3

Contemporary Perspectives

Precarious Time(s) in Photography and Film

Slow Art

The previous chapter foregrounded lateness, slowness, and attention as central tropes in a dissonant modernist discourse that pursued vastly different temporal itineraries. Technological and infrastructural innovations, above all the development of a modern urban transport system with buses, trams, and underground trains, accelerated urban living in all major European cities long before the motorcar became affordable after World War II. The Futurist glorification of unruly speed articulated an exaggerated love affair with the accelerating tempo of modern life. The flip side of this celebration of speed was a deep engagement with lateness and slowness as two complementary modes of desynchronization, which, aesthetically and temporally, disrupted the project of unflinching modernization. Chapter 2 also showed that lateness and slowness themselves are not homogeneous: in modernist

discourse they are evaluated along very different lines, as can be gleaned from Nietzsche's scathing attack on his own late culture, Kafka's exploration of lateness as a mode of resistance to power, or Freud's interpretation of latency and lateness as anthropological conditions. In the light of the overwhelming evidence of the modern fascination with vastly different times and modes of temporality, Lutz Koepnick "urges us to reconsider monolithic definitions of the modern and postmodern," which he sees as a continuum rather than in terms of a binary.[1]

For Koepnick contemporary art radicalizes the modernist interest in time through an aesthetic of slowness that exploits all kinds of technologies, both analogue and digital. In similar fashion, Urs Stäheli emphasizes that contemporary art is profoundly concerned with the exploration of time as an aesthetic experience. Stäheli is particularly interested in modes of slowness that rely on procedural practices and scripts of disengagement.[2] A prominent and very early example in this regard is the American artist Lee Lozano's *General Strike Piece* of 1969 in which the artist instructed herself as follows:

> GRADUALLY BUT DETERMINEDLY AVOID BEING PRESENT AT OFFICIAL OR PUBLIC "UPTOWN" FUNCTIONS OR GATHERINGS RELATED TO THE ART WORLD IN ORDER TO PURSUE INVESTIGATION OF TOTAL PERSONAL & PUBLIC REVOLUTION.[3]

Lozano then realized her manifesto through a gradual process of disengaging with the hyped-up New York art scene, by, for example, avoiding appearances at the opening of art exhibitions. The project culminated in the so-called *Dropout Piece* in the early 1970s when Lozano locked up her studio and left New York for good. Before her death in 1999, she chose an unmarked grave outside Dallas for her burial as the culmination of her dropout project.

1. Koepnick, *On Slowness*, 11.

2. Urs Stäheli, "Entnetzt euch! Praktiken und Ästhetiken der Anschlusslosigkeit," *Mittelweg* 36/22 (August/Sept. 2013): 24.

3. Reproduced in Stäheli, "Entnetzt euch!," 17.

As Stäheli notes, what makes this performance so remarkable is the absence of documentation of an act that was planned but, for a long time, went unrecognized.[4] Here the script of disappearance entailed the erasure of that very script in the completion of the project. As in Kafka's story of the disappearing mouse singer, *Josefine, die Sängerin*, Lozano's disappearance from an art scene that craves high visibility and celebrification received attention only retrospectively. Both Kafka's story and Lozano's performance pieces are about resonance through absence or disconnectedness.

Whereas Lozano orchestrated the slow disappearance of the artist from the contemporary art scene, Marina Abramović staged artistic presence in her slow performance piece *The Artist Is Present*, which was part of a comprehensive retrospective of her work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2010.[5] Besides video installations and photographs, the exhibition also included a live restaging of five of the exhibited performances. However, what turned the exhibition into a spectacle that attracted roughly 700,000 visitors was Abramović's daily performance of *The Artist Is Present* in the museum's atrium. From 14 March to 31 May 2010 she sat for six days a week and seven hours a day motionless and silent in a chair facing individual members of the public who were allowed to sit in a chair opposite her, equally motionless and silent, for as long

4. Stäheli, "Entnetzt euch!," 18.

5. The Serbian-born performance artist is internationally known for her extreme physical exploration of pain and power in *longue durée*. For example, in her early piece *Rhythm 10* (1973), she used twenty knives to quickly stab at the spaces between her outstretched fingers. Whenever she pierced her skin, she selected another knife from those laid out in front of her. She described her performance as follows: "Performance: I switch on the first cassette recorder. I take the knife and plunge it, as fast as I can, into the flesh between the outstretched fingers of my left hand. After each cut, I change to a different knife. Once all the knives (all the rhythms) have been used, I rewind the tape. I listen to the recording of the first performance. I concentrate. I repeat the first part of the performance. I pick up the knives in the same sequence, adhere to the same rhythm and cut myself in the same places. In this performance, the mistakes of the past and those of the present are synchronous. I rewind the same tape and listen to the dual rhythm of the knives. I leave." See http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/rhythm-10-2/ (accessed 3 January 2017).

as they wanted. In between these sitters Abramović closed her eyes to refocus on the new person sitting opposite her. In terms of her appearance, she alternated between three dresses, a red, a white, and a dark blue gown with a long train. With her posture slightly bent forward, her hair in a braided plait pulled over her left shoulder and her hands on her knees she gazed silently straight ahead. The effect of this theatrical arrangement was a still life that minimized the dramaturgy of performance to the brief intervals when the sitters opposite Abramović were changing. Visitors became witnesses to the passage of time: the artist's presence created a space of stillness in an otherwise bustling and noisy environment. The enactment of aesthetic *Eigenzeit* in the here and now thus depended on a spatial arrangement that separated Abramović from the museum space. Only because she was physically set apart from her audience, could she exude an aura that enacted aesthetic *Eigenzeit*.

By holding the sitter's gaze, Abramović enacted a form of heightened attentiveness that dispensed with the unawareness of the flow of time in everyday life. Evidently, *The Artist Is Present* was about the deliberate enactment of slow and equal time: Abramović looked at all sitters with the same focused intensity. However, the performance also brought forth time as sheer weight by emptying it of all action and content. In the first two months a table separated Abramović and her sitters; in the latter part of the performance the table was removed to emphasize the intensity of the encounter between artist and sitter in the present. Indeed, this performance of presence engendered a highly emotional connectedness between Abramović, the onlookers, and the sitters, who, as result of the intensity of her gaze, often broke out into tears. It also encouraged the onlookers as well as the sitters to question the experience and expectations of looking. Perhaps it is not surprising then that, with the passage of time, the lines of people waiting outside MoMA for their slot became longer and longer.[6]

6. The MoMA retrospective and Abramović's central performance were also the subject of the celebrated and award-winning documentary *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present* (dir. Matthew Akers, Jeffrey Dupre, 2012), which received the Sundance Film Festival Award (2012) , the Berlin Film Festival Audience Award (2012),

Slowness as an aesthetic practice and a mode of reception features prominently in much contemporary photography and film, defying the fast-paced entertainment conventions and the capitalist commodification of time, as are evident, for example, in recent blockbusters. Mainstream cinema's affirmation of the thrill of speed goes hand in hand with "cinematographic techniques and editing practices that emphasize pace and energy in ways that are sometimes seen as antithetical to narrative coherence and spatiotemporal continuity."[7] While these films favor fast-paced cutting, jerky and unfocused panning, or hectic zooming, slow cinema and slow photography embrace grammars of minimalism to interrupt the cult of speed. Slowness in this sense is more than a binary term in opposition to speed: it is an aesthetic art practice that may include the employment of digital or analogue technologies; slow diegesis and slow narrative; the gallery or cinema as a contemplative exhibition or reception space; and a responsive spectatorship. Often used synonymously with art house cinema, slow cinema favors the long take, minimalist plotlines, sparse dialogue punctured by pauses, and opaque narratives with hesitant or slowly moving protagonists who squander time. As Karl Schoonover has put it, in slow cinema "seeing becomes a form of labor" that requires effort and an attentive viewing practice on the part of the spectator, who may experience anxiety about the waste of onscreen and offscreen time.[8] "Art

and the Special Jury Award of the Sheffield Doc/Fest (2012). The film follows the narrative conventions of the documentary: interviews with Abramović frame a loosely biographical story line that leads up to her performance at MoMA in the spring of 2010. Interspersed are interviews with various art critics, Abramović's gallerist Sean Kelly, the curator of the MoMA exhibition Klaus Biesenbach, her former lover and collaborator Ulay, and Abramović herself. The film converts the embodiment of slow presence into a fast-paced, edited, and narrativized spectacle in a documentary format.

7. Tinda Kendall, "Staying on, or Getting off (the Bus): Approaching Speed in Cinema and Media Studies," *Cinema Journal* 55/2 (2017): 114. Timothy Corrigan discusses the "frenetic global espionage game" of the *Bourne* films as emblematic in this regard. See Timothy Corrigan, "Still Speed: Cinematic Acceleration, Value, and Execution," *Cinema Journal* 55/2 (2016): 120.

8. Karl Schoonover, "Wastrels of Time: Slow Cinema's Labouring Body, the Political Spectator, and the Queer," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 51/1 (2012): 66.

cinema," comments Schoonover, "exploits its spectator's boredom, becoming as much a cinema of expectancies as one of attractions. It turns boredom into a kind of special work."[9] For Tiago de Luca slow cinema needs the big screen "to facilitate a sustained perceptual engagement with the audio-visual elements on-screen."[10] De Luca suggests that the slow style "diverts attention away from the screen and onto the space of the film theatre itself, thus illuminating the viewing situation as a collective situation from the historically privileged perspective of today's spectator."[11] In so doing, it invites reflection on the very idea of collective spectatorship in the context of ever more fragmented modes of multiple screen viewing.

In the following I discuss a selection of works by photographers and filmmakers who employ aesthetics of slowness that disrupt not only the politics of speed but also the chronological imagination that invests in historical turning points. Exemplary in this regard is German photographer Michael Wesely, who was born in Munich in 1963: his photographs of railway stations in Europe in the early 1990s, of the rebuilding of Berlin's Potsdamer Platz in the late 1990s, and of East Germany after the millennium defy the very premise of the photographic medium, namely, that the photograph freezes a single moment in the flow of time. His experiments with exposure time not only capture extended periods of time in a single image, but these images create a new visual representation of time as a layered experience. The aesthetic experience of Wesely's time works is precarious precisely because it destabilizes linear and chronological time. Ulrich Wüst was born in Magdeburg in the GDR in 1949: his photobook *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst* (Late Summer/Final Autumn, 2016) both draws on and overturns the conventions of the photobook to stage the dramatic events of 1989 as empty time and empty space. Covering various East German locations and a trip to Moscow in 1989, Wüst's photobook foregrounds the contingency of everyday life at the very moment when history was about to assert

9. Schoonover, "Wastrels of Time," 70–71.

10. Tiago de Luca, "Slow Time, Visible Cinema: Duration, Experience, and Spectatorship," *Cinema Journal* 56/1 (2016): 26.

11. De Luca, "Slow Time, Visible Cinema," 38.

itself. These photographs are grainy, distanced, and difficult to read; they displace the common view of 1989 as an electrifying historical moment with a sense of historical precariousness. Christian Petzold was born in the Federal Republic in 1960: his film *Barbara* (2012) is set in the provincial GDR in the 1980s and explores the weight of slow time before the fall of the Berlin Wall. My discussion focuses on the crucial role of diegetic sound in a film that aims to recreate the "acoustic space" of the GDR. Ulrich Seidl was born in Vienna in 1952: his film *Paradise: Faith* (2012) is set in present-day Vienna and explores the return of religion against the backdrop of the dislocating effects of globalization. Like Petzold, Seidl employs a strikingly slow filmic aesthetics that works with long takes, static shots, and extreme forms of symmetry to capture the quest for *Eigenzeit*. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Maren Ade's acclaimed tragicomedy *Toni Erdmann* (2016): set in the neoliberal era of global capitalism, the film explores generationally inflected notions of the good life through the relationship of Winfried, a retired music teacher and a representative of the 1968 generation, with his daughter Ines, who represents a new professionally ambitious generation without any political ideals. While the film is not an example of slow cinema in the strict sense of cinematography, it is included in this chapter because of the filmic exploration of two diametrically opposed notions of performance that engender different speeds and opposing politics of time. Even though the artistic practices and media discussed here are very divergent, they all investigate the precariousness of our embeddedness in time and space. The works under discussion can be classed as "time works"—to appropriate the title of one of Michael Wesely's photobooks—because they experiment with modes of temporality that tentatively recuperate *Eigenzeit*.

The Disruption of Linear Time: Michael Wesely's Time Photography

West German photographer Michael Wesely's fascinating time photography of the built and natural environment challenges the very premise of the photographic medium: that its singularity derives

from its ability to wrest a particular moment in time from life. For Roland Barthes the indexicality of the photograph was irrefutable because analogue photography always captured a singular and nonrepeatable moment. In his classic book *Camera Lucida* he argued that photography's ontological status resides in the indisputable "has-been-ness" of the photograph, which in turn provokes the unsettling experience of the "punctum," that is, of a moment when the observer is disturbed by a detail in the image that she cannot account for.[12] Susan Sontag too famously argued that

> a photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened. The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what's in the picture. Whatever the limitations (through amateurism) or pretensions (through artistry) of the individual photographer, a photograph—any photograph—seems to have a more innocent, and therefore more accurate, relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects.[13]

In his famous essay "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" (1945) André Bazin compared film with photography, claiming that while cinema produces images of objects in duration, photography embalms time.[14] Whereas film unfolds in our time and space, photography can only offer images of a frozen past.

In the digital age, the conventional polarization of film and photography and of past and present in the two media has collapsed. There is a high degree of convergence between film and photography: the same digital camera can be used to take film shots and photographs or to arrest, repeat, or slow down filmic images. Martin Lister distinguishes between the "time in a photograph" and

12. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. R. Howard (New York: Vintage Classics, 1993), 43.

13. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 5–6.

14. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. A. Trachtenberg, trans. H. Gray (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 237–44. For a historical survey of the debate on time and photography, see Hilde van Gelder and Helen Westgeest, *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective: Case Studies from Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 64–111.

the "time of a photograph": while the first flows from technology and refers to the exposure time as well as "the peculiar temporality which invests a photograph at the time of its making," the latter captures the meanings and uses of photographs that are engendered in the process of reception.[15] "Once the image is inscribed," comments Lister, "it opens up to our cultural, our imaginative and intellectual investments in photography—especially with regard to how we conceive of time, the relations of past, present and future, and hence to matters of historical time and the temporality of memory."[16]

Our relationship to time is a key concern of Michael Wesely's photography. At the very moment when the technical possibilities of the digital era made the manipulation of photographs so simple, Wesely returned to the pioneering era of photography in the nineteenth century. When he was a student at the Bayerische Staatslehranstalt für Fotografie in Munich in the late 1980s, Wesely was given a portrait assignment. He realized that he could not arrest the character of a person in a tiny fraction of the shutter closure. Hence he began to experiment with extremely long exposure times by, for example, constructing pinhole cameras with filters and extremely small apertures to reduce the amount of light striking the film. However, in the end the pinhole camera was not capable of achieving the desired level of photographic detail and sharpness: Wesely therefore built his own camera housing for large-format lenses, using 13/18 and 9/12 cm sheet films.[17] By the 1990s he had managed to lengthen his exposure time up to several months, and ten years later up to several years. All fleeting or rapid movement is eliminated in these images because it cannot be picked up by the film: while enduring elements that remain unchanged for the duration of exposure time are in focus, recurring movement over time appears as a blur or imprints of impermanence. For the

15. Martin Lister, "The Times of Photography," in *Time, Media, and Modernity*, 49.

16. Lister, "The Times of Photography," 55.

17. Michael Wesely, email message to author, 1 August 2018.

same reason we cannot identify a particular season or differentiate between day and night: these photographs produce a strange quality of light that captures extended time.[18] By employing these extraordinary exposure times Wesely creates layered images in which different temporal states are copresent: he thus not only challenges the very premise of the medium, namely, that it provides "incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened," but he also makes us think afresh about the passage of time and the relationship of the visible world to time. These photographs no longer assert the single and nonrefutable moment and with it Barthes's has-been-ness as the ontological signature of photography. Wesely emphasizes: "Für mich wichtig sind die vielen unscharfen Details, in denen sich die Veränderungen andeuten, An- und Abwesenheit sich die Hand reichen."[19] (It is important for me to capture the blurred details, which indicate change and in which presence and absence are conjoined.)

The spectral effect of this technique is particularly pronounced in his photographs of European railway stations: having set up his cameras in various stations around Europe in 1992, Wesely opened the shutter of his camera exactly when a train left the station, and he closed it at the scheduled arrival time.[20] From a temporal perspective the project is fascinating: formally it adheres to the logic of the synchronized timetable because the exposure time is determined by the departure and arrival times of the various trains. Synchronized time was a relatively late invention of the nineteenth century in response to the rapid expansion of the railway system. The introduction of Greenwich mean time

18. See William Firebrace, "Slow Spaces," in *Camera Constructs: Photography, Architecture, and the Modern City*, ed. Andrew Higgott and Timothy Wray (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 250.

19. Wesely, email to author, 1 August 2018.

20. This photographic scenario may also be seen to reference the (much-mythologized) "primal scene" of cinema, the Lumière brothers' *The Arrival of a Train in La Ciotat* (1895). The fifty-second film shows the arrival of a train that is pulled by a steam locomotive at the French town La Ciotat in one single unedited take. Arguably, this is one of the (media) spectacles that is evacuated from Wesely's railway scene.

coordinated hitherto local time zones by way of a universal grid, which then enabled the smooth running of increasingly complex transport networks. In this way time lost its primary attachment to locality and became a global unit of measurement that also facilitated capitalist enterprise and imperial ambitions.[21] With this in mind, we can now see how Wesely's photography overturns the logic of the railway system, which led to time-space compression by means of a network that interconnected European cities on high-speed routes. By setting up his camera at central railway stations, Wesely foregrounds the time-space interdependency that marked modern capitalist expansion: unlike the rural stop on a secondary line, the central railway station is a busy transport hub and as such a major traffic node in an international network that stands for rapacious acceleration. But in Wesely's photographs the central railway stations appear as eerie and empty places. For example, when Wesely photographed Prague railway station in 1992, he opened the shutter at 15:10 when the train departed and closed it at 20:22 when it reached its destination in Linz (fig. 1). Even though the departure and arrival times determined the exposure time, the decisive moments of departure and arrival are canceled in this photograph. Instead of passengers alighting from and boarding the trains, we can barely see the ghostly contours of people sitting on a bench on the platform. On either side of the platform we see blurred lines that are created by the incoming and outgoing trains. The "still" photograph thus does capture movement through space, which, historically, was the concern of photodynamism at the beginning of the twentieth century.[22] In

21. On the loss of local time as a result of the expansion of the railway network, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch's classic study *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise: Zur Industrialisierung von Raum und Zeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, 5th ed. (Frankfurt a. Main: Fischer, 2011).

22. The Italian Bragaglia brothers attempted to capture the passage of movement through extended exposure times. Anton Giulio Bragaglia published the manifesto *Fotodinamismo futurista* in 1913. See Anton Giulio Bragaglia, "Excerpts from Futurist Photodynamism," in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940*, ed. C. Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 287–95.

Figure 1. Michael Wesely, *Praha 15.10—Linz 20.22* (1992).

Wesely's image the rolling stock appears even more dematerialized than the ghostly passengers on the platform. Speed is directionless here and thus without velocity, as we cannot determine whether the blurred lines record movement into or out of the station or both. On another level, the German railway stations and, by extension, the Central European rail network altogether, are particularly burdened sites of memory: seen from this perspective, the train stations with these phantom figures on the platform may evoke memories of the Holocaust.

In contrast to all fleeting phenomena, the industrial architecture of the different railway stations remains unaffected by the long exposure: the iron supports and glass domes arching over the tracks accentuate the ambitious architectural aspirations of the industrial era, which had invented the glass dome as a secular version of the cathedral. However, this impression of industrial solidity and permanence is overlaid by the eeriness of the platforms and

tracks.[23] Wesely's photographs are so ghostly precisely because the uncanny simultaneity of past, present, and future creates a profoundly anachronic temporality that dislodges linear temporal orientation. Instead of placing us in a dynamic transport hub full of life, these images appear strangely dislocated from time and from anchorage in a precise location.[24]

When Potsdamer Platz was rebuilt in Berlin in the late 1990s, Wesely left the shutter of his camera open for two entire years: as with his previous long-exposure photographs, he used a self-built camera with large-format lenses and sheet films.[25] Instead of a series of momentary snapshots taken over time, the viewer is confronted with layered images that not only unfreeze photography but also collapse the linearity of time. While these photographs capture different stages of the various building projects, they do not obey the chronological imagination that sustains dating systems and systems of periodization: instead of symbolically

23. Writing about Wesely's clocks, which, in other images, show no hands, Koepnick observes: "The clock's missing hands . . . are the sundials of a history in whose wake neither the industrial city nor the nation nor the political blocs of the cold war offer defining limits and may anchor the itineraries of everyday life within the topographies of the present. All numbers, and yet unable to tell us the time, Wesely's uncanny clocks are witness to a historical moment in which insular notions of the local—of unified identities, demarcated territories, and distinct presences—no longer appeared viable because, after the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the open and fast-paced form of the network emerged as the perhaps dominant structure of communication, collaboration, and cultural production." Koepnick, *On Slowness*, 70.

24. Here I deviate from Koepnick's reading; Koepnick follows Doreen Massey, arguing that space in Wesely's open shutter photography gives expression to a "dynamic simultaneity." Koepnick, *On Slowness*, 73. In contrast I argue that the copresence of different times in one shot produces surreal still lifes without any movement.

25. Critics tend to claim that these photographs were taken with the pinhole camera. See, for example, Koepnick, *On Slowness*, 71. Wesely writes: "In der Tat habe ich viel mit Lochkameras gearbeitet, schlussendlich aber diesen Apparat nicht für die Langzeitbelichtungen verwendet. Bereits die erwähnten Portraits wurden mit Grossformat-Objektiven gemacht." (It is true that I have often worked with the pinhole camera, but in the end I did not use it for the long exposures. Even the aforementioned portraits were shot with large-format lenses.) Wesely, email to author, 1 August 2018.

confirming the end of Germany's division and the beginning of a new era of confidence as represented by architecture, these photographs offer a visual representation of the copresence of past, present, and future. When we look at the photograph taken between 4 April 1997 and 4 June 1999 we can see how the apparent solidity of the built environment dissolves (fig. 2). It is interesting to note that the trees in the foreground actually appear more enduring than the built environment. The trees (which also feature in other pictures of the Potsdamer Platz series) introduce a temporal chasm between a seemingly immutable and strangely static nature and the man-made transformations of the environment, which appear ephemeral and transitory. And so the photograph creates an uncanny and ghostly effect that makes the emerging buildings look like phantoms of a past that, in spite of the rapacious rebuilding process, remains irrepressible.

Figure 2. Michael Wesely, *4.4.1997—4.6.1999, Potsdamer Platz, Berlin: "Long Exposures"* (1999). © Michael Wesely, Bild-Kunst Bonn/IVARO Dublin, 2018.

The Potsdamer Platz series thus marks a further radicalization of Wesely's time photography: neither time nor space functions here as a stable point of orientation. One could say that these photographs have a "prospective archaeological effect," as they track a process of construction that involves transitory stages of construction and demolition. But we shouldn't stretch this analogy too far: archaeology is keen to piece together fragments from the past with a view to salvaging material objects that it then places in a temporal sequence and order. By contrast, Wesely takes an image of a temporal whole that pulverizes the chronological imagination and brings into view an uncanny anachronicity, which probes the progressive transformation of Berlin after German unification. It is perhaps not surprising that Wesely himself describes his photography through an analogy with John Cage's music: "Mir liegt immer der Vergleich mit John Cage nahe. Er sagt, Musik sei: 'Fenster auf'!, er nimmt in einem Zeitfenster alles was kommt, er öffnet sich hin dazu, alles zu akzeptieren. Meine Bilder leben genau mit dieser Notwendigkeit das Ergebnis zu akzeptieren."[26] (I am always reminded of John Cage. He says that music is an "open window"!; he incorporates everything that is happening in this time window; he is open to accepting absolutely everything. My pictures live exactly off the very necessity to accept the outcome.)

Wesely's photography could be held to offer an artistic representation of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's idea of an extended present. But whereas Gumbrecht is fearful of such an unbounded sea of simultaneities, Wesely exploits extended exposure times to create a hitherto unseen image of copresence. The spectral effect of his images is undeniable; it forces the viewer to reconsider the meaning of being connected to the world in the here and now.

Wesely's long-term exposures have a very different effect when applied to the natural environment. His photobook *Ostdeutschland* (East Germany) appeared in 2004, fourteen years after unification, and contains fifty-three color photographs from different locations that were shot with a pinhole camera in which the aperture of the

26. Wesely, email to author, 1 August 2018.

pinhole was replaced by a narrow slit. Wesely explains the technical dimension of his approach as follows:

> Wenn man die Kamera mit dem Spalt horizontal auf Landschaft richtet, entsteht über die Vertikale gesehen, ein Bild, das korrekte Proportionen aufweist. Horizontal werden die Farb- und Helligkeitswerte zusammengetragen, aufaddiert und alle vertikalen Strukturen gebrochen, praktisch aufgelöst.[27]
>
> When you direct the camera with the slit horizontally at the landscape, from the vertical perspective you get an image that has the correct proportions. Color and brightness are produced and added up horizontally so that all vertical structures are broken down and practically dissolved.

The captions identify the various East German locations in very general terms—for example, "Lausitzer Bergland" (Mountainous Landscape near Lausitz), "Blick in Pirna auf die Elbbrücke" (View in Pirna from the Elbe Bridge), "Sonnenblumenfelder bei Niesky" (Sunflower Fields near Niesky), and "Lavendelfelder bei Großleuthen" (Lavender Fields near Großleuthen). What we see here are painterly images of horizontal bands of color that, at first sight, appear to bear no mimetic relation to any real place. For example, in "Ackerland bei Gusow" (Farmland near Gusow) the image is composed of a broad and dark band of the color brown, which then gives way to a lighter brown before a narrow darker line divides the bottom half from the top half, where a whitish hue then turns into a dark blue. While we can translate these colors into the representation of a field melting into the blue sky along the line of the horizon, there are no distinctive topographical features that suggest a particular place and time or that interrupt the flatness of the lines. It is possible to associate "Ackerland bei Gusow" with industrial agricultural production on a massive scale. However, the flatness of these images undermines the connection to real places: are we really looking at cultivated land that has been dug over for centuries? Or is this the kind of extraterrestrial perspective that catapults the viewer into a nontemporal sphere? In any case, it is

27. Wesely, email to author, 1 August 2018.

evident that the human relationship to the land is elided from a series of photographs that are more reminiscent of modern abstract painting than of photography.

While images like "Ackerland bei Gusow" still maintain a generic representational dimension, this link is far more tenuous in those pictures that were taken near towns or landmarks that resonate with the history of the GDR and the Cold War period. A prominent example in this regard is "Blick von der Glienicker Brücke auf Schloss Babelsberg" (View from Glienicke Bridge to Schloss Babelsberg). Glienicke Bridge is the bridge across the river Havel that connects Berlin-Zehlendorf with Potsdam. Originally a wooden bridge, then a stone bridge designed by the Prussian court architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, it was rebuilt as a modern steel bridge at the beginning of the twentieth century to increase the shipping capacity of the Havel and the Teltow Canal. In the final days of World War II the bridge was badly damaged. Rebuilding began in 1947, and the bridge was reopened in December 1949, three months after the foundation of the GDR. Even though it was renamed Brücke der Einheit (Bridge of Unity), a line across the middle of the bridge was drawn to demarcate the so-called inner-German border. From 1952 cars driven by civilians could no longer cross, and pedestrians needed a special permit; one year later the bridge—by now one of the last remaining bridges connecting East and West—was completely closed to all civilians. In the period between 1962 and 1986 the bridge was known as the Bridge of Spies because it was used for the exchange of Eastern and Western spies and Eastern dissidents.[28] On 10 November 1989, one day after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the bridge was finally reopened to general traffic. A metal strip on the footpath across the bridge reminds pedestrians of the division and unification of Germany. In

28. See Thomas Blees, *Glienicker Brücke: Schauplatz der Geschichte* (Berlin: Berlin Edition, 2010); Giles Whittell, *Bridge of Spies—A True Story of the Cold War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011); See also *Operationsgebiet DDR: Endstation Glienicker Brücke*, a documentary by Jürgen Ast and Martin Hübner; first screening, 23 November 2004. For a review, see http://www.mdr.de/doku/1311404-hintergrund-1311163.html.

1998, the Deutsche Post issued a special stamp commemorating the bridge as a significant *lieu de mémoire* in German history.[29]

In sharp contrast to the cartographic symbolism of the stamp, Wesely's photograph from the bridge across the Havel to Schloss Babelsberg carries no imprints at all of the location's fractured history (fig. 3 and color pl.). The upheavals of twentieth-century German history are absent from a picture that shows once again horizontal bands of color that change from a moss green to a grayish blue, then into

Figure 3. Michael Wesely, *'Blick von der Glienicker Brücke auf Schloss Babelsberg,' Ostdeutschland* (2004). © Michael Wesely, Bild-Kunst Bonn/IVARO Dublin, 2018.

29. Schloss Babelsberg too resonates with historical significance: situated in a park outside Potsdam, Schloss Babelsberg served in the nineteenth century as the summer residence of Prince Wilhelm, later Emperor Wilhelm I. The palace and garden were the very site where Wilhelm and Bismarck conducted talks in 1862 that led to Bismarck's appointment as prime minister and foreign minister.

a strip of brown and blue that gives way to the grayish blue of the lower half before fading into the light blue of the sky. With its long exposure time, Wesely's camera erases all topographical markers and geographical landscape features as mere epiphenomena of a pure landscape that is composed of gradations of color and light.

Rather than inviting historical reflection, the photograph from Glienicke Bridge may be placed in the tradition of Jacob van Ruisdael and Caspar David Friedrich whose landscapes emphasize the horizon and the sublime. In Kantian philosophy, the sublime is a state of mind entered into by an encounter with a representation of the infinite or boundlessness.[30] It involves a movement of the mind that destroys time. But these images are perhaps also visually reminiscent of the landscape photography by Andreas Gursky. The Leipzig-born photographer digitally manipulates his large-scale photographs, retouching them and joining up segments of different photographs into a landscape montage that appears to be untouched by human intervention.[31] For example, *Rhein II* (Rhine II, 1999), the second of a set of six Rhine photographs, is a large-scale composition (190 cm by 360 cm) of color and geometry: while the original image captured a factory complex on the far side of the river, the manipulated photograph completely elides any reference to industry. In the foreground we see a narrow and horizontal band of green and a gray cycling path; in the middle ground the green embankment and the river Rhine, which flows horizontally across the field of view, and another band of green on the far side of the river under the overcast sky. Overall Gursky's work is more topographical than Wesely's in that we do recognize these landscape features. However, the overriding effect is not dissimilar to Wesely's time photography:[32] in both instances photography

30. Rudolf Makreel, "Imagination and Temporality in Kant's Theory of the Sublime," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 42/3 (1984): 303–15.

31. He studied at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Bernd and Hilla Becher where he started with black-and-white photography before switching to color.

32. However, it is important to note that Gursky's work is characterized by the tension between extreme detail, on the one hand, and the creation of a painterly transcendental effect, on the other.

achieves an intermedial effect that gestures to landscape painting. On the other hand, Wesely's landscape photographs have a more abstract effect: with their colored and layered strips, one could also view them as scientific representations of geological strata. When viewed in this way, the image also brings into view a transhuman dating system that exceeds human time.

Whether viewed as abstract landscapes or as quasi-scientific images, they are evidently stripped of any concrete historical and topographical reference points that could assign them a place in German history and the chronological imagination. And so the East Germany in Wesely's photobook is no longer a site of ideological contestation but the springboard for an imagination that employs the technical media to ultrasubjective effect. The images capture a timelessness that seems to have escaped the assault of history. When seen against the backdrop of the heated postunification debate about the place of the GDR in German history that dominated the 1990s, these images gain an acute historical index: they overwrite the Western idea of the drabness of East Germany with astonishing pictorial splendor.

The Disruption of Historical Time: Ulrich Wüst's Photobook *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst*

The title of Ulrich Wüst's photobook *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst* (Late Summer/Final Autumn, 2016) immediately conjures up the trope of lateness, which, as we saw in chapter 2, figured so prominently in fin de siècle discourse.[33] Just two years after German unification in 1871 Nietzsche diagnosed lateness as the defining sickness of modern culture. Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* punctured German nationalist fervor through a scathing attack on the contemporary era, which he described as a malignant *Spätzeit*, a late epoch under the spell of the epigone and dandy. For Nietzsche modern life had lost its creative power to an antiquarian mind-set,

33. Ulrich Wüst, *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst* (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2016).

which had led to the uncritical appreciation of all things past that, for Nietzsche, crippled his own era.

My association of Nietzsche with the works of East German photographer Ulrich Wüst may seem idiosyncratic. It is, however, motivated by the striking untimeliness of Wüst's photobook, which was published in conjunction with an exhibition at the CO Photographic Gallery in Berlin in 2016. The photos included in the exhibition and in the book were taken in the run-up to the fall of the Berlin Wall in August, September, and October 1989. Wüst's photobook is untimely in Nietzsche's sense: its belated appearance more than twenty-five years after German unification creates reflective distance and an alternative view of history that displaces the global iconicity of 1989. His photo narrative does not depict the usual images of the Monday demonstrators in Leipzig, of ecstatic East Berliners arriving in the West or of jubilant Westerners making their way into the unknown East, of lines of pastel-colored Trabants at the open border, of bewildered and bemused GDR officials, but rather a series of impressions that, with a few exceptions, appear as nonevents.

Before analyzing the thematic and temporal structure of the book, it may be useful to briefly touch on the genre of the photobook and its history. In terms of scale and diversity, the photobook is an important genre that has accompanied the history of photography ever since the nineteenth century when Henry Fox Talbot's *Pencil of Nature* and *Sun Pictures in Scotland* appeared in the mid-1840s. Talbot's *Sun Pictures in Scotland* responded to the Victorian craze for all things Scottish and the apotheosis of Sir Walter Scott: the twenty-three plates of Scottish landmarks and sites of memory "comprise a visual anthology of subjects connected to Scott."[34] The book thus stands at the beginning of a rich genre that, in spite of its apparent diversity, is characterized by an overarching narrative and aesthetic concern that place each individual photograph in a

34. Graham Smith, "H. Fox Talbot's 'Scotch Views' for *Sun Pictures in Scotland* (1845)," in *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond*, ed. Patrizia Di Bello, Colette Wilson, and Shamoon Zamir (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 20.

broader context. In their seminal *The Photobook: A History* Martin Parr and Gerry Badger insist that a photobook must be more than a collection of images in book form. For Parr and Badger it is essential that the photobook give expression to a coherent photographic idea, a particular aesthetic, or a definable thematic interest: "The sum, by definition," writes Parr, "is greater than the part."[35] As Patrizia Di Bello and Shamoon Zamir observe with reference to Talbot's Victorian publications and Ed Ruscha's conceptual *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1962), which has gained iconic status in the history of the genre, photobooks are often concerned

> with the relations between place, history and nationhood. Both [Talbot and Ruscha] explore, whether romantically or ironically, places which have become weighted with cultural memory and myth. . . . Both are also books of travel, the photobook not merely as a record but also in some way an enactment of journeying, and kinds of autobiography or memoir by indirection.[36]

In Germany the photobook came to prominence in the mid-1920s when interest in montage aesthetics coincided with the exploration of photography's representational practices and potential. "What distinguished the photobook," comments Patrizia McBride, "is not simply that it provided accounts of the world that privileged visual over literary strategies. Rather, its images were endowed with a performative quality; that is, they were meant to demonstrate the representational strategies proper to the photographic medium, which the photobook sought to foreground and reflect on."[37] McBride's analysis focuses on the construction of visual meaning in the work of the Dada artist Hannah Höch, who, in the early 1930s, produced a scrapbook that comprises several

35. Martin Parr, "Preface," in Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History* (London: Phaidon, 2004), 1:7.

36. Di Bello and Zamir, "Introduction," in *The Photobook: From Talbot to Ruscha and Beyond,* 6–7.

37. Patrizia McBride, "Narrative Resemblance: The Production of Truth in the Modernist Photobook of Weimar Germany," *New German Critique* 115/39 (2012): 182.

hundred images that she took from various illustrated magazines, pasting them onto two issues of the Weimar women's magazine *Die Dame*.[38] Analyzing the complex analogical networks that are created by the dizzying montage of the photographs in a grid layout, McBride demonstrates that Höch's scrapbook overturns the mimetic relationship between the photographic image and its referent. It challenges photography's investment in verisimilitude and illusionism by way of a montage technique that calls for analogical comparisons between seemingly unrelated images. In this way Höch's work initiates a "performative investigation of photography's narrative and rhetorical power."[39]

McBride's astute observations about the performative potential of the photobook are highly relevant for the discussion of Wüst's *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst*, which complicates the relationship between place, history, and nationhood. In effect, the anti-illusionist representational practice of *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst* negates the foundational myth that 1989 marks the beginning of the reunification of the divided German nation. While Wesely's *Ostdeutschland* erases all traces of human history, Wüst's photobook obliterates the very category of history by foregrounding the contingency of life. His black-and-white photo narrative opens with a title page that shows a screen shot of a television set displaying the West German news program *Tagesschau* on 3 October 1989. A female news presenter is reading the news against the backdrop of a map that shows West Germany, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and Poland with their respective capital cities, Bonn, East Berlin, Prague, and Warsaw. On the bottom left of the screen the strapline reads: "DDR-Flüchtlinge können jetzt ausreisen" (GDR refugees are now allowed to leave). While this opening screen shot of a highly mediatized news event draws attention to the dramatic build-up leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the ensuing photobook undercuts the chronological imagination that has accompanied the

38. McBride, "Narrative Resemblance," 183. A facsimile volume has been published by Gunda Luyken: *Hannah Höch Album* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 2004).

39. McBride, "Narrative Resemblance," 196.

narrative of 1989. The image of *Die Tagesschau* is not indicative of a photojournalistic perspective; Wüst rejects the type of visual strategy that stages history as a series of electrifying moments and dramatic turning points that symbolize human agency. Rather, his photography exposes "the dialectic between alleged objectivity and subjective-subversive attention to detail."[40]

Wüst's photobook is divided into a prologue, five central photo series, and an epilogue. Each section carries a brief title, date, and place-names.[41] The photographs are arranged either as a single photograph per page or as developed contact strips or sequences of negatives: four photographs with perforation holes run across and over the edge of the double page. The perforated roll film foregrounds the materiality and historicity of analogue photography: roll film not only massively helped to speed up exposure times but also recorded the chronological occurrence of the photographs. Wüst overturns these conventions: his pictures neither capture the acceleration of history in 1989 nor do they allow the viewer to produce an "order of time" through chronological sequencing. Even though the photobook records journeys undertaken by Wüst in 1989, these journeys appear uneventful and inconclusive.

The prologue comprises five disparate photographs that are not interconnected by any explanatory narrative or captions: on the left-hand page we see a close-up of two T-shirts with a picture of Gorbachev and Russian inscriptions about perestroika, democracy, and glasnost; on the right-hand side there is a photograph of the exterior of a building with various graffiti: someone sprayed "D Jetzt" (democracy now) underneath an old-fashioned and faded

40. Felix Hoffmann, "Leporello/Time/Memory: On Ulrich Wüst and His Leporello *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst*," in Wüst, *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst*, 87.

41. "Stadtflucht Berlin Prenzlau" (Escape from Berlin Prenzlau) and "Sommernacht Prenzlauer Berg" (Summer Night Prenzlauer Berg) were shot in August 1989; "Spätsommer Kühlungsborn" (Late Summer Kühlungsborn) in September 1989; "Oktober (1)" was shot in Leipzig in September, "October (2)" in Berlin on 6 and 7 October, that is, shortly before and on the fortieth anniversary of the GDR. While "October (3)" was shot in Leningrad and Moscow in October, the epilogue carries no dates or locations at all: it contains two photographs of a GDR flag hanging from a domestic radiator underneath a net curtain with a floral pattern.

advertisement for "Rohprodukte" (raw materials). This photograph carries the cryptic caption "(P.S.)" (post scriptum), which dislodges the imperative gesture of the "democracy now" slogan. The sense of uncertainty about what precisely we are looking at, or when, is carried over to the next double page: on the left-hand page we see two Russian guards in front of a national shrine. The Russian inscription over the entrance allows the reader to identify Lenin's mausoleum in Moscow; on the right-hand page we see the silhouettes of two people, possibly Russians, on top of a wide set of steps that appear to lead to some grand memorial. The prologue concludes with a sparse shop window display with a sport trophy in the middle, a poster of a GDR sprinter in a race on the left, and a newspaper cutting at the bottom about the success of the GDR women's team at the World Cup. The prologue adopts an associative rather than a chronological perspective: while some of the images can be read as iconic expressions of the grassroots movement of 1989, others do not fit this template. Is Lenin's mausoleum an icon of the greatness of the Russian Revolution or a representation of a dead idea? Does the image of the peculiar shop window display offer an ironic view of the GDR's race against the West? Or is it a representation of the difficulty of capturing movement in photography?

However the viewer deals with these questions, this prologue clearly at once fulfills and undermines the prime function of a prologue to provide the context for the ensuing drama or narrative. In keeping with this strategy of decontextualization, the first series, "Stadtflucht Berlin Prenzlau" (Escape from Berlin Prenzlau), which was taken in August 1989, consists of a developed strip of negatives of extremely grainy photographic shots that appear to have been taken from a train that was traveling through the industrial landscape on the urban periphery north of Berlin, passing highways, bridges, massive overland heating pipes, weekend dachas, a coal-powered station or storage facility, electricity pylons, and a harvester (fig. 4).

The sequentiality of what appears to be a contact strip evokes movement through time and space, but the individual images appear strangely static and frozen in time, an effect that is heightened by the black border that separates the images. Presented as filmstrips or contact prints they produce an aesthetics of the

Figure 4. Ulrich Wüst, "Stadtflucht Berlin Prenzlau," *Später Sommer/ Letzter Herbst* (1989). © Ulrich Wüst, Kehrer Verlag 2016.

unfinished. The absence of captions magnifies the sense that these images are not about wresting a particular moment in time from life. They don't seem to capture the singular and nonrepeatable moment that, for Roland Barthes, defines photography's ontological status. By depicting a journey through a frozen industrial landscape in which humans are either absent or barely recognizable, they stage the summer of 1989 as nonevent.

Such defiance of the chronological imagination structures the book as a whole: the next series is entitled "Sommernacht Prenzlauer Berg" (A Summer Night, Prenzlauer Berg) and dated August 1989. Prenzlauer Berg lies in the district of Pankow in East Berlin and was home to numerous East German dissidents, countercultural artists, and illegal movements (including squatters) during GDR times. Within its boundaries are two key sites of the peaceful revolution: the Zion Church, which allowed activists to use its facilities to print illegal magazines and flyers in 1989; and the Gethsemane Church, which became a hot spot for protests in the lead-up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Wüst, however, does not engage with any *lieux de mémoire* at all: his Prenzlauer Berg series contains nine close-ups of urban pavement with various objects on the ground, including a single shoe, a shovel, a branch broken off a tree, a cord with empty cotton bags tied to its end, and a fallen-over metal pole. The close-ups do not help but hinder interpretation: we are looking at a series of details that are as hard to understand as the industrial landscapes of the previous series.

The title "Sommernacht Prenzlauer Berg" may be seen to evoke the idea of a romantic encounter that has little to do with these pictures of debris. While the previous series showed images in flux that look static, the Prenzlauer Berg photographs consists of close-ups that provide unreadable images. Both series thus archive places and times that resist integration into any meaningful historical narrative. Like the Weimar artist Hannah Höch, Ulrich Wüst disrupts the mimetic relationship between the photographic image and the referent: we do not recognize what we see in these photographs. Recognition of the referent is replaced here by analogical comparisons between similar images that cannot be narrativized. Wüst's photobook thus draws the viewer's attention to photography's representational strategies and rhetorical power. Neither the time *in* the photograph nor the time *of* the photograph—to use Martin Lister's terminology—can be established with any degree of certainty.

"Spätsommer Kühlungsborn" (Late Summer, Kühlungsborn) is the central and perhaps most intriguing section, as it seems to return to the conventional idea that the photograph has "a more innocent, and therefore more accurate, relation to visible reality than do other mimetic objects."[42] This series consists of nine images that, as the caption informs us, were taken in September 1989 near Kühlungsborn, a popular holiday resort on the Baltic coast of the GDR. Seven of the nine photographs show rear views of individuals or groups of two or three people looking out at the sea or the beach in front of them. The viewer forms the impression that these people are paying their final visit to the beach before returning home—they are all dressed, and many carry their luggage with them. The German viewer in particular is likely to interpret these images as expressions of the desire for a more open country without the legally punishable offence of *Republikflucht* (desertion from the republic, i.e., the GDR). We will see that such beach scenes on the Baltic are a recurring motif in narratives about 1989: it occurs in Petzold's film *Barbara* when the eponymous protagonist helps a teenager to

42. Sontag, *On Photography*, 5–6.

escape from the GDR while she returns to her job as a doctor in a provincial hospital. Wüst's figures in the Kühlungsborn series could also be straight out of the world of Lutz Seiler's acclaimed novel *Kruso* (2014), which is set on the small Baltic island of Hiddensee, west of Rügen, which even during GDR times was a haven for dissidents and intellectuals. Edgar Bendler, the protagonist, who has just arrived on the island, goes down to the beach where he is overcome by the view of the sea: "Der Anblick des Meeres! Ed fühlte die Verheißung. Und nichts anderes war es doch, wonach er sich sehnte, eine Art Jenseits, groß, rein, übermächtig."[43] (The view of the sea! Ed felt the promise of it. And he longed for nothing else, only a sort of beyond, great, pure, and all-powerful.)

Returning to Wüst's series: the first photograph, "Spätsommer Kühlungsborn," shows a small group that could be a family: a woman dressed in a light overcoat with a large handbag hanging from her shoulder is about to place a black suitcase on the beach (fig. 5). She is flanked by two men to her left and right:

Figure 5. Ulrich Wüst, "Spätsommer Kühlungsborn, September 1989," *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst* (1989). © Ulrich Wüst, Kehrer Verlag 2016.

43. Lutz Seiler, *Kruso* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014), 75.

the middle-aged man on her left wears a black leather jacket and a light pair of trousers; he carries a small suitcase while looking out at the sea. The young man on the right—perhaps the couple's son—has rolled up his dark trousers above his ankles; in his right hand he holds a small travel bag with a white pair of trainers tied to its handle. He too is gazing at the sea.

Unlike in the other series included in the photobook, the location, date, and subject matter of these photographs seemingly accentuate their anchorage in historical time. As Susan Sontag observed, "All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt."[44] The *punctum* of the particular moment, when the woman is about to place her suitcase on the beach, occurs within an iconography that evokes transcendence. For the German viewer the composition of this photograph is perhaps reminiscent of Caspar David Friedrich's *Der Mönch am Meer* (*The Monk by the Sea*, 1808–10). Friedrich's epochal painting depicts a single figure in a long garment in rear view on a dune overlooking the sea and the vast expanse of the horizon.[45] The symbolism of Friedrich's painting derives from the vastness of the sky (which takes up more than three-quarters of the picture) and the small scale of the human figure—the only vertical element in an otherwise horizontal composition. Wüst's photograph, too, makes do with only a small number of compositional elements. Apart from the beach, the sea, the sky, and the three figures, only a pair of seagulls are to be seen, one resting on a post at the edge of the picture on the left, the other bobbing in the water to the right of the center of the picture. As in the case of Friedrich's painting, Wüst's photograph is composed of strict horizontal layers: the sky

44. Sontag, *On Photography*, 15.

45. Anselm Kiefer is another artist who has reworked Friedrich's Romantic paintings: his series *Besetzungen* (Occupations) of the late 1960s contains the photograph of a man in riding boots standing on the foaming seashore extending his arm out to the sea in Hitler salute. The composition of the photograph combines elements from Friedrich's *The Monk by the Sea* and his *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818).

is separated from the bottom half of the picture by the sharp line of the horizon. Aside from the emptiness of the picture, what is apparent is the lack of any perspective depth. Wüst's figures stare at a horizon that, despite its breadth, appears opaque.

The Kühlungsborn series ends with a double page that draws attention to the sequential nature of the leporello. On the left-hand edge of the picture, a man, who is also carrying two bags, looks, from a rocky outcrop or wall, out onto the sea, which lies approximately a meter below. Two vertical posts that rise from the water underscore the horizontal composition of beach, sea, and sky. The last picture, on the double page on the right-hand side, shows the identical scene without the male figure: all the people who looked so longingly out at the sea have now left. Wüst's Kühlungsborn series can be read as an allegorical view of the longing for emigration and political freedom at the very moment when this was about to become possible. And so the "time of the photograph" is intensely historical because viewers superimpose their knowledge of subsequent events. By sharp contrast, "the time in the photograph" captures a stagnating and extended present without a future horizon under the conditions of GDR socialism.

There is only one series in Wüst's photobook that seemingly reinstates the chronological imagination and historical time: the photos of the series "October 2" were taken on 6 and 7 October 1989 in Berlin, that is, on the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the GDR. As the East German leadership prepared bombastic celebrations with a military parade, the seeds of its imminent collapse had already been sown. Thousands of citizens had fled via Hungary and Czechoslovakia, while others stayed and tried to change the system from within, forming protest groups and organizing peaceful demonstrations. But despite this crisis of legitimacy, the politburo in East Berlin refused to engage with this grassroots movement. The brutal crackdown on Chinese pro-democracy protestors in Tiananmen Square a few months before fueled the fear that the GDR regime could resort to similar measures. The GDR's guest of honor was Gorbachev, whose calls for perestroika were ignored by Honecker and his leadership. But as Gorbachev made his way toward the Palast der Republik (Palace of the Republic),

the seat of the East German Volkskammer (Parliament), crowds lined the street shouting, "Gorbi, Gorbi."[46]

Like the prologue, Wüst's photo series "October 2" opens with a shot of a television screen showing a very grainy picture of the fortieth-anniversary celebrations in a large assembly or concert hall, presumably in the Palast der Republik. In the foreground, we see the audience standing up in an orderly manner while a choir and orchestra appear to be performing on stage. A dark curtain in the background is adorned with the dates 1949 and 1989 and the GDR symbol of hammer and compass surrounded by a garland of corn. Because of the poor quality of the picture, it is impossible to identify any historical actors who participated in the official events.

The ensuing series then consists of a contact strip that shows street views before and during the main military parade: soldiers and other official groups are photographed in profile marching along the parade route in East Berlin with onlookers lining the streets. Two photographs disrupt the sequentiality of the series: a first full-page photograph shows musicians on a stage with five people in the foreground who seem to be listening to a lackluster rehearsal. A second full-page image depicts crowds lining Schönhauser Allee behind barriers; a military band is playing while the parade appears to be approaching (fig. 6). There is a sense of collective expectation, as the heads of the onlookers are turned to the left. This full-page photograph thus foregrounds the staged character of a choreography that turned citizens into passive onlookers on a spectacle that aimed to legitimize the GDR. The next strip shows marching bands who are at distance from the crowd: what is most striking about these images is the amount of empty space and the large gaps between participating groups (fig. 7). Empty space is an index of the empty and depleted time of the GDR leadership, which is holding onto hollow rituals of power in the face of change.

46. For a video of the official coverage of the military parade and celebrations, see http://www.the-berlin-wall.com/videos/gorbachev-at-gdrs-40th-anniversary-722/ (accessed 22 November 2016); http://www.amara.org/en/videos/cK6YPytFYrgF/info/40-jahre-ddr-40-years-of-gdr-military-parade-full-ceremony/ (accessed 23 November 2016).

Figure 6. Ulrich Wüst, "Oktober 2: 6.–7. Oktober," *Später Sommer/ Letzter Herbst* (1989). © Ulrich Wüst, Kehrer Verlag 2016.

Figure 7. Ulrich Wüst, "Oktober 2: 6.–7. Oktober," *Später Sommer/ Letzter Herbst* (1989). © Ulrich Wüst, Kehrer Verlag 2016.

This series thus highlights how the GDR leadership orchestrated power in public space; it also exposes the ritualistic character of an utterly cheerless spectacle that symbolizes the *Spätzeit* or the end game of the GDR. Overall, the series makes visible an antiquarian

scenography that, in a futile gesture, converted public space into a stage for the hollow performance of authoritarian power.[47]

By interweaving strips of negatives with individual photographs that are displayed on one page, Wüst adopts a technique that disrupts the kind of photographic illusionism that points to the historical referent outside the image. Instead of dramatizing a historical moment, the photo narrative creates a network of visual analogies that attune the viewer to resemblances and differences that remain, however, ultimately unreadable. The overall effect of this analogical representational strategy is a radical de-dramatization of the political moment of 1989. *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst* offers us an ironic and melancholy view of the GDR as a ghostly and emaciated *Spätzeit*.

In the Acoustic Space of the GDR: Christian Petzold's *Barbara*

Christian Petzold is one of the most acclaimed directors of the so-called Berlin School who made his name at the Berlinale in 2005 with *Gespenster* (Ghosts), the second part of his trilogy, which is characterized by a strikingly spectral cinematography that showcases the Berlin Republic as haunted by ghosts.[48] By contrast to the earlier Ghost trilogy, his feature *Barbara* (2012) appears as a fairly realistic history film that offers a nuanced representation of life in the GDR in the early 1980s from the perspective of its eponymous protagonist. Barbara Wolff is a dissident medical doctor who, after a prison sentence, is banished from the prestigious Charité in Berlin to a provincial hospital near the Baltic Sea. She must work under Dr André Reiser, who, as Barbara knows very well, is reporting on

47. On this issue, see Anne Fuchs, *After the Dresden Bombing: Pathways of Memory, 1945 to the Present* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 104–10.

48. The other films are *Die innere Sicherheit* (*The State I Am In*) and *Yella* (2007). On hauntology as a signature of Petzold's work, see Andrew J. Webber, "Topographical Turns: Recasting Berlin in Christian Petzold's *Gespenster*," in *Debating German Cultural Identity since 1989*, 67–81.

her to the local Stasi man, Klaus Schütz. Arriving in the province, Barbara is already plotting her escape with the help of her West German boyfriend, a businessman, who provides her with money and an escape plan. There are two meetings of the West German lover and Barbara: the first time in a forest setting where they engage in hurried sex before the lover is driven off by his Western colleague in a shiny Mercedes Benz. The second furtive rendezvous takes place in an Interhotel where Barbara's lover is called to a business meeting before they have sex. During their conversation, Barbara's lover assures her that she will not need to work in the West because he is earning a good income. This unwanted assurance has an unsettling effect on Barbara who does not share his patriarchal vision of the good life in the West.[49] Over time, Barbara becomes increasingly absorbed by her work in the hospital, taking care of the patients in tandem with André. The film ends with Barbara's return to the hospital after helping Stella, an unhappy young girl who is pregnant and has run away from a youth penal center in Torgau, to escape in her place. Hailed by reviewers as a sort of love story, the film eschews the conventions of melodrama: even though the plot has the makings of a melodrama—a woman is caught between two men who represent two opposing ideological systems—the film abstains from a conventional grammar of passion. As Nick Hodgin comments, "Barbara disrupts generic expectations by consciously undermining the very genre it invokes. Passion is largely absent; at best underplayed, interrupted."[50]

Visually, Petzold's film breaks with the conventional image of the mousy-gray GDR by employing a strikingly warm color palette.[51]

49. When the girl from the adjoining hotel room shows her pictures of various rings in the *Quelle* catalogue—an icon of the downward distribution of wealth in the capitalist West—Barbara plays along without any real enthusiasm.

50. Nick Hodgin, "East Germany Revisited, Reimagined, Repositioned: Representing the GDR in Dominik Graf's *Der rote Kakadu* (2005) and Christian Petzold's *Barbara*," in *East, West, and Centre: Reframing Post-1989 European Cinema*, ed. Michael Gott and Todd Herzog (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 247.

51. See *The Making of Barbara*, pt. 2, Hans Fromm, Anette Guther, and K. D. Gruber in conversation with Hans-Christian Boese, 0:15–0:45; Christian Petzold, dir., *Barbara* (2013), DVD.

The retro "Kodak look" of the mise-en-scène does not so much induce nostalgia as a sense of historical distance from a bygone world in which technologies are largely absent or antiquated. The state's obsession with controlling its citizens is set in a low-tech context, which features in the establishing sequence in the guise of an old-fashioned tram that transports Barbara to the province. The Trabants and Wartburgs that are used to observe and hassle Barbara symbolize the hopeless backwardness of the GDR. And yet, even though this regime of surveillance appears anachronistic when compared with the technologies of the West, it is no less intrusive and intimidating in its slow and deliberate execution of power.

The competition over speed between East and West features directly in the forest sequence, which includes an encounter between a West German who drives a slick Mercedes Benz that can do 200 kilometers per hour and an East German Trabant owner who laments that he had to wait eight years for his car. For Nick Hodgin the direct juxtaposition of the Trabant to the Mercedes is so clichéd that it becomes parodic, drawing attention to the overworked visual grammar of postunification discourse.[52] The scene ends with the Trabi driving past the Mercedes, which is shown to reverse back on the woodland road. As Andrew Webber observes, the "cartoon form" of speed politics in this scene casts "its more general and subtle ideological freighting in the rest of the film into relief."[53] It is important to emphasize that the film does not merely feature slow speed diegetically as a symbol of backwardness; it also employs an arresting aesthetics of slowness that recuperates *Eigenzeit* under the conditions of surveillance.

In his illuminating essay on Petzold's film, Andrew Webber demonstrates that in *Barbara* the three principal levels of speed in film are slowed down: firstly, the movements of people and things in the filmic space appear as studies in time and motion. Secondly, the motion of the camera is slow; it often favors "a distinctive

52. Hodgin, "East Germany Revisited," 248.

53. Andrew J. Webber, "'Good Work': Speed, Slowness, and Taking Care in Christian Petzold's *Barbara*," in *Time in German Literature and Culture*, 177.

attention to the framed image and iconographic organisation."[54] Thirdly, the editing and cutting "is designed to hold action back": even though there are more cuts in *Barbara* than in earlier works by Petzold, the film uses this device to heighten the intensity of the encounter between its principal characters.

Webber's main concern is Petzold's "dynamics of carefulness,"[55] which finds paradigmatic expression in a scene devoted to the contemplation and discussion of Rembrandt's famous painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632). André has invited Barbara to visit a laboratory, which he has assembled in the hospital so that he can carry out diagnostic tests on location. As Barbara is using the microscope to verify an earlier diagnosis, André observes her while standing at the window, a position that, in the topology of the film, is linked with the theme of surveillance. The establishing sequence represented Barbara's arrival from the point of view of André, who is shown to observe her from a hospital window in the company of the Stasi man, Schütz. Barbara's deliberate behavior in the establishing scene—sitting down on a bench, she lights a cigarette to avoid arriving a minute too early—is a calculated demonstration directed at the Stasi informers. When in the later lab scene Barbara compliments André on his good work (23:59), he seizes the opportunity to gain her confidence by offering her the use of the laboratory. But Barbara remains on her guard because his real role is "Aufpassen, dass sich niemand separiert" (to make sure that nobody segregates themselves) from the GDR. Her comment is an ironic repetition of André's early advice that Barbara should not "segregate" herself from her colleagues in the hospital. Petzold's use of the fast-paced shot-reverse technique in this exchange enhances the tension between the protagonists: their mutual sexual attraction remains shadowed by the political question as to whether trust can be established under the conditions of surveillance. It is at this point that André offers an interpretation of Rembrandt's painting. As Webber demonstrates, his description

54. Webber, "Good Work," 180.
55. Webber, "Good Work," 174.

of the painting—a reproduction of it is hanging on the lab wall—is an intertextual citation of the elaborate ekphrastic description of the same painting in W. G. Sebald's *Die Ringe des Saturn* (*The Rings of Saturn*, 1995). I have argued elsewhere that Sebald's own interpretation aims to challenge the disastrous consequences of modern biopolitics, which, for Sebald, was brought about by the Cartesian split between body and mind in early modernity.[56] André follows in the footsteps of the Sebaldian narrator by offering a forensic interpretation of the misrepresentation of a significant detail in the picture: the dead man's dissected hand is anatomically wrong. Both Sebald's narrator and André suggest that the misrepresentation of the hand in a painting that is exemplary of Renaissance realism is symbolic of Rembrandt's partisanship with the victims of history: the body of the dead thief, which is exposed on the slab for the surgeons and viewers to see, is being subjected to retributive punishment even after death by hanging. Webber points out that both Sebald's narrator and André produce readings that engage in the very instrumentalization that they overtly criticize: as André claims that all doctors in Rembrandt's picture have their eyes on the anatomy atlas rather than on the pale body of the dead man, the camera zooms in on one figure in the painting who is gazing at us, the viewers, and not at the anatomy atlas. For Webber this raises the question as to whether this is simply a continuity error or a deliberate device designed to make us even more suspicious of André's manipulation of Barbara. Webber suggests that the scene represents "a broader reflection upon the epistemological—and thereby ontological—status of acts of reading and misreading, of witnessing and interpretation, of situations and behaviours in the film."[57] The incorporation of the painting allows the viewer "to look slowly and carefully at what is hidden in full view."[58]

Building on Webber's insights about Petzold's slow cinematography and the politics of looking in this film, I will examine the use

56. Anne Fuchs, "W. G. Sebald's Painters: Some Reflections on Fine Art in W. G. Sebald's Prose Works," *Modern Language Review* 101/1 (2006): 172–74.

57. Webber, "Good Work,"187.

58. Webber, "Good Work," 188.

of diegetic sound. Diegetic sound plays a crucial role in a film that explores the conditions for intimacy and *Eigenzeit* in the context of state surveillance. Rather than using extradiegetic music to underscore emotional intensity in Hollywood fashion, the sound in the film is, in the main, diegetic: we hear wind picking up when Barbara is cycling through a threatening landscape, birdsong, barking dogs, engines of cars, trams, and the ordinary clatter of noise in everyday life.[59] In an interview, Petzold explained that he had recorded the diegetic sound before filming so that his actors could hear it on the set: "The reaction of the actors to the sound has to be natural. It's the ambiance. The ambiance must be the acoustic room of the German Democratic Republic, 1980."[60]

Diegetic sound does not just support the naturalistic representation of the exterior world; it creates an "acoustic space"—to appropriate Petzold's suggestive term—in which all sound is potentially indicative of a menacing intrusion into privacy and the disruption of *Eigenzeit*. Examples of symbolic sound include the sizzling of a defective socket in Barbara's flat, barking dogs, ticking clocks, and the loud ringing of the doorbell, which is a recurring motif. The first time we see Barbara in her flat, she is shown sitting in her bathroom in a white dressing gown smoking a cigarette. Evidently she has just had a bath and is enjoying a small moment of intimacy when she hears a barking dog in the distance followed by a car engine. A furtive look from the window confirms that she is under observation by the Stasi. A further disruption of *Eigenzeit* occurs when the doorbell rings three times. Barbara approaches the door hesitantly but opens it after further knocking: it is not the Stasi but the nosy female caretaker who demands that Barbara accompany

59. We also hear parts of a radio broadcast of the overture of Carl Maria von Weber's *Freischütz* (1820)—the paradigmatic German Romantic opera—when Barbara repairs the bicycle tire in her bathroom, and later on, the live transmission of a race in the 1980 Moscow Olympics, which anchors the film in a precise historical context.

60. Petzold employs the phrase "acoustic room" rather than "acoustic space." I employ the latter term to capture the idea of a space of surveillance that produces aural alertness. Daniel Kasman, "Spatial Suspense: A Conversation with Christian Petzold," *Notebook* 16 (2012), https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/spatial-suspense-a-conversation-with-christian-petzold (accessed 19 January 2017).

her immediately to inspect the cellar. Still in her bathrobe, Barbara inquires whether this cannot wait until tomorrow, but the caretaker responds: "Nein. Morgen hab' ich keine Zeit." (8:54; No. Tomorrow I won't have time.) The doorbell is a leitmotif symbolizing the enactment of the type of temporal authoritarianism that strategically disrupts rare moments of intimacy and *Eigenzeit*. As Barbara and the hostile caretaker descend into the dungeon-like cellar, the cinematography employs the suspense techniques of horror movies without, however, overlaying the scene with an extradiegetic soundtrack: standing in the cellar, Barbara notices the barking dog in the distance. The disjuncture between the cinematography and the sound in this scene throws into relief the displacement of fear: the cellar is not the locus of a monstrous threat but a storage facility for coal and the place where Barbara finds the bicycle that enables her to embark on her furtive excursions.

The invasion of intimacy and *Eigenzeit* occurs in the main in the domestic setting. Petzold describes the scene where the Stasi men are searching Barbara's apartment as a deliberately quiet, unrushed, and systematic intrusion:

> Die beiden Männer. Jetzt in Barbaras Wohnung. Einer der beiden, Schütz, sitzt in einem Sessel. Der andere durchsucht die Wohnung. Schweigend, langsam und genau. Arbeitsteilung. Schütz betrachtet Barbara.[61]
>
> The two men, now in Barbara's flat. One of them, Schütz, is sitting in an armchair. The other one is searching her flat. Silently, slowly, and methodically. Division of labor. Schütz is studying Barbara.

In the acoustic space of the GDR, both stillness and sound can exude threat. The first search scene concludes with the doorbell ringing and a woman entering. She demonstratively puts on a pair of clinical rubber gloves before requesting that Barbara follow her into another room for a strip search.[62] After the house search,

61. Christian Petzold, *Barbara: Ein Drehbuch*, ed. Fred Breinersdorfer and Dorothee Schön (Berlin: Deutsche Filmakademie, 2012), 29.

62. While in this scene the body search is conducted offscreen, the later repetition of the search scene shows Barbara's degradation as she is forced to bend over so that the woman can execute a penetrative body search.

Barbara is curled up on her bed when the doorbell rings again: this time it is André, who has come to tell her that the much-awaited serum has arrived and that she is needed to administer it to Stella. Barbara's first reaction to his unplanned visit—"Ich weiß, ich bin zu spät. Können Sie melden." (18:57; I know I am late—you can report me.)—accentuates the Pavlovian function of the doorbell: whenever it rings, Barbara expects the invasion of her privacy.[63] And so Barbara develops a heightened state of alertness and vigilance vis-à-vis the threat of intrusion. She registers André's unannounced visit or the sudden appearance of the piano tuner on her doorstep as unwelcome intrusions because they occur in the same acoustic space of surveillance as the visits by the nasty caretaker or the searches by the Stasi. It is for this reason that Barbara remains on her guard, assuming a somewhat mannered posture that always anticipates surveillance and all kinds of intrusion.

Her vigilance is, however, balanced by the rhythm of her movement through space: this is particularly so when she is shown walking. Barbara's posture and gait are coded as a practice that establishes *Eigenzeit* as biorhythm. The enabling effect of her bodily rhythm can be gleaned from the short scene in which Barbara walks to her flat down a little lane in the village. To fully appreciate the symbolism of this short scene, we need to place it in a longer sequence of events. At the end of her first day, Barbara is waiting at the bus stop in front of the hospital when André passes her in his Wartburg before stopping and reversing to offer her a lift. Accepting his offer rather reluctantly, Barbara opens the door and quickly gets inside. The ensuing conversation during the car ride reveals the asymmetrical power that governs their relationship. André advises Barbara that she should not segregate herself from her colleagues in the hospital because they might feel provincial and second class. His rebuke refers to their lunch break in the staff restaurant: André and his team are discussing a case over lunch,

63. It is interesting to note that in the script, André is knocking on the door; during filming Petzold replaced the knocking with the doorbell to underscore its Pavlovian effect.

when he notices Barbara walking toward them with her tray. As he is turning his head to invite her to join their group, she cuts him off by wishing them "Mahlzeit" (an enjoyable lunch) while walking on to a different table. During the car ride she responds to André's reprimand by mocking his choice of the Latin-derived verb "separieren" (to segregate) instead of the more common "absondern" (to set apart). She suggests that his stilted formulation may be symptomatic of his own fear of being second class. When André turns left at a junction without asking for any directions, Barbara brings his complicity with the system and their asymmetrical relationship into the open: he did not need to ask where she is living or why she ended up in the province because he had already been "prepared" by the authorities: "Sie sind doch prepariert! Und ich separiere mich jetzt." (5:57; You have surely been prepared! And now I am going to segregate myself!) By repeating the loaded term "separieren," Barbara rejects André's pitch. Asking him to stop the car, she gets out and walks away from him down the rural lane. Their bristling exchange in the confines of André's car lends Barbara's short walk symbolic significance: it reenacts precisely the type of segregation from the collective identity that had provoked André in the restaurant scene. The rhythmic sound of her footfall accentuates her defiant individuality.

Petzold's film explores the politics of *Eigenzeit* in the context of divided Germany. While the Stasi terrorizes Barbara with its strategy of surveillance and intrusion, André works toward reconciling her to a life in the socialist collective through collaborative work as medical clinicians. His growing attraction adds complexity to his character, thereby avoiding a purely negative representation of the GDR.[64] André offers the prospect of a useful and fulfilling life that makes its peace with the Stasi and the repressive state. The West German lover promised a seemingly free and unburdened life in the West that, however, comes with new strings attached. Because

64. On this issue, see Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," *German Life & Letters* 67/2 (2014): 280–300.

his deep-seated patriarchal attitudes would turn her into a priceless asset, Barbara rejects this commodified version of freedom. However, her return to the hospital at the end of the film is deliberately anticlimactic and highly ambivalent: sitting at the bedside of a youngster who attempted to commit suicide, she is facing André, who is her colleague, a Stasi informer, and a potential lover. The silence in the final scene is laden and heavy with uncertainty. It is left completely open how Barbara will fare in the GDR before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Petzold's slow cinematography creates an acoustic space in which diegetic sound often heralds the methodical intrusion into privacy and the disruption of *Eigenzeit* by agents of the state. The ringing doorbell, the running car engines, ticking clocks, and so forth produce a grammar of interruption that, in its very predictability, is extremely threatening. Responding to the politics of intrusion by the agents of the state, Barbara develops and fine-tunes a form of vigilant attentiveness that always anticipates her opponents' next move. Under such conditions Barbara's quest for *Eigenzeit* will remain precarious.

The Longing for Transcendence: Ulrich Seidl's *Paradies: Glaube*

According to Thomas Luckmann, the widely shared assumption that the Western project of modernization inevitably involves a process of secularization, understood as the shrinking and eventual disappearance of religion from the modern world, is mistaken. As modern society evolved, Luckmann argues, it could not maintain "the social universality of an essentially religious world view oriented to the supremacy of a salvational articulation of the great transcendences."[65] But the emancipation of a secular domain did not remove religion from modern life altogether; rather, it relegated

65. Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), 132.

it to the private domain where it became a matter of individual choice. In modernity the compulsory sacred world view gave way to a variety of competing belief systems from which individuals could pick themes to combine and build them into "a private system of ultimate significance."[66] For Luckmann the privatization of religion also diminishes the "span of transcendence": the longing for the great transcendence of doctrinal religion transmutes into the search for "intermediate" or even "minimal" notions of transcendence that respond to the individual's needs.[67] Luckmann does not explicitly highlight an important side effect of this currency conversion: as the great transcendence is exchanged for more attainable little transcendences, the notion loses its transtemporal quality, that is, its association with eternity as a time that encompasses past, present, and future. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the search for attainable transcendences also points to the precariousness of social relations. Religious sects and sectarianism have flourished in recent decades, not least because they promise certainty and salvation in an era that is characterized by profound economic, social, technological, and environmental upheaval.

A recent example of artistic engagement with the quest for attainable transcendence in the age of precariousness is Austrian filmmaker Ulrich Seidl's *Paradies: Glaube* (Paradise: Faith), which was released in 2012. The film is the middle part of Seidl's Paradise trilogy, which offers an ironic exploration of three different versions of paradise in the twenty-first century.[68] The trilogy foregrounds the precariousness of happiness in the twenty-first century by covering the same period of time in the lives of three female protagonists who are members of the same family but embark on individual holidays in search of their private paradise. As in previous films, Seidl allowed the narrative to develop during the shooting in interaction with his cast of lay and professional actors: his script

66. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, 134.

67. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, 135.

68. The subtitles are derived from Ödon von Horvath's play *Glaube Liebe Hoffnung* (Faith Love Hope, 1932). Originally conceived as one feature film, Seidl decided to make three full-length feature films.

contains no written dialogue, as he believes that dialogue should evolve in the filming process. The first part, *Paradies: Liebe* (Paradise: Love), tells the story of fifty-year-old Teresa (Margarete Tiesel), a single mother, who travels to Kenia in search of sex. On the beach of her resort she meets Mungu (Peter Kazungu), a so-called beach boy who prostitutes himself to European women. While in Visconti's *Death in Venice* (1971) the beach is the site of Aschenbach's tragic desire for Tadzio, in Seidl's film it is the locus of economic exchange between African men and their European "sugar mamas": the desire for love is costly and results in mutual exploitation. In this film Seidl combined handheld camera work with static shots in the dialogue scenes. Together this creates a documentary effect that is further enhanced by the participation of African lay actors in the cast. *Paradies: Hoffnung* (Paradise: Hope), the third part in the trilogy, relates the experience of Teresa's daughter Melanie (Melanie Lenz), who is forced to spend her holidays in a summer camp for overweight teenagers. The monotonous daily regime of indoor and outdoor exercise and rationed meals is punctuated by the teenagers' nightly chats about love and desire, their night raids on the communal fridge, and the secretive smoking of cigarettes. Melanie falls in love with the director of the camp who eventually enforces professional distance by means of a *Kontaktverbot*, the prohibition to talk to him.[69]

The protagonist of the second part, *Paradies: Glaube*, is Teresa's sister Anna Maria, a middle-aged medical technician and Roman Catholic who spends her holidays spreading the word of God around the impoverished suburbs of Vienna. These excursions to the margins of urban society allow Seidl to depict the dark underside of the neoliberal era: Anna Maria seeks out those who have fallen off the social ladder because they cannot keep up with life in the superfast lane and with the demand for continual innovation

69. Florian Mundhenke has shown that Seidl established himself as a controversial filmmaker who traverses the genre boundaries between documentary and fictional filmmaking to new effect. See Florian Mundhenke, "Authenticity versus Artifice: The Hybrid Cinematic Approach of Ulrich Seidl," *Austrian Studies* 19 (2011): 113–25.

in the knowledge economy. Precariousness is thus a prominent theme in a film that places the protagonist's religiosity squarely in the context of the global era. In her domestic environment Anna Maria engages in obsessive cleaning, praying to Jesus, and masochistic acts of self-flagellation and penitential shuffling on her knees through the rooms of her monastic abode. Anna Maria shares her fundamentalist Catholicism with a small group of like-minded zealots who call themselves Legio Cordis Jesu and gather in her house to pray for Austria to become Catholic again: these zealots view themselves as "the spearhead of true faith" (25:46). Even though the protagonist is a Roman Catholic, the institution of the church no longer articulates her faith. Anna Maria is never shown to attend official mass or to go to confession. In her search for the great transcendence she has developed private rituals that take place within the four walls of her home.

The establishing shot shows us a dimly illuminated and Spartan-looking study in the evening: the static camera is positioned in the doorway facing a window covered by slatted blinds. The artificial light coming in through the window barely illuminates a crucifix on the left wall and a religious painting of Christ on the right, which is hanging above a desk with laptop, printer, and desk lamp. While the setting is strikingly Spartan and geometrical, the laptop and printer indicate that the story unfolds in our present age. Seidl predominantly employs a static camera for the scenes that take place inside Anna Maria's home. Diegetic sound is used to indicate movement: we hear how the door is being unlocked and opened before we see Anna Maria entering the room and switching on the desk lamp (0:50). A profile medium long shot shows her praying in front of the crucifix: "Beloved Jesus, please accept my sacrifice today for the grave sin of unchastity. So many people are obsessed with sex. Free them from their hell" (1:06). Unlocking the drawer of the desk, she takes out a whip, strips to the waist, and—falling on her knees—begins to ritually and violently flagellate herself until red abrasions appear on her back (1:37–2.32), the stigmata of her fervent love of Christ. While the static camera alternates medium-long profile shots of Anna Maria with rear views, it never shows a close-up of Anna Maria's face: the viewer has no access to

her emotions. The lack of extradiegetic music emphasizes the documentary and voyeuristic effect of Seidl's cinematography.

The topography in the film symbolically foregrounds the sharp separation between Anna Maria's public front and her private belief system. However, the privacy of Anna Maria's religious world is of course destroyed by the voyeuristic and perhaps even pornographic exposure of her sexual and religious practices, which transforms her from professional expert into a precarious subject. The different locations also stand for the different temporal trajectories associated with the various social spheres that Anna Maria traverses. While her house is the guarded location for the enactment of a premodern religion, the film also brings into view the contemporary urban world, as, for example, represented by the hospital, Anna Maria's workplace. In scene 2 she is shown working in the radiology department of her hospital, using high-tech CT scanners and a laptop to screen the patients. In this setting Anna Maria perceives the human body from a scientific and objective view: when carrying out mammograms and magnetic resonance imagining (MRI) on various patients, she instructs them calmly not to move while the image is being taken. In a rare point of view shot we are shown Anna Maria studying the MRI of a human brain on a laptop in the lab (4:09). In her professional role, Anna Maria is a highly skilled medical technician who adopts a rational and scientific perspective. The scene ends with a brief conversation with her boss about her holiday plans. In her professional life, there is no indication that Anna Maria's connection to the contemporary world is so precarious. After work she exits from a subway station, and then walks along a busy road before traversing a park en route to her house. The park is a recurring motif and a heterotopia in Foucault's sense. "Heterotopias are something like counter-sites," comments Foucault, "a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites . . . that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted."[70] The park is both a

70. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16/1 (1986): 24.

place of reprieve—on her way home, she stops and sits down on a bench, enjoying a moment of idleness (5:58)—and the site where she encounters a grotesque group sex scene at night (38:10) that is reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch's triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (ca. 1490). Bosch's central panel depicts a garden teeming with an abundance of strange fruits and plants, fantastic animals, and nude male and female figures who are engaged in all kinds of sensual and amorous activities.

The suburbs and apartment blocks that Anna Maria visits to proselytize are a fourth type of location. Knocking on the doors of strangers, many of them immigrants or social dropouts, she announces, "Good morning: the mother of God has come to visit you today" (11:16). That mother is a two-foot clay statue of the Virgin Mary, to which she insists they pray. When Anna Maria interacts with the outside world, Seidl employs the handheld camera and long takes for the scenes unfolding inside the apartments that Anna Maria visits. For example, in one particularly grotesque scene Anna Maria tries to convert an immigrant woman from Russia or the former Soviet Union who is an alcoholic and lives in a run-down apartment. The woman represents the modern precariat: her filthy flat suggests that she has been living alone for quite some time and that Anna Maria is a rare visitor. At the opening of this scene, which is shot in one long take, we see the woman opening a beer bottle at her kitchen sink in which piles of dirty crockery are stacked up. Entering the living room where Anna Maria is sitting on a sofa, she asks whether Anna Maria is from the police or a saleswoman. When Anna Maria replies that she is from the church, the woman comments, "Church—that's harmless" (1:28), and offers Anna Maria a beer. Anna Maria now gets down to her real business by gifting a set of rosary beads to the woman, explaining that praying the rosary can cure her from beer, vodka, and sex with men (1:28). When Anna Maria asks the woman where she is from, she responds: "Selber kommen her. Da bin ich." (1:29; Mind yourself where you from. I am here now.) Anna Maria's questions about the woman's origins are met with heightened emotions—eventually she reveals that her mother did not care for her because she "was fucking 100,000 men" (1:29), a

comment that allows Anna Maria to introduce Maria as heavenly mother. As Anna Maria is proselytizing, the woman tries to grab Anna Maria's breasts, tearing at her skirt and underwear. Moments of intimacy alternate with aggressive attacks on Anna Maria, who persists in her attempt to save the woman from the demon of drink. The scene moves to the kitchen, where an extended physical battle ensues, which is rendered in one long take with a handheld camera. As Anna Maria tries to wrest the beer bottles from her, the woman embraces her, declaring: "I love you, my beautiful woman" (1.31). Even though the woman's emotional neediness translates into increasing violence, Anna Maria attempts to calm her down. The scene ends with the woman opening another bottle of beer and Maria praying at the door: "Jesus, help this poor woman. Jesus. She really needs your help" (1.35). The high-angle shots, the long takes, the handheld camera, and the improvised dialogue endow this scene with dramatic intensity and rare intimacy: even though Anna Maria is a zealous proselytizer, she shows genuine humanity and care for the woman. By expressly taking his time, shooting this lengthy scene in long takes, Seidl adopts a documentary format that foregrounds social deprivation and precariousness as motivating factors for Anna Maria's longing for transcendence.

Anna Maria's house is a heterotopic space in which she observes the rituals of her premodern religion. When she returns home after work, she crosses the threshold into another world: hanging up her keys and taking off her shoes, she enters the domain of her private belief system that, even though it draws on Catholic dogma, runs counter to official church teachings. By positioning his static camera in the hallway at a 90° angle to the door, Seidl accentuates the importance of the threshold, which divides the private domain from the public sphere. Anna Maria starts her time off work by feverishly washing and polishing the floors (6:58)—once she enters her house, her modern desire for hygiene transmutes into a premodern act of cleansing from the dirt of this world. The film shows, however, that her obsessive rituals are symptomatic of a pathological obsession that does not engender happiness.

The different spaces and locations in the film evoke different temporal trajectories: the hospital stands for a high-tech society

in which well-being can be engineered with the help of diagnostic technologies. The suburbs are depressing places of abandonment and stagnation on the fringes of society: they represent a geography of disempowerment that is the by-product of the disembedding forces of globalization. While the park is an ambivalent site that can engender moments of horror and happiness, Anna Maria's home is the site of obsessive control: within the four walls of her house, Anna Maria attempts to fend off social precariousness by observing a ritualistic and obsessive timetable.

On the first morning of her holiday, we see Anna Maria playing religious hymns on her electronic keyboard under the window of her sitting room before she embarks on her religious mission. Returning home, she reenters the study—her private torture chamber—this time in full daylight (14:35): removing an alarm clock and a belt with metal rings from her desk she fastens the belt tightly around her waist in preparation for yet another sacrifice to her beloved Christ. Having set her alarm clock, she begins shuffling on her knees through the house, praying Holy Marys with the rosary beads in her hands. While Anna Maria moves ever more quickly on her knees from room to room, praying feverishly, the camera remains static. Anna Maria's sadomasochistic punishment takes back the domestification of the "wild transcendental experiences" that, as Luckmann argues, remained part of the medieval church tradition but were later harnessed, controlled, and ultimately rejected by the modern church. This premodern ritual ends when the alarm bell goes off (17:17): we then watch how Anna Maria tends to her wounds with modern disinfectants—her escape into a premodern heterotopia of religious fervor is framed and controlled by clock time and modern technologies.

At one point the filmic narrative points to the etiology of Anna Maria's religious neurosis: when her estranged and paraplegic Muslim husband, Nabil, unexpectedly returns home after a period of two years (27:53), we learn that her quest for religion was probably triggered by the accident that left him wheelchair bound. Before long, they are waging a personal religious war: as Anna Maria keeps refusing to have any physical relationship with him, Nabil begins to view Christ as his rival. Alone in the house, he

symbolically resumes his marital role by, for example, replacing the image of Christ on Anna Maria's bedside table with their wedding photograph (42:35). However, even though Anna Maria takes care of his physical needs, it is clear that she has long since left Nabil for her new lover, Jesus. Having moved her bed into her study to safeguard her privacy, she is shown masturbating holding the crucifix in her arms under the duvet (1:08). Nabil's pleading becomes increasingly abusive and violent as he tries to enforce his "marital rights."[71] Their marital warfare culminates in an attempted rape scene: one night Nabil calls for Anna Maria's help as he is lying helplessly on the floor. When she tries to lift him back into his bed, he drags her down on the floor (1:40). A wrestling match ensues in which he attempts to roll on top of her, pushing his hand between her legs, while she is desperately fending him off. Rolling around on the floor, they slap and hit each other. As in the scene with the drunken woman, Seidl employs a handheld camera to capture the shocking eruption of violence in one long take. The viewer is put in the position of the distanced and perhaps Olympian observer of pathological behavior.

These rare dramatic scenes contrast sharply with Seidl's strikingly slow and artificial cinematography that favors symmetry and stillness. The use of a static camera for much of the action that is set inside Anna Maria's house produces a sequence of stylized *tableaux vivants* that create both a hyperreal and antirealist effect.[72] And so a gap opens up between the depiction of religious fanaticism and

71. When Anna Maria attempts to exorcise his demons by spraying him with holy water while he is asleep on the sofa bed, Nabil wakes up screaming (1:18). Nabil retaliates the next day by forcefully removing all Christian icons and symbols from the walls. He recovers from his iconoclastic rage by flouting Islamic rule and drinking a beer in the kitchen (1:20). Anna Maria then strikes back by stowing his wheelchair in the garage: Nabil is now forced to drag himself in reptile fashion on his belly on the floors of the house (1:23).

72. Mundhenke's observation about Seidl's earlier films also applies to his Paradise trilogy: "The anti realism or hyperrealism can be said to work similarly to a Brechtian alienation effect, breaking through both the solidity of documentary sobriety and/or the completeness of situational illusions. . . . The images seem offending and insulting in terms of the actions depicted, but quite artificial and conceptualized in terms of aesthetic techniques." Mundhenke, "Authenticity versus Artifice," 124.

marital warfare in a documentary format, on the one hand, and the self-reflexive artificiality of the *tableau vivant*, on the other. This tension does not allow the viewer to settle into a comfortable position of moral judgment. A striking example of Seidl's aesthetics of stillness is the scene in which Anna Maria plays religious hymns on her electronic keyboard under the window (8:40; fig. 8).

Here the visual representation and diegetic sound contradict each other: even though Anna Maria is comically out of tune and even though her keyboard playing is not very accomplished, the mise-en-scène exudes a sense of pictorial stillness. This scene can be read in conjunction with the strikingly similar image in Petzold's *Barbara* where the protagonist is shown at the piano with landscape pictures. In both films piano music and the electronic keyboard are part of a particular soundscape that symbolizes the protagonists' desire for an alternative to the disenchanted here and now. But in both films music cannot fulfill the desire for transcendence because the acoustic space of the film is overlaid by audible threats. In addition, both films employ diegetic sound to foreground their protagonists' experience of time: while in *Barbara* the emphasis is on time as a weight, in Seidl's film diegetic sound (ranging from trees blowing

Figure 8. Film still from Ulrich Seidl, *Paradies: Glaube* (2012), directed and produced by Ulrich Seidl. © Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion.

in the wind to rainfall or thunderstorms) reminds the viewer of a premodern cyclical time that coexists with the modern time of urban Vienna. Ironically, Anna Maria's longing for premodern time is symbolized by an electronic prosthesis, her keyboard. Seidl dignifies her religious quest by tapping into the tradition of Dutch interior painting: the keyboard scene under the window evokes Jan Vermeer's *The Music Lesson* (early 1660s) with its photorealist attention to detail and remarkable sense of geometry (fig. 9).

Figure 9. Jan Vermeer, *Lady at the Virginal with a Gentleman, "The Music Lesson"* (early 1660s). Royal Collection Trust. Public Domain.

The similarity invites contrasting analysis: while the female figure in Vermeer's painting is practicing her music in the presence of a male teacher or cavalier, Anna Maria is alone. In Vermeer's painting, the face of the female figure is reflected in the tilted and framed mirror above the virginal. In European painting, mirrors often represent vanity or the quest for self-awareness and truth. The mirror in Vermeer's painting also reflects a bit of the foreground carpet and some of the floor tiles as well as a leg and the crossbar of the easel, which introduces the artist into the painting. The viewer is thus presented with a scene of a young woman making music with her music teacher or a gentleman cavalier as an unseen artist is painting them. In Seidl's shot of the first keyboard scene the slatted blinds prevent the reflection of Anna Maria's face. Later on, Seidl too employs a mirror effect when Anna Maria is shown playing her keyboard in her study at night (1:38): the reflection of the ceiling lamp in the window sliced through by the seams of the net curtain not only evokes Anna Maria's desire for transcendence but also attracts attention to modern technologies of representation. What Vermeer's *Music Lesson* and Seidl's keyboard scenes share is a great sense of distance from the figures: with their backs turned to the viewer, they remain ultimately impenetrable. The intertextual allusion to Vermeer's work thus accentuates the dignity of Anna Maria's aspiration as well as her extreme loneliness. It is important to note that Anna Maria's and Nabil's longing for a better world is visually represented in analogous terms: Nabil too is shown praying at the window with the blinds slanted and the blue fir tree visible in the middle distance (1:13).

Shortly before the end we see Anna Maria weeping over the body of Nabil, who lies prostrate on the couch in the living room and appears like the dead body of Christ (1:37): regardless of whether one reads this scene as a visual allusion to various pictorial representations of the Lamentation of Christ or as a Pietà in reverse view, Anna Maria's pain is aesthetically ennobled by the strong chiaroscuro effect that is evocative of Renaissance art. The lamp on the wall exudes a warm light that contrasts starkly with a dark framed painting showing an Alpine scene. Seidl combines the hyperrealist depiction of small details with the symbolic use of lighting that shifts from light to dark with some intermediate

value. In this way, he constructs a tableau of suffering that places Anna Maria in a long line of martyrdom. What we have here then is a filmic representation of religious fervor that employs two opposing registers: on the one hand, the story pathologizes Anna Maria by suggesting a causal link between her faith in Christ as her savior and Nabil's accident. On the other hand, the cinematography undercuts this causal logic through an aesthetic of stillness that places her quest in the framework of the European history of art.

Seidl's film remains poised between the clinical exploration of the protagonist's religious fervor and the aesthetic rehabilitation of her quest for release from worldly pain. While we follow the plot with titillating horror and a good dosage of voyeuristic pleasure, the film ennobles the protagonist through an intertextually enriched filmic language that places Anna Maria's longing in a long art-historical tradition. The scenes shot in a documentary format in the deprived suburbs of Vienna remind the viewer of the abject deprivation and loneliness suffered by those who have not managed to keep up with global capitalism. The scene with the alcoholic woman brings into view Anna Maria's humanity: even though she is driven by religious fanaticism, she is also shown to be quite tender and caring. By foregrounding what cries out to heaven, Seidl legitimates the protagonist's desperate quest for release from a disenchanted world.

Disruptive Performances: Maren Ade's *Toni Erdmann*

German filmmaker Maren Ade (1976–) studied at the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film in Munich and is loosely associated with the Berlin School of German cinema: she made her debut with the feature film *Der Wald vor lauter Bäumen* (The Forest for the Trees, 2003), which won the Sundance Film Festival Special Jury Prize in 2005. Six years later the romantic drama *Alle Anderen* (Everyone Else, 2009) followed and was awarded the Große Preis der Jury at the Berlin Film Festival. Her third feature film, the internationally

acclaimed tragicomedy *Toni Erdmann*, was released in 2016.[73] In an interview Ade explained that it took her almost four and a half years to write the *Toni Erdmann* script, shoot the film, and edit 100 hours of footage down to 156 minutes.[74] As a film director, Ade shares with Christian Petzold the preference for long takes, and in keeping with the realism of the Berlin School, the film employs no extradiegetic music.

Toni Erdmann tracks the fraught relationship between Winfried Conradi (Peter Simonischek), a retired music teacher in his sixties living in the West German city of Aachen, and his daughter Ines (Sandra Hüller), a successful business consultant currently working in Bucharest. Winfried is a member of the left-leaning German postwar generation that, having worked through the National Socialist past, has embraced the idea of a pluralistic, open, and socially responsible society. His daily life revolves around his music, looking after his blind dog, Willie, and caring for his ailing mother.

73. It was nominated for the Palme d'Or and won the competition award at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016. It won the European Film Awards for Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenwriter, Best Actor, and Best Actress in 2016. Other awards include the German Film Awards for Best Feature Film, Best Performance, Best Screenplay, and Best Director; the German Film Critics Association Award in 2017; the New York Film Critics Circle Awards for the Best Foreign Language Film in 2016; and the Toronto Film Critics Association Awards in 2016, among many others.

74. See Jonathan Romney, "Maren Ade: Toni Erdmann's Humour Comes out of a Big Desperation," *The Observer*, 21 January 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/jan/21/maren-ade-toni-erdmann-humour-comes-out-of-desperation-director; Wenke Husmann, "Tränen gelacht und ein bisschen gegruselt," *Die Zeit*, 14 May 2017, http://www.zeit.de/kultur/film/2016-05/toni-erdmann-cannes-filmfestival-maren-ade; Dietmar Dath, "Jetzt mach mir hier aber mal bitte keine Zähne," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13 July 2016, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kino/video-filmkritiken/maren-ades-toni-erdmann-im-kino-14337456.html; Christina Tillmann, "Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 20 July 2016, https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/kino/toni-erdmann-der-widerspenstigen-zaehmung-ld.106521; Richard Brady, "A Stilted Vision of a Declining Europe," *The New Yorker*, 21 December 2016, http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/a-stilted-vision-of-a-declining-europe-in-toni-erdmann; A. O. Scott, "Dad's a Prankster Trying to Jolt His Conformist Daughter," *New York Times*, 22 December 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/22/movies/toni-erdmann-review.html.

His life is governed by the routine of "long-term, and incremental and above all predictable time" that, according to Richard Sennett, organized citizens' lives from cradle to grave in the era of social capitalism.[75] The establishing scene shows that Winfried has a penchant for practical jokes: when a delivery man arrives with a parcel at his front door, he claims that the package must be for his brother Toni who has just been released from prison. Calling for Toni, he disappears inside the house only to return in the guise of his fictional brother: clothed in a disheveled dressing gown and wearing joke-shop false teeth, which he keeps in his shirt pocket, he plays the part of the sleazy crook before revealing that it was a prank and dispatching the bewildered courier with a generous tip. The scene is shot from the perspective of the courier, who has to wait for Winfried at the door: the company logo *Global Packaging* on his uniform is an early signal that this film unfolds in the context of global turbocapitalism.

While Winfried's life is rooted in his local community, Ines is part of a globally mobile professional elite: she inhabits a stylish apartment in Bucharest and moves with ease through glitzy hotels, bars, restaurants, gyms, and shopping malls. Her social map shares the sterile yet ostentatious idiom of global capitalism that enforces uniformity on how to display and spend lucre. Dislocated from locality and history, these locations are nonplaces in Marc Augé's sense of the word.[76] Ines's life takes place in the fast lane: she has long internalized the neoliberal norms of global capitalism: flexibility, ruthless competition, and short-term gains are prioritized above loyalty, stability, and experience. Her colleagues and friends are potential competitors who maintain shifting friendships while competing against each other in the production of the best deal in the quickest time possible. Outwardly Ines is a successful business consultant, but her life is precarious, lonely, and largely devoid of attachments.

75. Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, 23.

76. Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995).

We meet Ines for the first time on a brief return to Germany for an early birthday party organized by her mother, Winfried's ex-wife: while her family is talking admiringly about Ines's recent business trip to Shanghai and her future prospects, Ines neglects her scarce family time for business calls on her cell phone in the garden. When Ines finally joins the family gathering, Winfried inserts his false teeth for comic relief, announcing that he will have to visit her in Bucharest to personally deliver her birthday present. Their relationship is clearly awkward and strained: Winfried knows little about his daughter's life, and she is unaware of her father's health issues and resists close communication.[77] When he goes looking for her in the garden to have a chat she pretends to be on her phone to avoid a personal conversation (14:05). Ines informs him that she cannot join him and her grandmother for breakfast the next morning; Winfried quips that he will invite Inge instead, his new hired daughter. After Ines has dashed back to Bucharest to prepare her company's plan to outsource the work of a Romanian oil company by shedding the indigenous workforce, Winfried settles back into his predictable and orderly life. The death of his beloved dog then frees him up for a surprise trip to Bucharest. The scene shifts to a slick lobby of a corporate building in Bucharest, where Winfried is waiting for Ines, who eventually turns up surrounded by suited executives. Inserting his fake teeth, Winfried is planning a jocular appearance only to find that Ines passes through the security gates with her entourage without acknowledging his presence. She has noticed him out of the corner of her eye and sends her personal assistant, Anca (Ingrid Bisu) to inform Winfried about the various hotel options in the city. When Winfried inquires about what his daughter is like as a boss, Anca replies euphemistically that Ines provides her with lots of feedback about her performance (20:51–21:36).

77. He is wearing a blood-pressure monitor under his shirt, which inflates from time to time. Ines notices the noise and inquires whether she needs to be worried, but Winfried fobs her off.

Winfried.	Performance—this means the—describes your job?
Anca.	Nein, performance ist also meine Arbeit im Allgemeinen—z.B. im [*sic*] Meetings, im äh—mit dem Team, im Kontakt mit dem Klient.
W.	Und was ist da wichtig, ich meine das Wichtigste, im Kontakt mit dem Klienten?
A.	. . . Die Kunst ist, dem Klient zu erklären, was er eigentlich will.
W.	Na, das kann meine Tochter bestimmt gut.

W.	Performance—this describes your job?
A.	Performance—that's my work in general, in meetings with the team, and in contact with the client.
W.	And what is most important in the contact with the client?
A.	. . . The art of telling the client what he really wants.
W.	I am sure that my daughter can do that very well.

Ines and her colleagues move in a corporate world that is governed by normative behavioral scripts and business targets that can be measured by KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). In this pressurized environment, performance denotes conformity with the neoliberal values of perpetual innovation, profitability, competitiveness, and advancement. Disguised by the jargon of "team building," the corporate idea of performance turns colleagues into competitors without solidarity. Corporate socializing is therefore no less competitive than the workplace. Ines spends her free time working out in the gym, eating in expensive restaurants and drinking in slick bars, making cheerless trips to strip clubs with colleagues, and doing the odd line of coke—all of this is done as part of the team. Even her sex life is governed by competition: meeting her male colleague who is her lover in a hotel room, Ines avoids intercourse with him by spurring him on to ejaculate onto a petit four that she promises to eat, if he manages to hit his target.[78] Because sex is just another form of performance, it is devoid of intimacy. As a female

78. Her lover told her that her boss advised him not to "fuck her too frequently" (1:16) because otherwise she might lose her drive. Refusing intercourse, Ines picks this up and observes sarcastically that she does not want to lose her drive (1:17).

consultant in a macho corporate environment, Ines regularly encounters deeply ingrained gender stereotypes: even though she has been assigned a major project, Henneberg (Michael Wittenborn), a powerful client, introduces Ines to his wife, Natalia, as a "specialist for shopping" (25:40). The next day she has to undertake the demeaning role of accompanying Henneberg's wife to a faceless shopping mall: the biggest mall in Europe is, however, largely empty because the locals cannot afford to go shopping there.

The movie also explores opposing generational perspectives about what constitutes fulfilling time and the good life. When father and daughter get to spend some leisure time together by the indoor swimming pool of a stylish fitness center, the membership at which comes with Ines's job, Winfried brings up the topic of happiness (39:05–40.00):

Winfried.	Na, bist du eigentlich auch ein bisschen glücklich hier?
Ines.	Was meinst'n mit Glück? Glück ist ein starkes Wort.
W.	Ich meine, ob du mal ein bisschen zum Leben kommst, auch?
I.	Mal ins Kino gehen, oder so?
W.	Na ja, mal was machen, was Spaß macht.
I.	Da schwirren jetzt ganz schön viele Begriffe hier rum, ne: Spaß—Glück—Leben—musst de mal ein bissschen ausdünnen. Was findest du den lebenswert? Wenn du schon die großen Themen hochbringst? (Pause)
W.	Das kann ich jetzt so spontan gar nicht sagen; ich wollte eigentlich nur wissen, wie's dir geht.
I.	Das ist mir schon klar, aber dann must du auch ne Antwort haben. (Pause)
W.	And, are you a little bit happy?
I.	What do you mean by happiness? Happiness is a loaded term.
W.	I mean whether you have time to live a little.
I.	Going to the movies or that sort of thing?
W.	Well, doing things now and then that are fun.
I.	Your language is peppered with quite a number of different terms: fun, happiness, life—you need to tone it down a bit. What do you find worth living for, since you are bringing up the big issues?
W.	I cannot answer that on the spot. I only wanted to know how you are.
I.	I got that, but you should really have an answer.

Ines's sarcastic response to her father's care rejects his idealism, which she finds misplaced, naive, and out of sync with the hard realities of turbocapitalism. After some hurtful exchanges over the course of the next day, Winfried takes his farewell, pretending to return home to Aachen: we watch him board a taxi from Ines's point of view: standing on the balcony of her designer apartment with a badly injured toe, she waves at him with tears running down her face: it is left open whether she is weeping because of the pain in her toe or because of the difficult relationship with her father.

In reality Winfried's seeming departure gives birth to Toni Erdmann. He pops up in a stylish restaurant at the very moment that Ines is telling her female friends that she has just had the worst weekend of her life. Equipped with a long-haired wig and his false set of joke teeth, and wearing a sharkskin suit and tie, a look that makes him appear like a crooner, he adopts the role of Toni Erdmann, freelance management coach. Even though his appearance is outlandish and characterized by deliberate slippage, he manages to pose as Henneberg's personal life coach, inveigling his way into his daughter's circles in order to disrupt their arrogance, superiority, and sense of entitlement. His role-playing is characterized by an unsettling slippage: while Ines sees through his act straightaway, her colleagues and friends are intrigued and bemused, as they fail to disentangle role play from reality. Even though it should be blatantly evident that he is playing a role, their own entanglement in constant professional role play and a world of simulation has crippled their sense of judgment about the underlying reality. Because the fanciful figure of Toni Erdmann could after all herald a new management style, they collectively buy Toni's story. Winfried's carnivalesque performance in the guise of Toni Erdmann is thus *the* pivotal device in the film that exposes the collectively enacted social conformity of Ines's circle.

But the carnivalesque not only disrupts consensus about the prevailing social order; it also brings into view alternative temporalities that challenge the rational definition of time as an economic resource. The film hints at a cyclical notion of time early on when

Winfried's school choir performs a humorous song on the occasion of a colleague's retirement. Winfried and the kids appear on stage in the guise of Death with their faces painted black and white. The symbolic conjoining of humor and death places Winfried's ensuing roles in the long tradition of the carnivalesque, which, through burlesque and grotesque exaggeration, reminds us that life is cyclical and a prelude to death.[79]

Even though Ines is outraged by her father's fanciful acts, she cannot resist his encroachment on her life. And so, in the course of the film, Winfried's increasingly outlandish role-playing cracks her social veneer, (re)establishing a precarious bond with his daughter: while they are visiting the Romanian woman that he met at a reception, Winfried passes himself off as the German ambassador and Ines as his secretary, Miss Schnuck.[80] The scene involves the painting of Easter eggs and culminates in their joint performance of the iconic Frank Sinatra song "My Way": Winfried plays the keyboard, and Ines hollers the song with increasing emotion in front of the astonished Romanian family. In this scene her vocal performance is a form of self-expression that literally gives voice to her longing for personal empowerment. The handheld camera stays focused on Ines for the duration of the song to capture her vulnerability, underscoring her emotional need beneath the veneer of success.

Over time Winfried's antics do have an infectious effect. The birthday party scene deserves close scrutiny because here Ines engages in an impromptu drama that disrupts her acquiescence with the corporatization of all aspects of life. As she is making final

79. Michail M. Bachtin, *Literatur und Karneval: Zur Romantheorie und Lachkultur*, trans. Alexander Kämpfe (Frankfurt a. Main: Fischer, 2000); M. Bachtin, *Rabelais und seine Welt: Volkskultur als Gegenkultur*, ed. Renate Lachmann (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).

80. His Romanian host sees through his act but allows him to carry on because she senses that it has to do with the father-daughter relationship. Later on, after Ines's abrupt departure, Winfried reveals to the woman why he is playing his role.

preparations in her apartment, she is shown struggling with a newly bought designer dress. Ripping off the price tag, she struggles to zip it up with the help of a kitchen fork. We then see her laboring over a pair of high heels in the corridor: crouching on the floor she pauses, before returning to her bedroom, where she tries to take off the tight dress. This comical scene is a fine-tuned observation of the irksomeness of life. When the doorbell rings, she has managed to tear the dress off and, only in her underwear, opens the door to her American female friend who awkwardly inquires as to whether she has come too early. Ines offers her embarrassed friend a drink, rejecting her offer to help her choose a dress from her "bursting" closet (2:05). The doorbell rings again, and her friend volunteers to open the door so that Ines can get dressed. Refusing once more, Ines takes her underwear off and opens the door naked to her boss, Gerald (Thomas Loibl), explaining to the stunned man that her party is a "Nacktempfang," a naked reception in the interest of "team-building" (2:06). Explicitly stating that he does not have to participate, she surreptitiously appeals to his competitiveness and the corporate ethos. Gerald leaves, and Ines returns to her American friend, suggesting that she should also take her clothes off; when the friend explains that this is not her thing Ines asks her to leave the party. In Ade's film the intrusive sound of the doorbell intensifies the dramatic buildup: each time it rings, Ines dons her nakedness as a novel party style.[81] Her lover Tim (Tristan Pytter) is the next guest to arrive: believing that he has been set up, he departs too, and Ines remains alone and naked in her apartment. Lying face down and diagonally on her bed with the designer dress covering her head, she does not answer her cell phone. Ines knows that she has knowingly transgressed the corporate norm of a false discretion that commits its sexual and other violations behind closed doors. When the doorbell rings with increasing insistence, Ines opens the door now

81. The recurring motif of the ringing doorbell may also reference Petzold's *Barbara*. While in Petzold's film the doorbell stands for a menacing atmosphere of surveillance and intrusion, in Ade's film it lends the scene the dramatic tension of a play in the tradition of theater of the absurd. Harold Pinter springs to mind as a possible precursor.

wearing a light dressing gown: Anca is the first guest to arrive naked because she has been told that this is a novel challenge.[82]

In this pivotal scene Ines stages a new version of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, Hans Christian Andersen's famous tale about the two rogue weavers who promise their vain emperor a new suit that will be invisible to those who are stupid or incompetent.[83] When the ministers and various court officials are sent in to check on the weaving, they can see no garment at all. Afraid that they may be deemed to be incompetent and therefore unfit for office, they report to the king the elaborate description of the fictional robe that was offered by the rogue weavers. When the king himself is shown the invisible garment, he too faces the dilemma that he may be unfit to govern. He therefore announces that the suit is beautiful and displays himself naked in front of his subjects until a small boy cries out that he has nothing on. With this ending Andersen privileges the romantic figure of the little boy in a scene of revelation that confirms the human ability to establish the truth. With this gendered ending, the story seemingly links the motif of nakedness with transparency: even though the truth should be apparent to the naked eye, it is repressed by all except for the male child.[84]

82. The scene subtly exposes the cowardliness of the male colleagues, who know that Anca, the PA, is likely to rise to the challenge because, as a female Romanian employee, she occupies the lowest position in the corporate hierarchy.

83. For Sigmund Freud the story exemplifies the secondary revision that characterizes the work of dreams: the emperor is the dreamer who, ashamed of his public nakedness, clothes his dream. While for Freud the weavers are agents of secondary revision, the boy is the analyst who removes the cloak of repression. See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (London: Basic Books, 2010), 260–66.

84. Hollis Robbins has offered a persuasive reading against the grain by analyzing the roles of the weavers, the emperor, the court officials, the public, and the boy. She argues that "by foregrounding questions of sociability against a backdrop of political and economic turmoil, Andersen's tale clearly suggests that social discretion can engender democratic social solidarity." Looked at from this angle, the boy's voice reflects a socially conservative position according to which emperors should be robed in clothes that reflect their status, wealth, and power. See Hollis Robbins, "The Emperor's New Critique," *New Literary History* 34/4 (2003): 666.

Returning to Ines's birthday party, the scene maintains and transforms the key elements of Andersen's story. In Andersen's tale the king is the butt of the weavers' conceit; in Ade's film Ines herself is the author of the ploy. In Andersen's version the king, his court officials, and the broader public pretend not to notice his nakedness; in Ade's film the participants in the birthday party pretend that their nakedness is a new form of team-building. In both stories anxiety about social incompetency and failure prevails. In the last analysis Ines restages *The Emperor's New Clothes* to expose the self-abasing humiliations that she has to endure in the male-dominated world of corporate conformity. Whereas Andersen's tale ends with the comforting reinstatement of a simply truth, Ade's retelling culminates in another disruptive performance. As the doorbell rings once more, a huge furry monster arrives, handing Ines a small bunch of flowers that has been ripped from a flower bed. This is Winfried, who has borrowed the Bulgarian Kuker costume from the Romanian host to drive out evil spirits. Reanimating pagan beliefs and practices, the Kuker's appearance symbolizes the revival of nature, fertility, a good harvest, and, more generally, happiness.[85] The figure thus stands for a mythopoetic reality that disrupts Ines's entrapment in the corporate world. As Ines tries to establish who is underneath the costume, the doorbell rings again: Gerald has come back naked after mustering up his courage over a beer. Standing close behind Gerald, the hairy monster spooks him by gently touching him on his shoulder. Anca explains to the startled Gerald that the creature is Bulgarian in origin and that it drives out evil spirits—a purpose that the boss refashions as an exercise in team-building. Even naked the man flaunts his corporate identity. As the Kuker leaves the party, Ines walks out too, pretending that she has to pay the actor. She follows the strange creature as it makes its way through a local park, where she observes how the locals

85. The Bulgarian Kukeri Festival is celebrated after New Year's Eve and before Lent. It involves men who dress up in animal furs, horns, and sequins, wearing wooden masks, as they drive out evil spirits. See Christo Vakarelski, *Bulgarische Volkskunde* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 380–89.

smile at the Kuker or touch its fur coat for good luck. Shot in one uninterrupted long take, the scene culminates in a brief moment of reunion between father and daughter when Ines approaches and hugs the hairy monster in the park setting (2:18; fig. 10). This rare moment of tenderness between Beauty and the Beast is the result of a ritualistic performance of otherness that draws on ancient practice: by appearing in the pagan guise of the Kuker, Winfried performs a radical alterity that suspends our embeddedness in a disenchanted present.

This precarious moment of togetherness remains just that: the film ends with Ines briefly stopping off at home for the funeral of her grandmother, who has died in the meantime. After the funeral, father and daughter share a few minutes in the garden before Ines needs to leave in pursuit of a new job in China. Winfried uses the occasion to provide Ines with a belated answer to her earlier question about his notion of happiness: explaining that the daily routine of life has often bogged him down too, he then recounts a few episodes from Ines's childhood. The memory of how she learned to ride a bicycle or when he rescued her from a bus stop exemplifies a rare moment of a precarious togetherness that is only

Figure 10. Film still from *Toni Erdmann*, directed and written by Maren Ade, produced by Maren Ade, Jonas Dornbach, Janine Jackowski, and Michael Merkt 2016. © Komplizen Film.

retrospectively recuperated. At this poignant moment Ines reaches out to him by taking his false set of teeth from his shirt pocket and inserting them in her mouth to try out his guise. As Winfried steps inside the house to fetch his camera to capture this moment, Ines remains alone in the garden setting: wearing his fake teeth, she is her father's daughter, a funny monster that, for a brief moment, breaks out of the cage of conformity.[86] The final shot shows Ines without the fake teeth alone in the garden. Evidently, the garden is a temporary heterotopia: Ines will resume her hectic life as part of the corporate business elite. But there is the suggestion that the memory of the disruptive performances of father and daughter will have a lasting effect.

Ade's film employs a conflict-laden choreography of social performance to foreground a generationally inflected conflict between father and daughter about the good life. Their different lifestyles and incompatible outlooks translate into opposing notions of a good performance: Winfried's jocular and crude acts on- and offstage not only enact carnivalesque freedom from social constraints, but also aim to overcome his estrangement from his daughter. In addition, his performances are meant to disrupt his daughter's unquestioning acceptance of the pernicious rules of a corporate world that, as he observes on numerous occasions, forces her to accept deeply ingrained sexism. In sharp contrast to her father's unsettling antics, Ines's performances are about the alignment of all aspects of her life with her professional interests. In the world of corporate capitalism, performances are measurable and profit-oriented: they aim to engender a uniform mode of behavior that seemingly obliterates differences of class, race, gender, and age while in reality sustaining the dominance of the Western white male. The notion of the team is an essential component in this performance script because it curbs individuality in favor of collective identity. In the birthday party scene, Ines enacts a self-reflexive form of performance that

86. The garden and park scene in Ade's film thus works by analogy with Seidl's park scene in *Paradies: Glaube*. In both cases gardens and parks symbolize Foucault's heterotopias. See Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 24.

seemingly maintains her professional veneer while in reality subverting her overt conformity with the system. Pretending that her impromptu naked appearance is part of the normal team-building exercise, she lays bare the pervasiveness of social conformity as well as the absence of any real intimacy in that world.

Conclusion

In 2016 various British newspapers, including the popular *Evening Standard*, reported that the average daytime speed on London roads had plummeted to 7.8 miles per hour, that is, far below the speed of 10 to 15 miles per hour of a horse and cart.[87] Congestion, road work, traffic diversions, online shopping deliveries, and the dramatic rise in the capital's population were blamed for continuously declining speed on London's roads. A comparison of average speeds between 2016 and 2017 shows that speed has been decreasing in all major British cities. And yet, in spite of the common daily experience of gridlock in urban centers, congestion on highways, and long lines of traffic at stoplights or crossroads, the fantasy of high speed seems to be just as seductive as it was a century ago when the transportation revolution ushered in modern speed politics.

The unparalleled success of the BBC television program *Top Gear* is a case in point: the motoring magazine that started airing in 2002 was one of the most widely watched factual television programs globally until the firing of one its key presenters in 2015.[88]

87. Ross Lydall, "Revealed: How Average Speed of London Traffic Has Plummeted to Just 7.8mph," *Evening Standard*, 9 December 2016, https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/revealed-average-speed-of-london-traffic-is-just-78mph-a3416446.html (accessed 8 January 2018).

88. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Top_Gear_(2002_TV_series). Acclaimed for its slick format, the show was regularly criticized for ridiculing environmental issues and advocating irresponsible driving. Complaints by the public to the British broadcasting regulator Ofcom included the presenters' sexist, homophobic, and racist remarks. To this day, then, speed politics links the pleasure of speed with power, gender, privilege, and consumption. See Duffy, *The Speed Handbook*, 7.

Hosted by an all-male cast, the show included car reviews, power laps, long-distance races, and occasional specials with car stunts. *Top Gear* viewers and fans of online racing games get their kicks from a speed fantasy that suspends the daily reality of enforced immobility and inertia.[89] Clearly in our era of traffic congestion, overcrowded transport systems, and long security lines, high speed is mostly a simulation. Our digital devices help us to recycle the waste of empty time that we spend waiting. The news alerts, computer games, and social media apps that we constantly access on our cell phones and tablets transform passive immobility into restless immobility. For the Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han (see chapter 1) our digital connectivity is merely symptomatic of a pervasive dyschronia that, in his view, destroys the very possibility of temporal anchorage.[90] Han argues that, by browsing social media, gaming online, and surfing the internet, we only intensify the atomization of time, thereby destroying the very condition of time as duration.[91]

Against this background of fragmented time and the simulation of experience through speed, the question is whether slow art can disrupt the speed politics that governs our daily lives. Can it offer more than enclaves of cultured respite or therapeutic moments of

89. The simulation of speed favors a particular representation of space. We often race through vast deserts, sublime mountain ranges, or along empty overland roads that seem to be made for competitive racing. As such, these locations are passive recipients of phallic projectiles that conquer passive (feminine) space. The deep imbrication of speed politics in colonialism and capitalism has been widely debated by critics such as Harvey, Virilio, Lefebvre, and Duffy, who have charted the capitalist conquest of space.

90. See chapter 1 on Han's analysis of atomized time.

91. Various slow life movements have responded to the exhausting experience of modern speed politics by advocating a return to a more sustainable lifestyle: for example, the slow food movement, which was founded by a group of activists in the 1980s, originally promoted regional cuisines and a slower pace of life. It has now evolved into a global grassroots organization campaigning for the sustainable production of fair and affordable food for all. Koepnick's assessment that such movements "couple their quest for deceleration and tranquillity to desires for re-enchantment and salvation" misses the politicization of the slow food movement. Koepnick, *On Slowness*, 253.

deceleration in our era of stagnation at top speed? In his book *On Slowness* Lutz Koepnick answers this question in the affirmative. He theorizes slow art "not merely as an attempt to decelerate and invert the speed of modern life but as a mode of movement, perception, and experience that allows us to engage with the present in all its temporality."[92] Rather than inverting speed, "slowness plays out the virtual against the deterministic, dispersal against the trajectorial. As it invites us to hesitate and delay immediate responses, slowness makes a case for the open rather than the timeless, but also for the finite and mortal rather than for stalwart visions of progress, for experience rather than fate."[93] For Koepnick slow art can "uphold what phenomenologies of speed tend to deny, namely to encounter the present as a place of potentiality and contingency."[94] In many ways Koepnick's observations read like a commentary on high modernism, which, as he argues himself, also opened up multiple temporal trajectories that punctured the modern vision of speed as progress. In the last analysis, for Koepnick, the defining feature of slow art is the reinstatement of historical contingency and openness through aesthetic practices that, instead of reducing complexity, explore the temporality of presentness.[95]

This chapter has explored a diverse range of artworks, from performance art to photography and film, that share many of the features of slow art as discussed above. However, while Koepnick emphasizes the potentiality of contingency, the artworks under discussion in this chapter accentuate the precariousness of living in the present. Even though both terms overlap to an extent, they are by no means synonymous: the term "contingency" designates the end of a deterministic universe and the modern shift toward

92. Koepnick, *On Slowness*, 251.

93. Koepnick, *On Slowness,* 251–52.

94. Koepnick, *On Slowness*, 251.

95. Koepnick, *On Slowness*, 261. Koepnick draws on Siegfried Kracauer to advance the notion of hesitancy as a nonjudgmental mode of reception and optics that enables the viewer to "measure and assess the complex interactions between subjective and nonsubjective temporalities" (252).

chance combined with free will.[96] Opposed to necessity, contingency is the child of the historicist turn that, in the words of philosopher Richard Rorty, "has helped free us, gradually but steadily, from theology and metaphysics—from the temptation to look for an escape from time and chance."[97] Rorty embraces contingency in the figure of the "liberal ironist" who "faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires—someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the idea that those central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance."[98] While contingency is for philosophers from Nietzsche to Rorty the very foundation of freedom, the notion of precariousness as I have used it in this study loosens the link between contingency and freedom. I deliberately us the verb "loosen" rather than "cut" to avoid the alarmist register of the contemporary debates about precarization. Aesthetic precariousness recasts contingency in terms of a radical uncertainty about the past, the present, and the future. While some slow artworks seek, in the words of Koepnick, "to warrant the possibility of . . . experience in the face of today's acceleration," others no longer mediate between individual perception and social meaning. However, the examples discussed in this chapter accentuate once more the fallacy of binary oppositions: the terms "contingency" and "precariousness" are situated on a sliding scale.

Of the examples discussed here Wesely's time photography is closest to Koepnick's version of slow art as a recovery of contingency as potentiality. Wesely's various experiments with extreme exposure time create layered images in which different temporal stages are copresent. His early photographs of European railway stations draw on the notion of the timetable, only to overturn the linearity and synchronicity of modern time. The present is a site of

96. See Dirk-Martin Grube, "Contingency and Religion—A Philosophical Tour D-Horizon," in *Religions Challenged by Contingency: Theological and Philosophical Approaches to the Problem of Contingency*, ed. Dirk-Martin Grube and Peter Jonkers (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1–43.

97. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xiii.

98. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xv.

enfolded temporalities that collapse the linearity of past, present, and future. The Potsdamer Platz series of the late 1990s marks a further radicalization of his work: with its extremely long exposure times these photographs offer uncanny images of a rebuilding process that symbolized the birth of ultramodern Germany. While the man-made structures appear as transitory and indeed ghostly, the trees in these pictures point to the permanence of nature. As a constant presence in these images, they evoke the ecological timescale of natural history. It is precisely this shift from human history to natural history that characterizes Wesely's photobook *Ostdeutschland:* the extraterrestrial and abstract landscapes of this series explode the timescales of human history. Here Wesely brings into view an absolute time that evokes both the geophysical timescales of geology and transcendental "other" time.

While Wesely works with long exposure times to recover radical other temporalities that may be seen to recover the contingency of human history, Ulrich Wüst's *Später Sommer/Letzter Herbst* employs yet undercuts the aesthetic conventions of the photobook. Instead of staging 1989 as a series of electrifying turning points, Wüst's strategy of decontextualization raises questions about representational conventions and viewing practices. Analogical comparisons between serialized images replace the recognition of their referent. The photobook does not record a chronological view of history but a series of uneventful and inconclusive journeys that resist conventional narration. The grainy black-and-white photography displaces the idea of historical agency in favor of the precariousness of human experience. Here the mediation between individual perception and social meaning is precarious. In addition, we have seen that Wüst's aesthetic of the unfinished produces a profound sense of inertia and stagnation that seems to eliminate the possibility of change. And so the most representational series in the conventional sense, that is, the beach images, depicts people looking at a horizon that is gray, leaden, and closed-off from an open future. While Wesley enfolds different temporal stages or eliminates human time altogether through long exposure times, Wüst creates a sense of stagnation through serialization.

Turning to cinema, we have seen that Petzold eschews the conventions of mainstream cinema's love affair with speed. The slow unfolding of plot, sparse dialogue, the long take, and symbolically laden diegetic sound work toward an aesthetic that envisages a particular form of attention and care for the Other as a viewing experience. And yet, my analysis of diegetic sound in *Barbara* has also exposed the political dimension of attention: in the context of GDR state surveillance, attention is not just a form of ethical engagement with the Other through collaborative work in the hospital. It is above all a mode of vigilance that aims to protect Barbara from state interference. And so in the acoustic space of the GDR both stillness and sound can exude a threat as well as engender significant moments of *Eigenzeit*. The anticlimactic ending of the film further underlines Petzold's aesthetic of precariousness. Barbara's decision to stay in the GDR is highly ambivalent: her relationship with André remains precarious and open to state interference.

Ulrich Seidl's *Paradies: Glaube* explores an extreme case of religiosity in the age of turbocapitalism. The protagonist's quest for transcendence involves premodern practices of penance as well as feverish proselytizing in the depraved suburbs of Vienna. Anna Maria (and with her the viewer) encounters extreme forms of social precariousness: the figures of the middle-aged hoarder who presents himself in his underwear and of the alcoholic Russian immigrant who is simultaneously aggressive and emotionally needy bring into view more than the erosion of the social security systems of the postwar order. Seidl shoots these scenes in a documentary style: these characters allow Anna Maria to enter their homes because, in all likelihood, she is a rare visitor in their disembedded and lonely existences.

However, what makes this film a further example of an aesthetic of precariousness is the cinematographic tension between two opposing perspectives. The documentary format promotes a clinical and perhaps Olympian view of Anna Maria's religious practice. Looked at through the documentary lens, her extreme acts of self-flagellation appear as symptoms of an obsessive disorder, the etiology of which lies in her relationship to her paraplegic Muslim husband, Nabil. Their estrangement is depicted in the naturalist

style of an Ibsen drama in which the battle between the sexes assumes grotesquely violent proportions. But the documentary format is held in check by Seidl's stylized cinematography, which creates a strikingly antirealist effect. Intertextual allusions to artworks place Anna Maria's religious quest in the long tradition of Western art history and its quest for transcendence. The irresolvable tension between the documentary format and Seidl's cinematography of stillness suspends the viewer's moral judgment. And so Anna Maria's religiosity is both highly pathological and deeply humane: it cries out to heaven in response to a disenchanted world.

Maren Ade's *Toni Erdmann* also explores the precariousness of social relations in the context of globalization. The conflict between father and daughter allows Ade to foreground generationally inflected perspectives on what constitutes fulfilled time and the good life. While Winfried Conradi is the beneficiary of the social agenda of the postwar era—his comfortable retirement in the West German town of Aachen revolves around his local community—his daughter Ines represents the globally mobile management class that enjoys the spoils of neoliberal entrepreneurship without any apparent social hang-ups. Their different lifestyles and incompatible outlooks translate into opposing notions of a good performance: Winfried's jocular and crude acts on- and offstage not only enact carnivalesque freedom from social constraints; they also aim to overcome his estrangement from his daughter. In addition, his performances are meant to disrupt his daughter's unquestioning acceptance of the pernicious rules of a corporate world that, as he observes on numerous occasions, forces her to accept deeply ingrained sexism. In sharp contrast to her father's unsettling antics, Ines's performances seek to align all aspects of her life with her professional interests. In the world of corporate capitalism, performances are measurable and profit-oriented: they aim to engender a uniform mode of behavior that seemingly obliterates differences of class, race, gender, and age, while in reality sustaining the dominance of the Western white male. The notion of the team, an essential component in this performance script, serves to curb individuality in favor of collective identity. In the pivotal birthday party scene, Ines then enacts a self-reflexive mode of performance

that seemingly maintains her professional veneer, while in reality subverting her overt conformity with the system. Pretending that her impromptu naked appearance is part of the normal team-building exercise, she lays bare at once the pervasiveness of social conformity as well as the absence of any real intimacy in this world. Winfried's appearance in the guise of the ancient Kuker engenders a genuine reaction in Ines precisely because the Kuker symbolizes the revival of life and happiness. And so, by the end of the film, father and daughter have rebuilt a precarious relationship through their disruptive performances.

The examples discussed here differ in terms of genre, thematic concerns, and artistic sensibilities: Wesely shifts from an aesthetic of copresence to an aesthetic of abstraction. Both modes are concerned with the recovery of temporal potentiality in Koepnick's sense. By contrast, Wüst's aesthetic of the unfinished works within the human timescale to expose the precariousness of historical experience: his representation of the summer and autumn of 1989 raises the issue of the readability of history. Petzold's s aesthetic of attention explores the precariousness of *Eigenzeit* under conditions of extreme surveillance, a theme that resurfaces in his later film *Etwas Besseres als den Tod*.[99] Seidl's aesthetic of intertextual tension explores the longing for transcendence in our disenchanted age. The documentary representation of social precarization and of Anna Maria's pathological religiosity contrasts sharply with the aesthetic of stillness and intertexuality that dignifies Anna Maria's search for meaning. Finally, Maren Ade's aesthetic of performance explores the corporatization of social relations in the world of global capitalism alongside intergenerational conflict over the meaning of the good life.

I classify the photography and films under discussion here as "slow art" not because they advocate retreat into havens of respite and calm in response to the experience of a high-speed culture.

99. See Andrew J. Webber, "The Seen and Un-Seen: Digital Life-Time in Christian Petzold's *Etwas Besseres als den Tod*," in "*Ästhetische Eigenzeit* in Contemporary Literature and Culture, Part II," ed. Anne Fuchs and Ines Detmers, special issue, *Oxford German Studies* 46/4 (2017): 345–59.

Rather than merely designating decelerated tempo, slow art involves complex aesthetic practices that probe the often inconclusive experience of both subjective and social time. Time in these works is a performative category that brings forth *Eigenzeit* as a precarious and unstable experience. Slow art requires the work of "close looking" from an attentive recipient who is prepared to engage in self-reflexive, contemplative modes of reception.