracht's apparent anti-materialist message was uncanny in the shadow of 9/11. Interestingly enough, the orientalist frenzy around *1979*—its emphasis on the novel's prophetic character as well as its insistence on identifying in the novel a discursive paradigm shift—all but ignored Kracht's own tip-off that vision, images, and above all invisibility run to the core of his prose's engagement with the postmodern.

In contradistinction to those critical positions that either praise or deride Kracht's prose because of its orientalism, the following essay engages each of Kracht's works through their dialogical relationship to one another, taking Kracht at his word when he exclaimed that *1979* was an extension of *Faserland* (Cosmo). Without dismissing outright those charges against Kracht's orientalist transgressions, this essay forges links between Kracht's debut and his second novel and casts them against the backdrop of Baudrillard's cartographic illustration of the simulacrum. This investigation insists that spatial displacement and invisibility entwine to form a double-pronged response to the image-driven world of the simulacrum. Efforts in Kracht's prose to escape the simulacrum circumscribed within national boundaries lead to a geographical displacement toward Asia and thereby invite the temptations of orientalism. By insisting that Kracht's novels inform one another, the following discussion cross-fertilizes the topos of temporality captured in the title of his second novel—the year 1979—with that of space from his first novel—a variation on “Vaterland.” This analysis utilizes the concept of accelerated “time-space compression” in order to assess how temporal and spatial coordinates constitute both the symptoms of postmodernity and influence identity formations against it. As for how the commodity status of images plays out along these axes, David Harvey points out that the dizzying turnover of images—a hallmark of the postmodern—has brought about a collapse of linear time such that the past and present merge into an overwhelming present. Additionally, spatial barriers have imploded such that global simultaneity is now a reality (291, 293). This “annihilation of space through time” has drawn, for capitalists and consumers alike, attention to the importance of negotiating “relative locational advantages” in the global village that, for the former, allow for new flexible means of accruing capital and, for the latter, necessitate identity constructions rooted in local places. Harvey writes, “place-identity, in this collage of superimposed spatial images that implode in upon us, becomes an important issue, because everyone occupies spaces of individuation (a body, a room, a home, a shaping community, a nation), and how we individuate ourselves shapes identity” (302).<sup>4</sup> Whether grounding identity in places can truly amount to a remedy for this time-space compression and exactly how such a successful claim would manifest itself are questions for which there are no simple answers. By inserting Kracht into this theoretical matrix, this essay contends that his interest in images, the prominence of spatial displacement and invisibility, as well as the underlying menace of time-space compression all point to a crisis of identity in his works. This essay thus taps into the existing scholarship on Kracht's work that focuses on identity formation, especially in *Faserland*.<sup>5</sup> But unlike those arguments that insist upon the failures of Kracht's subjects to overcome their vertiginous postmodern condition, this essay argues that Kracht's novels together map the province of

postmodernity onto the globe and determine not so much whether an identity immune to postmodern effects is feasible but rather where and to what degree such a sense is retrievable. The sequel to *Faserland* reflects Kracht's sustained effort to locate temporally and spatially any and all forms of freedom and agency amidst postmodern paralysis. How this influences a reading of orientalism in these novels remains to be seen.

Celebrated and despised for its apparent embrace of affirmative consumerism and its anti-political sentiment, *Faserland* garnered the reputation among literary scholars and critics as a novel about the troubled search for identity in postmodern times. The novel depicts a nameless twenty-to-thirty something who travels aimlessly from Sylt to Lindau in order to visit stylish friends and trendy locales, all of which fail to satisfy his wanderlust. As for the protagonist's identity crisis, what remains unresolved among scholars are the origins of this dilemma and the influence on his fate. According to Anke Biendarra, the grounds for his failed quest for self lie in his flawed decisions to indulge in consumer culture, whose genesis Biendarra locates in the formation of the Berlin Republic. By turning to designer labels, high-society friends, and fashionable bars, clubs and parties, the aimless wanderer hopes to transform himself into a coherent whole person by delivering himself from overwhelming feelings of emptiness (167–68). Biendarra emphasizes not only the futility but also the fatality in this excessive reliance on the superficial, for she sees in the novel's unresolved conclusion, in which the protagonist rows to the middle of Lake Zurich, the logical consequence of his relentless empty feelings: preparations for a suicide attempt by drowning. For Fabian Lettow, however, the origins of the protagonist's dilemma lie beyond the realm of individual agency: the decidedly postmodern milieu of contemporary Germany that infects the individual with a debilitating case of vertigo. On these spatial circumstances, Lettow writes, "Durch den Holocaust (der im Text beständig dadurch mit thematisiert wird, dass der Ich-Erzähler [...] in jedem ihm unsympathischen Gesicht stets einen Nazi wittert) steht Deutschland prototypisch für die Zerstörung von Humanität und Werteverbindlichkeit. Genau das bedeutet Postmoderne an dieser Stelle: Die zerschlagene Basis von allgemein verbindlichen Werthorizonten..." (289). For Lettow, this post-Wall postmodern chaos—the culmination of Germany's disastrous 20<sup>th</sup> century—not only destabilizes the protagonist's identity but also stands as an adversarial force with which the novel's nameless wanderer must reckon. Unlike Biendarra who sees *Faserland* as a modern-day morality play whose message emanates from the protagonist's alleged suicide, Lettow deemphasizes the significance of the novel's open ending. He casts the narrative in terms of a David-versus-Goliath conflict in which the wanderer outdoes postmodernity by relentlessly setting himself

off from everything and everyone else with the help of his massive reservoir of commercial labels.

There is credible evidence in *Faserland* that makes Lettow's attempt to assign agency to the novel's protagonist much more than just another generic academic effort to whip up intervention when in fact there is none. However, the tautological conflict that arises between Biendarra's insistence on a critique of consumerism and Lettow's application of Bourdieu's category of distinction leaves the role of material culture in the novel ambivalent, if not entirely irresolvable. Entirely overlooked heretofore, another mode of agency prevails throughout the protagonist's seemingly aimless journey from Sylt to Zurich, one that takes into consideration not only the quandary of imploded postmodern space but also the remaining "spaces of individuation" at the level of the material body. Dismissed as one of many signs of his decline, cigarette smoking is one of the protagonist's most central preoccupations. Although the reader learns of maybe three cigarettes in one chapter or a dozen in another, the wanderer is constantly enshrouded in a haze of smoke.<sup>6</sup> The occasions for smoking cigarettes range from the insignificant and banal (e.g., smoking out of habit, a social ritual, or a means to bide one's time) to the provocative and emotional (e.g., smoking as a reaction against anti-smoking regulations, a means to repress tears, or to counteract the shock of a revolting experience). The grounds for smoking, however, transcend these superficial scenarios and run to the core of the protagonist's reasons for wandering north to south as well as his concomitant identity work. Cigarette smoking is, much more than his assemblage of consumer goods, a means for regaining control of the embodied self by accomplishing the very opposite, namely the disillusion of the firm boundaries between the body and its surroundings.

In his ruminations on cigarettes and the ontological status of the smoking subject, Richard Klein describes smoking as an "experience of boundlessness" (63). Referring to Jean Paul Sartre's own deliberations on the appropriation of things in *Being and Nothingness*, Klein argues that cigarettes resist Sartre's critique of bourgeois ownership as captured in his proposition "I am what I have" because smoking cigarettes, obliterates the very object of appropriation (the cigarette) and would accordingly extinguish the self. In other words, smoking cigarettes leads to a kind of invisibility. Klein goes further by pointing out that smoking cigarettes runs to the core of the concept of appropriating the world symbolically through violence:

Tobacco, says Sartre, is "the symbol of the appropriated object" because, as it is smoked, the solid thing is gradually turned into smoke which enters my body. Smoking mimes the desired transformation of an object into myself through an act of appropriative possession; the object becomes "mine" by a process of "continuous destruction," "the transformation of the consumed solid into smoke," whereby it passes into me and becomes (part of) myself. (38)

When seen from this vantage point, smoking cigarettes is dialectical, for it destabilizes the borders between the self and the world. At the same time, it entails a form of agency that promises the smoker a chance to experience himself as if he were the stable object—the being-in-itself—that he inhales and exhales.

Although *Faserland's* protagonist never reflects on the political and philosophical ramifications of smoking cigarettes, he nevertheless acknowledges his reliance on the ontological usefulness of smoking cigarettes at that moment when cigarettes are no longer necessary. At the close of his journey, the use value of cigarettes suddenly appears superfluous. "Während ich spazieren gehe," he says two days after crossing over into Switzerland, "rauche ich Zigaretten, aber irgendwie paßt es nicht so richtig, hier zu rauchen" (144). If, as the narrator infers here, the benefits of smoking are only redeemable in Germany, it seems at first unclear just what it is about being in Switzerland that invalidates the power of the cigarette. He speaks in general terms of Zurich's pristine beauty, extols its neutrality in World War II, and most of all envies the uninterrupted continuum of Swiss history throughout the 20th century as made evident by the city's unspoiled architecture. That Switzerland appears to be the solution for his problems is, however, much more than a simple case of envying the greener grass on the other side of the German border. Smoking feels unnecessary in Zurich because the protagonist perceives the new nationally coded space as being entirely different than the German space(s) he left behind. This geographic difference lies in how the experience of beauty as something finite influences the protagonist's constitution of himself qua a body vis-à-vis a world full of consumable objects. As Klein points out, the beautiful object, the focal point of Kant's pure aesthetic judgment of taste, is experienced as being finite, possessing distinct beginnings and endings, and inhabiting a space that makes these delimited boundaries possible. What this means for Kracht's protagonist and his quest to construct his sense of self is that Switzerland is an Euclidean field, a place where here and there exist, and where he experiences himself as an individuated self with structured and meaningful boundaries between the inside and outside of his body. Most importantly, Switzerland feels like a country where, to use the language of Kristeva, the rule of abjection (i.e., the process of purging the abject) reigns supreme, where the threat of the abject to the firm borders of the body can be banished.

In contrast to the modern Euclidean places of Switzerland, Germany is a postmodern space, one that impacts how the protagonist experiences both his bodily self and the national boundaries through which it passes. The Federal Republic—while represented as a geographical expanse to be traversed from north to south—exists for the protagonist largely in terms of an imploded territory in which distinct, autonomous places and the kilometers of road, rail and airspace separating them become an endless series of

spectacles blurring together the here and there as well as the then and now.<sup>7</sup> This infolding of contemporary Germany, perhaps best signified by the ubiquitous Barbour jackets and the social milieus to which they belong, is but a minor symptom of this new "spectacular separation" of German places, for what weighs on the protagonist most about this new postmodern space is its effect on the psychological construction of the material body. Where Switzerland initially seems like a place where borders between the embodied self and the external world endure without disruption, Germany promises no such good fortune. The ultimate threat to the mental constitution of fortified corporeal boundaries, shit, abounds everywhere in this postmodern Germany. As a result, abjection becomes a full-time preoccupation. In fact, the novel *Faserland* is as inundated by cigarette smoke as it is by human and animal excrement. Readers learn at the very outset of the protagonist's journey how smoking and waste are never too far from one another. "Ich zünde mir eine Zigarette an," the protagonist says at the outset of his journey, "und während Karin weitererzählt, beobachte ich, wie ein schwarzer Windhund...eine große Kackwurst neben einen Tisch setzt. Der Hund kackt komischerweise halb im Stehen, und ich kann genau erkennen, wie ein Viertel der Wurst an seinem Hintern klebenbleibt." The protagonist continues by admitting that, although the sight puts a grin on his face, "mir jetzt richtig schlecht ist, weil ja auch die Scampis irgendwie komisch geschmeckt haben ..." (12). Only a partial consequence of his unappetizing meal, the traveler's queasiness is also attributable to the spectacle of the defecating dog.<sup>8</sup> From then on, the abject in *Faserland* manifests, but is not limited to images of trains and planes dumping excrement onto people, fantasies of being urinated on, the flatulence of strangers, memories of fouling oneself, the stench of public toilets, the facial hair of other men, recreational drugs, and the protagonist's own cuticles, which he continually grooms. That he does not react to this abject food and shit by retching, vomiting or choking, as is usually the case according to Kristeva, deserves attention, for, as the protagonist observes, a great many people (including himself in a few exceptional circumstances) do just that. As exemplified by the graphic image of the dog, the abject signifies not only the threshold between the inside and outside of the material body but also the instability of this boundary. Accordingly, vomiting, that violent response to the abject which forces the self both to look away and to expel itself, serves as a fitting antidote, for the subject recreates the very borders that the abject calls into question (Weiss 44). Instead of vomiting at the sight of the abject, the protagonist smokes.

Logic would dictate that if the relentless assault by the abject on bodies in Germany upsets the bulwark between the self and the external world, then the boundlessness experienced by smoking would merely intensify this quandary (Gross 177–79). Though smoking and vomiting appear homologous as both involve an ejection from the body, the benefits of lighting up

transcend those of vomiting. Far more than just complying with the symbolic order by imposing fixed borders on the body, smoking keeps in dialectical play this need to position the self vis-à-vis a world full of objects along with a transgressive desire to dissolve the body's borders altogether, to go up in smoke and disappear altogether. By violating the laws of abjection, the protagonist thus wills his exclusion from the symbolic order, and in the larger context seeks an escape from that nationally bound, postmodern space which instigated the policing of corporeal limits. In addition to constructing an unruly body, cigarettes play a central role in determining the protagonist's line of flight out of postmodernity. The craving to smoke, or, as his eureka moment in Zurich demonstrates, the desire to go cold turkey, is entirely contingent on the protagonist's geographic location. Said differently, smoking is a cartographic tool, a divining rod of sorts, with which the protagonist traverses Europe longitudinally in an effort to find a place where he no longer has to invent ways to circumvent the abject and the symbolic dictates it triggers. And yet this quest for a deterritorialized place is elusory. Although Zurich looks, smells, tastes, and feels wholly different at first, the protagonist soon discovers that an exiled existence in Switzerland promises no prolonged escape from the regime of the abject, which both he and his divining rods survey as belonging solely to the province of contemporary Germany. Already back to smoking cigarettes, the protagonist finds himself seeking out the grave of Thomas Mann because, of all the works belonging to Germany's 20<sup>th</sup>-century literary canon, Mann's stood out the most to him. Frustrated by nightfall, the wanderer spots a stray dog defecating on what turns out not to be the sought-after cemetery plot. Aptly read by Biendarra as, in part, a reference back to the novel's original scene of the defecating dog, this return of the abject signals, according to this reading, not so much an authorial assault on German literary modernism but rather proof that the unyielding bifurcated imposition—the abject and abjection—on the material body and its psychological construction are transnational (177–79). The exilic condition, as symbolized by one of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Germany's most outstanding exiled writers, is deemed untenable.

*Faserland* presents an alternative to this illusory Swiss exile, one that barely breaks the surface of the narrative, but that nevertheless constitutes the foundation on which Kracht's second cartographic project, *1979*, stands. Alexander, the nameless wanderer's old roommate from boarding school, is but a minor character in *Faserland* who makes two appearances in the novel: once during his stopover in Frankfurt and later when he sees him in a café.<sup>9</sup> Someone who fills the protagonist with both fond and painful memories, Alexander is the one person in the novel for whom the protagonist is truly invisible. This disconnect—Alexander's blindness as well as the protagonist's reluctance to reestablish contact—is significant, for it is Alexander

who develops an alternative to scouring Europe longitudinally for a respite from Europe's excrement. The crux of Alexander's discovery lies in his departure from his friend's decidedly 20th-century German construction of a national identity. As historian Dagmar Herzog has pointed out, the figure of the abject, its strict policing under German fascism as well as its lingering post-fascist specter, assumes a central position in the imaginary of the sixty-eighter generation (432–35). Reminiscent of sixty-eighter critic Klaus Theweleit who suggested in *Männerphantasien* that embracing the abject deterritorializes, *Faserland*'s protagonist is wedded to the idea that the abject and abjection constitute the nexus of his problem and its solution. In contradistinction to this longstanding position, Alexander discards these topoi along with the material body on which they depend and instead hypothesizes a theory that one can begin to attain another sense of identity by first tracking down national artifacts that globalization has strewn to the most far reaching places. On Alexander's fascination with locating the local in the global, the protagonist writes, "Der...ist jahrelang nach dem Abitur nur herumgerüst, in der ganzen Welt...er wäre auf der Suche nach den Spuren des Liedes "You're my heart, you're my soul" von Modern Talking ... um zu sehen, wie weit [das Lied] verbreitet ist, nicht in Orten wie Fuerteventura und so, das weiß man je eh, daß da sowas gerne gehört wird, sondern eben in Pakistan und in Bangladesch und in Kambodscha." Alexander's quest to prove his own "sehr seltsame Theorien ... über die Verbreitung der Popmusik"—that is, pop music by specifically German bands like Modern Talking and Fehlfarben—amounts to much more than surveying the transnational culture industry's globalized means of production and distribution, or even the far reaching effects of consumer piracy (64). But what exactly Alexander's hypothesis intimated and whether his anthropological research substantiated this hunch eludes the protagonist as well as the narrative. Clues to this rationale for journeying eastward must be found elsewhere.

In his volume of travel reportage, *Der gelbe Bleistift*, published five years after *Faserland*, Kracht assembles twenty vignettes about trekking through Asia. In the earliest contribution, the narrator writes of a Saigon bar called "Apocalypse Now," in which a Vietnamese bartender plays the title track ("The End" by The Doors) to Francis Ford Coppola's film of the same name. The narrator exposes the milieu's efforts to suture together codes originally concocted to paint an American imaginary of Vietnam after the Vietnam War. Unmasking this orientalist simulation culminates in a challenge to the Western traveler. "Vietnam," his French conversation partner agrees, "existiert eigentlich nur im Kopf," and for this reason charges him to discover the real Vietnam (*Bleistift* 119). However, authentic Vietnam never materializes, for the very concept of authenticity is frustrated. Interactions with European tourists and Vietnamese locals continually undercut preconceived notions of the other. Amidst this confusing web of projections, the mass of

consumer goods and cultural signs appropriated by European travelers and Vietnamese locals call any hierarchy between East and West into question. This confusion culminates when the protagonist realizes in Hanoi's best dancehall that a local band specializes in covering songs by Modern Talking, to which he mistakenly claims German ownership. "Eine deutsche Band," exclaims the protagonist, "da fährt man ans Ende der Welt und hört die gleichen Sachen wie zu Hause auch" (127). The implied equivalence between German and Vietnamese cultural taste is an oversight though, for not only does the cover of "You're my heart, you're my soul" transport culturally distinct structures of feeling inaccessible to the European voyeur, but it also, in spite of this apparent global synchrony, belongs to a register of time entirely unencumbered by what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai calls "the hegemony of Eurochronology" (30, 35–36).

Appadurai contends that at the cusp of the 21st century the global flow of culture has developed into a clearinghouse of cultural goods that can be accessed selectively according to the particular needs of local communities around the world; this media fodder can serve as a local "form of negotiation between sites of agency . . . and globally defined fields of possibility" (31). The protagonist in Kracht's travel reportage clearly waxes nostalgic after hearing a reworking of a bygone German pop song. He even compares the crowd's reaction to the covers in terms of a particularly "ausgelassenen Kindergeburtstag" (127). By infantilizing Vietnamese pop sensibilities as well as casting the cover band as a derivative of a German precursor, the traveler indubitably sees his past resurrected as another country's present. What this orientalist way of hearing prevents him from acknowledging, however, and what other outsiders—like the unenthused Russians in the disco—can only partially access in terms of an exportable oddity are the imagined worlds that the Vietnamese engender through their unique pastiche of global culture. As Appadurai remarks, rummaging through the "synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios" can leave the impression that one's own past can be made to appear as a normalized modality of one's present, albeit in another space (30–31). Appadurai sheds light on a much more optimistic conceptualization of postmodern time-space compression that privileges the powers of imagination as opposed to a national essentialism. While Kracht's traveler in Vietnam intimates in the end that the real Vietnam is elusive, he nevertheless fails to realize that nations and national identities exist primarily in one's head. In light of the numerous cross-references between Kracht's travelogue and the figure of Alexander in *Faserland*, it is arguable that Alexander's quest for a theory of pop music and its global dissemination is rooted in a fascination for those who re-author the meanings and uses of artifacts that originally arose out of German culture. To be sure, Alexander does not transcend the orientalist ways of the Vietnam traveler. It is arguable that his desire to experience remnants of Germany's cultural past as the building blocks of an

entirely different cultural imaginary in the present reconstitutes through spatial displacement a sense of linear time in the wake of its postmodern implosion. Likewise, Germany's "there-ness," its distinct spatial coordinates, is thrown into relief by virtue of the radical disjuncture between "original" and "cover," then and now, past and present. It is within reason to argue that the constructive differences between "home" and "abroad" that are amassed by watching others consume nationally encoded cultural objects differently amounts to little more than another incarnation of orientalist appropriation. With this said, Alexander nevertheless represents an important first shift in how Kracht's prose conceives of identity and the problems of space. In contrast to his former friend, Alexander does away with the nationally constructed body as the basis of identity and instead proffers the idea that assumptions about national belonging are eventually unmoored by the cultural imagination of others. Kracht's follow-up solves the troublesome persistence of the orientalist fantasy by doing away with difference altogether.

Whereas the nameless wanderer in *Faserland* flirts with invisibility in the hope that his corporeal identity will soon materialize as a distinct whole, Alexander disregards the body entirely. Corporeal boundaries along with their relation to national spaces are no longer the defining criteria for identity. Unlike his friend, Alexander responds to postmodernity's space-time compression by giving into its spatial logic and global flows and assenting to the primacy of the free-floating sign and the disappearance of the real behind the imaginary. Alexander's latitudinal traversal from West to East serves as the premise for Kracht's second novel, *1979*, but the central character of this subsequent adventure neither accommodates Alexander's mimetic strategy for coping with the simulacrum nor does he retire his forerunner's obsession with the material body. In many respects identical to the nameless protagonist in *Faserland*, *1979*'s nameless protagonist, an interior decorator, lacks a coherent sense of self. He is entirely empty. His self is derived from appropriated signs: pop music, bourgeois fashion, modern design, and abstract expressionist artwork. His interpersonal relationships are as meaningless as they are demeaning, yet they continue out of an inexplicable sense of obligation on his part. Communication with his partner comes to a standstill, "weil alles so gleichförmig schien, es war nur noch ein Austausch von Formeln," formulas deeply rooted in the signs of commodity culture with which he adorns himself (26). In spite of the death of his lover in the first half of the novel, he remains devoid of emotions. Not only is he oblivious to mourning and melancholy, he is also without any memory and a past. He is incapable of grasping his relationship to linear time. He fails to cull meaning from texts; words and sentences continually refrain from producing meaning. Provocative signs like swastikas elicit no ethical or political reaction in him. When challenged by a

belief system like theodicy, he responds with a simple "Ich weiß es nicht" (90). And regardless of whether his partner is dead or alive, he proves incapable of determining the outcome of his own narrative. His final fate lies in the hands of strangers. In the words of Baudrillard, the protagonist's identity is "untenable" (*Symbolic Exchange* 4).<sup>10</sup>

If the protagonist in *Faserland* demonstrates the futility in seeking out an alternative modern identity in a postmodern space, the protagonist in *1979* foregoes such a quest and conveys an air of contentment with his postmodern constitution as he travels eastward to Iran.<sup>11</sup> The confrontation between his identity and an emergent Islamic fundamentalism unmoors the effects of the postmodern. This clash begins at that moment when the death of the protagonist's partner results in the abandonment and isolation of the protagonist in a society undergoing its own death and rebirth. Kracht's pre-Khomeini Iran is a heterotopia, a site that, as Michel Foucault argues, "juxtapos[es] in a single real place several spaces, ... that are in themselves incompatible" (22–27). However, under the immanent rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the novel's initial heterotopic commingling of West with East comes undone. As the streets of Tehran fill with protestors, the protagonist fails to grasp Iranian fundamentalism's nostalgic intent to use violence to reverse the historical process toward Western (post)modernity. Instead of seeing the Revolution in terms of its rejection of political pluralism, technical and social modernization, cultural globalization and hyper-secular consumerism, the nameless interior decorator is blinded by his own postmodern predicament. He takes the Revolution to be wholly postmodern—"ich lief stundenlang durch die riesige Stadt," he recalls. "Etwas Neues war geschehen, etwas völlig Unfaßbares, es war wie ein Strudel.... Es schien, als gäbe es kein Zentrum mehr" (94). Nothing could be further from the truth, for the militant Islam of the Ayatollah Khomeini's radical agenda was predicated on re-establishing a central reactionary modernist ideology.<sup>12</sup> Only after hearing the advice of the Romanian bohemian Mavrocordato does the interior decorator realize he must take action in order to survive the new Iranian regime. Instead of returning home, the protagonist heeds Mavrocordato's suggestion: "Sie müßten etwas hergeben, ohne etwas dafür zu erwarten oder zu bekommen. Sehen Sie es wie einen einseitigen Tausch" (114). The only other alternative involves a fantastic pilgrimage: "Sie müssen zum heiligen Berg Kailasch finden. [...] Dieser Berg wird in vielen Religionen als das Zentrum des Universums angesehen, als Welt-Lotos" (114). Of altruism or asceticism, the protagonist chooses the latter and embarks for Chinese Tibet, for as he says himself, "Ich habe aber nichts, was ich geben kann" (114).<sup>13</sup>

According to Baudrillard, the idea of "a one-way exchange," also known as "the gift without a counter-gift," runs to the core of the simulacrum's mechanics, whose complete control arises from the structural impossibility

for the receiver to respond to its message. In the age of hyperreality, in which the principles of modern representation—the dialectic of the sign and referent—have been neutralized, free-floating signs abstain from signifying and instead link up with one another to engender an indefinite chain constituting an appearance of something more real than reality itself. With the ascent of this play of signs, the once pivotal categories of “exchange value,” “use value” and “sign value” have become extinct, relics that linger on only in form, not in function. The upshot of Baudrillard’s analysis of this third-order simulacrum is his discovery that the logic of the now entirely defunct symbolic exchange once endemic to pre-modern societies can be deployed as the last and only weapon capable of toppling this perfect system of domination. Inherently reciprocal in nature, the symbolic exchange initiated by the individual must obligate the simulacrum to respond to an exchange against which the only permissible equivalency is the simulacrum’s own suicide. Baudrillard illustrates this refunctionalization of the pre-modern symbolic in terms of the ascetic: “the ascetic’s secret dream is to attain such an extent of mortification that even God would be unable either to take up the challenge, or to absorb the debt. He will then have triumphed over God, and become God himself.” “That is why,” Baudrillard goes on to note, “the ascetic is always close to heresy and sacrilege, and as such condemned by the Church, whose function it is merely to preserve God from this symbolic face-to-face, to protect Him from this mortal challenge where He is summoned to die” (*Symbolic Exchange* 38).<sup>14</sup> Seen in this light, Mavrocordato’s two suggestions are, in theory, one and the same. In practice, however, this latter solution devolves into what Claudia Breger has rightly called “orientalistische[] Selbstausslöschung” (216).

In the protagonist’s exchange as an ascetic, it is the death of all signs of commercial culture that he exchanges for the death of the postmodern spell over him. After disposing of the last remaining signs of his prior existence as a Western consumer somewhere in Tibet (Brooks Brothers boxer shorts and a pair of fine leather loafers), the former interior decorator undergoes a retroactive transformation. He acquires an ability to feel emotions, identifies himself as belonging to a social community and regains lost memories of childhood. Just as Mavrocordato predicted, the protagonist’s deliverance from a postmodern to a presumably pre-modern condition results in his becoming whole again, a wholeness that the ascetic experiences, interestingly enough, as the first of several gifts to come, a “goldenes Geschenk des Himmels” (146). By giving credence to Baudrillard’s plot against the simulacrum, *1979* might seem to suggest that a nostalgic turn backwards is not only an effective strategy of resistance to the simulacrum but also an efficacious one at that. On the contrary, as the sudden narrative twist in the last fifth of the novel demonstrates, the happiness attained in this pre-modern vacuum of the symbolic is quickly undone, for it cannot ward off the historical legacies of the political economy of the sign that once already swallowed up reciprocal gift-giving.

1979 illustrates this onslaught with the ascetic's abrupt internment in a Chinese gulag, where a reactionary modernism more monolithic than the one the protagonist left wields violence against bodies and minds in order to enforce state ideology and its corresponding representations of power, most often exemplified by portraits of Mao Zedong. Whereas "Ich weiß es nicht" once reflected the protagonist's postmodern predicament of not being able to articulate signs with meaning (90), the same response in a Chinese labor camp can only stem from insubordination and espionage, indictments accompanied by beatings and denunciations (158). In addition to learning to embrace his captors' fabricated accusations and "dialektischen Materialismus" as truth (159), the German prisoner is presented with yet another gift, that of work in a quarry, which he unthinkingly accepts (163), such that his former symbolic death is deferred and his internment is ensured indefinitely.<sup>15</sup> Shipped off to another even more inhumane labor camp, the protagonist's sense of happiness persists, but is no longer what it once was.<sup>16</sup> This glee is directly proportional to the pleasure he finds in ideological compliance, his devotion and sacrifice to the collective, and sneaky survival strategies. Above all, survival entails a care for the self that merely forestalls imminent malnourishment and starvation; the protagonist writes: "Die Maden waren tatsächlich die einzige Möglichkeit, an Protein zu kommen. Wir erkannten bald, daß sie sich in menschlichem Kot, der mit faulenden Kohlstrünken und Krankenhausabfällen angereichert war, am wohlsten fühlten" (182). With this and other graphic passages about preparing and eating maggots harvested on human excrement, 1979 invokes the question of the abject along with its role in the constitution of identity featured so prominently in *Faserland*. However, abjection is entirely absent in the protagonist's response to feces and vermin. He connotes that his body is entirely unfazed by the threat of the abject to a body's boundaries between inside and out, subject and object, life and death. In effect, his ideological compliance to communism results in the eradication of any need to maintain the body as a psycho-social space of individuation; his is but one of millions of bodies reduced in the name of the body politic to the status of disposable raw material. Although the protagonist intimates that he disappeared and by extension escaped from his former life (181), this disappearing act at the novel's close is hardly liberating or happy, for it transpires in a space that neither resembles anything earthly (modern, postmodern, or otherwise) nor promises any line of flight; here, even place-identity is impossible: "der Ort ... war ... wie die Oberfläche des Mars" (181). In the end, the reader is left with but a fragment of a character whose remaining identity claims are few: "Alle zwei Wochen gab es eine freiwillige Selbstkritik. Ich ging immer hin. Ich war ein guter Gefangener. Ich habe immer versucht, mich an die Regeln zu halten. Ich habe mich verbessert. Ich habe nie Menschenfleisch gegessen" (183). The protagonist's deliverance from postmodernity concludes with a maniacal devotion

to a dogmatic modern master narrative that leaves him with just a shell of an existence. A cautionary tale, his latitudinal escape out of postmodernity's dominion, merely leads to his subjugation to another far more gruesome power. Compared to the protagonist's adventure in *Faserland* that fails to find in Switzerland refuge from the woes of postmodern Germany, the flight in *1979* out of the postmodern and into the East is undoubtedly bleaker.

If there is a lesson to be learned in the fate of the protagonist in *1979* it is that a reversal of the postmodern processes, i.e., a retreat back to the modern or even pre-modern, accentuates the vulnerability of the material body to socio-political systems of domination and control that transform bodies into objects. Not all of *1979* is hopeless, however. There is an alternative, one that enables a mode of resistance that seeks not to escape the simulacrum but instead traffics in hyperreality without resorting to the self-aggrandizing voyeurism in which Alexander indulged. Although the effectiveness of Mavrocordato's proposals eludes the protagonist, he nevertheless validates for himself the efficacy of a "one-way exchange." Mavrocordato demonstrates for the protagonist firsthand how to fabricate and benefit from one's own simulations. After indulging in a meal composed entirely of black-tinted food, Mavrocordato and the interior decorator don black uniforms replete with dark rubber-soled ballet shoes and set out in the middle of the night to short-circuit surveillance cameras affixed atop buildings bordering public spaces in Tehran. After connecting one camera to a small handheld television monitor that he brings along, Mavrocordato re-positions the lens at the screen, thereby creating a closed media circuit: "Er drückte einen Schalter, und auf dem Monitor war jetzt der kleine Fernseher selbst zu sehen, in sich hundertmal gebrochen und verkleinert; er verlor sich in der Mitte des Bildschirms im Unendlichen" (111). If, according to Baudrillard, hyperreality entails the looping of reality around itself in pure repetition, Mavrocordato's unilateral gift is nothing more than a simulation of the simulation, a postmodern message to which the modern Iranian state apparatus in flux cannot respond.<sup>17</sup> Mavrocordato fills his body full of blackness from the inside out and, in a temporary media blackout which he engineers, disappears entirely.

Mavrocordato's reasons for trafficking in simulacra are grounded in another kind of concern and care for the corporeal self. This, along with his understanding of the ascendancy of the image under postmodernity, his grasp of the simulacrum's mechanics and effects, his penchant to disappear from view, as well as his ability to inhabit otherwise inhospitable places all suggest that of the many possible responses to postmodernity his balances imitation with critical intervention, a mix that allows for limited agency in local spaces (Harvey 351). Mavrocordato owes his uncanny ability to diagnose the world around him and to respond accordingly less to his own genius

than to his intertextual lineage. Mavrocordato is the progeny of another semi-fictional character, Georghiu Mavrocordato III (1888-?) invented by Peter Lamborn Wilson.<sup>18</sup> Wilson's character inherits Cumantsa, a fictional town that Wilson situates on the west coast of the Black Sea. Described as "the only [...] government ever to be openly based on the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche" (146), Cumantsa, or more precisely the experimental form of self-rule imposed by Mavrocordato the grandfather, is remembered by Kracht's character, the grandson, as a little-known "utopische[n] Kleinstaat," an "anarchistisch-dadaistisches Experiment," and a "Witz als Staatsform" (50–51). This connection between the semi-fictional Mavrocordato lineage and Nietzsche is crucial for appreciating the disappearing acts practiced by Kracht's character. By extending the Mavrocordato lineage from Wilson's fictional fin-de-siècle to the present, Kracht's novel covertly establishes the Mavrocordato grandson as following a century-old line of aesthetic responses to time-space compression that (according to Harvey) found its inception in the works of Nietzsche (15–20). As Harvey notes, Nietzsche heralded the superiority of aesthetics over science due to its ability to make sense of the vertigo engendered by the innumerable fragmented spaces and ephemeral moments of modernity. For Wilson, Nietzsche's idea of "strong and protean" individuals with a will to power, an aesthetic faculty and a knack for destruction must be reconfigured today into persons with a "will to power as disappearance."<sup>19</sup> When read in tandem with his theoretically-driven manifesto "The Temporary Autonomous Zone," penned under the pseudonym Hakim Bey, Wilson's story of Mavrocordato the elder is nothing more than a narrative illustration of this theoretical update of Nietzsche's geopolitics. This post-postmodern proposal motions that an aesthetic of disappearance enables an individual to ferret out places momentarily unknown to the state, outside the realm of history, and thus unincorporated by simulation. In effect, these "autonomous zones" are invisible utopias of the present from which one can "strike ... at structures of control ... conquer without being noticed and move[] on before the map can be adjusted" (Bey 122, 100). Indeed, this is exactly what the younger Mavrocordato does on his late-night caper through Tehran. Wilson/Bey is quick to note that his idea of autonomous zones is "science fiction," a largely unrealized, theoretical concoction. The speculative status of these autonomous places is crucial, for the lack of any concrete recipe relegates them to the realm of the literary imagination. Kracht accomplishes the disappearing acts of which he speaks at the outset of this essay through imagined narratives that oppose the idiom of the simulacrum. More than any other character, Mavrocordato successfully negotiates the pitfalls of postmodern space by virtue of his personal connection to the history of time-space compression that has been accelerating ever since its heyday under high modernism.

Mavrocordato is, however, a slippery character, for even though he apparently succeeds in foiling the simulacrum by disappearing à la Bey's "temporary autonomous zone," the status and composition of his individual identity politics remain unclear. Mavrocordato addresses neither the national nor the international perimeters of his identity, and for this reason offers little by way of comparison with Kracht's previous cast of decidedly German characters. More importantly, Mavrocordato seemingly disregards the value of local, national, or even international coordinates in the quest to acquire a "space of individuation" under the sign of postmodernity. The crisis of national identity as surveyed in *Faserland* has given way to a disavowal of all traditional place-identities. This is not to suggest, however, that no link exists between the identity work in the two novels. As mentioned previously, the material body weighs heavily not just on Mavrocordato's mind, but also on those of the protagonists and supporting characters in both novels. As has been argued over the course of this essay, Kracht's prose works toward imagining identities beyond those that mirror the physical body using national boundaries and histories. Kracht's imagined identities are facilitated entirely by the absence of nation and its concomitant history. All the same, both Mavrocordato and the nameless interior decorator, make clear that this shift in no way disregards the material body nor does it involuntarily protect it from global networks of capital that feed off of and fuel simulacra. The perceived meanings of images—the vertiginous maps that they create—paralyze and eventually destroy material bodies. With respect to the question of orientalism posed at the outset of this investigation, the shift that Kracht's prose undertakes from longitudinal to latitudinal displacement is a maneuver that sidesteps these material conditions for identity but inadvertently espouses orientalist trappings. This hazard is especially prominent in *1979*, where the two prominent characters, the bohemian (Mavrocordato) and the tourist (the first-person narrator), choose divergent paths (altruism and asceticism, respectively) that, according to Baudrillard, potentially lead out of the province of the simulacrum but, in Kracht's narrative, end up in two radically different spaces. These characters' choices are significant, for the protagonist's spiral downward from asceticism into an orientalist fantasy of false purification stems directly from Baudrillard's own last-ditch attempt (*Symbolic Exchange and Death*) to theorize a path through the quagmire of the simulacrum. As Caren Kaplan has argued, poststructuralist projects intent on imagining micro-politics against the reign of images have regularly appropriated the idea of the nomad and the ascetic "without having recourse to anthropological definitions" or "accounting for them as sites of colonial discourses" (85–91). But while Eurocentrism indeed lurks behind Mavrocordato's Baudrillardian prescription for escaping Western modernity as an ascetic, his other option, the one he himself embraces, is notably independent of that spatial displacement which gives way to orien-

talism. Always already at home in the liminal places of the autonomous zone, Mavrocordato's direct assault on the simulacrum never appropriates the Orient as a foil for the Occident. His intervention in the network of postmodern images is entirely independent of all axes of orientation and meaning. Disappearing can conceivably occur everywhere, just as long that place is nowhere.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Foster cites two homologous manifestations of recent abject art: one pushes the illusions of the simulacrum to the brink of uncovering the real; the other rejects illusions altogether (152). Foster explicates the cultural and socio-historical shift in the abject and body as "obsessional site[s] of critical discourse" in "Politics" 12–13, 15–16.

<sup>2</sup> For a transcript of Stockhausen's commentary on 9/11, see Stockhausen 76–77.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Claudia Breger's assessment of orientalism and homosexuality in 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Space and place are treated in this essay distinctly. Space is the socially constructed terrain delimited, divided and dominated by "differentiating machines and regimes of veridication" and "jurisdiction." Places are points in space where individuals and groups develop "points of belonging and orientation." See Grossberg 106–07.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lettow and Biendarra.

<sup>6</sup> The protagonist exclaims, "Während ich mir die mindestens zweitausendste Zigarette heute anzünde, erzählte Nigel von dieser Party..." (*Faserland* 30–31).

<sup>7</sup> In addition to Harvey's work, see also Burgin 109.

<sup>8</sup> The scampi are, according to Kristeva, not at all unrelated to the protagonist's nausea induced by the shitting dog. Kristeva writes, "food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection" (2).

<sup>9</sup> Recollections of Alexander consume roughly ten pages in chapters three and four (57–58, 63–66, 67–70, 70–71, 76–77). Each encounter links Alexander with the abject suggesting that its proliferation has colonized places, things, and people.

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Kracht for underscoring the relevance of this text.

<sup>11</sup> For more on postmodernism, see Lettow 292–96. Kracht loosely modeled his protagonist on Robert Byron in *The Road to Oxiana* (1937). I am indebted to Mr. Kracht for sharing this insight with me.

<sup>12</sup> The protagonist continues by asking himself whether the Revolution was in fact "gleichzeitig nur noch ein Zentrum und nichts mehr darum herum" (94). The reestablishment of a center is exactly what the closed religio-social movements of nationalism and fundamentalist traditionalism seek to install. For more on the emergence of a fundamentalist-militant Islam in the 1970s and its relation to Western doctrine see: Turner 88–90, 92–94. I thank Mr. Kracht for bringing this text to my attention.

<sup>13</sup> Halving is not as mystical as it seems to the protagonist. In an expanded reading of 1979, Baudrillard's understanding of the non-alienated double as it prevails in primitive societies would need to be taken into account here as well as the modern internalization of the double. Halving corresponds to the protagonist's shedding of his "vengeful and vampiric double" embodied by the sick lover (*Symbolic Exchange* 142).

<sup>14</sup> The argument in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* is Baudrillard's final effort to challenge the logic of the simulacrum. His subsequent works do away with any notion of

resistance and, as Harvey claims, imitate the contours of the postmodern. For an overview of Baudrillard's development, see Cook 150–67.

<sup>15</sup> Baudrillard explicates the relationship between labor and death with respect to political economies like capitalism and communism immediately following his account of symbolic exchange as a form of resistance (*Symbolic Exchange* 38–43).

<sup>16</sup> It is arguable that the protagonist's happiness in China is the apogee of the blissful condition that plagued him early on in the narrative, a condition Nietzsche called in *The Gay Science* "Chinese happiness." China was the epitome of an administered society, one entirely devoid of subjects capable of negotiating between dubious ideologies that promise redemption and actual life-affirming change (99).

<sup>17</sup> Baudrillard writes, "To gain exit from the crisis of [modern, R.L.] representation, the real must be sealed off in pure repetition" (*Symbolic Exchange* 72). Another translation reads: "To escape the crisis of representation, reality loops around itself in pure repetition." For Charles Levin's translation, see *Selected Writings* 145.

<sup>18</sup> Once again, Mr. Kracht brought this intertextual link to my attention.

<sup>19</sup> Bey links this "will to disappear" to Nietzsche, Foucault, and Baudrillard (126).

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