

Phantom Pain

Kurt Drawert's Poetics of Aphasia and Atopia

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Abstract. The paper introduces the oeuvre of Kurt Drawert and analyzes, by which means and with which aims the contemporary history of German Reunification is reflected critically in his essays, poems and prose. Drawert's work circles around carefully recorded absences that the author himself has experienced and which are possibly reflected more extensively due to his relocation to federal West Germany in 1993. Such absences are shown to be ruinous for post-Soviet individuals in the unified society. But at the same time, they are constitutive for Drawert's poetics, written from the passage through the non-places of his (former) country. Reading his oeuvre from this perspective means comprehending a meticulous measurement in his poetics of the absent: of *Heimat*, causing an atopian perception (including the increase of retrotopian nationalistic thinking); of speech that has been and still is 'injured' or even lost, causing a not only political aphasia (allegorized by the *Kaspar-Hauser*-figure); and absence of time, as past is lost with the belated and declined East—and the present suffers from a global acceleration, causing an *asynchronia* in transformation that further reduces the society's ability to design the future. Drawert's engagement does not cease with a melancholic exploration of a collective phantom pain, stating a persisting disintegration. Out of the analytical measurement of such 'left-overs' of the reunification process in Germany there evolves a harsh criticism of the contemporary situation surrounding the individual in the global digitized society. A related mission of literature reveals the (always fragmented) truth to the reader—prolonging a political kind of criticism whose methods trail back to GDR-opposition. Thus, any 'valid' political change would depend on the influence of a common language and maturity.

Keywords: Poetics of History, German Reunification, Ostalgic, Body of Language, alethurgy, Political Maturity, Kaspar Hauser, the other, fake dissidentism

I. Introduction¹

“[...] ich kann mich ins Auto setzen und losfahren und ohne Mühe alles und für immer verlassen, denn es gibt keine Heimat, wenn es sie in uns selbst nicht gibt. Und heimatlos sind wir doch alle.”²

(*Spiegelland*, quoted in 2020, 11)

Kurt Drawert’s recently published book *Dresden. Die zweite Zeit* (2020) practically opens with this self-quotation of the monologue *Spiegelland* (1992), referring to a collectively lost (inner) home. The narrator (most probably roughly the author himself) returns to the city where he lived about half a century earlier—a place of reflected and involuntary remembrance, often connected to his father who has passed away and had already been a central figure in the first volume. It is by no means a coming home story—with his first sentence the narrator states that he is in search of something, something he knows he lacks. The flickering term *Heimat*—Drawert’s narrator confesses that he does not understand the sense of this concept³—evokes the question for the emotional part of the expectations connected to German reunification discussed vigorously 30 years thereafter. In an interview given in October 2020, the former president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Joachim Gauck, who was a Reverend and Christian *Bürgerrechtler* from Eastern Germany in 1989, underlined that he missed nothing of the GDR apart from a feeling of genuine community arising out of opposition to the socialist regime.⁴ This comes close to what Drawert had already articulated in the nineties in the expression “Exilanten eines

1 This paper on the poetics of Kurt Drawert is based on a talk given at the North Eastern Modern Language Association (NEMLA) in Boston, March 2020. Since Drawert never wished for any socialist future and shows no “Ostalgie”, he did not really fit in the panel “Unrealized Futures in Post-Socialist Memory and Culture”. However, the author would like to thank the panel chairs Michel Mallet, Maria Mayr and Kristin Rebien for the invitation to and the exchange while the conference and thereafter. The text shows an overview of Drawert’s work as it existed until the end of 2020 on the basis of the selected key concepts. Thus, it corresponds in a way with the briefer entry on Kurt Drawert written by the author [AM] for the *Kritisches Lexikon der Gegenwartsliteratur* (published as well 2023). Drawert’s works have been introduced with an epimodernist perspective at the ERA-Workshop in Siggen (March ’23).

2 “I can get in the car and drive off and leave everything and forever without any effort, because there is no home if it does not exist within ourselves. And yet we are all homeless, aren’t we?” All quotations have been translated from German into English by the author with the support of DeepL application, David Kristinsson, Graeme Garson and Kinda Dalla.

3 Drawert, *Dresden*, 22. The actual discussion is summarized in Scharnowski, *Heimat*.

4 Gauck notes an “indefinite sadness” in looking back to the year 1990: <https://zeitung.faz.net/faz/30-jahre-deutsche-einheit/2020-10-02/eine-kaum-erklaerbare-traurigkeit/513221.html> (last accessed 3 October 2020).

Gefühls”.⁵ Because this feeling or atmosphere, missing in the reunified Germany—or to quote the double sense of his words more precisely: the absence from it—still generates pain like an amputated part, not exactly of the body but of the linguistically embodied self that experienced a complete change of circumstances. A loss that creates interference and disruption in the East German perception of the (new) era, including frustrating misconceptions due to ‘different German languages’⁶ that Drawert has documented carefully since 1989/90.

The absence of a unifying language and an “inner unification”⁷ is still the basal source of Drawert’s criticism of contemporary Germany. It is by no means the personal longing for a “future past” (Reinhart Koselleck) of the GDR, caused by a time-lapse and leaving an emptiness of unfulfilled hopes and promises which may be related to the figure of the father in *Spiegelland* and *Dresden*. On the contrary, he directly focuses on the yearning for a lost past, a *retrotopia*⁸ that grows silently on the “backsides of glory”.⁹ Thus, the presence—moreover permanently threatened by its digital substitutes—is saturated with the past and its inner destructions, as *Dresden* shows.¹⁰ Those abandoned desires are the hallmarks of deep resignation, becoming the source of an existential ‘lack of belonging’ that is reflected in his writings. It turns out to be a pattern that is critical of capitalism and typically post-Soviet at the same time. This pattern (and the connected narratives of Ostalgie) can also appear as a real danger, if it occurs as the return of the suppressed—“But what I don’t understand, / why I see the past / in the present / as the future.”¹¹ The title of his ‘future-II’-collection of essays *Was gewesen sein wird* (2015) shows him to be intimate with concepts of history-writing in the sense of an archeology of the presence; in general, Drawert can invoke for his poetics of (contemporary) history Koselleck, who has pointed out language as the primary factor of remembrance and research:

“[...] sobald ein Ereignis in die Vergangenheit geraten ist, rückt die Sprache zum primären Faktor auf, ohne den keine Erinnerung und keine

5 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 45.

6 Cf. Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 99.

7 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 207.

8 The term was coined by Bauman, *Retrotopia*.

9 Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*.

10 Drawert, *Dresden*, 162.

11 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 194: New York. The astonishing fact, that this danger is perceived in the center of the Western World (New York), is connected to a warning of an intoxication by the still circulating ideological poisons of the declined Soviet Union. “Der wirkliche Feind aber, er ist unsichtbar, ein Untoter am Grund der Geschichte dieses Jahrhunderts.” (Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 105) [But the real enemy, he is invisible, a living corpse at the seabed of the history of this century.]

wissenschaftliche Transposition dieser Erinnerung möglich ist. Der anthropologische Vorrang der Sprache für die Darstellung der geschehenen Geschichte gewinnt damit einen erkenntnistheoretischen Status. Denn sprachlich muss entschieden werden, was in der vergangenen Geschichte sprachlich bedingt war und was nicht.”¹²

The last sentence could have been written by Drawert himself, articulating a claim to interpretational sovereignty of a literary language that is able to evoke a particular perception of the past and the present. As a substantial contribution to the public discourse of the GDR, in Drawert’s writings, the East German socialism is unmasked in the mirror of its use of language. For Drawert, prescribed language is an attack on the innermost district of the human being. Thus, the trauma of the GDR (and its aftermath) is a language trauma. To decide what is, has been or even will have been conditioned by language means for Drawert exploring the missing link between the hopes and dreams related to the fall of the wall and the reasons of their pending realization. Before analyzing his poetics of the absent (see III, IV and V) I will continue to briefly introduce the author and his work.

II. The perspective on 1989/90 in Drawert

In Lutz Seiler’s renowned novel *Kruso*, published in 2014, the charismatic utopian socialist Aljoscha Krusovitsch postulates:

“Die Aufgabe des Ostens [...] wird es sein, dem Westen einen Weg zu zeigen. Einen Weg zur Freiheit [...] Ihnen, die technisch, ökonomisch, infrastrukturell so weit gekommen sind, mit ihren Autobahnen, Taktstraßen und Bundestagen, den Weg zur Freiheit zu weisen, diese verlorene Seite ihres Daseins.”¹³

Without substantial freedom or liberty, the feverish leader of a deserting crew states, a future would be worthless to realize. The quoted criticism of the Western

12 Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, 18. [...] as soon as an event has passed into the past, language moves up to become the primary factor without which no memory and no scientific transposition of this memory is possible. The anthropological primacy of language for the representation of history that has emerged thus acquires an epistemological status. For linguistically it must be determined what in past history was conditioned by language and what was not.] (for the historiographical status of language see as well Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 123f. on Klemperers LTI)

13 Seiler, *Kruso*, 352–59. [The task of the East [...] will be to show the West a way. To show them a way to freedom [...], those who are so developed technically, economically and infrastructurally with their highways, assembly lines, and federal parliaments, the way to freedom, this lost side of their existence.]

system (ironically broken in Seiler's novel) in no way ceased with the end of the GDR. It merely lost the acceptance of a larger audience for a while and differentiated also by reflecting the vanished GDR in various voices. Among those there is Kurt Drawert, born near Berlin in 1956. The family moved to Dresden in his childhood. He later witnessed the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the *Wendezeit* in Leipzig, where he had studied literature at the *Johannes R. Becher Institut für Literatur* (his novel *Ich hielt meinen Schatten für einen anderen und grüßte*, 2008, portrays that period). In 1993 he moved to Lower Saxony, meanwhile he lives in Darmstadt. As an East German author in the West, he had an even more special position, as has been pointed out regarding Eastern literature in general:

“[...] after the fall of the Wall in 1989 the East emerge[d] in different ways as a poetic transit or passage space, a liminal space which, while setting limits to the subject's movement, still serves as a threshold to a different perception of reality [with own] spatial and temporal coordinates, [set] in relation to individual and collective ideas of belonging [...]”¹⁴

Apparently, Drawert was quite successful in exploring these transitional spaces, including them in his place of writing, expanding the possibilities of the sayable: he was awarded the *Ingeborg Bachmann Prize* (1993) for the essay collection *Haus ohne Menschen*, the *Uwe Johnson Prize* (1994) and several others, more recently the *Lessing Prize* (2017). Despite these important acknowledgements, the public reception was often low, at least since his separation from the renowned Suhrkamp publishers. Maybe also for that reason, the experience of being and remaining a stranger, of a persisting loneliness, is still a basic motif of the author that runs like a red thread through his work. The lingual, poetical coping with strangeness in a continuously changing world could be pointed out as the author's main mission. In that sense he postulated that the poem must be preserved as a place of freedom—not only of but the more: enabling expression as well in private as in political affairs.¹⁵

Being foremost a poet—after the first collection *Zweite Inventur* (GDR, 1987) there followed *Privateigentum* (Suhrkamp, 1989), *Wo es war* (1996), *Frühjarskollektion* (2002) and the long poem *Der Körper meiner Zeit* (2016)—, Drawert has published three essayistic novels—*Spiegelland* (1992), *Ich hielt meinen Schatten für einen anderen* (2008), *Dresden* (2020) and three theatre plays: *Alles ist einfach* (1995), *Steinzeit* (1999), *Das Gegenteil von gar nichts* (2015). Besides he published a number of stories during the 90s that are, as the theatre plays and some travel logs,¹⁶ not cited in this survey. Noteworthy are his essays published in various compilations: *Haus*

14 Egger, “»The East« as a Transit Space,” 248.

15 Drawert, *Die Ortlosigkeit*.

16 See Döring, “Eine Reise mit Kurt Drawert.”

ohne Menschen (1993), *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit* (2001), *Provokationen der Stille* (2012) and *Was gewesen sein wird* (2015). These essays refer to broken hopes for a vanished or differently envisaged *Wende* and swallowed yearnings. Drawert appears here as an outstanding analytic and critic of his time who carefully reflects his own position, means and media.

For Michael Braun, Drawert is the only contemporary German writer “who has translated the ideas of the French (post-) structuralists Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze and Barthes into a coherent aesthetic theory”.¹⁷ On the other hand, Drawert stays ambivalent, ambiguous, too distanced and hermetic for many readers. For that reason his works apart from *Spiegelland* that has been published three times (1992, 2015, 2020) they are often only commented cursorily in Germany (little has been translated into French, Italian and Turkish). This might be changing after he got a contract with the C.H. Beck publishing house (2011) and the influential academic *Journal text & kritik* dedicated the first volume in 2017 to Drawert (editor: Peter Geist). But so far, we still can conclude from a review of the (East German) critic Fritz Raddatz: Drawert’s writings are simply not written for the market.¹⁸ The constant repetition of melancholic topics may also be a factor; Drawert himself (as the probable narrator of *Dresden*) admits:

“Ich habe, wenn ich geschrieben habe, immer aus Verzweiflung geschrieben, und wenn ich einmal nicht geschrieben habe, dann war ich auch nicht verzweifelt. Es gibt keinen Grund zu schreiben, wenn man nicht verzweifelt ist, dachte ich immer, vielleicht aus Eitelkeit [...]”.¹⁹

From a political perspective, his desperation sounds slightly extensive regarding contemporary Germany—but looking at “the backside of glory” is more than an attitude for Drawert: it is a principle. And this perspective shapes the understanding of the absent. For a better understanding of the ‘phantom pain’ of contemporary history documented in his writings, Drawert’s perspective on the former East will be explored next.

II.1. Abandonment of the East

Drawert’s position towards the GDR is clear. There is a complete refusal of the socialist system he had to experience for half his life, and of its agents and ideology—moreover

17 Braun, “In Rufweite zum Schweigen,” 9. In his essay on the “dislocated self” in Drawert, Colin Grant relates Drawert also to Sartre (Grant, “Without a name,” 296).

18 Raddatz, “Gemälde des Terrors,” 39f.

19 Drawert, *Dresden*, 271. [When I wrote, I always wrote out of desperation, and if it occurred that I didn’t write, then I wasn’t desperate. There’s no reason to write if you’re not desperate, I used to think, perhaps out of vanity [...]]

as they were personified in the communistic father and grandfather, two opportunistic characters that were GDR Officials and who are blamed in *Spiegelland* and *Dresden* for having systematically concealed the involvement of the grandfather in the NS. By example of family history, Drawert points out the filiation of totalitarian thought from the NS-regime to GDR functional elites. The “real existing socialism” is portrayed most detailed (and ironically) in his ‘shad-ow-novel’ *I mistook my shadow for someone else and greeted* (2008), his attempt at a picaresque novel.²⁰ Here it is emphasized very strongly, how degrading, painful and useless an average life in GDR was—the novel shows a people of slaves, “Tuttis” (collective characters), who had to form a collective mind to be part of the socialist society and its institutions.²¹ The annihilation of the individual is allegorized with his main character (and narrator) Kaspar Hauser, living deep under the earth in the ninth district of guilt (with some hints on Dante), until he is punitively transferred to the national book institute (“Nationale Bücherei”);²² in Leiden (= Leipzig), a panoptic and heterotopian space. Undoubtedly, the crippled body of a dwarf—furthermore disfigured by a hare-lip and clubfoot²³—represents the psychological damages of totalitarianism both in public and private speech and individuality. The expression “Denkendenken”²⁴ could even evoke allusions to “double think” in George Orwell’s 1984.

In his acceptance speech for the Johnson Prize, entitled *The Abolition of Truth*, Drawert analyzed the relation between the individual and the governmental language regime as a situation:

“[...] in der von vornherein feststand, wer mit welcher Aussage und in aller Unumstößlichkeit im Recht war und wer mit welcher Aussage und in aller Unumstößlichkeit nicht im Recht war. Und nicht im Recht konnte nur sein, wer die Voraussetzungen der Sprache in Zweifel gezogen hatte, um für sich Voraussetzungen des Sprechens zu schaffen.”²⁵

What is criticized here as a tautological system of speech, is the appearance of what we might call with Foucault a “regime of truth”, installing the regularly repeated

20 In that genre he follows Thomas Brussig’s renowned novel *Helden wie wir* (1995). The most convincing picaresque novel on German Reunification has been published meanwhile by Ingo Schulze: *Peter Holtz. Sein glückliches Leben erzählt von ihm selbst* (2017).

21 E.g. Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 102.

22 Cf. Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 157–89.

23 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 143–45.

24 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 197.

25 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 119. [...] in which it was clear from the outset who was in the right with his statement and in all irrevocability and who was not in the right with his statement and in all irrevocability. And only those who questioned the preconditions of language in order to create preconditions of speaking for themselves, could be in the right.]

confession of failure as the only possible individual manifestation of truth—accompanied by the investigations of the secret service (*Staatssicherheit*).²⁶ I will come back to that politico-linguistic criticism of GDR (as well as contemporary) language later (IV). Drawert would not have created a romantic or nostalgic yearning for any future of this rotten system with its gloomy “utopian imperative”²⁷—not even in that cloudy alternative utopian way the unrealized dreams of the round table members in 1989 and 1990 had to remain.²⁸

Instead, he warns of the danger that the GDR could survive as a myth and as such become a powerful factor for identities, prolonging the exclusion of the individual and undermining its resilience to any authoritarian claim of leadership.²⁹ At this point Drawert again remarks on a continuity in totalitarian thought: a history of violence in the GDR, that had inherited its militant character from Nazi-Germany:

“Und es wundert auch nicht, daß gerade der Osten kriminelle Energien freisetzt, empfänglich ist für Neonazismus, Fremdenhaß und alle Arten der Gewalt, die die herrschende Realität immer schon begleitet hat und sich nur ihre geeigneten Ausdrucksformen sucht. Die Bewegungen der radikalen Szene sind keine verspäteten Abwehrreflexe auf den SED-Staat und seine administrativen Strukturen, vielmehr stehen sie in einer Kontinuität dazu und machen im Nachhinein den militanten Charakter der Macht sichtbar.”³⁰

We could conclude from those descriptions of the GDR and its remnants in 1992, 1996 and later: there is no *Ostalgie* in Drawert’s writings, but carefully reflected considerations criticizing the retroactive type of nostalgia quite precisely.³¹ A closer look into his essays and poetry seem to make the situation more complicated: a certain kind of ambivalence appears there, notable for example in the poem *Mit Heine*—here Drawert confesses that the name of his passed *Vaterland* is indelibly inscribed in him.³² Volumes like *Wo es war* (1996) or even his previously mentioned

26 Cf. Drawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 49f.

27 Drawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 64.

28 Drawert it seems, had high hopes too, at that time; Drawert, *Dresden*, 164.

29 Cf. Drawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 30ff.

30 Drawert, *Fraktur*, 198f. [And it is not surprising that it is precisely the East that releases criminal energies, is receptive to neo-Nazism, xenophobia and all kinds of violence that has always accompanied the ruling reality and only seeks its appropriate forms of expression. The movements of the radical scene are not belated defensive reflexes to the SED state and its administrative structures; rather, they are in continuity with it and, in retrospect, make the militant character of power visible.]

31 Cf. Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 203. S. Boym makes a very useful distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia (Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41, 49).

32 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 87.

Dresden. *Die zweite Zeit* (2020) seem to deal with nostalgic feelings—but in fact, they contain repeated warnings of the GDR myth as the wrong method of handling the absent past that was caught up meanwhile by reality; Drawert now criticizes the Pegida-movement on basis of his earlier analysis.³³

The lost home is furthermore identified with a former absence of the father: The safe space that he experienced in his childhood as a “peaceful fatherless silence” mentioned in the poem *Wo es war*³⁴ should not be interpreted as a “paradise lost”. But not by accident does it echo a renowned statement of Freud (interpreted by Jaques Lacan as an instruction of the *ego* to withstand). It might also be the intention of Drawert,

“[...], das Ich zu stärken, es vom Über-Ich [dem Vater-Prinzip] unabhängiger zu machen, sein Wahrnehmungsfeld zu erweitern und seine Organisation auszubauen, so daß es sich neue Stücke des Es aneignen kann. Wo es war, soll Ich werden. Es ist Kulturarbeit etwa wie die Trockenlegung der Zuydersee.”³⁵

So, we could conclude that this quotation flags out the work on the reflection of nostalgia. On the other hand, the principle of an inner clarification (or even enlightenment) mode conducted by the *super-ego* would also fit quite well to the attitude towards life shown by the father figure in *Spiegelland* and *Dresden*. Sounding out this double sense, in 1996 Drawert worked on a literary re-appropriation of his lost fatherland which is “branded deep inside” him,³⁶ after he had left from the still so-called “new federal countries” (doubling up the loss). Dominated by this work on psychology, the new situation became to some extent a continuation of the “inner emigration” during the eighties.³⁷

33 Drawert, *Dresden*, 162–64. Regarding this topic cf. now László Krasznahorkai’s great novel *Herscht 07769* (2021).

34 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 80.

35 Freud, “Die Zerlegung der psychischen Persönlichkeit,” 86. [[the] purpose is, after all, to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the superego [which would be the position of the father], to expand its field of perception and to develop its organization so that it can appropriate new pieces of the It. Where it was, I shall become. It is cultural work, like the draining of the Zuiderzee.] Lacan has commented this sentence prominently (cf. Lacan, *Die Ethik der Psychoanalyse*, 14–15 and Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 46f). To understand Drawert’s intention within the quote exactly, it would be necessary to study this psychological discussion more carefully than I can do here.

36 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 79 or ineradicably “imprinted” in the meaning of Levinas. Critchley states about Levinas’ ethics of otherness: “[...] the relation to the other lives on as an imprint in the subject to which it responds but which it cannot comprehend. [...] it is constitutively split between itself and a demand that it cannot meet, but which is that by virtue of which it becomes a subject.” (Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 62–63).

37 Cf. Brockmann, “Kurt Drawert,” 21.

II.2. “Wir waren das Volk”:³⁸ Disenchantment of the Reunification

“Doch nun, mein Spiegelland ist abgebrannt, »und ich bin, was / sich spiegelt in deinen Augen«.”³⁹

Like many authors of his generation, Drawert also characterized the *Wende* as a takeover, not as the unification of equal members of a dispelled family. But his basic analysis was anticipatory to the more common point of view nowadays—he pointed out that both parts of Germany have lost their ‘other’, their mirror. For the West this loss of a weaker, economically and technically retarded counterpart might turn out to be more problematic than expected because of “cadaveric toxins” set free by the declined East: ptomaines transferred in circulating myths of the passed away foe,⁴⁰ silently contaminating the *mock winners’* ground.⁴¹ For the East Germans the great change often turned out to become a failure in private and working relations—the high hopes of becoming part of the ‘better Germany’ and realizing all dreams at once were fading often very rapidly.⁴² In a sense of the quotation above, we could assume the place (or aim) of their narcissistic desire for an enhanced self via consumerism, the expected future proved to be unattainable. Reaching the “Spiegelland” meant to lose all illusions of a perfect Western life and to adopt the perspective of the other on oneself.

Concerning the political perspective, Drawert additionally has pointed out in several essays since the early nineties that the East missed furthermore the chance of political self-efficacy:

“Die Zusammenbrüche der Systeme, die am defektesten sind, lassen keine Sieger, sondern nur noch Überlebende zu. Und wenn die Ismen [-ismen] an ihren Schwächen sterben und nicht an den Stärken der Gegner, so hinterlassen sie in den Überlebenden doch immer auch Spuren der Kränkung, kein Sieger geworden zu sein [...]. Hätte eine Opposition in einem langen, aufopferungsvollen Kampf das totalitäre Gebilde gestürzt, würden wir jetzt am Anfang einer neuen Epoche stehen. [...] die Sekundanten wissen es, [...] das begehrte Objekt gehört, da es nicht erobert ist, nur noch sich selbst.”⁴³

38 Anonymous—quoted by Michael Nast (Nast, *Vom Sinn unseres Lebens*, 195).

39 Drawert, *Der Körper meiner Zeit*, 76.

40 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 34–35. Thomas Hettches reunification-novel *NOX* (1995) deals as well a lot with this topos that may refer to Heiner Müller’s identification of post-war Germany with a chopped up, still unburied and still undead cadaver; e. g. in *Germania, Tod in Berlin* (1977/1995)

41 Cf. Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 101–2; Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 295–96; Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 207; Drawert, *Dresden*, 238.

42 Cf. Heydemann and Paqué, *Planwirtschaft*.

43 Dawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 31. [The collapse of the systems that are most defective does not

There is obviously another mimetic desire for something missed that remained unrealized due to this *Sieg ohne Sieger* [Victory without winners].⁴⁴ It is the longing for a real revolution—discussed by Drawert with Freud: the community of brothers wasn't able to kill the father before he passed away by himself (and the succeeding democracy seems to be a 'father' who is too weak).⁴⁵ It has been marked as a "lapse" by Heiner Müller,⁴⁶ that there was no real obstacle taken, there were no victims or more precisely: sacrifices taken on the way to liberty, like in other post-soviet countries—and no origin, no community was won or perpetuated from the revolutionary situation (aside from the new nationalism). It just ended up in a simple implosion of the socialist system. The transformation into a myth secures its continuation in a subversively fought symbolic civil war,⁴⁷ a struggle for the interpretative sovereignty over 1989 that persists today: Drawert chronicles this myth—compared to a ptomaine—as a key driver of *Pegida*.⁴⁸ Thus, leaving behind the contaminated, unrealized future in his homeland could be interpreted even as an act of amputation.

Instead of a true realization of unity, for Drawert the situation remained entirely transitory also in the West, but became slightly everyday life, as the poem *Ortswechsel* shows: "Nirgendwo bin ich angekommen. / Nirgendwo war ich zuhaus. / Das stelle ich fest / ohne Trauer. [...] / Doch mein Körper ist ruhig geworden."⁴⁹ It is the melancholic silence of his body getting used to the absence of *Heimat*, even though Drawert insists to notice it as "without sadness". Executing a belated flight with his own personal move to *Niedersachsen* [Lower Saxony], Drawert won the perspective of the juxtaposition between the two parts of Germany, enabling him as an "Ostwessi" to write more objectively about his time and "the transparency of the absurd"⁵⁰—from an atopian point of view. As such he had to face a complete alienation to familiar, as well as to new places, that appeared to be callous or heartless to

allow winners, only survivors. And if the -isms die from their weaknesses and not from the strengths of their opponents, they always leave behind in the survivors traces of the offence of not having become victors [...] If an opposition had defeated the totalitarian structure in a long, self-sacrificing struggle, we would now be at the beginning of a new epoch. [...] the seconds know that the object of their desire belongs, since it has not been conquered, only to itself.] Also Joachim Gauck refers to that problem in the above mentioned interview.

44 Drawert, *Revolt des Körpers*, 57. Not a quotation of, but maybe a reference to Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht* [War without a battle].

45 Cf. Drawert, *Dresden*, 211.

46 Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, 488.

47 Cf. Drawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 46.

48 Drawert, *Dresden*, 65.

49 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 83, 85. [Nowhere have I arrived. / Nowhere was I at home. / I realize that / without sorrow. [...] But my body has become calm.]

50 Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 100.

him, and “the landscapes looked empty” as per his recollection. In this setting of the homeless individual becoming a complete stranger, Drawert introduces a central motif of his criticism of reunification: the logical and instrumental coldness of a takeover.⁵¹

He describes banners in the middle of nowhere (empty landscapes) as a symbol for the postponed promise of Helmut Kohl to create “blühende Rapsfeldlandschaften” as Drawert quotes ironically falsely in his shadow-novel.⁵² Instead, East Germany and the lyrical ego were experiencing a fake recovery:

“[...] doch leer wie die Landschaft / am Ende der Ankunft, die ich, / dem Sturz gleich des erblindeten Tieres / ohne Geschichte, herzlos, – denn die Orte sind uns die Fremde / der Tage vor sich selbst geworden, / und die Orte sind mir herzlos / ohne Geschichte, – betrat, / ist schon mein Erinnern, / und unwidersprochen / stehen im Wind dieses Frühlings / die Fahnen der Fabrikanten.”⁵³

He shapes this critique in showing that the formerly desired object is substituted unsatisfactorily by consumption and pacified in spoiled bodies (in *Geständnis*)⁵⁴ and ends up in emphasizing the risks for the Eastern newcomers in the market economy, helplessly lost in blackmarket operations as objects of any fraud or speculation. He even coined the phrase *Ausverkauf der Leere*⁵⁵ regarding those who are ‘lost in consumption’, replacing reality with signs of a life that they had hoped to achieve.

The melancholic statement of a contested takeover in the poem *Tauben in ortloser Landschaft* (the “others” as a target of profitmaking are in fact the East Germans)⁵⁶ and the emerging emptiness of the individual remains valid also in Drawert’s later works. It is accompanied by a criticism of Globalization, Neo-liberalism, Turbo-capitalism and Digitization, symbolized (and conceived) in those “Chat-Rooms der Hölle”.⁵⁷ It could easily be summarized under the *Matrix Amerika*—which is in fact the title of one of his poems, published after the global bank crisis (post Lehmann Brothers) in the volume *Idylle rückwärts* (which could be translated as

51 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 79; cf. as well Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 226.

52 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 225–26.

53 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 79. [...but empty as the landscape / at the end of the arrival, which I, / like the fall of the blinded animal / without history, heartless – for the places have become to us the strangeness / of the days before themselves, / and the places are to me heartless / without history – entered, / is already my memory, / and unchallenged / in the wind of this spring / the flags of the factory owners are blowing.]

54 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 35f.

55 Drawert, *Revolt des Körpers*, 7f.

56 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 108.

57 Drawert, *Frühjahrskollektion*, 13.

“Retrotopia”).⁵⁸ Moreover, from expressions like: “New York against the world” quoted from graffiti discovered during a visit there,⁵⁹ we can assume that Drawert developed a critical perspective on ‘the West’ (at least) from 1989 onwards. These are aspects of a critique of transformation (*Versagenshistorie*; 2020, 63), rehearsed in GDR times, that were extended into a critical perspective on contemporary society, discussing the (ubiquitous) precarious connection between power and truth. We will go into more detail when exploring the absences perceived by Drawert’s subject mentioned above. The constellation of these absences of speech, place and time creates what I detect as a—more or less collective—‘phantom pain’ documented in Drawert’s works that accompanies the historic and social-psychological processes since the political act of German Reunification.

III. Atopia—lost home, but recess of the poet?

“Wir, alle, haben einen Ort verloren, den kein anderer ersetzt.”⁶⁰

As we have seen before, the topos of placelessness is very frequent in Drawert’s writings. In his shadow-novel the GDR appears as an atopian (or even dystopian) zone since it is designated as “Höhlenrepublik”.⁶¹ Vast parts of the plot are situated under the surface of the Earth; and even its history seems to be submerged. The change of location in 1993 in search for a new home and life in the west failed – maybe intentionally, at least anticipated by Drawert. The failure of we could call with Levinas an approach of “proximity”⁶² was a creative one; it allowed Drawert to expand his diagnosis of *Ortlosigkeit* to the reunified society dominated by West Germany. Almost overnight the East got globalized and hence, more atopian. The term, *atopos*, fits (in addition with the loneliness of Augé’s “non-places”)⁶³ perfectly

58 Drawert, *Idylle rückwärts*, 246, the Lehmann Brothers also appear in the theatre play *Das Gegenteil von gar nichts* [The Opposite of Nothing] (2009).

59 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 189–96.

60 Drawert, *Der Körper meiner Zeit*, 154.

61 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 13.

62 “Proximity is not a state, a repose, but, a restlessness, null site, outside of the place of rest. It overwhelms the calm of the non-ubiquity of a being which becomes a rest in a site. [...] Never close enough, proximity does not congeal into a structure [...]” (Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 82).

63 Augé’s distinction between late-modern “non-places”, the spaces of supermarkets, highways, train stations, airports, hotels, slums and refugee camps (Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 44, 93), and „anthropological places” (Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 63–72), based on historical and social relations, will likely be familiar to Drawert, who studied twentieth-century French philosophy extensively. Moreover, it is reminiscent of Foucault’s heterotopia, another term of topological analysis that also includes the dimension of time (heterochronia).

into Drawert's intermediate landscapes that are as well "areas of a manifold fractured experience"⁶⁴ making the contemplating subject (even though inhabitant) a stranger. His rather nomadic considerations of lost places and transitory spaces denote a sort of contingent and generic geography: "The non-place is the opposite of utopia; it exists, and it does not host any organic community"⁶⁵—definitely a source of disenchantment for those who believed either in the future of an utopian socialism or in the fast reunification of the German people. Waldenfels connects the non-place to the image of the globe as a common market:

“[...]—das dazugehörige Raumkonzept ist das des Spatium, der ver-räumlichten Kontingenzen mit atopischen Effekten einer ausgreifenden Unbewohnbarkeit und eines Schwindens des Raumes in seiner Ausdehnung durch völlige Verfügbarkeit—»überall und nirgends«.”⁶⁶

It is the constitutional backside of the utopian concept of the market. The utopia of the market requires a society that has no national identity and no exterior or interior borders anymore (except economical ones). On the surface, the rules seem to be the same and still in force, but in the deep structures of their logic and in the grammar of their connection, a virus of atopian dissolution—or: in Drawert's words: dispersion⁶⁷—rages, 'infecting' as well the references of places that are surrounded by growing territories of non-places. It creates a world that is delivered to isolated individuality, the transitory, the provisional and the ephemeral.⁶⁸ The established fixed assignments give way to the decentralized logic of aleatory and permanent passage; a process that involves risks and implosions to the subject.

It is obvious that the ultimate time of the globalized atopian society and of the 'realized' utopia of the global free market started after 1989/91 with the fall of the Soviet "imperium".⁶⁹ In Drawert's work the 'unified new world' turns out to be dominated more and more by numb consumerism⁷⁰ that leaves no space for any kind of idealism or tellurian character (a term once coined by Carl Schmitt in his *Theory of the Partisan*, 1963): "wenn es hier / keine guten Tarife fürs Handy mehr gibt, dann ziehen auch / wir Leine."⁷¹ Another symptom of this atopian age is the great

64 Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen*, 11.

65 Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 130–31.

66 Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen*, 117–21. [...the associated concept of space is that of the spatium, of spatialized contingency with atopian effects of an expansive uninhabitability and a dwindling of space in its expanse through complete availability—'everywhere and nowhere'.]

67 Drawert, *Schreiben*, 73.

68 Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 93.

69 Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 134.

70 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 202.

71 Drawert, "§1) Die Würde des Menschen ist," 5. "[...] if there are / no more good rates for mobile

migration since 2015 that Drawert frequently reflects upon—identifying refugees as the scapegoats of globalized markets.⁷²

Despite his own placelessness and strangeness (in sense of being *atopos*),⁷³ Drawert also has a deep poetical relation to the atopian sphere—in a manner that is reminiscent of Augés “mirror reflection” between place and non-place.⁷⁴ Emmanuel Levinas’ localization of *non-lieu* and utopia within the divided subject is another trail: in a disclosure for the other (or the being otherwise) that is a basic part of the self and has to be enunciated to enter the truth.⁷⁵ The energetic source and the landmarks of Drawert’s writing have to be located in this sphere:

“[...] ich habe es nie, niemals als Defizit erlebt, diese Spaltung, diese Ortlosigkeit, sondern als eine sehr besondere Quelle der Kraft und Orientierung.”⁷⁶

In *Spiegelland*⁷⁷ we find descriptions of how truthful texts are growing in the mind while driving without any direction through the wastelands of a dwindling country, “in the silent dialogue that develops between him and the landscape”:⁷⁸

“Nur das Unterwegssein rettet die Gültigkeit des Sprechens, dachte ich, denn die Räume, in denen wir leben, sind verdorbene und für die Würde des Sprechens abträgliche Räume [...]”⁷⁹

phones here, then we’ll hit the road too.”

72 Drawert, *Der Körper meiner Zeit*, 146, 154; Drawert, *Dresden*, 64.

73 In his linguistic-philosophical essay Grant relates Drawert’s subject furthermore to Hofmannsthal’s famous letter of Lord Chandos, to Mead’s connection between participation and communicability and Sartre’s Being and Nothingness (Grant, “Without a name,” 292, 294, 296).

74 Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 94: [Place and non-place are fleeing poles; the place never completely disappears, and the non-place never completely restores itself—they are palimpsests on which the tangled play of identity and relation constantly finds its mirror reflection anew.]

75 Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 8, 45. Drawert does not mention the franco-lithuanian philosopher (born in Kaunas in 1905) anywhere, as far as I see. So this connection might be accidental—however, it would be worth to investigate that. The term “Denkendenken” of the ‘facial disfigured’ narrator in the shadow-novel (2008, 281) could mark a valid trail (regarding Levinas distinction between “saying” and “said”). Furthermore, e. g. Simon Critchley (Critchley, *Infnitely Demanding*, 56–69) and Mari Ruti (Ruti, *Between Levians*) have shown the relations in thinking subjectivity between Levinas and Lacan.

76 Hielscher, “Ich glaube, Ich glaube,” 88. [I have never, never experienced it as a deficit, this division, this placelessness, but as a very special source of strength and orientation.] The division or dissociation might refer to Lacan.

77 Cf. Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 159.

78 Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 121.

79 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 162. “Only being on the road saves the validity of speaking, I thought, since the spaces we live in are corrupt and detrimental to the dignity of speaking.”

Here, Drawert shares a thought with de Certeau:⁸⁰ in respect of this dignity (and due to it), the text itself becomes a place,⁸¹ a plane for the projection of the interior and the osmotic interchange with the exterior, locking the relatedness into the other.⁸² We could conclude by this, with the texts generated on the passage, Drawert found his own “rhetorical country”⁸³ addressed to himself as well as to the other, the reader. In creating appropriate language for the entities or unicities of world and (East German) history that are narrated (and thus become reversible),⁸⁴ even the narrator’s “broken voice” (of loneliness) in the shadow-novel is postulated a place⁸⁵ that may be reached by following a grinding trace of broken steps through a different grey sand.⁸⁶ This sorrowful localization (and reconstruction) of a language of reference is a poetic response to her public absence during the GDR and later.

IV. Aphasia—“eine Kaspar-Hauser-Legion”⁸⁷

“Ein trauriges Gestammel beginnt, denn die Sprache hatte das Sprechen okkupiert, und es steht jetzt, wo es gilt, sich und seine Einzelheit zu erklären (und im Sinne der entdeckten Konkurrenz auch entdecken zu müssen), nicht zur Verfügung.”⁸⁸

The opening quotation refers to the situation right after the fall of the wall—East Germans are depicted as almost speechless, not only politically but also economically, which is consequently extended to their individual affairs. Suffering from this immaturity they failed to behave as *mündige Staatsbürger* of a country, that had trained them in “Sprech- und Sprachabrichtungen.”⁸⁹ The regime of truth and the grammar of power in the East had treated many of them too long as objects of a truth regime, that forced them to speak about themselves in an informative way (‘assisted’ or controlled by the state security). On the other hand, public speaking

80 Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 100, refers to de Certeau.

81 As well the read one: “Wo meine Bücher sind, ist meine Heimat” (Drawert, *Der Körper meiner Zeit*, 76) – which could moreover include the reader.

82 Cf. Hielscher, “Ich glaube, ich glaube,” 93–95.

83 Augé, *Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 127.

84 Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 35, 47.

85 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 16.

86 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 82.

87 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 107.

88 Drawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 45. [A sad stammering begins, for language had occupied speech, and it is not available now, when it is necessary to explain oneself and one’s particulars (and, in the sense of discovered competition, have to be exposed).]

89 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 146.

in socialist Germany was full of taboos. Drawert shows many of them already in his *Spiegelland*-monologue,⁹⁰ like the Nazi-past of his grandfather, who was among many other former Nazis in his generation, who agreed to remain silent.⁹¹ In the following section I will try to show how Drawert (or his narrators) deal(s) with the principle of alethurgy, on which the truth regime of the GDR was based. In finding words for the suppressed by the father and grandfather, the hidden vulnerability of society in total is exposed. Furthermore, the effects of this—alethurgic—truth regime result in the state of language emergency quoted above, making people unable or at least hindering them from realizing dreams and hopes related to the fall of the wall.

IV.1. Alethurgy: production of a collective immaturity

“Ich möchte, sagte ich Feuerbach, daß die Entmündigungspraxis und Sprachversklavung als ebenso grausam erachtet werden wie die physische Folter und die Verwahrung in einer Zelle.”⁹²

The mythical figure Kaspar Hauser, “dieses Rätsel im Herzen der Aufklärung”⁹³ as the one who grew up without speech, is not only a collective allegory for the Eastern Germans in general but also a self-portrait of the author (if we accept Drawert as the narrator in *Spiegelland*⁹⁴ and *Dresden*), who is simply overwhelmed by the new situation:

“Ich verstand diese ganze Begriffswelt nicht. Ich verstand gar nichts. Ich war vor lauter Befehls- und Aufklärungsmaterial vollkommen desorientiert, alle Werbe-, Informations- und Gesetzesbroschüren, die in hohen und nicht mehr zu ordnenden Stößen meinen Schreibtisch füllten, waren

90 Cf. Grub, ‘Wende’ und ‘Einheit’, 123–29.

91 Cf. Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 90: “Schweigensverabredung”. The way his grandfather became the designer of his past and presence, was a collective process as a part of nationbuilding in GDR: “Und vielleicht hat sich die ganze Generation meines Großvaters oder doch ein großer Teil dieser Generation dadurch, dass sie sich erfand, abwesend gemacht, vielleicht waren sie in Wahrheit alle Gefallene des Krieges, die gestorben weiterzuleben hatten [...]” (Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 79). The method to produce an individual truth via abandonment of the self (that will be replaced by the new, sufficient self) will be read with Foucault as a part of alethurgy (cf Foucault, *On the Government*, 411).

92 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 297. [I would like, I told Feuerbach, that the practice of incapacitation and language enslavement be considered as cruel as the physical torture and confinement in a cell.]

93 Hielscher, “Ich glaube, ich glaube,” 89.

94 Cf. the survey of Opitz, “Selbst(er)findung mit Vater,” 17.

mir eine einzige Desorientierung und Aufforderung zum Selbstmord, ich verstand tatsächlich nicht ein einziges Wort [...].⁹⁵

The narrator is not only suffering from “abgewöhntes Denken” and a fundamental expropriation of experience and knowledge.⁹⁶ Confronted with this explosion or inflation of written signs he almost loses his mind; he feels disorientated or even culturally dislocated.⁹⁷ He cannot handle all the information material in the way he was used to, and had been trained: carefully, because written documents had a certain, albeit rejected aura of authority. They were part of a culture of order and command that was of course completely different from the market liberalism of West Germany. This order was based on a mandatory truth.

Every government, every political system has a need to manifest truth, in the interest of the legitimacy of decision between right and wrong. For this manifestation of (governmental) truth and its exercise the principles of “truth-making”, alethurgy, *discretio* and confession are crucial.⁹⁸ The last part of the question “How, in fact, could one govern men without know-how, without knowledge, without being informed, without knowledge of the order of things and the conduct of individuals?”⁹⁹ has been answered first by church fathers like Tertullian or Cassian with the need of an individual implementation of a truth that is prescribed by authority. The regime of truth in GDR may be qualified as a lighter version of the principle that Foucault named after Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian poet, Nobel prize-winner and famous critic of the *GULAG*. It is qualified by its sense of terror that is executed mostly psychologically¹⁰⁰—by announcing the ‘truth’ (which may change like in Orwell’s 1984):

“Terror is precisely governmentality in a naked state, in a cynical state, in an obscene state. Within terror it is the truth and not the lie that paralyses. It is the truth that ossifies, it is the truth that makes itself unassailable and inevitable by its evidence, by this evidence that is expressed everywhere.”¹⁰¹

95 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 157.

96 Drawert, *Dresden*, 96 and 175 [approximately: “habituated non-thinking”].

97 Cf. Grant, “Without a name.”

98 Foucault, *On the Government*, 4–8; Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 391. I am deeply obliged to thank Prof. Gunter Gebauer and his Colloquium in Philosophy at the Freie Universität Berlin for having been introduced to Foucault’s lectures on the Government of the Living.

99 Foucault, *On the Government*, 4–5.

100 The sadistic style of Stalinism has been described by Erich Fromm in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973). Surely the structures of GDR allowed the same or similar tendencies. For Grant the GDR was „a derivative of a darker rationalist tradition” (Grant, “Without a name,” 293).

101 Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 34.

This announced and compulsory truth is produced in an “alethurgic circle”¹⁰² of operations, operations of an order of the truth that is repeated, or rather reproduced, continuously by every citizen. It belongs to those mechanisms of leading that stabilize the power of the government over “the living” in their minds.¹⁰³ The “discretio” (invented by Cassian) is one of the decisive cornerstones of that process. It has got nothing to do with ‘discretion’, on the contrary. Since the individual has no ability to differentiate right from wrong (not even the Christian saint), it must live in a status of a permanent self-observation. The findings have to be reported to another person installed by authority to judge, because only by confession (that reports the findings of *discretio*), can the individual receive the operator to recognize true and to avoid the evil, which is coexistent with the soul.¹⁰⁴ The result of this alethurgic circle is the consequential disposal of the interior in reproducing a collective or official truth that substitutes the (individual) self.¹⁰⁵ It is a submission under the will of the other (who is or becomes the master in relation).

In Drawert’s novels (their generic status could be discussed¹⁰⁶) father and grandfather represent on the one hand this ‘produced individuality’ (due to the invention of self-accordance with the new order) in erasing their former (NS-)identity (grandfather) or their love and their ‘bourgeois home’ (father) for another “ideologisierten Wirklichkeitsersatz”:¹⁰⁷

“Sie hatten einen Apparat entwickelt, der schon lange über sie herrschte und ihnen sagte, dass sie sich selber entblößen, dass sie im Dienst stehen, um das paranoische System des Denkens zu erhalten, und dass sie diesen Dienst in vollkommener Entblößung verrichten.”¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, they are, like the quotation shows, part of this system of compulsory (or even compulsive) alethurgy, using language as a means of exercising power.¹⁰⁹ In *Spiegelland* Drawert (or his narrator) describes a domestic atmosphere of suspicion that results in the scary silencing of a child who is capable of using

102 Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 112.

103 Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 36.

104 Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 393.

105 Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 411.

106 Drawert stated in an interview with Martin Hielscher: “Genres interessieren mich nicht. Das ist alles Quark mit Kartoffelsalat. Taxonomien sind für Germanisten gemacht [...]” (Hielscher, “Ich glaube, ich glaube,” 90).

107 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 85.

108 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 85. [They had developed an apparatus that had long ruled over them, telling them to expose themselves, that they were in service to maintain the paranoid system of thought, and that they were performing this service in complete exposure.]

109 Cf. Opitz, “Selbst(er)findung mit Vater,” 14.

language and has already excelled in family reading competitions. The father is a leading GDR police officer who even observes, convicts and punishes members of his own family. He always suspects everybody of not telling the truth, of deceit or cheating,¹¹⁰ he is always alert for signs of treason—and he mistrusts his oldest son the most: “we need to talk” he demands occasionally without any apparent reason.¹¹¹ The son, who responds with silence,¹¹² gets punished violently. The father follows the logic: he who does not express his thoughts is driven by evil—and must be ashamed to speak because of his inferior inner constitution. A hit in the face with the hand bearing a clunky wedding ring is the execution of a “centurion’s authority”,¹¹³ a cynical punishment “in the name of love”.¹¹⁴ As a result of this ritual of purification, his son is declared the chaff sorted from the wheat.

Aside from such systematically conducted talks the father is unable to hold a genuine conversation—as a talking subject, he is speechless like the whole system—or to articulate experiences or feelings. He cried once in a lifetime at the end of his service and later, his son only felt recognized one single time due to a kind of surprise contact, by which time his father was already suffering from dementia.¹¹⁵

IV.2. The corpus of the ruined language of truth: Kaspar Hauser

Drawert wrote about Victor Klemperer’s LTI, that it could be conceived as a kind of “Frankenstein der Sprache, den wir uns ganz und gar physisch zu denken und vor-zustellen haben, in brauner Uniform und gewaltbereit zu jeder Stunde”.¹¹⁶ In his “Kaspar of revolution”¹¹⁷ Drawert has not created any “utopian body” of language, as Foucault had intended, but a tragicomic kind of a crippled dystopian one. Like Oskar Matzerath, Kaspar is a dwarf who even grew gills while working in the ninth district of guilt of the cave republic.¹¹⁸ His narrator is an incorporation of language and subjectivity under conditions of totalitarianism (which in his youth

110 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 103–5.

111 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 134.

112 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 161.

113 Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 404–5.

114 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 26.

115 Cf. Drawert, *Dresden*, 250, 288.

116 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 127. [...] a kind of Frankenstein of language, whom we have to think and imagine completely physically, in brown uniform and ready for violence at any hour.]

117 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 228.

118 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 268.

the narrator of *Spiegelland* denied using¹¹⁹); an ostentatious ugly appearance¹²⁰ with a broken—but authentic¹²¹—voice, a victim of the “social realistic” system of the “D.D.R.”¹²² The narrator ensures:

“a) daß es Kafkas Nadelmaschine¹²³ tatsächlich gab und b) daß ich wirklich ein Folteropfer war. Ein Folteropfer sehr feiner und spurenloser und körperlich gar nicht nachweisbarer Art. Mehr ein Sprachfolteropfer,¹²⁴ abwesend und unmündig gehalten, ein Unmündigkeitsopfer. Andererseits wurde diese meine Abwesenheit und Unmündigkeit von vielen Geheimbundkörpern registriert und beschrieben und in Archiven gelagert, die natürlich gigantische Abwesenheitsarchive waren mit Beweisen des Nichtvorkommens als handelnde Sozialsjekte. Der Generaltrick war die Auslöschung bei vollem klinischen Erscheinungsbild der Person.”¹²⁵

That is what the GDR-system of alethurgy produced in the eyes of Drawert: “Sprachfolteropfer” without the ability to act independently and responsibly—a burden for the new era after 1989. His works also show how ‘mutiny’ could grow after the silence of the child. Like Foucault, whom Drawert mentions in that context of lingual embodiment,¹²⁶ a potential of resistance, of rebellion against the practices of chastisement and punishment by an apparatus of power is attributed to the tortured and disfigured body (of language).

119 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 44.

120 See above and Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 208–10.

121 Cf. Drawert, *Wo es war*, 80.

122 Drawert, *Dresden*, 164.

123 This is of course a reference to the famous Strafkolonie. The harrow is identified here with the practice of observation of authors by the Stasi. “Wir sind die Antwort auf ihn, auf dich, sagte Tutti X, und eine andere wird es nicht geben. Das war ihre Nadelmaschine, sagte ich Feuerbach, und ihr Vorteil war, daß sie gar keine Nadeln mehr brauchte, um einen Körper durch Schrift zu entwerten.” (Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 103).

124 A quote from Peter Handkes Kaspar (1968) who continuously repeats the sentence Ich will ein solcher werden wie mein Vater gewesen ist.

125 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 102. [a] that Kafka’s needle machine really existed and b) that I really was a torture victim. A torture victim of a very fine and traceless and physically not at all provable kind. More a speech torture victim, kept absent and immature, an immaturity victim. On the other hand, this absence and immaturity of mind was registered and described by many secret society bodies and stored in archives, which of course were gigantic absence archives with proofs of non-existence as acting social subjects [zoon politikon]. The general trick was an erasure of the full clinical appearance of the person.]

126 Cf. Helbig, “Sprache als Zivilisationsbefund,” 51.

IV.3. Vulnerability as a weapon: exposure of the system

As mentioned above, the duty of telling the truth is breached by father and grandfather, at a critical point (the continuation of dictatorship). The son, whom they failed to raise ideologically and therefore constantly punished, starts to mirror their lack of legitimacy that was representative of the whole system¹²⁷—in following the rules of their familiar discourse of power until its tilting point; the inverted discourse shapes up to an authentic *Sprache der Wende*.¹²⁸ The trick seems rather simple: he just continues telling the truth about himself, but now he speaks as well about them. In exposing (but also experiencing) himself as vulnerable¹²⁹ he exposes their deeper vulnerability and that of the whole system they were serving—the roles of the object and the subject of this ritual of purification are changed. Drawert also explains the linguistic methods of the opposition to invert authority in one of his striking essays:

“Der subkulturelle Diskurs hatte sich so weit vom Zeichenvorrat der Macht entfernt und eine systematische Geschlossenheit derart erreicht, daß er nicht einmal mehr befeindet werden konnte. [...] Da die Grammatik der Macht eine Tautologie war, konnte die ihr widersprechen wollende Opposition ihrerseits nur tautologisch reagieren.”¹³⁰

These methods could not be abandoned by the regime censors because they were their—simulated and reflected—own. The consequence was a kind of counter-alethurgy, a language of truth-telling, that tended to threaten the system because it reflected the procedures of everyday life in the GDR—in other words, the world of the fathers—with a strong critical effect. Taking into consideration, what Drawert wrote about the practices of the medieval inquisition—power and authority established themselves not exactly in the submission of the delinquents, but in their

127 Cf. Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 165.

128 In contrast with Thomas Brussig's famous novel *Helden wie wir* (1995), Drawert is not blaming the mothers (Brussig stages Christa Wolf as the mother of all mothers at the great demonstration of Nov. 4th 1989); nonetheless the narrative style of his shadow-novel is occasionally reminiscent of Brussig's Klaus Uhltscht (cf. Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 261). As regards the frequently imparted topos of the problematic relation between father and son, there is a stronger similarity with (later) novels such as Christoph D. Brumme's *Nichts als das* (1994) or Uwe Kolbe's *Die Lüge* (2014).

129 Cf. Braun, “In Rufweite zum Schweigen,” 12.

130 Drawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 60: “Die Unaufgeklärtheit der Revolutionen”. [The subcultural discourse had distanced itself so much from the regime's repertoire of signals and had achieved such a systematic unity that it could no longer even be fought. [...] Since the grammar of power was a tautology, the opposition seeking to contradict it, could in turn only react tautologically.]

contrition and acceptance of guilt¹³¹—, we can conclude: it is a liberating inversion, not of the poetically adopted principle of alethurgy, but of its effects on power relations. In his postscript to *Spiegelland*, dated October 3rd, the narrator (or Drawert) even repeats the *doxa* of the *discretio*:

“[...] ich konnte nicht wissen, von welchem Standpunkt des Denkens aus die Lüge oder das Verschweigen oder die Verabredung zum Schweigen gebrochen worden wäre, ich konnte nicht wissen, wer ich war, wenn ich schrieb, die Lüge oder das Verschweigen oder die Verabredung zum Schweigen könne sich nur selbst überführen [...]”¹³²

And “jenes zwanghafte Aussprechenmüssen, irgendwie obsessiv”¹³³ is precisely the product of *discretio*—the delivery of the individual truth to the other (who was not the father anymore but the public), waiting for an *apophansis* of critique, a redemptive statement concerning the confessed.¹³⁴ Thus, Drawert’s writings are poetics of confession and vulnerability: the confession (of the speaking self) results in an inversion of the effects of the alethurgic circle that was used by the regime to substitute the individual self by an invented collective one. The poem *Geständnis*¹³⁵ transfers this self-relatedness to a clear refusal:

“[...] ich lehne es rigoros ab, mich neu zu erfinden/ meine Klarheit zu deuten/ meine Unklarheit zu deuten, die Geschichte. // [...] so gehen wir / ruhelos hin, und so bin auch ich // im Staub meiner Wege zuhaus.”¹³⁶

The speaking self claims to be “from nowhere” and it won’t become part of any collective indoctrinated truth again. Nonetheless, the vulnerable passivity may, as well as the tautologies within the political ideas of a better socialism of the GDR-opposition, respond to “an irrecuperable time”.¹³⁷

131 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 206.

132 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 177. [I could not know from which standpoint of thought the lie or the concealment or the agreement to be silent would have been broken, I could not know who I was when I wrote that the lie or the concealment or the appointment to silence could only convict itself.]

133 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 165.

134 Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 47.

135 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 36.

136 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 36. [I rigorously refuse to reinvent myself/ to interpret my clarity/ to interpret my obscurity or history. // [...] so we’re wandering / restlessly, and so I am too // at home [only] in the dust on my ways.]

137 Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 50.

IV.4. New threats of maturity—criticism of capitalism, digitization, globalization

“Wenn er jetzt, den Mund voll von Blut / den Beamten / des Fortschritts / die Geschichte der Stille / erzählt, dann bereut er / noch einmal / die Entdeckung des Lichts, / das erste Öffnen der Tür, / und wie er im zu guten Glauben / a gesagt hat.”¹³⁸

The Poem *Kaspar Hauser* introduces an explanation for the speechlessness of the many after 1989: the mythical figure would regret deeply now having said “a” (because it necessitates saying ‘b’, too). Additionally, there is a link to Lacan’s setting of the object “a” that is always already lost, initiating a desire for the desire¹³⁹—a powerful engine behind the dynamics of capitalism and the competition for attention. As such, the poem appears not only to be a massive criticism of the (economically executed) reunification. Sabine Egger has already commented on its validity today:

“The speechlessness suffered by the poet-speaker might have been caused by the suppression of free speech under communist rule, but it continues in the New Europe due to the pressure of market forces on the writer and the role of media and their presentation of reality within this framework.”¹⁴⁰

The consequence is a forthcoming ‘abolition of reality’ by its sovereign simulation, a virtual automatic creation of media,¹⁴¹ that formerly was the result of the linguistic power exercise in the GDR, producing discourses of submission.¹⁴²

Under these conditions, the realization of dreams and wishes can fail in face of the overabundance of offers. Confronted with the “emptiness sell-out,”¹⁴³ individuals seem to suffer from a dispersion not only of awareness but of articulateness itself due to an exhausted language:¹⁴⁴

“Keiner hatte die Absicht, hier eine Mauer / zu errichten, und dann Wohlstandsgrenzen, damit ja keiner, / aber was, weiß ich jetzt auch nicht.”¹⁴⁵

138 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 11. [When he now, his mouth full of blood / tells the officials / of progress / the story of silence / he regrets / once again / the discovery of light, / the first opening of the door, / and how he has said in too good faith / a.]

139 Cf. Hielscher, “Ich glaube, ich glaube,” 91.

140 Egger, “»The East«,” 250.

141 Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 165.

142 Drawert, *Spiegelland*, 39.

143 Drawert, *Revolt des Körpers*, 7.

144 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 236.

145 Drawert, “§1) Die Würde des Menschen ist,” 6.

The lyrical I, quoting Walter Ulbricht's famous lie from 1961, ostentatiously lacks words to describe his suspicion about persisting social borders after 1989—his resignation shows instead the suspension of the will of perception (it is left to the reader to fill this gap). And it shows how limited the ability for critical comparisons can become in a society of spectacle, which is driven by “Techniken, die uns in die Entmündigung treiben”.¹⁴⁶ The consequence: it is “mit dem Heilsbild der Aufklärung endgültig vorbei”.¹⁴⁷ The Poem *Quiz*, coined on Günter Jauch and his show *Wer wird Millionär?* gives an example, by exaggerating the (un)ethics of spectacle: “how many Jews, four or three, it's about half a million, you can also ask the audience”.¹⁴⁸

In Drawert's perspective these are the symptoms of depraved communication in the public sphere, from which literature must keep a critical distance.¹⁴⁹ Since the millennium he constantly reminds us of what modern technologies—“centrifuges of extinction”—have wreaked: “a destroyed perception and a standardized quality of consciousness”.¹⁵⁰ This way, a basically consumerist and disembodied relationship to truth and history is spreading. In Drawert's eyes, digitization tends to undermine, both the ability of language to signify (as a “language of success” harbouring new enchantments¹⁵¹) and the lingual competences of the people, who are getting used to a “capitalistic monotony”,¹⁵² transmitted by mass media. In general, Drawert tends to refresh Adorno's and Horkheimer's renown criticism of “culture industries” and “semi-education” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) that accompanies a growing passivity of consumerism condemned already by Nietzsche. However, the combination of capitalism and digitization is provoking tendencies of an anti-humanism that might not have been expected after 1991. It was identified by Frank Schirrmacher and Peter Sloterdijk as a result of the Nash-algorithms as another kind of dark rationalism: “Behaviorism [...] became victorious by being coupled with paranoia”, because these algorithms are based on “pure distrust” generally supposing the other as foe.¹⁵³

Moreover, Drawert is afraid of an entropy of meaning (already in the early nineties he mentioned the “noise of truths”¹⁵⁴): being and acting online would

146 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 234 [techniques that drive us into incapacitation].

147 Drawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 62 [the image of salvation is definitely at bay].

148 Drawert, *Frühjahrskollektion*, 81. The question cynically refers to the Shoa.

149 Cf. Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 168.

150 Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 168.

151 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 207–8.

152 Krause, “Dem vom Körper,” 33.

153 Schirrmacher, *Der Geist in der Maschine*, 43, 40.

154 Drawert, *Haus ohne Menschen*, 34.

automatically cause volatilization, dispersion, losses¹⁵⁵—due to a global synchronicity that multiplies the voices and leads to global de-realization, a deadlock of communication.¹⁵⁶ The internet would have swiftly run itself down to a disposal site of worthless information.¹⁵⁷

V. Asynchronicity—occupied presence, suspended future

“Jemand kratzt an der Haustür / und will, daß ich öffne. / Es kann nur der Tod sein / im Anzug eines Handelsvertreters / mit Rabattangeboten. Er stiehlt / Augenblicke und verkauft sie / als Uhren.”¹⁵⁸

Drawert’s inventory of the losses after 1989 started with the forlornness of landscapes and spaces of (an also mental) absence (*Abwesenheitsräume*¹⁵⁹)—and thus creative zones of literature. We already saw that this is connected to a loss of time as well: firstly, in a “subtraction of the time of my existence in exchange for nothing”¹⁶⁰ which refers to the abrupt devaluation of GDR-biographies; secondly, in the dissolution of (a “really socialistic”) slowness, starting right at the moment the economic unification was enacted. The result was the perpetual disintegration of time that interfered in the amalgamation of two different systems and time regimes. For Drawert, the East has simply resided in modernity, while the West had already proceeded to an almost virtual post-modernity (high-tech-capitalism). In his essays and theater pieces Drawert shows the impertinences of the catching-up process in the “belated” East as a way from pre-historic stone age to high-tech-society.¹⁶¹ For the East it meant reaching present time before thinking of any future. And he argues once more for the significance of that difference for the West:

“Der *Geschwindigkeitsverlust* im Osten war dem Westen ein notwendiges Korrektiv zur Beschleunigung der eigenen Geschichte; mit ihm schien eine Notbremse im Weltgeschehen installiert, eine Komponente der Bewegungslosigkeit in der Rasanz [...]. Kurz: *der Osten war das Sedativum*

155 Drawert, *Schreiben*, 73.

156 Cf. Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 168.

157 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 241.

158 Drawert, *Frühjahrskollektion*, 8: “Keine Zeit”. [Someone scratches at the front door / and wants me to open it. / It can only be death / in the suit of a sales representative / with discount offers. He steals / moments and sells them / as watches.]

159 Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 24.

160 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 210.

161 Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 166; cf. Irmer, “End- und Denkspiele.”

des Westens; ohne es wäre die galoppierende Psychose des Fortschritts sicher schon vorher ausgebrochen.”¹⁶²

Regarding the continuation of this diachronic setting, the end of the “sedative zone” does not mark the end of belatedness in history: For Drawert, there is no completion of history (until its contemporaries die), because the bodies that have witnessed it and suffered from it, were shaped, marked and permeated by experience. And if this experience tends to contaminate the present, all that what will have been might be an unrealized future in sense of sticking mentally to former times, like the narrator’s mother in *Dresden* does. This makes memory communities prone to ‘untimely’ myths as configurations of the returning suppressed. On the one hand the asynchronicity is deepened by restorative requests (“GDR’s of the mind”¹⁶³) on the other by unfulfilled former expectations of the disenchanting.

Moreover the acceleration of time in the digitized world even increases the “Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen” (simultaneity of the non-simultaneous). By this, Germany (and the world in total) are restructured as an atopian society:

“[...] die Geschwindigkeit der Zeit nimmt in einem Ausmaß zu, daß wir es bald schon nicht nur mit zwei oder drei verschiedenen historischen Ebenen zu tun haben werden, sondern mit ganzen Sphären, die zeitlich und stofflich auseinanderfallen. [...] Wenn wir unser schönes Land auch in seiner inneren Verbundenheit wiederhaben, wird es keine Rolle mehr spielen, weil es dann keine Grenzen mehr gibt – jedenfalls keine sichtbaren.”¹⁶⁴

For Drawert the ‘inner’ or ‘mental’ reunification proves to be a never-ending process and an unrealizable future—even if a common national identity could be achieved it would already be repealed by the annihilation of national borders due to new traffic and communication technologies. The spatial (and economical) effects of digitization have already been mentioned above (*atopia*). The demarcation of time brings new economic constraints in the working environment as in leisure time—synchronicity means restlessness—that melt together in the instantaneous

162 Drawert, *Revolt des Körpers*, 52. [The loss of speed in the East was for the West a necessary corrective to the acceleration of its own history; it seemed to install an emergency brake in world affairs, a component of immobility in the frenzy [...]. In short: the East was the sedative of the West; without it, the galloping psychosis of progress would certainly have broken out before.]

163 Saunders and Pinfold, *Remembering and Rethinking*, 8.

164 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 212: “Es wächst nicht zusammen, was nicht zusammengehört”. [...] the speed of time is increasing to such an extent that soon we will not only have to deal with two or three different historical levels, but with whole spheres that fall apart in time and material. [...] When we have our beautiful country back in its inner connectivity, it will no longer play a role, because then there will be no more borders—at least no visible ones.]

simulation of life, making the perceiving body obsolescent: “Der Körper hält nicht / mehr Schritt mit der Welt auf dem Smartphone.”;¹⁶⁵ even more so, since “capital has become the subject of history”.¹⁶⁶ For the individual, time is an ever more precious resource now, stolen and sold as well by the media acting as peddlers (as quoted above): the pure combustion of the time of consumers who are not aware of their “fleeting capital”.¹⁶⁷ But the consumers are not only losing their future time to an expanded presence, their knowledge of the past also gets spilled: “those electronic days are burning up much better what has been formerly known as history”.¹⁶⁸ The result is a possibly explosive mixture of ignorance, dissatisfaction and yearning for a departure from the self-inflicted emptiness, the aforementioned proneness to mythical or retrotopian seductions or an ‘alternative’ in the sense of post-democratic mindsets. Aside from this sharp scolding of social media,¹⁶⁹ this a-historic, uncanny simultaneity of the nonsimultaneous can be contextualized with Ernst Bloch’s notes on asynchronous contradiction and pent-up rage that he pointed out as roots of the success of National Socialism in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (1935/1962):

“Ältere Zeiten als die heutigen wirken in älteren Schichten nach; leicht geht oder träumt es sich hier in ältere zurück. [...] Verschiedene Jahre überhaupt schlagen in dem einen, das soeben gezählt wird und herrscht. Sie [...] widersprechen dem Jetzt; sehr merkwürdig, schief, von rückwärts her. / [...] / Die Vergangenheit wird vom Kleinbürgertum heute freilich geschönt, es setzt sein Unerfülltes gerade mit dem relativ Besseren der Vergangenheit gemischt dem Jetzt entgegen. So hat gestaute Wut ihren ungleichzeitigen Widerspruch [...]”¹⁷⁰

Bloch points out it would be the task of historiography and material analysis to ban those flickering, mythical spots of the gone by to prevent them from taking influence on the present society.¹⁷¹ In making this task his own, Drawert also

165 Drawert, “§1) Die Würde des Menschen ist,” 5 [the body no longer keeps pace with the smartphone].

166 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 225.

167 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 235.

168 Drawert, *Frühjahrskollektion*, 49.

169 Cf. “Im neunten Kreis der Medien” (Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 233f).

170 Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, 104–17. [Earlier times than the today’s have an effect in older layers; it is easy to go back or dream oneself here into older ones. [...] Different years at all beat in the one that is just counted and reigns. They [...] contradict the now; very strangely, obliquely, from backwards. / [...] / The past is glossed over by the petty bourgeoisie today, of course; it sets its unfulfilled against the present situation, mixed with the relatively better of the past. Thus, pent-up rage has its uneven contradiction [...] against the present [...].]

171 Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, 124–25.

mentions the fact that present time is always streamed through by other times¹⁷² and warns of the political amalgamation of past, present and future¹⁷³ as “rhizomes in which the past lives on and has already become the future”.¹⁷⁴ It would mean replacing or suspending the future with a present that is occupied by the past. The ‘presentism’ of an expanded or even infinite ‘now’ or moment (the challenge Faust contested Mephisto with) can culminate either in the desire for a prescription of the future (*Was gewesen sein wird*), or in the “departure” to mythical retrotopian settings.¹⁷⁵ Only literature that relates in her narratives to the collective unconscious (suspending the gap between the same and the other¹⁷⁶) is justified in telling stories about the past in contemporary signs to “show us who we are and who we could be in the future”, enabling us to compare and to differ situations¹⁷⁷—and to finally realize common political aims. We will come back to this after some conclusions.

VI. Conclusions—Tasks of the East, tasks of literature

“Die Abschaffung von Freiheit und die Unterwerfung der Subjekte, vor den machtpolitischen Interessen eines Staates hier, vor der Gier des Kapitals dort, war immer die gemeinsame Achse, um die sich die Geschichte drehte.”¹⁷⁸

Among the tasks of the East in Drawert we might not find the hybrid illusion of Seiler’s narcissistic island-leader *Kruso*, who wanted to teach the Western world the way to the right type of liberty. But the question of how significant the convictions of the former GDR opposition and its methods of criticism can still be today remains. Concerning the past world of his origin, Drawert’s position is by no means nostalgic, it is clearly analytic and mostly refusing (for his mother in */Dresden/* he seems to make an exception). For this reason, the conclusion of my survey is that Drawert does not try to implement old stocks of communism into the present political discourse—even though he provokes occasionally with an impression of that (which is rather an attempt of destructive quoting used by Hannah Arendt).

172 Drawert, *Dresden*, 53–54; cf. also Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen*, 99.

173 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 194.

174 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 304.

175 Bauman, *Retrotopia*, 8f.

176 Cf. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 83.

177 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 228.

178 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 202. [The abolition of freedom and the subjugation of subjects, for the power-political interests of a state here, for the greed of capital there, has always been the common axis around which history has revolved.]

Instead, he expands upon his former criticism. From his belabour on the world since 1989, we can derive that he tries to provide additional means for consistent self-reflection.¹⁷⁹ The almost ‘compulsive repetition’ of difficulties in the reunification process, as well as the description of shrinking zones of substantial social participation are, aside from consumerism in the digital age, elements of this continuous critical investigation of reality including its unrealized alternatives.

Taking the attitude of a normative dissidence, inhabited from GDR times, as a measure, it is the vulnerable language that Drawert uses in search of truth¹⁸⁰—with the clear expectation to fail. His attempt to initiate authentic, post-ideological language, that would allow to make clear references again, arises from an inversion of the alethurgic practices of former GDR officials shown by the example of his father. Still today, this language tries to activate (and it risks irritating) the reader by innovative provocations (as well as by rather stereotypical ones). But this “place” denotes a reliable perspective to qualify his continuation of criticism: facing the new impositions to the subject ‘in’ the digitized and globalized market with its consequences of an information capitalism, the economics of attentiveness and hollow simulations of a perfect life. These consequences are characterized by the forthcoming topological (*Heimat*), lingual (speech) and chronological (future) absences discussed above. Thus, Drawert’s writings reproduce the phantom pain of an atopian and diachronic society that has forgotten itself as a community and lacks the language to reflect and discuss its urgent needs. From that ‘diagnosis’ Drawert’s dark (and often ironic) pessimism arises:

“Heute indes stehen wir vor dem Problem eines kompletten Infarktes aller Zeichensysteme. Die Sprache ist erschöpft. Der Kapitalismus ist manisch-depressiv. Der Sozialismus war paranoid. Da kann man sich jetzt aussuchen, was einem besser gefällt.”¹⁸¹

Hence, it is no wonder that he refreshed his earlier statement that “systems unable to reflect themselves become extinct”¹⁸² coined originally on the late GDR. It refers to his frequent warnings of a contamination of the Western world by totalitarian toxins: the unconsciously growing disclosure of digital structures to an almost perfect control and the obvious impact e. g. in the means of observation while the democratic status and maturity of the individual seems to fade. For Drawert, it

179 Cf. Drawert, *Revolten des Körpers*, 53.

180 Drawert, *Dresden*, 113.

181 Hielscher, “Ich glaube, ich glaube,” 86. [Today, however, we face the problem of a complete coronary of all sign systems. Language is exhausted. Capitalism is manic-depressive. Socialism was paranoid. Now you can choose what you like better.]

182 Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 179.

has already been contested for a long time, as in the striking last chapters of the shadow-novel, that take place post-89, the narrator constantly commits himself to self-censorship.¹⁸³ Defending a kind of “paradise lost” regarding his hopes into the West (in sense of a coming ‘reunified Germany of the mind’) including the values based on Enlightenment and Humanism, he can be located in the vanishing line of Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s *Critical Theory*, accompanied by French philosophers such as Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, Levinas or even Baudrillard.¹⁸⁴ Drawert’s program of disillusionment, disturbance, and the re-invigoration of reflection aims to enable a new maturity.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, the pessimistic comparison of experiences in socialism and market democracy sketches *ex negativo* what might have been—an unrealized future of a truly unified society—and what is lost and missed: unless it is translated in language and secured by literature. Thus, the careful documentation of absences (at least of reality and the subject itself) prove a defiant contention of the meaning of literature for contemporary societies.

VII. Postscript: The psychological source of phantom pain

“Vielleicht auch // ist jeder das selbst, was er, am falschen Ort, sucht. [...] // Ich vermisse nichts, nur das Gefühl, nichts / zu vermissen.”¹⁸⁶

This tautological statement in alignment of former criticism of the GDR is a conflation of Hölderlin’s *Irrsall* with an almost Socratic irony. It refers most probably to Lacan’s theory of the missing object (or thing) ‘a’ that cannot be understood, initiating a desire that remains unrealized. But Freud, too, had already identified an “unknown loss” as the source of melancholia. For the context of reunification¹⁸⁷ it is noteworthy, that the absent and missed object of love (to which the ego is expended) could be even substituted by abstract ideas like “Vaterland, Freiheit, ein Ideal”.¹⁸⁸ The difference between sadness about loss and melancholia is marked by consciousness. Drawert even denotes the longing as a *conditio humana*: “Uns ist ein Mangel eingeschrieben, der nicht gefüllt werden kann.”¹⁸⁹ In that sense, Drawert declares the absent as the mainstay of his poetics:

183 Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, e. g. 259.

184 Cf. Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 87: “Das Jahr 2000 findet [nicht] statt.”

185 Cf. Drawert, *Was gewesen sein wird*, 254.

186 Drawert, *Der Körper meiner Zeit*, 76. [Maybe also // everyone is, what he, in the wrong place, is looking for. [...] // I miss nothing, only the feeling of missing / nothing.]

187 Cf. also Grub, “»Wende« und »Einheit«,” 248.

188 Freud, “Trauer und Melancholie,” 431, 428: “Trauer und Melancholie.”

189 Hielscher, “Ich glaube, ich glaube,” 92.

“[...] ich habe *das Fehlende* zu meiner Substanz gemacht, zum Mittelpunkt meiner eigenen Geschichte.”¹⁹⁰

These poetics of the absent (as the source of identity) are not at least a transposition of his own *Wende* melancholia: Drawert has been among those *Exilanten eines Gefühls* (“expatriates of a sense of belonging”¹⁹¹) that remains as a ‘mental niche’ from the time of revolution against the GDR socialism, but never did succeed in a concretion of any imagined political structures.¹⁹² Regarding the statement of Joachim Gauck quoted in the introduction, it appears even for intellectuals an almost impossible mission to clarify what exactly is lost—that, which would allow people to liberate and live uninhibited again.¹⁹³ This is a collective task of an ‘alethurgy of the self’, producing an identity that is not imposed. To neglect this task would mean leaving the field to myths, depraved to fake news e. g. on Twitter, as Drawert mentions in his yet unpublished Lessing-speech (2017). The false compensation of the missed in right wing populism is heavily attacked by Drawert who analyzes and confronts (with Barthes)¹⁹⁴ these stolen and retroactive ‘narratives of dissidentism’ in showing their misuse and sources,¹⁹⁵ producing ‘fake partisans’ of transformation that Bloch had identified as a non-simultaneous contradiction.¹⁹⁶

For Drawert, poetry owns the competence to supply the highest quality of insights in the world and the self.¹⁹⁷ It is not limited to serving as an archive or even a kind of administration of the absent and the pointless longings caused by it. Including the reader and his experiences, desires or wishes, in short: his *conditio*, literature can outline these absences by leaving gaps that have to be filled by him—or herself. In addressing the reader as the “other” in the sense of supplying the measure of *discretio* that is always missed by the human being,¹⁹⁸ the “act of reading” (Wolfgang Iser) does not substitute reality like the virtual doubles and surrogates run by the media of digitization.¹⁹⁹ In contrast, in giving (back) the ability to differ, to verify and to decide²⁰⁰ it determines reality within the ‘joint performance

190 Drawert, *Dresden*, 279.

191 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 45.

192 Cf. also Drawert, *Ich hielt meinen Schatten*, 227.

193 Cf. Freud, “Trauer und Melancholie,” 430, 444.

194 Cf. Barthes, *Mythen des Alltags*, 115: the myth as stolen language.

195 Cf. Drawert, *Dresden*, 211–12.

196 Cf. Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, 122.

197 Cf. Hielscher, “Ich glaube, ich glaube,” 92.

198 Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 391, 395, 405.

199 Cf. Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 209.

200 Foucault, *Die Regierung der Lebenden*, 386.

of narration' that annuls the difference between the same and the other,²⁰¹ even though the reader's imagination is conducted by the author (who could deceive). As such, Drawert's self-delivery to the other, to the stranger who might give him space, speech and time in his mind, appears once more rather alethurgic than therapeutic—which he has recently postulated: therapy would be a waste product of his writing.²⁰² Anyway, even the findings of the voluntary and autonomous alethurgy of oneself appear as further lost items: "No one has enough tears / to tell of themselves, let alone / there would be words for all that stayed absent and does not come again."²⁰³ It is the task of literature to reveal at least the missing words.

But something else remains: the feeling of having been consequently neglected by the public sphere of a society that allows anyone to say almost anything, meanwhile resulting in the digital inflation of speech and the disintegration of the public: "Heute hätten wir es gern zurück, ein wenig nur, dieses politische Ernstgenommenwerden."²⁰⁴ In looking backward to the year 1989 (and before), Drawert creates an almost nostalgic regret at the lost regard of an authority that constantly felt endangered by the criticism and further social impacts of literature. Like this, the earlier introduced mythical figure of Sisyphus²⁰⁵ that has already been suffering unemployment, could now symbolize the writer's (lost) position and work in the perpetual battle for attention:²⁰⁶ "Seen from the ideal of the idea, there are only defeats."²⁰⁷ Only some dark ironic comfort is reserved for those, whose art, like a stopped clock, shows the time correctly twice a day. Contrary to this limitation, Drawert's poetics of the backsides of contemporary history (or odyssey) encompass much more in their constellations of the missed, of failed dreams, wasted hopes and their sad stories. Not at least, the melancholic collection of *trouvailles* may impregnate against wrong promises of restorations of great pasts:

"Es sind die an-/gespülten, ab-/genutzten, aus-/verkauften Gegenstände,
die von/ einem Anspruch auf alles berichten und wie kläglich er endet. //
Die Welt ist ein Strand und ihre Geschichte der Abfall."²⁰⁸

201 Cf. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 83.

202 Hielscher, "Ich glaube, ich glaube," 93.

203 Drawert, *Der Körper meiner Zeit*, 18.

204 Hielscher, "Ich glaube, ich glaube," 96.

205 Drawert, *Wo es war*, 10; Drawert, *Rückseiten der Herrlichkeit*, 74f.

206 Drawert, *Dresden*, 277.

207 Drawert, *Der Körper meiner Zeit*, 108.

208 Drawert, *Der Körper meiner Zeit*, 109. [It is the washed up, used up, sold off objects that tell of a claim to everything and how miserably it ends. The world is a beach and its history is waste.]

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