

‘To the Future Turned, We Stand’: Progress and the Temporal Politics of Citizenship in the German Democratic Republic

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‘To the Future Turned, We Stand’:¹ Progress and the Temporal Politics of Citizenship in the German Democratic Republic

In both parts of post-war Germany, the promise of progress played a central role in imagining and implementing new frameworks of social belonging and their formalization in the institution of citizenship. This article investigates how ideologies of progress were employed by various political and cultural actors in East Germany to support processes of citizenship formation and the consolidation of an independent statehood. I open with a brief historical discussion to argue that discourses of progress and futurity have played a significant role for all modern nation states independently of their ideological positioning. I will then proceed to show that the GDR, together with other socialist states, stands out in this regard due to the extent that its temporal politics were both modelled by and predicated on the particularity of its economic paradigm: the centrally planned economy. Following an analysis of the realm of formalized politics I will discuss how ideologies of progress manifested and were critically reviewed in the realm of literary production.

Keywords: GDR; temporal politics; futurity; progress; citizenship; temporalization of belonging; *Speculations about Jakob*

¹ See the first stanza of the GDR’s national anthem, written by Johannes Becher (later cultural minister of the GDR): ‘Auferstanden aus Ruinen | Und der Zukunft zugewandt, | Laßt uns Dir zum Guten dienen | Deutschland einig Vaterland.’ (‘From the ruins risen newly, | To the future turned, we stand. | Let us serve you good weal truly, | Germany, our fatherland.’)

Introduction: The temporal politics of citizenship

All forms of political authority come with their own temporal politics whereby a given community organizes its history, present, and future. To produce and protect a unified temporal reality for a given community of citizens has historically been among the primary concerns of modern nation states. In this task, states have relied as much on past-oriented founding myths as they have on images of futurity. Since the rise of popular democracy during the late eighteenth century, official visions of the future have regularly been organized around promises of social, economic, and political progress. While requiring reiteration throughout the governing process, such promises of a better future are often particularly pronounced during early periods of state building, when they offer a common point of orientation towards national consolidation. Many of the prominent foundational slogans of modern Western democracies, such as the French ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’, or the US American ‘all men are created equal’, were not descriptive utterances at their point of creation during the respective national revolutions. Instead, they were (and have, to an extent, remained) state-issued promises and collective expressions of hopes, desires, and ambitions directed toward the future.

In German history, the aspirational character of modern citizenship has never been more evident than in the period after World War Two and the fall of the National Socialist regime, when the country faced the challenging task of devising a new formal framework for the civil society it aimed to create. Each of the two ideologies that would come to divide Germany – respectively anchored in socialism and a liberally oriented social market economy – brought its own distinct understanding and practice of progress. On each side of the German border, the promise of progress played a central role in imagining and implementing new frameworks of social belonging and their formalization in the institution of citizenship.² In the GDR,

² In line with current usage in the field of citizenship studies, I employ citizenship as an umbrella term capturing legal, social, and cultural layers of political identity, agency, and belonging. See, e.g., *The Oxford Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, ed. by Ayelet Shachar and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); *Citizenship*,

passionate commitments to visions of progress were constantly reaffirmed in all public realms, ranging from cultural to agricultural production (with the GDR's most salient agricultural vehicle, the tractor *Fortschritt ZT 300*, forming but one ostentatious example). By comparison with its eastern neighbour, early West German commitment to progress was less overt and more complex, but still remained central to the state building process. Explicit political and cultural engagement with the concept by the ruling parties was often accompanied by (and sometimes cloaked in) scepticism or advocacy of conservatism. Yet a strong implicit endorsement of infinite progress could be found across many policy sectors, most prominently so in the FRG's dedication to economic wealth as measured in the growth of its gross domestic product (GDP). The resulting *Wirtschaftswunder* – a term coined in 1950 by *The Times* to capture the country's seemingly miraculous economic stride – became a constitutive pillar of West German post-war identity both internationally and domestically.

To a considerable degree, the centrality of notions of post-war progress was owed to the deliberate social engineering efforts of the Allied forces, who were acutely aware of the political utility of ideas of progressive transformation. Uta Gerhardt has shown, for example, how the idea of radical change at the heart of what became known as the 'zero hour' thesis was a consciously and carefully engineered instrument, already constructed by the US government while the war was still ongoing, to effect a complete reorganization of all aspects of German social and political life.³ And in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Soviet visions of socialist futurity and of a leadership in the developmental 'race' with capitalist nations became a central semantic strategy of state building through the temporalization of belonging.⁴

Belonging, and Nation-States in the Twenty-First Century, ed. by Nicole Stokes-DuPass and Ramona Fruja (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

³ Uta Gerhardt, *Soziologie der Stunde Null: Zur Gesellschaftskonzeption des amerikanischen Besatzungsregimes in Deutschland 1944–1945/1946* (Stuttgart: Suhrkamp, 2005).

⁴ See, e.g., Ralph Jessen, 'Semantic Strategies of Inclusion and Exclusion in the German Democratic Republic (1949–1989)', in *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes*, ed. by Willibald Steinmetz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 275–91.

In this article I will concentrate on the development of the latter case to investigate how ideologies of progress were employed by political and cultural actors in the GDR to support processes of citizenship formation and the consolidation of an independent statehood. While the GDR was constituted as a unique political body which did not easily fit any theoretical model of statehood, it also provides a particularly illustrative example of the politics of progress by offering insights into tendencies that were driven to an extreme in the socialist state but are, in subtler forms, universal to the modern nation state. In support of this point, I will open with a brief historical discussion to argue that discourses of progress and futurity have played a significant role for modern nation states of all ideological hues. I will then proceed to show that the GDR, together with other socialist states, stands out in this regard due to the extent that its temporal politics were both modelled by and predicated on its particular economic paradigm: the centrally planned economy. Building on an analysis of the realm of formalized politics, I will investigate how the GDR's temporal regime manifested and was, at times, resisted in the realm of literary production. My analysis will focus on the period prior to 1971, when Erich Honecker succeeded Walther Ulbricht as First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party.⁵

Progress, Citizenship, Modernity

⁵ Honecker's takeover may be said to have brought about a significant shift in the GDR's temporal politics, with its focus on the temporal presentism of 'really existing socialism' motivating many authors to reinvest in utopian thought. Heiner Müller noted: 'Damals hatte die Partei gerade beschlossen, dass der Sozialismus eine selbständige geschichtliche Formation und nicht der Übergang zum Kommunismus sei, die Heiligsprechung der Misere, die Geburt der Karikatur "real existierender Sozialismus".' Heiner Müller, *Werke, Vol. 9: Eine Autobiographie*, ed. by Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), p. 157. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer who pointed this out.

Scholars of progress, most prominent among them Hannah Arendt and Rainer Koselleck, widely agree that the concept is a distinctly modern one. Our contemporary connotation of progress is usually thought to have arisen around the time of the Industrial Revolution, when Western imperialism could be said to have crystallized into a distinct ideology, and when the concept of national citizenship emerged. Koselleck traces the etymology of the German term ‘Fortschritt’ back to Immanuel Kant, whom he believes to have coined it in his 1754 essay ‘Die Frage, ob die Erde veralte, physikalisch erwogen’.⁶ Precursor notions of progress, such as the Latin ‘perfectibilis’, the French ‘perfectibilité’, or the German ‘Progreß’ and ‘Fortgang’, whose history reaches back more than 2000 years, were distinct from the modern concept by still being rooted in organic metaphors of growth and circular biological processes. The concept of progress/‘Fortschritt’ which emerged across Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, was entirely denaturalised. Instead of an organic metaphor, the concept now offered an instrument for capturing the modern experience of a linear, engineerable, and purely socio-political historical time.⁷

In the German context, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx may be seen as having made particularly impactful contributions to the normalization of an understanding of history as directional and of society as inherently amenable to change. Hegel’s notion of distinct stages or epochs of civilizational development, as laid out in his philosophy of history,⁸ became significant for the GDR via its critical reception in Marx’s and Lenin’s writings. Hegel and Marx diverged in their analysis of the driving forces of historical development, but both identified human history with the progression of objective social practice.⁹ For both thinkers,

⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Fortschritt’, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon Zur Politisch-Sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975), pp. 351–423.

⁷ Koselleck, ‘Fortschritt’.

⁸ *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über Die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. by Eduard Gans and others (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1837).

⁹ *Marx Engels Werke, Vol 3* (Berlin: Dietz, 1845), p. 28; see also *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. by Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 434.

history has a plot: While Hegel understands historical development as representing an expression of the unfolding of *Geist* or Spirit, rendering human action secondary, Marxist theory stages social classes and the forces of production as the significant *dramatis personae*. Marx rejected Hegelian metaphysics and what he understood as the Hegelian system, yet he corresponded with Hegel in his view of world history as innately progressive and oriented towards a *telos* of human freedom, envisioned as manifesting in material, moral, and cultural improvement. Both thinkers conceptualized a dynamic end-point to historical progress – the Germanic Protestant world for Hegel, and the realization of communist society for Marx.¹⁰

There is reason to consider that the simultaneous emergence of the concept of progress and the concept of modern citizenship was not coincidental. Both notions complement and mutually legitimize each other, and both have frequently been drawn on as responses to the same challenges of industrial societies by leaders and popular movements alike. Appealing to a similar set of popular hopes and demands, the sense of forward momentum inherent in both notions has served to stabilize communities amidst the enormous transformations they had been subjected to since the beginning of the industrialization process. With the Industrial Revolution effecting a radical upheaval of previous social orders and inspiring stronger calls for political transparency and participation, the idea of progress became not only a vehicle for expressing the desires of excluded groups, but also an instrument in the hands of the ruling elites for pacifying these desires and justifying existing inequalities. During the nineteenth century, the promise of perpetual economic growth became a staple of industrial societies, who turned to it in their quest for mediating the politics of inequality. Barry Buzan and George Lawson remark that, for the nation states consolidating at this time, progress acquired the status of an ‘addiction’: ‘Progress in the form of economic growth, allied to a degree of redistribution,

¹⁰ Howard Williams, ‘The End of History in Hegel and Marx’, in *The Marx-Hegel Connection*, ed. by Tony Burns and Ian Fraser (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), pp. 198–216 (pp. 198–99).

was as important as nationalism in containing the class conflicts predicted by Marx, Engels and their successors.’¹¹ It was not only the empirical experience of measurable material progress, but also the mere political commitment to ideas of growth and transformation, which served as important instruments with which to appease sentiments of injustice in the face of inequality. The notion of economic progress justifies poverty by promising a future escape from it. When holding on to the idea of progress, disparities in the distribution of wealth and power metamorphose from a systemic injustice into a merely temporal problem.

In his seminal work on the conceptual history of progress in the Western world, Reinhart Koselleck lays out the complexity and internal contradictions that the term has accumulated as layers of meaning throughout its development. He contends that the concept is ‘utopisch und erfahrungsgesättigt zugleich’, and at once an indicator of and a factor in the rapid changes that have marked modernity.¹² Since the Industrial Revolution, Koselleck argues, the notion of progress has contained the socio-political message that historically acquired human skills and experience are never sufficient to meet the new and unforeseeable challenges of the future. For this reason, the notion of progress compels political systems to invest in comprehensive planning efforts, but these efforts are, necessarily, constantly subject to change due to the perpetually evolving present and projected environments they are embedded in.¹³ Koselleck’s findings are very much in tune with more general analyses of modernity such as Anthony Cascardi’s, who, writing about two decades after Koselleck, affirms: ‘[T]he modern subject’s self-image is built on the premise of its incommensurability with any pre-existing

¹¹ Barry Buzan and George Lawson, ‘Ideologies of Progress’, in *The Global Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 97–126 (p. 101).

¹² Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Fortschritt’, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975), pp. 351–423 (p. 353).

¹³ Reinhart Koselleck, “‘Fortschritt und Niedergang’”: Nachtrag zur Geschichte zweier Begriffe’, in *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*, ed. by Reinhart Koselleck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), pp. 159–82.

paradigm',¹⁴ thus rendering the idea of radical change and perpetual unpreparedness for the future ahead a central principle of modernity.

Some of the features that Koselleck notes as characteristic of progress may also be seen to apply to the concept of citizenship. In the same way as progress, modern citizenship was historically conceived of, and has since remained, a utopian idea, always maintaining its future-oriented, aspirational character. Scholars of citizenship today increasingly emphasize and embrace the imperfect and unfinished quality of civic community.¹⁵ But even before this perpetual improvability came to be welcomed in political and scholarly discourse, it could be seen to have constituted not an accidental lack, but a defining characteristic of citizenship. Like the concept of progress, the idea of equal citizenship eternally delays part of the fulfilment of its promise to a time yet to come. Simultaneously, however, the concept and its attendant values of equality, rule of law, and economic equity could not continue to function as popular incentives if they were not, at least to some extent, also rooted in the lived experience of tangible changes in the political consciousness and power relations.

The notions of progress and citizenship share another trait in their ideological elasticity. Even though the concept of progress meets the characteristics of a self-standing ideology,¹⁶ it also is so amenable to a variety of temporal, spatial, and ideational contexts that it formed a central determinant of each of the four main ideological strands of twentieth-century Europe. All four strands – nationalism, socialism, racism, and liberalism – used the idea of progress as a central basis on which to challenge existing societal orders, justify comprehensive programmes of social engineering, and legitimize the expansion of state power both internally

¹⁴ Anthony J. Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 6.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Iris Marion Young, 'Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference', in *Justice, Governance, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Difference* (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität, 2007), pp. 79–116.

¹⁶ See, for example, Barry Buzan and George Lawson, who define ideology as 'assemblages of beliefs, concepts and values that address how polities, economies and cultural orders relate to each other, how individuals and groups fit into these assemblages, and how human collectivities should be governed.' Buzan and Lawson, p. 99; for further reading on the nature of ideology, see, e.g., Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

and internationally.¹⁷ The notion of progress has been deeply implicated in the West's colonizing mission, where it served as a comparative yardstick to distinguish countries based on their different levels of 'civilizational' development and legitimized the imperial project.¹⁸ While the progressive elements of liberalism and socialism are well established, the connection of not only nationalism, but also twentieth-century racism to ideas of progress is not always recognized. Nationalism's 'progressiveness' lay in its reimagination of the structures of political belonging and administration. And even racism, Barry Buzan and George Lawson observe, was underpinned by nationalist notions of 'progress' in its belief that a certain, predetermined part of the population 'should command historical development'. As they point out: 'There was a close, if often unacknowledged, relationship between liberal and socialist ideas of "improvement", and racist proposals to use eugenics' for what they alleged would constitute the biological development of humanity.¹⁹

Progress, Division, and Socialist Citizenship

It was this ideological flexibility of progress narratives which determined their utility in German post-war politics. While the creation of a new model of German citizenship and national identity posed an enormous challenge to both East and West, the GDR found itself confronted with a variety of political complexities to which discourses of progress offered a particularly suitable response. In addition to the difficult task, faced by all of Germany, to

¹⁷ See Buzan and Lawson, p. 101.

¹⁸ See Buzan and Lawson, p. 99.

¹⁹ Buzan and Lawson, p. 100.

develop a concept of national identity that would appear fitting in light of the hyper-nationalistic excesses of the preceding Nazi years, GDR national identity also had to adhere to the doctrines of what was then called Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism. Within this ideological framework, nationalism was generally viewed suspiciously as a bourgeois concept created to ‘divert the proletariat’s attention from the realities of the international class struggle’.²⁰ Besides the cause of a global socialist future, allegiance was also owed to the Soviet Union: when national devotion was expressed, it was often in the form of a ‘dual patriotism’, equally directed at the GDR and its Soviet neighbour.²¹ In this context, universalist progress narratives offered themselves as a suitable tool of political mobilization by being commensurate with the aims of socialism, transnational in nature, and still useful to demarcate a separate identity *vis-à-vis* the West.

The distinct stances that the two Germanies held towards the concept of progress are emblematically expressed in their respective constitutions of 1949. While both documents demonstrate some of the aspirational elements characteristic of modern constitutions, they differ decisively in their explicit commitment to progress. The text that, from 1949 onwards, was to constitute the central foundation for all political relations in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the *Grundgesetz (GG)*, opens with a powerful assertion in Article 1:

(1) Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar. Sie zu achten und zu schützen ist Verpflichtung aller staatlichen Gewalt.

(2) Das Deutsche Volk bekennt sich darum zu unverletzlichen und unveräußerlichen Menschenrechten als Grundlage jeder menschlichen Gemeinschaft, des Friedens und der Gerechtigkeit in der Welt.

²⁰ Dietrich Orlow, ‘The GDR’s Failed Search for a National Identity, 1945-1989’, *German Studies Review*, 29.3 (2006), 537–58 (p. 538).

²¹ See Orlow, p. 540.

Even though grammatically expressed as the description of a present state, in 1949 the text may more accurately be understood to have represented a negotiation of, and commentary on, a particular conception of the past and the future. Like the French and American slogans, the West German constitution neither delivered an accurate account of historical experience nor described the moment of its inception, but rather constituted, in the form of a performative speech act, the setting of a radical mark between the dark realities of the past and the vision of a more positive future.

The belief in legal, social, and political progress which is merely implied in Article 1 of the West German constitution was made explicit in the GDR's constitution of the same year. Its preamble states:

Von dem Willen erfüllt, die Freiheit und die Rechte des Menschen zu verbürgen, das Gemeinschafts- und Wirtschaftsleben in sozialer Gerechtigkeit zu gestalten, dem gesellschaftlichen Fortschritt zu dienen, die Freundschaft mit allen Völkern zu fördern und den Frieden zu sichern, hat sich das deutsche Volk diese Verfassung gegeben.²²

The GDR's constitution shows remarkable overlap with its West German counterpart in its dedication to the rule of law, human rights, and peaceful international relations. Yet both documents show significant differences in the conceptualization of what, on the surface, appears to be the same subject matter. While there is a longstanding legal debate about whether the West German constitution understands dignity and human rights as *a priori* natural law or

²² *Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, 7 October 1949. The GDR's successor constitution of 6 April 1968 replaced the preamble with a new text, in which the idea of progress was still clearly present in the form of movement metaphors, but not explicitly enunciated: 'Getragen von der Verantwortung, der ganzen deutschen Nation den Weg in eine Zukunft des Friedens und des Sozialismus zu weisen, in Ansehung der geschichtlichen Tatsache, daß der Imperialismus unter Führung der USA im Einvernehmen mit Kreisen des westdeutschen Monopolkapitals Deutschland gespalten hat, um Westdeutschland zu einer Basis des Imperialismus und des Kampfes gegen den Sozialismus aufzubauen, was den Lebensinteressen der Nation widerspricht, hat sich das Volk der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, fest gegründet auf den Errungenschaften der antifaschistisch - demokratischen und der sozialistischen Umwälzung der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung, einig in seinen werktätigen Klassen und Schichten das Werk der Verfassung vom 7. Oktober 1949 in ihrem Geiste weiterführend, und von dem Willen erfüllt, den Weg des Friedens, der sozialen Gerechtigkeit, der Demokratie, des Sozialismus und der Völkerfreundschaft in freier Entscheidung unbeirrt weiterzugehen, diese sozialistische Verfassung gegeben.'

as positive law,²³ from a linguistic perspective, the first two paragraphs of the constitution are conspicuously free of creating agents. In the language of the *GG*, dignity and human rights are not brought about by the action of the state or citizenry, but merely require to be ‘honoured’, ‘protected’, and ‘acknowledged’ (‘geachtet’, ‘geschützt’, ‘bekannt’). That a commitment to these notions is aspirational and future-oriented is made explicit only in the GDR’s constitution, in which ‘the German people’ appears as an agent ‘imbued with the intention/will’ to ‘vouch’ for freedom and human rights, and to ‘create/shape/organize’, to ‘serve’, and to ‘promote/advance’ (‘gestalten’, ‘dienen’, ‘fördern’) the values of social justice, international peace, and societal progress.²⁴

Beyond the preamble, a brief linguistic analysis of the GDR’s constitutions of 1949 and 1968,²⁵ along with the FRG’s *GG*, corroborates the great importance that ideas of progress and development had for the GDR’s political founding narrative. The GDR’s 1949 constitution uses the term ‘Fortschritt’ twice in its programmatic opening, and the term ‘Entwicklung’, which can be seen as sharing a sematic field with ‘progress’, occurs 22 times. The 1968 constitution, which replaced the earlier document, uses the terms ‘Fortschritt’ and its derivatives five times, and the term ‘Entwicklung’, in phrases such as ‘die Entwicklung der sozialistischen Gesellschaft’, is employed an astonishing 38 times.²⁶ By comparison, the *GG*, while prominently including the implicitly forward-looking preamble cited above, is entirely free of any explicit mention of ideas such as ‘Fortschritt’ or ‘Entwicklung’, and on the ten

²³ See, e.g., Christoph Enders, *Die Menschenwürde in der Verfassungsordnung: Zur Dogmatik des Art. 1 GG* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).

²⁴ Own translation.

²⁵ The 1949 constitution was amended in 1955, 1958, and 1960, and was finally replaced by a new constitution on 9 April 1968. My analysis is of the original 1949 constitution.

²⁶ GDR constitution of 1968, Art. 3 (2). For the numerical analysis, I referred to the 1968 constitution’s amended form of 1974 – the GDR’s final constitution before reunification.

occasions that the prefix ‘fort’ is used, it is consistently in different forms of past- and conservation-oriented terms such as ‘Fortdauer’, ‘Fortgeltung’, and so on.²⁷

These differences in constitutional references to aspects of progress and futurity are in many ways reflective of the two distinct models of German citizenship which would develop in East and West. This was despite both countries’ initially maintaining the same citizenship laws. Following the Berlin Declaration of 5 June 1945, whereby the four Allied Forces assumed supreme authority over German territory,²⁸ the Allies had jointly repealed NS legislation related to the Nuremberg race laws, through which millions had been rendered stateless, as well as the laws that had forcibly transferred German citizenship to French and Luxembourgian nationals. While the National Socialists’ 1935 citizenship law was cancelled throughout all German territory,²⁹ the *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz (RuStAG)* of 1913 was left in force. Even once independent statehoods began to manifest, citizenship laws and their application in both parts of Germany remained practically untouched, with both the FRG’s and GDR’s constitution adopting the *RuStAG* almost without changes.³⁰

Yet citizenship remained a matter of contestation throughout the period of German division. Even though the separate constitutions indicated the creation of two distinct state entities, West Germany never ceased to insist on a single German citizenship. The GDR’s constitution of 1949 originally concurred, stating: ‘es gibt nur eine deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit’ (Art. 1 Abs. 4). The country only changed its stance in 1967, when introducing its own citizenship law. In its preamble, the *Gesetz über die Staatsbürgerschaft der*

²⁷ See, e.g., Art. 123 (1): ‘Recht aus der Zeit vor dem Zusammentritt des Bundestages gilt fort, soweit es dem Grundgesetz nicht widerspricht’. The term ‘Entwicklung’ is used once, but only in a strictly developmental context, when referring to the ‘leibliche und seelische Entwicklung’ of extramarital children (*GG*, Art. 5 (6)).

²⁸ See, e.g., Hans Kelsen, ‘The Legal Status of Germany According to the Declaration of Berlin’, *American Journal of International Law*, 39.3 (1945), 518–526.

²⁹ The Federal Republic later reversed part of the cancellation by considering valid the 1935 laws on naturalisation through service in the German ‘Reichsarmee’ or the SS.

³⁰ The GDR’s 1949 constitution introduced slight changes, most notably with regard to gender equality.

Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetz) retroactively declared that an independent GDR citizenship had already been created in 1949.

Yet despite endeavours to foster identification with a distinct socialist statehood, the formal legal situation of two German citizenships did not entirely match public sentiment in the GDR. This was increasingly addressed during the 1970s and 1980s, when a number of legal and historical scholars were tasked with formulating a fully-fledged theory of GDR national identity and citizenship.³¹ In one of the outputs of this state-led process, the authors Gerhard Riege und Hans-Jürgen Kulke, in a 1980 book tellingly titled *Nationalität: deutsch. Staatsbürgerschaft: DDR*, acknowledge: ‘Menschen unseres Landes waren sich zur Zeit der Staatsgründung durchaus nicht darüber im klaren, daß der erste deutsche Staat der Arbeiter und Bauern auch eine neue Staatsbürgerschaft bedeutete’.³² In concert with other experts, such as the GDR historians Alfred Kosing and Walter Schmidt,³³ Riege and Kulke articulated a model of citizenship centred on ideas of societal and individual development and its connection to the lived political activity of the citizen, in which the legal formality of the institution is meant to withdraw into the background. As Riege and Kulke asserted in 1980: ‘Als ein reales gesellschaftliches Verhältnis wird auch die Staatsbürgerschaft nicht durch ein Gesetz geschaffen, sondern durch die gesellschaftliche Aktion, die zur Staatsgründung führte’.³⁴

This model of citizenship relied heavily on imagery of futurity, progress, and competition with the West. Just as political and economic competition between the two German

³¹ At the 13th plenum of the Central Committee in Dec 1974, Honecker first distinguished between nation, nationality and citizenship. The distinction had been devised by Alfred Kosing and Walter Schmidt.

³² Gerhard Riege and Hans-Jürgen Kulke, *Nationalität: Deutsch. Staatsbürgerschaft: DDR* (Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1980), p. 16; see also Münch, p. 90 f. In line with the sentiment expressed in the title of Riege and Kulke’s book, the GDR’s second constitution, of 9 April 1968, eradicated the declaration of a unified German citizenship found in the 1949 constitution, but still asserted an allegiance to the German nation in its preamble: ‘Getragen von der Verantwortung, der ganzen deutschen Nation den Weg in eine Zukunft des Friedens und des Sozialismus zu weisen’.

³³ See, e.g., Alfred Kosing and Walter Schmidt, ‘Über die Dialektik von internationalem und nationalem’, *Thematische Information und Dokumentation*, 1974.

³⁴ Riege and Kulke, p. 17.

states as a whole was often expressed in the spatiotemporal terms of progress, with one state declared as being ‘ahead’ of the other, and the other as being historically ‘backward’, ‘ageing’, or ‘in decline’, GDR scholars of citizenship also availed themselves of the metaphors of a journey, a race, or rivalry between the young and the old. Riege and Kulke use this terminology when explaining the incommensurability of the two German citizenships:

Die sozialistische Staatsbürgerschaft der DDR, 1949 mit dem Arbeiter-Bauern-Staat entstanden, teilt mit dem Alter dieses Staates sein Aufblühen. Was sie für den einzelnen und die Gesellschaft wirklich bedeutet, wird inhaltsreicher und vielfältiger, je weiter unsere Gesellschaft auf dem sozialistischen Kurs zum Kommunismus vorankommt. Zugleich hebt sie sich zunehmend stärker von der imperialistischen deutschen Bundesbürgerschaft ab, die den einzelnen mit einer Ordnung verbindet, deren glänzende äußere Aufmachung nicht überdecken kann, daß sie abgelebt und geschichtlich verbraucht ist. So betrachtet wird die Kluft zwischen den gesellschaftlichen und staatlichen Ordnungen ständig größer. Die von vornherein bestehende Unvereinbarkeit der mit ihnen verknüpften Bürgerschaften tritt immer plastischer hervor.³⁵

In line with the tenets established in the constitution, Riege and Kulke characterize GDR citizenship as a continuously emergent concept. In contrast to West German citizenship, which is portrayed as stagnant and outmoded, GDR citizenship is understood as still only approximating its *raison-d'être*, incessantly unfolding its true nature the further GDR society advances ‘on the socialist course to communism’.

In a separate publication entitled ‘Der Bürger in der sozialistischen Gesellschafts- und Staatsordnung der DDR: Seine Grundrechte und Grundpflichten’, Gerhard Riege expands on this description by portraying GDR citizenship as an inherently dynamic institution. Here he contrasts the durability of the formal framework of citizenship with its lived content – at which

³⁵ Riege and Kulke, pp. 146–47.

level it is engaged in a continuous, quasi-mystical process of development, in sync with the dynamics of general societal progress:

Der sozialistischen Staatsbürgerschaft ist eine innere Dynamik eigen. Seiner Form nach bleibt das Rechtsinstitut über längere Zeit weitgehend unverändert; in seinem Inhalt hingegen entwickelt es sich mit der sozialistischen Gesellschafts- und Staatsordnung, d.h. in dem Maße, in dem die Selbstbestimmung des Volkes, die Beherrschung der Gesellschaft und der Natur durch den Menschen an Tiefe und Breite zunehmen.³⁶

Notable in this context is the denomination of ‘Staatsbürgerschaft’, which, beginning in the 1970s, was increasingly used to demarcate the GDR’s citizenship from the FRG’s ‘Staatsangehörigkeit’. While the latter was portrayed as a mainly passive status, the GDR’s ‘Staatsbürgerschaft’ was fashioned as a concept which expressed the active engagement of the citizenry as well as their privileged relationship to the law and the state. The status of the socialist ‘Staatsbürger’, Riege and Kulke insist in accordance with the official doctrine of the time, ‘reflektiert in ganz anderer Weise als der des Staatsangehörigen die Gewißheit, in der Gesellschaft wirken zu können und von ihr gebraucht zu werden’.³⁷ This social integration, however, did not come free of charge: it had to be earned by collaborating with the state’s model of a technocratic, progress-oriented temporality.

Economic Progress and the Temporalization of Belonging

To a large extent, the GDR’s politics of progress and the measure for active citizenship as defined by Riege and Kulke were rooted in the paradigm of the centrally planned economy.

³⁶ Gerhard Riege, ‘Der Bürger in der sozialistischen Gesellschafts- und Staatsordnung der DDR: Seine Grundrechte und Grundpflichten’, in *Grundrechte des Bürgers in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft*, ed. by Eberhard Poppe (Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1980), pp. 9–60 (p. 53).

³⁷ Riege and Kulke, p. 23; see also Münch, p. 94 ff.

While operative from early on, this link became doctrinal during the SED's VIII party congress of 1971, when the leadership declared that a state's socio-economic system was the determining variable of its citizens' national identity, with the implication that the GDR and West Germany formed two separate nations.³⁸

The GDR's economic order provided a vision of a fully integrated society, in which, according to the country's standard textbooks on economic law, all social and political institutions were 'Glieder eines Organismus, der in bewußter Durchsetzung der ökonomischen Gesetze des Sozialismus nach einem einheitlichen, auf die Entwicklung der Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft gerichteten staatlichen Gesamtplan wirksam ist'.³⁹ Michael Ostheimer suggests that the GDR's temporal politics was primarily the result of a dialectical interaction between the world of work and a certainty about the future ('Zukunftsgewissheit').⁴⁰ The former, i.e. the processes of labour and production, was strongly determined by factors such as tempo and rationalization, and continuously oriented towards an economics of time, usually framed in metaphors of a 'race' against capitalist methods of production.⁴¹ The perceived predictability of the processes of labour and production, on the other hand, corresponded to utopian imageries of the future, which blended a belief in technical feasibility, linear progress, and the reliability of collective prognostication with quasi-religious expectations of salvation.⁴²

³⁸ Orlow, p. 457.

³⁹ Gerold Ambrosius, "'Sozialistische Planwirtschaft' als Alternative und Variante in der Industriegesellschaft: Die Wirtschaftsordnung', in *Überholen ohne einzuholen: Die DDR-Wirtschaft als Fußnote der deutschen Geschichte*, ed. by André Steiner (Berlin: Links Christoph, 2006), pp. 11–31 (p. 13).

⁴⁰ Michael Ostheimer, 'Wendezeit - Wende der Zeit: Zum Zusammenhang von Geschichtsphilosophie und Zeitdenken in der Post-DDR-Literatur', in *Romanhaftes Erzählen von Geschichte: Vergegenwärtigte Vergangenheiten im beginnenden 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Daniel Fulda and Stephan Jaeger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 251–78 (p. 254).

⁴¹ In its own terms, the regime's aim was to optimise efficiency of human labour in both industry and agriculture, in keeping with the Leninist-Marxist doctrine according to which the economic value of goods is determined by the amount of physically necessary and socially accepted labour that goes into their production. See Ostheimer, p. 254.

⁴² Ostheimer, p. 254.

It is not always remembered today that, when first implemented in the Soviet Union, the idea of progress through the command economy, directed by the rational state, appeared to demonstrate some success. In stark contrast to the West's experience of depression during the interwar years, the Soviet Union quickly advanced its industrialization process, providing 19% of the world's industrial production on the eve of the Second World War (as compared to only 4% in 1913). At the same time, the USSR's population (at least statistically) enjoyed better access to medical care than many Western countries, with more doctors per capita than either Britain or Germany.⁴³ Yet these dynamics in wealth and welfare changed after the war, and never manifested for the GDR. The detailed causes of the development of the country's economic decline remain subject to debates that are outside of the scope of this article.⁴⁴ Yet beyond questions of causality, there is wide agreement today that the theoretical model underlying the GDR's economic activity diverged considerably from the reality on the ground. Even while the regime lasted, the disparity between the propagated vision of plannable, linear progress and the increasingly unfavourable economic position *vis-à-vis* its West German neighbour began to discredit the GDR's temporal politics in the lived experience of many of its citizens.

This discrepancy between ideal and reality, however, did not diminish the political significance of progress discourses in the GDR, and may even have encouraged their propagation. In the ongoing effort of state consolidation, the GDR's official language of progress served an important function in a process that Ralph Jessen, borrowing from Koselleck, has called the 'temporalization' of belonging.⁴⁵ By means of this semantic device,

⁴³ Buzan and Lawson, pp. 110–11.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Hajo Riese, 'Grenzen und Schwächen der Erkenntnis: Die Wirtschaftstheorie', in *Überholen ohne einzuholen: Die DDR-Wirtschaft als Fußnote der deutschen Geschichte* (Berlin: Links Christoph, 2006), pp. 33–44; André Steiner, 'From the Soviet Occupation Zone to the "New Eastern States": A Survey', in *The East German Economy, 1945-2010: Falling Behind or Catching Up?*, ed. by Hartmut Berghoff and Uta Andrea Balbier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 17–49.

⁴⁵ See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: Columbia University Press, 1985).

the GDR's population was constructed as a unified entity by narratively placing it in a particular relationship to the historical past and visions of the future. The nature of this relationship was usually expressed in contrast to that of the 'reactionary' FRG. As Jessen points out:

The offer of 'temporal' identification was based mainly on two arguments: one distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' strands in the German past; the other directing attention towards a future Communist utopia. With regard to the German past, SED propaganda and historiography put forward the concept of two competing paths in German history, one of which – the path of reaction – had resulted in imperialism and fascism as the ultimate stages of the capitalist order, while the other – the path of progress – had led to the founding of the GDR.⁴⁶

The GDR's self-fashioning as 'anti-fascist', progressive, and oriented towards a number of eschatological expectations, aimed at endowing the state with a particular legitimacy for its citizens. This message was directed at all citizens, but particularly at the younger population who were understood as both the symbolic and actual bearers of a utopian socialist future.⁴⁷

Beyond providing a semantic dividing line distinguishing political in- and out-groups, discourses of progress and futurity also played an important role in the task of epistemologically weakening the subjective standpoint of the individual citizen. This was done by discursive means that seemingly erased the responsible actors, instead attributing social and political developments to the 'laws of history'. In his *Sociolinguistic History of East and West*, Patrick Stevenson observes the general invisibility of agents in the GDR's official discourses, with the result 'that the emphasis [was] constantly placed on the accomplishment of processes rather than on the participation of individuals or social groups'.⁴⁸ The frequent use of the passive voice was complemented by a series of standardized phrases such as 'die objektive

⁴⁶ Jessen, p. 278.

⁴⁷ See Jessen, p. 279.

⁴⁸ Patrick Stevenson, *Language and German Disunity: A Sociolinguistic History of East and West in Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 60.

Gesetzmäßigkeit der Entwicklung’,⁴⁹ as well as by the ‘emphatic use of positive, assertive vocabulary’ (e.g. ‘vollständig’, ‘allumfassend’, ‘stets’, ‘heute und in Zukunft’), and the absence of relativizing expressions (e.g. ‘vielleicht’ ‘wahrscheinlich’, ‘teilweise’).⁵⁰ A remarkably large proportion of the many fixed terms, collocations, and phrases that would become canonical in the GDR’s later years were related to a sense of governable futurity, such as ‘planmäßig’, ‘Vervollkommnung’, ‘diesen bewährten Weg konsequent fortsetzen’, ‘die sozialistische Zukunft schöpferisch gestalten’.⁵¹ The effort to ‘spin-doctor’ an impression of linear and engineerable progress was also made evident in a language of ‘permanent optimism’, which often made euphemistic use of the future oriented construction ‘noch’ + comparative adjective or adverb (e.g. ‘die Vorzüge des Sozialismus noch besser zur Entfaltung bringen’).⁵² Especially from the late 1960s onwards, these and analogous patterns became ubiquitous in the GDR’s formal language. In her analysis of official GDR discourse, Ulla Fix, for example, was able to identify 66 such uses in just a single speech by Education Minister Margot Honecker.⁵³

Progress and Literature: Socialist Realism vs. *Mutmassungen über Jakob*

The linguistic codification of a specific sense of temporality was not contained to the narrow sphere of government alone. For the state’s temporal politics to become hegemonic in Antonio Gramsci’s sense, that is internalized by society to the extent of forming part of the

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Jessen, p. 287.

⁵⁰ Stevenson, p. 60.

⁵¹ Stevenson, p. 61.

⁵² Stevenson, p. 60.

⁵³ Ulla Fix, ‘Noch breiter entfalten und noch wirksamer untermauern: Zur Beschreibung von Wörtern aus dem offiziellen Sprachverkehr der DDR nach den Bedingungen ihres Gebrauchs’, in *Beiträge zur Phrasologie - Wortbildung - Lexikologie*, ed. by Gotthard Lerchner, Rudolf Grosse, and Marianne Schröder (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1992), pp. 13–28 (pp. 16–19); see also Stevenson, p. 60.

normalized world view, it had to operate in all domains of civic life, including the cultural sphere. In this process, literary production became a critical forum for the presentation of complex and ambiguous gestures of both resistance and collusion, where the operation of the state's temporal politics was demonstrated, celebrated, illuminated, and subverted – often simultaneously. As all forms of narration, literary fiction cannot escape the requirement to forge a specific relationship to time. The fictional universe established in any novel necessitates the rendering of a particular temporality: that is a depiction, however subtle, of the social and political management of time, together with the individual and collective experience of time that ensues. A character's specific experience of time is thus always also a commentary on how he or she relates to the experience of the greater collective that constitutes the citizenry.

In the GDR, the objectives of the politically favoured literary genre, socialist realism, were closely interlinked with the historiographic task, undertaken with increasing rigour as the regime matured, of recasting the story of Germany's past to match the ideological tenets of the regime. In a complex process of 'administering' German history ('Verwaltung der Vergangenheit'), preceding historiography was revised to establish a generally polarized narrative of the German past in which class struggle, linearity, and confidence in a positive socialist future featured strongly.⁵⁴

In line with these principles, the unambiguous celebration of state-driven technological progress formed a frequent motif in the socialist realist novel. Particularly up to the 1970s, the genres of *Aufbau-* and *Baustellenroman*, which were typically placed in a setting of heavy industry, embraced a highly techno-optimistic spirit of 'totaler Machbarkeit'.⁵⁵ Machines and technological innovation were regularly depicted as means for subjecting both social

⁵⁴ See Martin Sabrow, "'Beherrschte Normalwissenschaft": Überlegungen zum Charakter der DDR-Historiographie', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 24.3 (1998), 412–45. Sabrow emphasizes the important point that GDR historiography was much more diverse and multi-layered than is often portrayed.

⁵⁵ Erhard Schütz, 'Technische Zeit: Einleitung', in *Handbuch Nachkriegskultur*, ed. by Elena Agazzi and Erhard Schütz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 381–94 (p. 384).

developments and nature to full human control. A character in Karl-Heinz Jakob's novel *Beschreibung eines Sommers* of 1961 (turned into a successful DEFA film in 1962), for example, fantasizes that even the complete destruction of planet earth would hardly present a challenge in the future: '[Dann werden wir] den lächerlichen Erdball aus seiner Bahn sprengen und uns ein anderes Sonnensystem suchen. [...] In den nächsten zwanzig Jahren werden wir lernen, Kernfusionen zu bauen'.⁵⁶ Underlining the mechanisms of 'temporalized' citizenship, social and political belonging, in the *Aufbau-* and *Baustellen-*genre, was strongly linked to an ability and willingness to keep up with the GDR's socio-technological developments. In the socialist realist novel, a character's 'lagging behind' the rapid socio-political developments was sanctioned with ostracism or other forms of punishment. A novel's happy ending, on the other hand, was achieved through a synchronizing of characters with the new political era and the rest of the citizenry.⁵⁷

One of the vital tasks of literary fiction in socialist cultural doctrine was to mirror and support the politically central idea of progress, by rendering the protagonists' process of development 'a metonymy of the historical development of socialist society'.⁵⁸ Among the foremost architects of socialist realist literary theory was Georg Lukacs, who explains the function of literary characters in the following terms:

Daß ihre Individualität letzten Endes gesellschaftlich-geschichtlich bedingt ist, kommt gerade in der Beziehung: Vergangenheit-Gegenwart-Perspektive der Zukunft am deutlichsten zum Ausdruck. Gerade das literarische Herauswachsenlassen der heutigen Menschen aus ihrer durchlebten Vergangenheit bringt das Verhältnis von Menschen und Gesellschaft innerhalb einer Persönlichkeit am konkretesten an die Oberfläche.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Karl-Heinz Jakobs, *Beschreibung eines Sommers* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1961), p. 79.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Schütz, p. 384.

⁵⁸ David Kenosian, 'The Death of the Collective Subject in Uwe Johnson's Mutmassungen über Jakob', *Orbis Litterarum*, 58.6 (2003), 452–65 (p. 456).

⁵⁹ Georg Lukacs, 'Sozialistischer Realismus heute', *Neue Rundschau*, 1964, 404–5.

Among the novels that were believed to harmonize with these aesthetic and political goals were Brigitte Reiman's *Ankunfts-novel Ankunft im Alltag* (1961) and Erik Neutsch's *Spur der Steine* (1964), the latter of which was praised for creating a 'neue proletarische Heldengestalt' whose developmental path exemplified the ideal-typical progression of the modern industrial worker.⁶⁰

The conception of a linearly progressing temporality propagated by socialist realism was intimately connected with the GDR's economic model. The economic paradigm of central planning anchored the regime firmly in what Hartmut Rosa has called the classical modern concept of time, characterized by the 'strict planning and rigid, thorough organization' of traditional bureaucracy.⁶¹ Determined by the standards of linear time, understood as being fully extraneous to events, 'the length and sequence of activities within a segment of time are here fixed and planned ahead of time in order to guarantee a social synchronization and coordination of actions'.⁶²

The political aim of a comprehensive temporal alignment of society rendered literary texts that challenged the linearity of individual experience deeply subversive. Uwe Johnson's novel *Mutmassungen über Jakob* provides an instructive case study to illustrate the political danger which the SED leadership observed in any narrative disruption of the officially propagated temporality. *Mutmassungen* takes the death of the title's hero, the railway foreman Jakob Abs, as the fulcrum for a study of the complexities of German civil society under the conditions of division and the Cold War. Written while the author was still in the GDR, where the book's publication was never allowed, *Mutmassungen* appeared to immediate critical acclaim in West Germany in 1959. The novel's remarkable style, making use of modernist

⁶⁰ Hans Koch, 'Von Der Streitbarkeit Des Romans', *Sonntag*, 17 (1964), 10–11.

⁶¹ Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 334.

⁶² Rosa, p. 235.

techniques such as free syntax, multiperspectivity, and a highly elaborate architecture, has been seen as offering one of the first apposite aesthetic responses to the challenges of the post-war period and German division.⁶³ In the East, the negative reception of the novel and the emigration of its author upon publication were seen by some as symptomatic of a then increasing inability among literary writers to voice discomfort and dissent with the GDR while still remaining part of its society.

Mutmassungen über Jakob is designed as a negotiation among a variety of characters who speculate about the cause of Jakob's sudden death, with only sparse interjections provided by a narrator. Since Johnson believed that the perspective of the omniscient narrator of the socialist realist novel would mirror and symbolically endorse the position of the State Security Service (the 'Staatssicherheit' or 'Stasi'),⁶⁴ he attempted to abandon the privileged epistemological position of authorial omniscience.⁶⁵ In the course of *Mutmassungen*, a polyphony of voices are given space, and, in keeping with the egalitarian form and epistemology of the novel, no final conclusion is drawn with regard to the novel's central puzzle, leaving open the question of whether Jakob's passing was caused by an accident, political execution, murder, or suicide.

The novel comments on time and temporality in a multitude of ways, both explicitly and on the levels of symbolism and structure. While occasionally adopting elements of reverse

⁶³ See, e.g., Viviana Chilese, 'Uwe Johnson: Mutmaßungen über Jakob', in *Handbuch Nachkriegskultur*, ed. by Elena Agazzi and Erhard Schütz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 593–96.

⁶⁴ He expressed this view during an interview. See Michael Roloff, 'Gespräche mit Uwe Johnson', in *Ich überlege mir Geschichte...': Uwe Johnson im Gespräch*, ed. by Eberhard Fahlke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 178.

⁶⁵ The question of whether or not Johnson succeeded in eliminating the omniscient narrator has inspired considerable debate in the scholarship. Colin Riordan, among others, argues that Johnson failed in his attempt, as he appears to be able to access characters' thoughts. See Colin Riordan, *The Ethics of Narration* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association and the Institute of Germanic Studies at the University of London, 1989); D. G. Bond, in contrast, asserts that the omniscience of the author should not be confused with that of the narrator, who is not given this perspective. See D. G. Bond, 'The Dialogic Form of Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob*', *Modern Language Review*, 84.4 (1989), 874–84. See also David Kenosian, 'The Death of the Collective Subject in Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob*', *Orbis Litterarum*, 58.6 (2003), 452–65.

analytical narration characteristic of the spy or detective novel,⁶⁶ Johnson decisively distorts this conventional form, disturbing even a reverse linear flow. Instead, Johnson develops a model of narration and, in certain respects, a historiography which is conspicuously anti-linear, incomplete, and continuously questions its own validity, thus never arriving at the point of resolution that classic detective fiction offers. The frequent recurrence of incidents, narrated from different points of view, adds an element of circularity, and the omission of information about the temporal location of events, together with the overall perspectival fragmentation, resists any impression of facile progression in the reader's attempt to collect more information. Decisively opposed to Lukacs' theories, Johnson's writing drew on a line of authors and intellectuals, among them Ernst Bloch, Hans Meyer, and Anna Seghers, who, instead of narrative teleology, argued for a dialectical aesthetics around failure and differentiation.

Johnson's rejection of narrative linearity and stringent chronology was an acutely political act, and immediately understood as such by the GDR leadership. The head of the SED's Cultural Committee ('Kulturkommission'), Alfred Kurella, criticized the work on the basis of its 'misleading' temporality, in which 'die *Wirklichkeit* sich in eine Summe von qualligen Beziehungen auflöst und die Handlung zum *zeitlosen* Nebeneinander verschiedener Ereignisebenen wird'.⁶⁷ Besides its general aesthetic hostility towards Johnson's text, Kurella's comment is notable for the connection it establishes between temporality and reality, and the acknowledgement that fictional production has the capacity to disrupt this connection. By laying open the chasm between the state's claim to governing power and its limited capacity for actual enforcement, aesthetic choices and portrayals of temporality that deviated from the

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Luc Boltanski, *Mysteries and Conspiracies: Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

⁶⁷ Cited in Chilese, p. 593. Emphasis added.

official norm were perceived as not only artistically unworthy, but also as morally objectionable and politically dangerous.⁶⁸

Conclusion

When Kurella criticises *Mutmassungen* on grounds that its temporality ‘dissolves reality into a sum of jellyfish-like connections’,⁶⁹ he puts his finger on the politically destabilising potential of temporal epistemologies that deviate from those the state is trying to promote. While the GDR provides a particularly conspicuous case study of the governance of time, the effort to influence and control a collective’s temporal experience is common to all states. As political entities, states are constituted with boundaries inscribed not only in territory, but also in time. The existence of temporal boundaries, Elizabeth Cohen notes, ‘reminds us that rights derive not just from who we are and where we are but also from when we are’.⁷⁰ Yet temporal boundaries do not merely circumscribe states, but also form within them, segmenting the experiences of a citizenry into a variety of life worlds. Since the late nineteenth century, the organization and unification of reality for a particular population has been among the primary tasks of all modern nation states.⁷¹ To consolidate the reality of its own existence, the nation state had to construct for its population a shared reality which consisted, among other aspects, of a homogeneous experience of time and space. The process of citizenship formation has thus relied heavily on the state’s ability to create a sense of synchronicity among a dispersed group of diverse individuals.

⁶⁸ See also Boltanski’s analysis of the detective novel, Boltanski, pp. 133–34.

⁶⁹ Own translation.

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Cohen, *The Political Value of Time: Citizenship, Duration, and Democratic Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 6.

⁷¹ Boltanski, pp. xiv–xv.

The specific future-oriented temporality the GDR leadership, particularly as constructed during the Ulbricht years, aimed to create can be seen to have left an ambiguous legacy to this day. On the one hand, perhaps counter-intuitively and certainly against intentions, the GDR's narrative self-construction as a nation driven by progress may eventually have been an aiding element in Germany's political unification. While ideologies of progress, for both Germanies, were instruments of antagonism and competition to prove the superiority of the own societal model *vis-à-vis* the neighbouring state, they also formed a uniting element. In a recent study, entitled *Designing One Nation: The Politics of Economic Culture and Trade in Divided Germany* (2020), Katrin Schreiter has shown how the political will to outperform the opponent in fact manifested on the material level of product design, trade, and consumption in a way that became conducive to rapprochement. What started as a competition for ideological superiority, Schreiter observes, 'quickly turned into a shared, politically legitimizing quest for an untainted post-fascist modernity'.⁷²

On the other, the strong future-orientation inherent in the GDR's progress ideology can be seen to remain an obstacle to psychological unification to this day. Peter Thompson has argued that the still lingering nostalgic identification with the GDR on the part of the former East, often referred to as 'Ostalgie', should not be understood as a desire for dictatorship, but rather as 'a longing for a future that went missing in the past' because it always remained an unfulfilled promise. The GDR's past refuses to pass, Thompson maintains, 'not out of stubbornness or caprice or in an arbitrary fashion, but because it contains within it elements of the future that have not yet fully played themselves out'.⁷³ In an early artistic rendering of this idea, Volker Braun's poem 'Das Eigentum', written in 1990 on the occasion of German

⁷² Katrin Schreiter, *Designing One Nation: The Politics of Economic Culture and Trade in Divided Germany, 1945-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 6.

⁷³ Peter Thompson, "'Worin Noch Niemand War': The GDR as Retrospectively Imagined Community", in *The GDR Remembered: Representations of the East German State since 1989*, ed. by Nick Hodgkin and Caroline Pearce (Boydell & Brewer, 2011), pp. 250–65 (p. 252).

unification, contains the lines: ‘Was ich niemals besaß wird mir entrissen. | Was ich nicht lebte, werd ich ewig missen. | Die Hoffnung lag im Weg wie eine Falle’.⁷⁴ Together with other socialist states, the GDR’s ideology of progress relied on a ‘teleological fetishization of the future’,⁷⁵ which perpetually delayed the fulfilment of its promise of political and economic equity into an inaccessible time yet to come. By still feeding sentiments of nostalgia, the GDR’s progress narrative could thus be seen to continue operating, in a spectral capacity, as an instrument in the social state’s efforts of citizenship formation even after the regime’s resolution.

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⁷⁴ Cited in Thompson, p. 252.

⁷⁵ Thompson, p. 260.

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