Tune In To Radio Utopia: A Radiophonic Topography of SF *Hörspiel*

Gerrit Konrad Rößler
Unna, Germany

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Abstract

This study aims to trace various forms of the Utopian impulse as it manifests in the radiophonic imagination of science fictional worlds. Utopias are defined as self-contradictory critical constructs that are at once impossible and necessary. Science fiction (SF) is treated as a mode of critical reading rather than a genre.

By approaching Bischoff's *Hallo! Hier Welle Erdball!* as a science fictional text, various intersections of SF and the Utopian are uncovered. The remaining chapters apply these concepts of Utopia and science fiction to specific plays to establish their affinity to dramatic sound narrative. Specifically, this study examines the voice and its role in forming: massive social bodies of shared communal identity in Franke's *Papa Joe & Co*; cybernetic narration and its effects on objective knowledge of truth and reality in Jelinek's *Die Bienenkönige*; sound recording as prosthetic memory and representation of actual and non-actual events in Horstmann's *Die Bunkermann-Kassette*; and dream as analytical metaphor for the visualization of sound narratives and its effect on autonomous judgment and absolute communication in Fassbinder's *Keiner ist böse und keiner ist gut*.

The analysis suggests that these radio plays treat science fiction as an inherently critical practice that allows for an in depth exploration of Utopian desires. Conceived as a topographical exploration of Utopian space, which is a liminal realm in between the actual and the non-actual world, this study is situated at the intersection of literary, sound, and media studies. It employs the theoretical approaches of scholars such as Jameson (utopian studies), Chu (science fictional mimesis), Kittler and Hayles (technocriticism and posthumanism), Ryan (narratology), Sterne (sound studies), as well as more traditional approaches by Bloch, Adorno, Benjamin, and Foucault.

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"Ich brauch' endlich mal ein vernünftiges Radio in der Küche."

Lena Rößler-Ehrich

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Do You Read Me? A Problem of Sound

Any exploration of Utopian territory begins with a problem: a problem of sound. An interference, to be precise. Utopia is no-place (οὐ τόπος) and only sounds as if it were also a good place (εὖ τόπος). When sounded out through an Anglicized phonetic filter, *ou* and *eu* become homophones. In Greek pronunciation, οὐ and εὖ are distinct sounds. As homophones, the two meanings, like two frequencies, located on different places of the Hertz scale, may modulate or amplify one another, or they may cancel each other out. Certain organ stops on large pipe organs make use of a phenomenon called the "resultant tone," in which one pipe is combined with another, a fifth above the first. The resultant tone is an auditory illusion which can be heard an octave below the lowest note of the interval. The interference between the two frequencies produces an audible pitch that no single pipe is actually playing. It may be an auditory illusion, but it is one that the listener can experience and even enjoy. The accidental collision of the two meanings behind the term Utopia, owed to a bilingual interference, produces a similar illusion, and it, too, is one that can be experienced and enjoyed. The resultant here is not a sound but a place. As described by Thomas More's fictional explorer Hythloday, one of the first adventurers to explore and subsequently name the Utopian territory, this place is out of reach, unobtainable, nowhere to be found. Yet it can be described, measured, and imagined. Like the resultant tone, it can be engaged as if it was real, despite our conscious knowledge that it is not. As a destination, a territory with a real place in the world, Utopia is a proper noun and deserves to be capitalized in all its grammatical variations.[1]

In this dissertation, I will embark on my own journey into the Utopian territory. I will attempt to exploit this inherently self-contradictory structure of the Utopian in terms

of its progressive and revolutionary effects on the present conditions. This is not to say that by means of sudden and radical social change I mean to realize the world's presented in the plays. Instead, I conceive of Utopia as an impossible but necessary space, where we make the phantasms, myths, and hidden agencies that frame our knowledge of the present moment apparent to ourselves. Like the resultant tone, they become something we can experience and know, and, as a result, critically assess, subvert, and, potentially, overcome. Utopia is a fictional construct as much as a social reality. Utopia is a critical necessity.

  To find my bearings, I will follow a particular tracking signal which I believe best incorporates the idea that the Utopian is a resultant of several interfering signals: the *radiophonic imagination.* What I call radiophonic imagination is the construction of and relationship with imaginary bodies and objects that populate imaginary worlds created solely by sound technology. This relationship is individual and private because I engage with this world in the most intimate setting of my living room and imagine it before my inner eye, while at the same time public and social because I share this experience through a medium that is available to an infinite number of others. It is real in the sense that it has a tangible impact on the here and now, and it is an illusion in the sense that my imaginary is anchored in my subjective assessment of the world (however this subjectivity may be constituted for a posthuman cyborg). The radio, as connector between an imaginary private self and an equally imaginary public social, is an illusion that, like the resultant tone, is born out of the interplay between technology and the physiological and psychological processes of the body. That is why the radio, as I will

show in the chapters to come, is deeply grounded in the Utopian impulses and fantasies that frame our existence as human, or posthuman, beings.

It might be objected that the term radiophony constitutes a pleonasm. After all, how should the radio be any other way than phonic? Despite the fact that, at least in the adjectival use, the term radio and radiophonic have been used widely interchangeably, I choose radiophony deliberately. First, it helps me to distinguish it from Octavia Butler's use of the term "radio imagination," which designates a type of writing that introduces characters and scenes as if they were on the radio: without cues as to their appearance, race, gender, age, etc. (cf. Butler 2001). While I agree with Butler that this kind of ambivalence and ambiguity is an important aspect of radiophony, it is not a necessary one. Voices may deliberately connote as well as conceal all four of these features. Radio, in Butler's use, becomes a Utopian tool that allows us to create a world free of prejudice. Rather than just the Utopian construct, my term is intended to also include the technological apparatus, the listening situation, the elements of production, etc. All of these are part of the imaginative practice that is radio.

Secondly, I want to distinguish myself from those theorists of radiovision, who analyze the visual components of radio, ranging from the design of radio sets to visual and tactile supplements of educational radio (Fetscher and Gross 2006).[2] My term comes perhaps closest to F.T. Marinetti's term "wireless imagination." He used it to designate the psychological and somatic effects modern broadcasting technology had on the listener's imagination. All the articulations of human imagination such as art, poetry, and music, but also architecture and engineering, were to be filtered through the productive modes of modern technology. Marinetti and the other Futurists valued speed, high

volume, and power as a means to arrive at an aesthetic that they considered radically future-oriented (cf. Marinetti 2005). I do not propose to adopt a futurist reading of radio or science fiction. In fact, my use of the Utopian is prefaced on the notion that all future-oriented imaginings are deeply connected to the past and present. Instead, I would like to take from Marinetti the idea that human cognition, our perception of the world, is undeniably affected by the technologies through which we engage with the world. In the Futurist conception, wireless imagination desires to exceed the limits of the biological body. Whereas Marinetti includes technologies like the telephone, "the telegraph, the phonograph, the train, bicycle or automobile, the ocean liner, dirigible or airplane, the cinema or a great daily newspaper" in his consideration, I will focus on the radio (Marinetti 28).

To further narrow my approach to the Utopian isle, I will focus my investigation of the radiophonic imagination on science fiction (SF from here on).[3] Whereas radio has particular relationships to the Utopian, SF has particular relationships with the Utopian as well as the radio. To be certain, and I hope to make myself more clear on this point in Chapter 1, SF is not a term that describes the featured content of a body of texts (for example spaceships or aliens), but a certain attitude that it encourages in the reader. SF engenders a peculiar mode of reading. I believe that Science fictional reading requires the readers/viewers/listeners to become Utopians. To treat a text as SF is to explore its Utopian potential. Like the Utopian, SF requires us to treat the narrative world as if it was real despite our knowledge that it is not. It constitutes a conscious effort to create a cognitive feedback to the present (another concept I will discuss in greater detail in my first chapter). Four different radio plays – Herbert Franke's *Papa Joe & Co,* Elfriede

Jelinek's *Die Bienenkönige,* Ulrich Horstmann's *Die Bunkermann-Kassette,* and Rainer

Werner Fassbinder's *Keiner ist Böse und Keiner ist Gut* – all of which self-consciously

operate within the realm of science fictional imagination, will serve as jumping-off points

for my investigation.

Radio as Event and Play

Writing about radio means to embrace the Utopian paradox to the fullest, because

it means to discuss an object of inquiry that is unavailable to the reader except in

derivative form. To use a phrase coined by William B. Fischer, radio plays are "Literatur

für Listeners [*sic*]" (Fischer 2006). The script, be it a transcript of the actual broadcast, a

print publication of the radio drama, or a listening script, is always only an index or, one

might say, an inevitable symptom, of the actual production. Radio play consists of a

variety of sign systems and "non-verbal sign systems can, like language, contribute in a

unique way to the generation of narrative meaning" as Elke Huwiler has demonstrated

(57). By discussing the printed text only, we leave out a large portion of a semiotically

rich sonic text. Mira Djordjevic and Rainer Döhl therefore emphasize the need to develop

a kind of *Audiophilologie* or *Hörspielphilologie* which treats the listening experience and

the written script as two separate but related texts (cf. Döhl 1982, Djordjevic 1991).

While I will consider the audio texts in all their facets, be they dramatic dialogue

or purely sound-based, I will have to do so by referencing a sound text that is absent from

these pages. The phrase "Do you read me?" which is NATO standard in radio

transmission to demand confirmation that the signal came through loud and clear,

becomes a multimedia illocutionary act. A reader unfamiliar with the plays will have to

extrapolate what they may have sounded like from my descriptions or go to the trouble of finding a recording. As such, I am walking on prime Utopian real estate: in these pages the radiophonic is essential but immaterial, everywhere and nowhere.

A second Utopian paradox is revealed when we consider that the discussion of radio play performance is more elusive and at the same time more concrete and singular than most other performative narrative genres, such as film, television, or theater.[4] When we talk about *Hamlet* we simultaneously talk about all the different editions as well as performances throughout history. Of course, we can discuss a specific production by a specific theater company and director, but we would nevertheless summarize all the different nights of the season under one ideal and imaginary performance. Unless I was there to see it, I cannot know Heiner Mueller's 1990 *Hamlet* at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. Even if I was there, I talk about a larger, more complex issue when I invoke the name of the play, and not merely the individual performance I attended.

Radio, on the other hand, knows only one, rarely two or three productions of the same play: each one singular. Repeat performances are, in terms of what is performed, all alike, and their broadcasts, if there are repeat broadcasts at all, are few and far between. *Hörspielphilologie*, it seems, deals with very concrete objects. In this, *Hörspiel* is more akin to film and television than to theater. Like plays, films are shown in different theaters to different audiences at different points in time, yet we treat them as a single entity because the films themselves are identical each time. We refer to still shots to illustrate the nature of our object of inquiry. For radio, we only have the script or maybe a listening transcript to reference the object of our discussion. The illusion that the radiophonic object is something external and independent of the audience's perception

(individual or collective) is much harder to maintain; it is revealed as a Utopian fantasy right off the bat. I talk about *Star Wars* as an external and universal phenomenon*,* not "the screening of *Krieg der Sterne* at the Film Center Unna in February 1978." Films maintain their status as unique art objects *because* they are not experienced as singular events the way radio and television broadcasts are. Traditionally, the latter were shown only once to their entire audience at the same moment, creating a great sense of community, as we shall explore in Chapter 2. Radio's live nature mixes with the recorded and repeatable nature of the radio play and creates a hybrid between all these forms of performance. The interference between its hybridized elements produces, like the resultant tone, a Utopian ideal. I will attempt to treat the radio play as both a piece of performed literature like theater, which acquires unique properties in each individual performance, but also as a singular mass event like live television, where the unique properties are those of the audience alone rather than the performance itself. All of the plays discussed here have only been produced in a single version, although some have been broadcast more than once. I will take recordings of these productions as my main text.[5]

Radio play, of course, also begins with a problem of sound. As Friederike Mayröcker and Ernst Jandl put it, "'hörspiel' ist ein doppelter Imperativ" (88). Depending on how I enunciate the term *hör-spiel,* I may either instruct the audience to listen to and play with the text, or I may simply emphasize the peculiarity of the form (Why is it not *Radiodrama*, *Hörtheater*, or *Rundfunkdialog* for example?). We have to listen and playfully engage with the sounds we hear, the term seems to imply. We have to make sense of the contradictions and dissonances, we have to produce meaning in

dialogue with an absent other.[6] Orson Welles' now infamous radio play *War of the*

Worlds may serve as a reminder that we have to realize and remember that we *are*

playing. Listeners famously took Welles' performance as a real live invasion by either

Martians or the Germans who, as a looming threat, dominated the airwaves in 1938.

Apparently parts of the audience did not follow the imperative to play but chose to import

the events on the radio as a literal reality into their concept of the present conditions. In a

complete reversal from this mode of reading, people who heard of the attacks on the

World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001 on the radio reportedly

called in to news agencies because they found it a distasteful radio play. These listeners

played where it was not appropriate. Current conspiracy theories about the WTC attacks

continue to treat the event as speculative fiction. Clearly, the lack of the visual allowed

the listeners to suspend belief or disbelief however the case may have been in either of

these instances. Since the entire first chapter is dedicated to the exploration of this

relationship between Utopia, SF, and the radiophonic imagination, I will postpone further

investigation until we can revisit it in greater detail during the discussion of the individual

plays.

Impossible and Necessary Manifestations of Utopia

The Utopian, according to Frederic Jameson, appears in two separate but related

forms: the Utopian impulse, with which we will mainly be concerned here, and the

Utopian program (cf. Jameson 2005). The Utopian program is, like More's foundational

text, a concrete design, a blueprint, or a gesture into the future – one, however, without

any claims to ever being realized. In fact, if realized, it is no longer a Utopia, as it no

longer points away from, but becomes, the status quo. It is an impossibility, in fact, an

undesirable status, because once the perfect conditions are established, no more change,

dissent, invention would be possible. Utopian programs can always only be hypothetical

constructs to inspire change or, else, they will turn into their opposite. This inherent

inspiration to change is the other manifestation of the Utopian: the Utopian impulse. Like

the concrete program, it points into the future but without a concrete vision of a better

world. It may be recognized in any object, produced by any given society. As a product

of its particular socio-cultural circumstances, such a product will at the same time be a

result of the future-oriented imaginations of a social body and contain within itself the

sense of the possibility of a better future. This is what Ernst Bloch calls the *Principle of*

Hope: the recognition of possibility.

In other words, Utopian fantasies, for Jameson, are expressions of desires. Like

Freud's daydreams, they are imaginings of subconscious – sometimes even conscious –

wishes that find their temporary fulfillment in these imaginings (Jameson 45). While the

Utopian program tries to outline how we may see these desires fulfilled, the Utopian

impulse gives us an inkling of what these desires may be (Jameson 3). Often, the Utopian

impulse is legible in the ways the product falls short of its own promise. Aspirin, for

example, may suppress a headache, but it falls short of fulfilling its implicit promise of

eternal life. It cannot, for example, cure a deadly disease. Yet, as it allows us to daydream

of a pill that may cure not only a headache but also diseases that we cannot even imagine;

it carries the promise of eternal life in form of the Utopian impulse.

A radio fulfills the desire of making information more quickly and readily

available by the use of long distance transmission. It democratizes the availability of

information. But, as Brecht points out with bitter disappointment, it falls short of the goal

of democratizing communication. It distributes information only in one direction. The

sender can reach thousands simultaneously, but cannot receive a response (cf.

"Kommunikationsapparat"). Radio's shortcoming reveals its inherent Utopian impulse: a

Utopia in which information is reliably available to any member of the Utopian society

and which allows passive recipients to become active participants, not only in the

technological, but also the socio-political discourse. As Brecht comments, "This is an

innovation, a suggestion that seems utopian and that I myself admit to be utopian,"

(*Brecht on Theatre* 52). "When I say that the radio or the theatre 'could' do so-and-so, I

am aware that these vast institutions cannot do all they 'could', and not even all they

want" (53). But Brecht does not stop at merely suggesting that there "could" be more. In

formulating what this Utopian radio may look like – namely, an apparatus of complete

communication and accountability – Brecht turns the Utopian impulse into a Utopian

program. It has been suggested that this Utopian program has found its, perhaps partial,

realization in the internet and other new media, revealing both the Utopian potential of

Brecht's idea and its catastrophic, totalitarian opposite. Be that as it may, Brecht's

critique of radio reveals the Utopian impulse inherent in the technology and its use.

As a concrete fantasy or latent impulse, the Utopian is a manifestation of our

desires. To acknowledge them as Utopian allows us to recognize them as the kind of

illusion I described above: immaterial, impossible, yet available to experience. As the

interference of desire and possibility, or, in Brecht's view, possibility and practice, we

acknowledge these fantasies as produced by our present conditions and by our hope for

their improvement. If we consider the Utopian as impulse only, then we do not need to

heed the warning Bloch and Adorno formulate in their famous debate on Utopian

longing, that the Utopian always annihilates itself in its own realization (cf. *Utopian*

Function 10). As mere impulse, fulfillment of our Utopian longing is neither universal

nor eternal but lasts only for the moment of our engagement with the fantasy. In fact,

some Utopian fantasies, like eternal life, as Adorno says, are in their last consequence so

terrifying that we do not want to see them fulfilled, but it is necessary to think them as SF

scenarios in order to become aware of the danger (cf. *Utopian Function* 9). Others, like

Brecht's dream of total communication, are possible only as Utopian imaginings, and, as

such, we can explore their limits.

    Phantasms like absolute truth, essential meaning, total communication, in short,

all the phantasms that post-modern critique has exposed as idealized and problematic

concepts, are expressions of Utopian desires. I should emphasize, that "phantasm,"

"fantasy," and "desire" are not synonymous. The fantasy consciously or unconsciously

aims to fulfill or avoid denial of fulfillment of a particular desire (for example, as dreams,

as Chapter 5 will explore in greater detail). In the process of making sense of the world,

these fantasies can manifest as phantasm and become conceptual entities and, often

central, elements of discourse that shape our sense of what constitutes reality.

"A *phantasm* is a strong and very basic perceptual pattern, a sort of *idée fixe* that

organizes our world view" as Philipp Sarasin puts it (9).

    What I propose in this study is to treat phantasms, such as the ones mentioned

above, as Utopian isles and therefore as temporary, illusory realities that are both

necessary and impossible: necessary as a starting point of inquiry, but impossible, as such

an origin is always a phantasm in itself. As theoretical *loci*, they allow us to think with

them and beyond them as I will show in the chapters to come. As a sound illusion, Utopia is an island located in the abyss. The Utopian is a hybrid place: not fully located in our world, not fully in the other diegetic or fantastic world. It does not completely appear in the auratic environment of the here and now, but is also not limited to the world of sounds from which we are separated by the double membrane of microphone and speaker. The Utopian emerges in-between. It is an island that can serve as our base camp for our forays into a world which cannot be located anywhere, but which we are trying to comprehend. It is a place of bliss, a paradise which we create, and from which we are simultaneously expelled: a place where myth and meaning can exist, but which can never become our home.

Sound Critique of Real and Unreal Places

In the early days of Weimar radio, we knew when and from where the sounds on the radio came. They emminated from a group of people around a microphone and the sounds were made by a Foley artist in the studio. Alien invasions were indeed acoustic illusions, however convincing they were. *Prairie Home Companion* still uses this knowledge for comic effect when Garrison Keilor tells a story so absurd that his Foley artist cannot always keep up. It is funny *because* we know that these sounds are illusions, albeit illusions with a direct link to the physical reality of the stage. Since the engineers of the Third Reich developed the magnetic tape as storage device, a story told eloquently by Friedrich Kittler, we no longer have this certainty (*Gramophone* 107). A voice, particularly that of an alien, may very well be produced by the manipulation of the tape, by cutting and editing other sounds, even by interference in the transmission process. In

the digital age, where even the materiality of the magnetic tape is no longer necessary, voices can be produced "out of thin air."

Unlike a mirage in the desert, which one should not treat as reality and ignore at all costs lest one travels to one's death, the illusion of an acoustic world is something we turn *toward*. Rather than treat the acoustic world of the radio as an illusion and an absence, we treat it as if the opposite was the case. The world of radiophonic imagination, like the Utopian isle, is treated *as if* it were real, tangible, *as if* its bodies were there on the other end of the line. It is a conceptual necessity to acknowledge the imaginary body on the other end, just as it is a conceptual necessity to treat the Utopian isle like a real place. We know that both are fantasies. As Allen Weiss argues, radio inserts itself into this space between the idealized fantasy, the subjective, and the interior on the one hand, and the unobtainable real, the phenomenon, and the exterior on the other. "Between voice and wavelength, between body and electricity, the future of radio resounds" (8). As such, the radio broadcasts directly from the island of Utopia, or rather, the Utopian inhibits the radiophonic space.

Foucault organizes such spaces that are in a contradictory relationship to the relations that constitute them into two groups: Utopias and heterotopias.

> Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces ("Heterotopias").

What he calls heterotopias, on the other hand, have a real place. In his powerful example, the mirror is seen as a heterotopia, whereas the imaginary space in it is a Utopia.

> The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia insofar as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy ("Heterotopias").

As a heterotopia, the mirror juxtaposes the realness of the reflected object and the non-realness of the reflection in one and the same space. In doing so, it allows for the "real" self to literally reflect on itself. It has an effect on the here and now. In that sense, his concept of the term heterotopia is not all that different from how I suggest we should think about the term Utopia.

Another powerful example of a heterotopia is that of the theater, which "brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space" ("Heterotopias"). The living room, a space with rather clear and closed relational boundaries, becomes such a heterotopia via the radio and the television. A space that does not normally hold the contradictory strangeness of other places is

opened up and made endless. This is the case even more for the radio than the television because the radio allows us to move about the room and does not limit us as the photographic frame does.

Foucault's distinction between heterotopia and Utopia indeed makes sense insofar as it distinguishes between "real" Utopian spaces and "imaginary" ones. Rarely, however, are they as neatly distinguished as in his example of mirror or the theater. Radio, it seems to me, successfully dissolves this distinction because it allows for the "real" and the "imaginary" to bleed into one another, a process we will examine in greater detail in Chapter 2. With the boundaries dissolved like that, the very taxonomy of real and imagined loses its distinctive authority. Again, the Utopian emerges from the in-between. Is not the heterotopian practice of bringing together diverse and foreign objects and places on the "rectangle of the stage" also a form of wish-fulfillment or at least expression of a wish? In that sense, heterotopia and Utopia differ only by the degree to which they are conceived of as having a place that is real or unreal. Foucault's distinction is therefore most helpful if we want to trace the Utopian impulse as it manifests itself along spatial relations.

I suggest that, while such a distinction between heterotopia and Utopia is possible, as in the case of the mirror, it is, at least for our analysis, not necessary and possibly counterproductive. It is true, insofar as truth is equated with empirical reality, that Utopias are unreal. I cannot get on a boat – which is a heterotopia in Foucault's reading in and of itself – and go to More's Utopia or Plato's Republic. Similarly, I cannot play the resultant tone without the aid of the other two pitches. But I can hear it nonetheless, just as I can explore Utopia despite my inability to point to it on a map. This virtual

exploration, as we will see, is no more real or unreal than the place in which my body

resides while I write these lines or while I listen to the play. My reflection in the mirror,

to use Foucault's own example, is such an integral part of my conception of the real that

it can hardly be treated as something entirely separate. In the following pages, I will use

Foucault's term only to designate physical places in which we can experience the

Utopian contradiction I described above, but will otherwise refer to the Jamesonian

distinction between Utopian program – fantastical and indisputably un-real societies

designed as a counter-model to our present conditions – and the Utopian impulse – the

very real and future-oriented effect these imaginings have on our present conditions.

The critical potential of the Utopian was famously discussed by Ernst Bloch and

Theodor Adorno during a conversation that was – befittingly, for my argument –

recorded for and broadcast on German public radio in 1964 – the SWF in itself being an

early instrument of the Allies' Utopian project of denazification and re-education (cf.

Bauernfeind 2011). During their discussion, the two thinkers distinguish between the

dangers of concretely imagined Utopias and the desirable recognition of a need for

change. Adorno especially warns that "One may not cast a picture of utopia in a positive

manner" (*Utopian Function* 9). Any depiction of Utopia as an achievable goal conceals

its inescapable inherent contradictions and undesirable consequences. By denying the

possibility of a positive Utopia, Adorno wants to protect the critical potential of Utopian

thought against "the cheap utopia, the false utopia, *the* utopia that can be bought" (10,

emphasis original). Utopia, he argues, must not become a commodity that lulls us with a

false sense of happiness and wholeness. Elsewhere, he goes so far as to suggest that the

critical dystopia presented in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is informed by an

idealist and near-religious sense of the natural, by an objective knowledge of how things

ought to be. This "*philosophia perennis*" underlying Huxley's anti-Utopia, Adorno

rejects as deeply reactionary (*Prisms* 114). Adorno agrees with Bloch "insofar as we are

not allowed to cast the picture of utopia, insofar as we do not know what the correct thing

would be, we know exactly, to be sure, what the false thing is" (*Utopian Function* 11).

For Bloch, too, the function of the Utopian is not to present a blueprint image of a

better world, but to be "a critique of what is present" (11). This exposure of problems and

contradictions of the present is an inherent function of even the most regressive and

conservative Utopian imaginings, because such alternative designs always call the

existing modes and conditions into question. As Bloch writes, "If we had not already

gone beyond the barriers, we could not even perceive them as barriers" (11). The present

moment, a moment of stasis and false contentedness, is a dangerous place to be, however

tempted we may be (for example, by the illusory pleasures and commodities of the

consciousness industry) to accept it as the best possible condition. Utopia is a critique of

this present moment. In Adorno's words it persists "in the determined negation of that

which merely is, and by concretizing itself as something false, it always points at the

same time to what should be" (11). Even though it may point at what should be, this

glimpse into the future, this critique of the present, must not take the form of a positive

design for or teleology toward a better world. If it did, such a design or futurist history

would constitute a progressive Utopian vision only where it shows its flaws and ruptures.

To mark my point of departure, this point in space and time "which merely is"

and from which I am seeking to fulfill my Utopian desires, I will frequently use the term

"here and now." It is the moment of perception as it presents itself to the perceiving

subject. To be clear, it is not a stable deictic center that exists outside of the discourse, but an operational necessity that – necessarily and impossibly – anchors this discuourse on Utopian territory. As a category, it is highly individual insofar as the constitution of the "here and now" will depend on the complex interplay of social factors, such as access to and comprehension of scientific information, economic and social status, cultural norms and conventions, each of which as they appear in a historically particular situation. The subjectively perceived temporal and spatial present is a parameter against which we judge narrative worlds, whether they are realistic or fantastic, fictional or non-fictional, possible or impossible. What constitutes the here and now is furthermore informed by our concept of what is not "here and now," but, we might say, "there and then."

In its socio-political dimension, "here and now" is related to, but not identical with, the idea of the "status quo." I use the latter to emphasize the fact that the present moment in any given society, even in a loosely defined community, is characterized by a multitude of relative perspectives on the present. In their multitude, these perspectives produce a collective idea of what the present conditions are and accept them as the stable center of a particular episteme. Such a center is, of course, a fantasy in and of itself and, perhaps, an expression of its own Utopian desire. But, by thinking about this fantasy of the status quo as Utopian, we can treat it as something real, something that can serve as a foil against which we rebel and which is the object of our discontent. The very thought of the status quo requires us to think of it as being an object of change. We either want to restore the *status quo ante*, which means the current status quo is to be overthrown; maintain it, in which case the present moment is moving away from it and threatens its stability; or we want to progress from the status quo with another Utopia in mind. In each

case, the status quo is determined not by a singular private perspective but by a collective

discursive understanding of what constitutes the present conditions.

Challenges to the status quo can come in form of political, philosophical, social,

or any other form of change that requires us to see the world in even slightly different

terms. As will become clear later on, I do not speak of progressive Utopian effects of

radio in the sense of a particular political tendency. The voice of actual dictators was

broadcast via the *Volksempfänger* into the privacy of German homes with anything but

politically progressive intentions. Rather, I mean that, independent of a specific political

or social agenda, these effects frame our experience in such a way that, simply by

experiencing them, we are made to challenge the political, social, and epistemological

status quo. The radio pulls us away from the present conditions and places us in an

altered, yet not entirely removed, reality. We cannot help but become citizens of Utopia.

The interference between the fantastical notion of our present conditions and their very

real impact on our existence as social beings, allows us to fantasize and desire Utopian

programs (concrete designs for the future) as well as unconsciously recognize the

Utopian impulse (the potential latently present in the products and practices that

constitute the status quo).

Another way to think about what we would commonly refer to as "reality" is the

the concept of "actual world." The term has been introduced to literary theory by Marie-

Laure Ryan. The actual world is a set of individually or collectively held representations

of a "hypothetical real world" which exists "independently of the mind" (*Virtual Reality*

101). She suggests that, rather than "sacrificing the idea of an absolutely existing, mind-

independent reality, we can relativize the ontological system by placing at its center

individual images of reality, rather than reality itself" (101). She refers to those "worlds that each of us holds to be possible but nonactual" as "non-actual" worlds, each at a different distance to our actual world "depending on how difficult it would be to enact them, or what type of accessibility relations link them to the center" (102). As a concept, "actual world" allows us to place narrative worlds in relation to lived "real life" experience, without the need to posit a stable and essential center or origin. By framing reality in terms of its representations, rather than positive absolutes, we can discuss the phenomenological gray area in which the sounds and voices of the actual world blend with those of the narrative world and which I outlined above as a space that is both real and fictional, material and immaterial, present and absent: in other word, radically Utopian.

For our definition of SF, it is not, as I will show later on, necessary to know whether something is indeed possible or impossible according to the currently established laws of physics, but whether I feel the need to establish a logical connection to my current image of the world and whether this connection sufficiently satisfies me. It is not about whether it is possible, but whether I can plausibly imagine a set of circumstances in which it becomes possible, without completely abandoning my accepted epistemological framework. FTL (faster than light) is, according to Einstein, a physical impossibility, yet in SF texts vessels frequently travel beyond the light barrier. Without fail, some technical explanation is given as to why it is possible after all. The distinction between possible and impossible is not a question of whether or not it is contingent with my actual world – the world in which Einstein rules out the possibility – but whether or not I am satisfied with the speculative reasoning that establishes the potential for contingency. The

categorical rejection of time travel by the Vulcan High Council in *Enterprise* is considered a religious dogma within the *Star Trek* universe until Captain Archer, whose all-too-human reliance on intuition and disregard for logic has long irked the Vulcans, demonstrates its possibility ("The Expanse"). The categorical denial by the Vulcans is proven to be un-scientific lack of imagination. The magic of Harry Potter, on the other hand, is unexplained, disconnected from our realm of experience, and, most importantly, unavailable to the non-wizard reader. Potter's world is not part of the here and now (although for some it may be), while FTL is.

I nevertheless prefer the term "here and now" because it emphasizes the temporal and spatial components more than the term "actual world." Something could be part of my actual world without being here and now. It could be anywhere at any time in my actual world. There is a classic Sesame Street skit in which Grover and Herry explain to a younger friend the difference between here and there. Grover would point to Herry and indicate that, at that moment, Herry is there, while he himself is here. Their young student wishes to be there as well and rushes over to Herry. Much to the disappointment of the little one, by the time Herry's position is reached, it turns out to be no longer there but here. Herry and Grover are both part of the actual world of the inquisitive friend, and we can assume that they are part of each other's actual world, yet they each designate where "here" is individually. "Here" is, as the skit teaches, the vantage point, the point that is already reached at the given moment but which cannot be observed as the spot is already occupied by the observer. "There," however, is a point that can be observed, but never reached without it ceasing to be "there" and becoming "here."

The lesson taught by Grover and Herry is a lesson directly out of Ernst Bloch's Utopian playbook. For Bloch, the lived moment, too, is the moment we cannot observe because such an observation would require a perspective that is unavailable to us, as long as we occupy that space and time:

> Nur wenn ein Jetzt gerade vergangen ist oder wenn und solange es erwartet wird, ist es nicht nur ge-lebt, sondern auch er-lebt. Als unmittelbar daseiend, liegt es im Dunkel des Augenblicks. Nur das gerade Heraufkommende oder das gerade Vergangene hat den Abstand, den der Strahl des Bewußtwerdens braucht, um zu bescheinen. Das Daß und Jetzt, der Augenblick, worin wir sind, wühlt in sich und empfindet sich nicht. Dementsprechend also wird der jeweilige Inhalt des gerade Gelebten nicht wahrgenommen.
>
> ("Only when a Now has just passed or when and for as long as it is expected, is it not only lived, but also experienced. As immediately being there, it lies in the darkness of the moment. Only what is just coming up or what has just passed has the distance which the beam of growing consciousness needs to illuminate it. The That and Now [*sic*], the moment we are in, burrows in itself and cannot feel itself. Correspondingly, therefore, the respective content of what has just been lived is not perceived"; *Prinzip* 334; *Principle* 287).

Seen in the light of this passage from Bloch's *Principle of Hope*, the exploits of the three Sesame Street monsters also teach us something about temporal relationships between the observer and the actual world; the "now" part of the "here and now," if you will. Bloch's

"Dunkel des Augenblicks" prevents Herry and Grover's inquisitive friend from experiencing the lived moment.

Proponents of post-Newtonian physics might add that our very perception of now – that is, our placement in time – is relative to our placement or movement in space. We may perceive time as moving forward in a straight arrow at an absolute and constant speed, but this perception constitutes only a very limited perspective on the complex temporal and spatial mechanics of the universe (cf. Hawking 1988). Bloch, who, to my knowledge, never explicitly commented on the theoretical discoveries of his contemporaries Einstein, Schrödinger, *et al.* seems to intuitively grasp this notion of a radically subjective experience of temporality and amends it with the idea that representation of this experience is available to the observing subject only after the fact. There are only two ways to experience the here and now – or "That and Now," as Bloch calls it: in retrospect, by looking back at what Derrida might call the trace of a past presence, or in anticipation, by observing the Utopian impulse.

For Bloch, it is the latter that constantly presses forward. The present, for better or for worse, is inhabited by the future, or, in the words of Matthew Beaumont, "The present is, from this angle, monstrous because it is already in the process of being ineluctably transformed into an unimaginable shape by the underlying historical logic of the future" (230). The monstrous appearance of the future in the present is what Jameson calls the Utopian impulse. In *The Principle of Hope* Bloch calls this impulse by many names: urge, hunger, not-yet, to name only a few. Their common denominator is that they are based on a concept of temporality that denies the possibility of experiencing and representing the present other than from the future. My concept of actual world is

preceded by my living in it. This living in it occurs in the here and now, which is

shrouded in the darkness of the moment. Science fictional fantasies, be they set in the

future, alternative pasts, or presents, operate with this kind of temporality.

Radio Matters

Radio may strike us as an obsolete medium, a trace of the past, rather than a

carrier of Utopian impulses. In an age where movies can be streamed on cellular phones

and hundreds of television channels are available at an affordable cost, it would seem that

our Utopian desires could be observed more easily in the image rather than sound. This is

especially true in the US, where radio networks are either privatized or depend on

donations "from listeners like you." But even in Europe, with its largely publicly-funded

broadcasting landscape, radio seems to have lost its significance as a site of significant

cultural discourses. It seems to slowly have gone the way of the telegram and the evening

newspaper edition. I believe it can be easily argued that this impression is false. First of

all, radio is still alive and well, as is shown by the impact talk radio hosts, like Rush

Limbaugh and Laura Ingraham, have on national political discourses. NPR and its local

affiliates supply American households with news and human interest stories practically

free of charge. In Germany and the UK, too, radio is a place for heated public debate, and

pop-cultural discourse as well as niche programming. Elsewhere, oppressive regimes still

find the need to control broadcasting and to shut down violently pirate radio stations,

both on the air and online.

Without the limitations that come with the time-consuming production process of

print media, and without the need for providing images and exclusive video footage,

radio is still one of the fastest channels, by which to stay informed, however increasingly

rivaled by the internet. While not as fast as online media, the production and public

broadcast of radio still requires privileged access to the means of production. Not

everybody can produce and effectively distribute radio. This structural feature, that lead

Brecht to call radio a "vorsintflutlicher Apparat," preserves an aura of trustworthiness –

deserved or undeserved – that the internet is, for the most part, still lacking (cf. Brecht

"Radio"). This attitude may be changing, especially since most radio stations have

complex online components and alternative programming is mostly available on the web.

That said, radio, newspapers – in short, all the media that scholars as well as users like to

refer to as "old media," often not without a certain degree of affection – depend on this

imbalance between restricted access to production and unrestricted access to reception for

their very survival as the media of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the intellectual bourgeoisie.

Radio, perhaps because of this reputation as a non-mainstream alternative, self-

consciously appears to seek out programming that is more artistically ambitious and

sophisticated. While Hollywood blockbusters seem increasingly indistinguishable, the

fall TV premieres follow the latest trend (currently: vampires, zombies, and, fittingly for

this dissertation, dystopian scenarios), radio seems to engage in sound collages,

adaptations of literary works, alternative music, and classical performances; in short,

everything that distinguishes bourgeois high culture from mass-produced popular culture.

Unique experiments in film or TV exist, but they are infrequent compared to the overall

number of productions. Moreover, they potentially cater to the same audience that

downloads podcasts and listens to radio shows. This raises the question of whether or not

radio still *is* a mass medium or whether our discussion of the progressive potential of

radio culture is not indulging another Utopian bourgeois fantasy.

    This image of radio as the bastion of high culture applies to the US as much as to

Germany and the UK. A protest group called *Die Radioretter* recently signed a petition to

protest cuts in the "Kulturradio" programming of Germany's largest radio network WDR.

Their explicit goal was to protect what they felt was the cultural mission of publicly

funded radio:

> Das Kulturradio muss Anstöße geben. Es vermittelt Kultur, produziert Kultur und
>
> ist ein Teil der Kultur. Dazu gehören Konflikt, Streit, Brisanz. Es kann nicht nur
>
> Service bieten, denn Kunst, Literatur, Theater, Musik und Wissenschaft sind mehr
>
> als nur Konsumgüter. Rezension und Kritik begleiten die kulturelle Entwicklung
>
> und treiben sie voran.
>
> ("The cultured radio must give impulses. It imparts culture, produces culture, and
>
> is part of culture. This encompasses conflict, dispute, explosiveness. It cannot
>
> offer service alone, for art, literature, theater, music, and science are more than
>
> just commodities. Recension and critique accompany the cultural development
>
> and push it forward."; "Offener Brief")

Radio, these enthusiasts seem to say, is a tool to provide certain cultural practices and

discourses with a safe haven that television and the internet cannot provide. As such, the

radiophonic imagination is here pictured as a uniquely *conservative* practice, however,

one that also points into the future and away from the present conditions:

Das Kulturradio orientiert über Probleme auch der Gegenwart und Zukunft, zeigt

Handlungsmöglichkeiten auf. Es ist ein Gegenwartsmedium.

("The cultured radio gives orientation regarding problems of the present as well as

the future; shows options for action. It is a contemporaneous medium."; "Offener

Brief")

 Once more, the radio pulls us into Utopian territory.

Whether radio actually *has* greater cultural value, or produces a more

sophisticated listenership, or in any other way, shape, or form surpasses film and

television, is not for this author to decide or this study to find out. I do, however, believe

that, especially post-World War II, radio self-consciously plays with this notion of being

a medium that runs beside the cultural mainstream with a listenership of a select few.

This self-perception as "Kulturradio" allows producers to be more experimental and

daring in the first place. Especially later at night, when alleged "common people" are

expected to watch reality TV or shop on QVC, those who tune into the latest BBC radio

drama or Bayern 2 *Hörspiel* or the *Prairie Home Companion* can imagine themselves as

part of some kind of cultural elite, a cultural Utopia. This sense of imagined Utopian

community will be part of my discussion of radio throughout the following chapters,

especially in Chapter 2.

While radio may have been replaced by cable TV as the background noise of

choice in most American and European households, it is still the only viable alternative

for listeners who spend a lot of their time behind the wheel or in workplaces where a

screen would be too distracting or dangerous. Mobility is a particularly unique quality of

the radio. Unlike television or computer screens, it does not require one to focus the

visual field to a particular fixed point and can therefore function in many more contexts.

It demands less attention than visual media, but can be given more attention at the same

time, because it does not interfere with most everyday activities from cooking, to

shaving, to getting dressed, or driving to work.

Radio is also experiencing a certain, perhaps nostalgic, renaissance. Modern-day

Luddites celebrate radio as a remnant of the "good old days" in a world which is defined

by an overexposure to media and information technologies. Examples for this type of

investment in radio as a site of memory is Woody Allen's 1987 *Radio Days*, where the

medium's history of the 1930s and 40s parallels the protagonist's coming of age in

Brooklyn. In addition to the Prairie Home Companion, a plethora of old-style live variety

shows are produced in metropolitan areas – New York's Radio Theater Company at St

Marks Place or Berlin's "Empör Mich!" series at the BKA Theater, often broadcast on

local small range stations, or alternatively streamed on the internet, where they can easily

reach a large number of listeners. Such nostalgia is driven simultaneously by the desire

for the glamour and excitement of the roaring twenties and thirties and the alleged

technological simplicity of the auratic experience. Moreover, audio plays, divorced from

the medium of radio, harken back to the childhood of a generation that grew up in the late

70s, 80s, and early 90s. Live readings of scripts from audio plays popular in the 1980s –

like *Die Drei Fragezeichen* – draw huge crowds in the "scene" clubs in Berlin. Of course,

live stage performances in a radio-like setting are not radio, but it seems to me that they

appeal to similar desires.

It would be too easy to simply dismiss this popularity merely as a kind of nostalgia. Both radio and *Hörspiel* are very specific practices with unique semiotic structures. They both rely heavily on the listener's internal imagination and involve their audience with a very specific technological structure. What exactly this structure is, and how it involves the listener, will be the task of this study to find out. *Radio-Hörspiel'*s continued popularity seems to be an indication for a continued desire. This dissertation will try to identify this desire as Utopian. Particularly in Chapter 4, we will look at such practices as practices of prosthetic memory and in Chapter 5 as a kind of nostalgic dream.

Radio's unusual place as an old-fashioned and contemporary medium, as object of nostalgia and realm of cutting-edge art, has not gone unnoticed by academia. Radio studies have become a (re-)emerging field of media studies. Simultaneously, sound studies have come into the spotlight as an exploration of the dimensions of the aural in literature, film, and, of course, radio from a cultural and literary studies angle. In recent years, conferences like the MLA, ACLA, and GSA frequently feature panels entirely dedicated to sound poetics and radio cultures. The work of Friedrich Kittler, tragically connected to his recent passing, is experiencing a much deserved increase in attention, which brings issues of aurality, technology, and the body to the forefront. Jonathan Sterne (2003), John Mowitt (2011), Douglas Kahn (1992), to name but a few, have written exciting overviews of the field in recent years. Sterne describes modernity as an age of sound cultures, where emerging recording and broadcasting technologies shape our very understanding of ourselves as human beings. For Mowitt, radio facilitated twentieth century views on phenomenology and psychology and helped popularize certain brands of philosophy and psychology. In Kahn's view, radio historically was the playground for

the avant-garde and so helped to shape contemporary concepts of art and music ranging from John Cage to Nam June Paik. Yet little has been published on the radio play as such. In Marie-Laure Ryan's *Narrative across Media,* to give just one prominent example, face-to-face narration, still images, moving images, music, and digital media are considered at great length. Yet, despite the sustained success of audio books, podcasts, and narrative radio broadcasts of all kinds, the purely aural narrative is not considered, aside from music.

A search for publications on radio plays as such turns up very little. Exceptions are few and far between and usually limited to single articles or dissertation projects. Most studies limit themselves to histories of perception and production. The bulk of writing on German *Hörspiel* dates back to the "golden ages," first during the Weimar years of early radio and then again the late 50s through 70s, when the Allies as well as the Soviets established networks of publicly-funded broadcasting systems. While the first golden age was characterized by the experimental efforts of Walther Ruttmann, Alfred Braun, and Fritz Walter Bischoff during the Weimar era, it was authors like Ingeborg Bachmann, Günter Eich, Wolfgang Borchert, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder in West Germany and Heiner Müller, Brigitte Reimann, and Christa Wolf in East Germany who rediscovered the artistic potential of radio. Where the work of the Weimar pioneers is often analyzed as an exploration of radio's unique aesthetic potential, the work of the post-war authors received mainly a standard literary reading, which often cannot be distinguished from the analysis of a stage drama. As both producers, authors and theorists of radio, Walther Bischoff and Heinz Schwitzke may, at this point, serve as examples for the Weimar period and Rainer Döhl, Horst Tröster and Dieter Hasselblatt for the latter.

Like radio and sound studies, SF studies have been growing in popularity and

seriousness since the 1980s and have been part of the rise of popular culture studies.

Particularly for scholars coming from the left of the political spectrum, the idea of

Utopian societies, overcoming the limitations of human biology, and alien perspectives

on our present existence have provided a fruitful field of consideration. Authors like

Philip K. Dick and William Gibson have inspired major theoretical treatises by Larry

Rickels (2010), Avital Ronell (2005), Fredric Jameson (2005), and others. The

relationship between the Utopian and SF has been investigated many times. German SF,

as William Fischer laments in *The Empire Strikes Out* has, despite its long tradition from

Wilhelminian Germany to both East and West Germany, always taken a back seat in

these discourses. Moreover, very little has been written on SF radio, or, as I will discuss

in Chapters 2 to 5, radio as SF. Dieter Hasselblatt alone has argued that radio is the ideal

medium for the science fictional imagination. It therefore comes as no surprise that in the

second golden age of radio, the theorists of German SF and the theorists of *Hörspiel* are

often one and the same. In the last ten years, there have been only a few articles on SF

radio plays by William Fischer, Wolfgang Biesterfeld and, most recently, Stefan Weich.

Of course, a large body of work exists on Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* and Douglas

Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.* But none of these works address the particular

relationship between the science fictional and the radiophonic in more than a superficial

manner. I hope that my dissertation can fill these voids in the academic discourse.

This dissertation, nevertheless, remains on the fringe of sound studies, as much as

on the fringe of radio studies. It is neither a cultural history of *Hörspiel*, nor of SF radio

play, nor a study of the use of sound in SF literature. All of these are likely rewarding

projects that should be undertaken at some point. Some of these have already been

undertaken; for example, Ulrike Gottwald's history of SF in West Germany, and Sonja

Fritzsche's history of SF in East Germany, Stephan Weich's history of SF specifically as

radio drama and Goetz Schmedes' attempt at developing a semiotics of radio play, to

name but a few recent examples. What this dissertation *does* undertake is to connect all

these – sound, radio, SF, and literary studies – to Utopian studies, to the idea that there is

a particular relationship between the auditory sense, the radiophonic imagination, the

speculative mode, and the Utopian imagination. I propose that the introduction of the

radiophonic imagination to SF as a critical practice and the Utopian as a critical tool

allows us to go beyond the existing historical or formal approaches of Weich and

Schmedes and show how critical practice becomes part of our everyday engagement with

sound media.

All this is not to say that only the radio allows us to explore the Utopian isle.

Similar studies could be done with writing, theater, film, television, music, new media –

in short, any type of medium that allows us to engage with the kind of tangible illusion I

described above. In Chapter 1, I will therefore outline my main argument with regards to

SF and Utopia using a variety of cultural traditions and media. By asking the question

whether or not Fritz Bischoff's classic radio play "Hallo! Hier Welle Erdball!" is an SF

play, I will investigate what exactly it is we do when we read/view/listen to SF. If SF is

indeed as a mode of reading and the Utopian a type of critical tool, then we have to

wonder if the commonly held distinctions between the scientific and artistic, the natural

and artificial, the real and the fictional can be upheld or if the practice of SF, particularly

in the form of the radio play, does not productively undermine them.

Chapters 2 to 5 will then focus on specific German radio plays. In Chapter 2, I

will listen to Herbert W. Franke's play *Papa Joe & Co* to investigate how the radio

shapes a unique imaginary techno-community. Taking a pointer from Benedict

Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, I will show that such a community is always

imagined as well as imaginary. In Franke's play, this community and its imagined bodies

is framed by the spectrality of the voice, which, in the dramatic setting of the *Hörspiel*,

requires us to fantasize the speaker as well as an imaginary listener. As such, it also

constitutes a Utopian fantasy. Sound media, as both Kittler and Sterne argue, also plays

into the desire of accessing and storing reality without the interference of a superimposed

structure such as language. In Chapter 3, I will investigate how the listener becomes part

of this phantasmatic apparatus in a Utopian desire to access the "real" using Elfriede

Jelinek's *Die Bienenkönige.* The technology itself – transmission and storage – is

revealed as a narrative agent that selects and presents the data available to us. Embedded

in an overt techno-criticism, this discussion of narrative and technological agency also

raises the question whether a critical project that uses the very medium it criticizes is not

also a Utopian project: necessary but impossible. Chapter 4 will take a look at radio as a

peculiar site of memory. As technological artifact, recording technology allows us to

remember a certain place in the history of technology and technological practice. At the

same time, in Ulrich Horstmann's *Die Bunkermann-Kassette,* it transports traces of a past

existence – real or imagined – into our present, in a way film and print are unable to do.

And lastly, in Chapter 5 I look at the way we visualize this allegedly blind medium. By

comparing the way we employ our inner eye when we listen to radio plays to the way we

visualize dreams, I will show how listening to the radio operates under the Utopian

fantasy of total and unmediated communication. Dreams tend to allow us to take the most absurd and grotesque scenarios as literal reality. In that sense, they are both science fictional and radiophonic. Rainer Werner Fassbinder's play *Keiner ist Boese, Keiner ist Gut* presents the fulfillment of this desire as a dystopian scenario.

The Utopia is, as I said in the beginning, a real, tangible place, which is not imaginary even though it requires imagination. The different maps and illustrations that accompany many of the editions of More's narrative through the century speak of a Utopian desire in and of themselves: the desire to find and know Utopia, the desire to be able to understand its layout and its material structure. If we want to understand its topography, that is, to systematically survey this place that has such a fundamental impact on how we understand what the world is and what it can be, we cannot simply look at a map but we must listen to it; it is, after all, a problem of sound. And the best way to do so, at least the way that we will do it here, is in the radiophonic imagination. Our journey to Utopia is a journey into the present: not into an existing, accessible present, but rather into the potential of what our present can be, a kind of future present. By thinking of it in the terms outlined above – as a critical tool that results out of the interference between the desire for a perfect world and the impossibility of finding this desire fulfilled – this future present becomes accessible and thinkable. Like the resultant tone, we can compose, perform, and experience it. It becomes part of the textual make-up of our world, a physical absence that is an illusory presence.

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1   In this, I follow Jameson's habit of capitalizing all things Utopian (cf. Jameson 2005).

2   I am thinking primarily of a BBC production called *Radiovision* from 1963-64, but Brecht's "Flug der Lindberghs" also featured visual, tactile and participatory components, which could be considered radiovisual, but certainly not radiophonic.

3   SF has become the standard abbreviation for science fiction in both expert and layman circles. Alexei Panshin wrote a passionate article, one with which I tend to agree, on why the acronym SF is preferable (cf. Panshin 2013). For one, it avoids the suggestion that SF has to have science as its object and secondly it could also stand for speculative fiction, a term many writers and critics of SF prefer. I will go into the definition of SF in great detail in Chapter 1. I will resort to the term "science fictional" whenever I need to use it as an attribute or any other word class to which "SF" does not easily lend itself.

4   As sound art, instrumental music and non-verbal sound pieces also fall into this category of performative narrative genre. To see to what extent it can be treated as a narrative genre, consider Fred E. Maus (cf. Maus 1997). Mark E. Cory and Barbara Haggh compare the narrative content of experimental music specifically to radio drama (cf. Cory and Haggh 1981).

5   For reference and comparison as well as for the reader's comfort, I will reference passages according to the page number of the published scripts of the plays, rather than the time index of their recording.

6   Ronell refers to such a dialogue as a schizophrenic practice in the context of the telephone. In a sense that in pre-recorded radio plays, the kind I am exclusively referring to here, there is actually no one on the other end but I am nevertheless in a kind of playful interaction with the world of the play, it is more playful and schizophrenic than the telephone in Ronell's reading (cf. Ronell 1989).

Through Alien Ears: SF as Mode of Perception

"Hallo! Hier Welle Erdball!" Make no mistake, these words are coming from earth. They are not alien. The implied listener, on the other hand, is not of this world and needs reminding from where those sounds and noises are coming. To such a hypothetical listener, these words are alien indeed; they need clarification. Fritz Walter Bischoff's famous 1928 radio play, of which these are the opening lines, complies with this request for information and gives a comprehensive, if abstract, montage of words, music, and sounds that combine into an acoustic representation of a modern world. It seems, however, that if this someone actually answered the call, this hypothetical alien listener would be hard pressed to construct an image of Weimar Germany based on the play that would be recognized by Bischoff and his contemporaries at the *Schlesische Funkstunde.* What such an alien might recognize is that Bischoff's work is an exploration of the aesthetic possibilities of radio broadcasting and a new technology for sound recording: Tri-Ergon, a kind of film sound strip, which was then transferred to shellack records for preservation. Radio drama radically changed with *Welle Erdball* as it was no longer performed live around a microphone, but could be recorded, edited, and played again: repetition in always the same form. To this day, *Welle Erdball* is one of the very few early radio plays we can still listen to and enjoy as if it was the roaring twenties all over again. To us, the *Hallo!* is a call from a different time and one that makes us as alien as the extraterrestrial listener from the past.[1]

Extraterrestrial or extratemporal, we may also recognize that the play constitutes a Utopian project. Earth, Bischoff seems to suggest, is contained within the broadcast and transmitted into another world:

Hallo! Hier Welle Erdball! Wer dort?

Kein Geheimnis mehr zwischen Süd und Nord,

Was die Welle empfängt, die den Erdstern umschnürt,

Wir senden es aus, es wird vorgeführt.

("Hello! Earth Calling! Who's there? / No more secrets between south and north, /

whatever is received on the frequency that surrounds earth star, / we transmit it, it

will be presented"; all quotes from Bischoff's play my transcription, all

translations of the play mine)

In our imagination, this world is perfect. But, in a material sense, it is also non-existent: a

Utopian isle. The play poses a problem for the listener. Does the play depict a narrative

reality that we can explore? And, if so, would we not need to take the perspective of the

implied addressee, the alien who needs to learn about Earth? Or, does the play use poetic

imagery to paint some kind of lyrical picture of our home planet? How can we experience

the lyrical, unless we refuse to become aliens to our familiar world? The play addresses

literal aliens and lyrical earthlings, it seems. Is there a difference between these two kinds

of perception? I believe that this tension is at the core of what defines SF as a practice: a

mode of critical reading. If I want to investigate the Utopian through SF narratives, as I

promised in the Introduction, I need to make sure that we know what is meant when we

call something SF, sci-fi, or science fiction.

Genre or Mode?

But is it science fiction? Here is where our Utopian ground becomes shaky and difficult to tread on. To fully understand how I propose to utilize the Utopian to think about SF radio, we have to clarify what I mean when I say "science fiction." For one thing has to be clear: Utopia and SF are not the same, they are not interchangeable. This is what this first chapter intends to do: develop a definition of SF, not as genre category, but as *critical practice*. And, it intends to reveal the underlying Utopian project in the practice of SF. The Utopian, as I discussed in the introduction, is not so much a practice as a theoretical construct that can serve as a *critical tool.* As practices, or tools, as modes of reading and conditions for thinking about texts, SF and the Utopian are closely related as ways to pose critical cognitive challenges to the myths and phantasms that frame the present conditions.

Like *Hörspiel*, SF has been defined in many different ways. Oftentimes, the definitions and classifications emphasize very specific content or plot elements, *de facto* rendering some of the definitions mutually exclusive. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* proposes that "science fiction, abbreviation SF or sci-fi, [is] a form of fiction that deals principally with the impact of actual or imagined science upon society or individuals." According to this definition, *Welle Erdball,* with its modernist celebration of technology, could be read as SF. Likewise, the futurist poetry of Filippo Marinetti would qualify as SF, as it also deals with machines and technology and their impact on modern society and individuals (cf. Marinetti 2005). The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)* would like us to think that SF is "a type of book, film/movie, etc. that is based on imagined scientific discoveries of the future, and often deals with space travel and life on

other planets." According to this definition, neither Bischoff nor Marinetti would be

writers of SF. In fact, the *OALD* definition is so specific in its description of content

details, much of classic SF, like Philip K. Dick's *Man in the High Castle*, would not

qualify, because it is neither set in the future, nor does it deal with space travel or life on

other planets. It seems to me that, rather than to check off a list of content elements, the

more helpful question to ask is what happens in our engagement with the science fictional

text that is different from reading, say, a piece of realist fiction, or a technical manual.

Both these definitions discuss the object of our engagement, not the practice of what it is

we *do* when we read, watch, hear, or write SF.

   Paul Kincaid tries to answer this precise question in his book *What it is We Do*

When we Read Science Fiction. He discusses SF as a web of texts that all show certain

ever-changing family resemblances. Unable to positively define the genre, and unwilling

to abandon the idea of genre altogether, he returns to Damon Knight's statement: "The

term 'science fiction' is a misnomer, […] it will do us no particular harm if we remember

that, like 'The Saturday Evening Post', it means what we point to when we say it" (1).

Neither Kincaid's notion of family resemblance nor Knight's classic aphorism help us to

determine whether or not *Welle Erdball* is SF. But they both introduce the idea of SF as a

kind of practice. Farah Mendlesohn suggests that "Science fiction is less a genre – a body

of writing from which one can expect certain plot elements and specific tropes – than an

ongoing discussion" (James 1). Even a cursory glance at publications of and on SF

illustrates Mendlesohn's point. There seems to be little agreement what exactly defines

an SF text even among experts. Many studies of SF, and the present one is no exception,

open with a lengthy discussion of the particular definition with which they operate.

There is no more agreement among fans of SF than there is among critics. Such discussions are framed by audience expectations, market demands, academic discourses, and developments in scientific research that formulate our representations of the world. John Rieder emphasizes that the category of SF is applied, negotiated, claimed, and redefined over time by "communities of practice" that ultimately determine what SF is at any point in time (*Colonialism* 206). What constitutes SF to the individual reader and how she is positioned within these discussions, depends on which expectations and attitudes she brings to the text. *Welle Erdball*'s lack of narrative may disqualify it as SF for a reader looking to engage with a futuristic vision of our globe. A reader like myself may find the suggestion of an extra-terrestrial audience enough to go on. A study of SF as *genre* will have to expose the expectations and attitudes of a particular definition. Such an analysis would reveal more about the reader than about the text itself. Paradoxically, a theory of SF as *practice* would allow us to refocus our attention on the text. Such a study of SF as practice would talk about what we do when we read a text science fictionally and could incorporate a variety of potentially contradictory expectations and attitudes, as well as a large body of diverse texts.

Mendlesohn's emphasis on the various economies that shape the genre discourse is echoed in John Rieder's position that "attribution of [generic] identity constitutes an active intervention in [the genre's] distribution and reception" ("Defining" 193). This is the last proposition in a sequence of five, concerning the nature of genre, all "leading from the basic position that genres are historical processes to the point where one can effectively address the question about the uses and users" of a genre (192). The first four propositions are: genres are a) "historical and mutable", b) they have "no essence, no

single unifying characteristic, and no point of origin", c) they are "not a set of texts, but rather a way of using texts and drawing relationships among them", d) their "identity is a differentially articulated position in an historical and mutable field of genres" (193). It seems to me that, while Rieder aims to rehabilitate the notion of genre so that it may successfully describe science fiction as genre, what he is effectively describing is not the category *genre* but instead a kind of *mode*.

By applying the label genre, a reader effectively lays down the parameters that will frame how or what a text can mean. The desire to extract a meaning that is somehow hidden from plain sight is in fact a production of meaning. The product that is the meaning I am able to derive from an infinite number of meanings, is at once brought into existence and limited by the structural markers of the genre. I am reading a text, watching a film, classifying a dance routine, a speech act, or a story arch *generically*. In our example of *Welle Erdball*, this would mean that the play itself does not fall into the category of SF *per se,* but that I may or may not choose to read it as either SF or any number of other genres; some more plausibly than others perhaps. The application of a generic category in my act of reading is what I will refer to as *mode* and, in the particular case of SF, *science fictional reading* from here on.

Genre and Mode

The terms genre and mode have been used to categorize, order, classify and systematize a variety of different cultural phenomena and practices. We use genre to distinguish between poetry and drama, between literature and film, between comedy and tragedy, Western and SF, punk and rock, jazz, nu jazz, electro jazz, acid jazz and light

jazz, between SF, hard SF, horror SF, SF horror, SF opera and SF fantasy. This short list of different types of genres – or is it genres of genre? – demonstrates that we use the term genre to distinguish between phenomena and practices that are not on the same level of abstraction and sometimes hardly part of the same discourse. A film, for example, can also be a tragedy and a Western, begging the question what exactly it is we mean when we apply the term genre and what it is we are trying to accomplish with it.

The desire behind the practice of defining genres seems to be the wish to assign them a place in a larger ontological system, in short: the Utopian desire to know their true meaning. In his seminal work *The Order Of Things* Michel Foucault describes order as a state that is akin to the Utopian, as it means to find a "common locus" beneath all the things that are "'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from each other" (xvii). This common locus is, like the Utopian, at the same time real and unreal; it has no real locality, yet it contests our reality. Rather than a catalog of lexical entries that register absolute and definitive meaning, Foucault imagines order as a system of socio-historically constructed laws that give things their meaning in the first place. "Order, is at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language" (*Order* xx). Distinctions are not only inherently apparent in the things themselves, but it is the observer, who provides the grid and the table, who ultimately establishes structure, and for whom this structure constitutes an image of the world. Of course, the observer is not free to invent structure *ex nihilo*, but does so through a history of socially and technologically distributed cognitive acts.

Jacques Derrida refers to genre in a similar fashion when he suggests that the meaning of a statement changes with the genre category applied to it. The genre, in that sense, constitutes a law because "As soon as the word 'genre' is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind" ("Law" 56). Genres are the source of an identity, but it is an identity that is produced by the genre rather than recognized and labeled. For both Derrida and Foucault, the term genre has to do with the practice of making sense more than with the phenomenon of which it is trying to make sense.

Nevertheless, in literary scholarship from Aristotle to Bakhtin, genre has mostly served to classify and analyze texts according to their formal characteristics. If we are looking to make such generic distinctions, it seems that we assume genres to be stable categories that are simply "out there" and that we can identify by looking at specific features of form or content. To avoid the trappings of a generic Platonism, such an approach always has to confront the complex socio-historical dynamics that produce these forms or contents in the first place. A study of poetic genres like Marin Opitz' *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey*, in which he tries to sort through the poetic production of the early 1600s while simultaneously establishing a high German literary tradition, is a product of particular cultural circumstances that speaks of its author as much as of the textual production he is trying to systematize. Of course, Opitz does not use the term genre. But if Franco Moretti is right, that genres are "morphological arrangements that *last* in time, but only for *some* time. Janus-like creatures, with one face turned to history and the other to form" (2449), then any study of form over time is a study of genre.

In the 80s and continuing to the present day, genre criticism has shifted its focus to the socio-cultural circumstances of the literary production away from form and content. The aforementioned approaches to SF by Mendlessohn and Rieder are part of this tradition. Authors like Carolyn R. Miller suggested that a "rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" ("Genre" 152). While I tend to agree with Miller here, it nevertheless appears that all of her analyses tend to focus on forms of discourse that are rather clearly defined as formally identifiable objects of inquiry. In her analysis of the web log, for example, she tries to "establish the central tendencies and range of variation of discourse that is identified as blogs and examine their generically recognized substance, form, and rhetorical action. We explore the ancestral genres that offer rhetorical precedents and patterns for blogs. And we speculate about the recurrent rhetorical exigence that has brought together motivations, forms, and audiences to create and sustain the blog as genre" ("Blogging"). She is concerned with how a text means rather than what it means and at the same time tries to discern which social function it serves for the individual user. Like Foucault and Derrida, she seems to turn her attention to the production of genre rather than their formal appearance as a "natural" phenomenon. But her approach is still limited to the distinct phenomenon of the web log, which implies that, despite her focus on the genre user, Moretti's definition of genre as "form over time" still applies here.

A novel is not a blog, a drama is not a blog, and neither is the *Hörspiel*. A blog will not appear on a stage, in print, or on the radio. But conceivably, we could read a certain blog as SF.[2] It seems, furthermore, that in practice the distinguishing formal

characteristics of a genre, even of the web log, can often not be found in a "pure" variety

that can be matched with the definition. Even a seemingly clearly defined traditional

literary genre such as the drama, can defy rigorous classification, as Heiner Müller's

Hamletmaschine and Goethe's *Faust* demonstrate *ad exemplum*. The *Hörbuch* is another

one of many challenges to this purist distinction. Is a novel that someone reads out loud

for me to enjoy still a novel or a *Hörspiel*? The "superhero" genre, to name another

example, will require a superhero to be part of the diegetic world, yet what is required to

make a heroic protagonist deserving of the prefix "super" seems much less clearly

defined. I may consider Batman a superhero despite his lack of supernatural abilities, but,

to use the language of Jaques Derrida, "another hypothesis, another type of audience, and

another interpretation would have been no less legitimate" ("Law" 56). As a result, the

respective category (drama, superheroism) becomes malleable and less concise and the

level of common features that the genre is intended to designate becomes less clear. The

label SF seems to denote something else entirely. It is not form over time, for it can

appear in all of these guises, even as a blog, without ceasing to be SF. In other words, in

this dissertation I am concerned with something that Miller's socio-culturally oriented

approach does not help us understand. A different analytical term is needed.

While I want to retain Miller's notion of texts as socio-cultural production, I am

less interested in establishing its "central tendencies," "substance, form, and rhetorical

action" that might constitute its science fictionality. Instead, I would like to treat the text,

to use the language of N. Katherine Hayles, as *information*, which only signifies once it is

read out according to specific decoding principles along a chain of codes: "A signifier on

one level becomes a signified on the next higher level" (Hayles 31). If I apply a different

decoding principle, or, to put it more colloquially, if I do something different with the

information, the text will mean something very different. Once more, I submit the use of

the term "mode" to refer to these kinds of decoding strategies that, rather than

deciphering a code's "true" meaning, produce new texts that are themselves open to

reading and interpretation, but that are also framed by the generic laws and limitations.

It could be argued that postmodernism has long abandoned the strict delineations

between genres, rendering formal delineations such as poetry or drama, and content-

based delineations such a Western and *Heimatroman* just as contested as SF, if not

obsolete altogether. Yet, in order to deconstruct or ironize the *Heimatroman*, we have to

first agree what this *Heimatroman* is. Every serious historical study of SF will point out

that it was a heterogeneous field of practices from the beginning (cf. Chu 2010, Fischer

1984, James and Mendlessohn 2009). SF as a genre was at no point successfully defined

in terms of content nor limited to a particular form or medium. To quote John Rieder

again, SF "has no essence, no single unifying characteristic, and no point of origin […] sf

is not a set of texts, but rather a way of using texts and of drawing relationships among

them." ("Defining" 193) In contrast to labels like Western or *Heimatroman*, I suggest that

SF is a mode, insofar as the label SF does not tell us *what* we read, view, or listen to, but

how we read, view, or listen. Instead of privileging a particular reading of the text, I

acknowledge the multitude of possible readings and characterize it instead.

A mode is an attitude that we bring to the text and that the text feeds into. When I

distinguish between genre and mode, I am making a distinction between two different

strategies of approaching texts. Where genre analysis inevitably finds itself returning to

form or content elements, the term mode shifts the focus on how a text is used. To be

precise, the question will not be "how do we use an SF text" but rather "how do we use a text science fictionally." Whereas the answer to the first question requires us to be able to identify an SF text as a genre, the second question treats sf as a mode. It should be answered the same way regardless of the formal manifestation of the text, be it as novel, *Hörspiel*, or blog. The mode will also determine of which generic category I perceive it to be part. Whether Gregor Samsa turns into a metaphor for the alienated modern individual or into a horrifying monster depends on whether or not I use the text in the surrealist mode or the horror mode. Darko Suvin, for example, reads Kafka's famous narrative as a science fiction story (*Metamorphosis* 30). The same is certainly true for the reverse: certain established generic markers will facilitate a certain mode more easily, but, just as frequently, they will disappoint. It seems, however, safe to assume that texts that tend to facilitate particular uses will show certain family resemblances, which, in turn, will allow one to refer back to specific content features. A single swallow does not a summer make, just as a single UFO does not an SF text make.

Underlying this distinction of the science fictional and other modes or reading is the problematic but persistent conceptual tension between "science" and "fiction." This tension results from the perceived incompatibility between two types of narration, which distinguish themselves mainly in the supposed nature of the events they narrate. Science claims to systematically organize the factual, the real, events that have a place in our empirical experience, while the other, fiction, is constituted by the non-factual, the imagined, occurrences that have no place in our empirical experience. That is not to say that science and fiction *are* mutually exclusive or even binary opposites. Much of modern science is highly speculative and only tangentially supported by empirical evidence (cf.

Hawking 1988). Many fictions, on the other hand, draw heavily on historical events,

scientific discovery, or biographical experience (cf. Blume 2004). Proponents of

"fictionalism" go as far as to argue that, because truths are always relative to the

discourse in which they are claimed *as* truth, they have to be regarded as a kind of fiction

that requires a certain suspension of disbelief (cf. Ecklund 2011).

Yet, in practice, there is a clear operational opposition between science and fiction

when it comes to their own the fundamental attitude towards the world, or rather, each

one produces a narrative that requires a distinct way of relating that narrative to the

world. It seems that science and fiction are *modes* that simply operate with different

claims as to the truth value of their statements. If we call something science, we attribute

a different status within the epistemological structure of the world to it than we do if we

call something fiction.

I suggest that SF exposes this opposition as unstable and artificial. While this

opposition, which is so deeply ingrained in our modern understanding of the world is

constantly there, and its traces can be felt, it holds no immediate meaning in the world of

SF. On the contrary, SF constantly oscillates between accepted scientific knowledge and

fantastic invention. Cutting-edge scientific theory – such as multi-dimensional universes

and worm holes – frequently inspire science fictional narratives. In turn, these narratives

frequently inspire scientific ideas and theories (cf. Broderick 2000). In that sense, SF

operates in the Utopian space in-between. SF is a resultant of the two opposing

frequencies of Science and Fiction (as fantasies, larger than themselves, they deserve

capital S and F). In the process of representing this imaginary binary, of course, the

fictitious opposition is exposed, challenged, and dissolved.

Estrangement and Alienation

Now that I have established that SF should be treated as a practice and not as a generic label, we have to ask, what exactly constitutes this practice and how is it different from other reading practices? What do we do when we engage a text science fictionally? Again, the answers are legion: Darko Suvin argues that SF texts cognitively estrange us from our present concept of the world (7); Elfriede Jelinek believes that SF allows us to interrogate the present in a process she calls *durchspielen* ("Vorrede") that is the playing out of hypothetical scenarios. Jean Baudrillard finds that SF expands the familiar to the "nth power" (122) and so estranges us from our present at the same time as it gives us a sense of familiarity and predictability of the future. Dieter Hasselblatt uses the terms "Kalkül" and "als ob" to characterize the hypothetical aspect of SF imagination ("Radio" 1993). Alexei Panshin considers SF to be a "stone axe" with which we crack our sense of reality open (Panshin 1978). Despite the vastly different backgrounds of all these thinkers, the common idea that connects all of them is that SF serves as a tool to investigate, or work through, hypothetical scenarios, and that this exercise has an effect on our present. They all describe SF as a practice. Not as a kind of prophetic prediction of the events ahead, but as a mind game that exaggerates, transforms, and modulates the here and now to a point at which it becomes either grotesque or desirable, a dystopia or Utopia. At the risk of getting ahead of ourselves, it is in this deliberate hope for a better here and now, or at least for a better understanding of the here and now, that SF exercises its Utopian potential.

SF is a critical practice that is in dialogue with other critical practices, and which produces SF texts and science fictional readings, which are in dialogue with other texts and readings. But what distinguishes a science fictional reading from, say, a realist reading or fantastic reading? Often contested, frequently modified, but never truly overcome, I find Darko Suvin's influential definition of SF as the most helpful starting point for our discussion:

> SF is, then, a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment (*Metaphorphoses* 7).

Suvin suggests that SF creates a sense of estrangement that, in a kind of cognitive feedback process – we will have to look at that more closely later on – changes our understanding of the here and now. As discussed at length above, I do not agree with Suvin that SF is a genre, nor is it necessarily literary. His emphasis on "estrangement" already opens up his definition to my project as it poses the problem of how a text can be estranging, unless the reader experiences it as such. For whom, or how, is a text estranging? The alien listener of *Welle Erdball* may be very estranged indeed, but an experienced listener of Weimar radio plays would experience only limited estrangement. The concept of space travel in Méliès' *Voyage dans la Lune* may have been extremely estranging at one point, but may not be so anymore. Does the text itself then cease to be science fictional? And what about a reader for whom a trip to the moon still appears like an outlandish fantasy in 2013? To such a person, Buzz Aldrin's autobiographical young

adult fiction *Reaching for the Moon* may appear as hard-SF. Again, the quality of the

science fictional seems to be an issue of how we read, rather than what. A first rephrasing

of Suvin in the light of our investigation would have to be as such:

> *SF is a mode of experiencing the presence and interaction of estranging and*
>
> *cognizing effects of a text, regardless of the medium in which the text is engaged.*

There is still another problem with Suvin's definition. The emphasis on "the

framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" seems to be devised to

dodge the question, where mere bewilderment by a certain plot device ends and cognitive

estrangement begins. Does an audience that laughs at the preposterous plot twists in a

soap opera experience cognitive estrangement? Does an audience of the

Verfremdungseffekt of Brechtian epic theater experience cognitive estrangement? Are

either of these SF? Suvin's definition, in agreement with the majority of literary critics,

would say no, as both of these scenarios deal with a framework that is not alternative to

the author's empirical environment. The plot lines in a soap opera may not be probable

but certainly possible and Brecht may not have lived through the Thirty Years War with

Mutter Courage, but her story is part of his and our shared history.

However, it seems unhelpful to concern ourselves with the writer's empirical

environment if we want to describe a practice of reading/listening/viewing. It is not as

easy as replacing the author's with the audience's environment as the litmus test of

science fictionality, because I would still be concerned with the problem of having to

apply an objective, or, as Suvin puts it, empirical category to the text. We would simply

compare the reader's biographical place in the world to the world of the text and decide

whether or not the text is SF. According to such an approach, a German reader would

consider the alternative outcome to World War II presented in *Man in the High Castle* to

be SF, while a reader unfamiliar with European history would consider it a historical

account (cf. Dick 2007).

What I am suggesting, however, is that, independently of their knowledge of

"actual" history, each reader could read Dick's novel both of these ways and many more.

A text does not automatically *become* SF if the "imaginative framework" changes, but I

can approach a text in the mode of an SF reading. Whether or not I treat the text as a

viable alternative to my present conditions is related to, but not determined by, my

present conditions. This attitude will not only determine the degree of my estrangement,

but also how this estrangement feeds back into my present conditions.[3]

Ernst Bloch clearly distinguishes estrangement from the concept of alienation.

Both play into our reading and perception of SF texts. Alienation is a process by, or a

state in which something is removed from its proper condition and finds itself no longer

whole – wholeness being a fiction in and of itself, of course. Estrangement, on the other

hand, is the process by, or state in which something is placed out of context and made

unfamiliar. Brecht famously uses the idea of estrangement as a pedagogical tool which

Bloch describes as follows:

> The *Verfremdungseffekt* [unfortunately often translated as the alienation effect
>
> rather than estrangement GR] now occurs as the displacement or removal of a
>
> character or action out of its usual context, so that the character or action can no
>
> longer be perceived as wholly self-evident. Then, the scales may fall from one's
>
> eyes – exempla docent, although only by means of indirection. The roundabout

way proves to be the shortest, and displacement leads to present revelation – a

method, of course, much older than our term ("Entfremdung" 121).

In other words, we process information that otherwise would have escaped our attention

in new ways and thereby hopefully enhance the complexity of the way we conceptualize

this information. Realism conceals these inherent contradictions and ambiguities in our

image of the world by perpetuating the fantasy that it can show the world "as it really is."

In doing so, it glosses over the subjectivity of its own perspective and presents this

perspective as objective truth. It introduces its objects as if they offered themselves to a

lossless mimesis. Losslessness – a term I am borrowing from sound recording, where it is

used to refer to file formats that do not compress data and so, allegedly, provide a pure

aural mimesis – could only occur if, as Baudrillard puts it, "the map ends up covering the

territory exactly" (1). Brecht was highly critical of this kind of representation and pointed

out that such a mimesis is always an illusion. Through *Verfremdung*, this illusion is

broken and exposed to the viewer. As a deliberate attempt to estrange us from our present

conditions in the hopes of improving them, *Verfremdung* is an expression of a Utopian

desire.

There are, however, many ways by which we can make the familiar strange, call

attention to that which goes unnoticed, or show things in a new light. SF certainly does

that, but so do horror and fantasy.[4] For Suvin, the degree of estrangement could be

marked on a sliding scale with two imaginary and idealized poles: pure realism on the

least estranging end of the spectrum, and pure fantasy as the most estranging on the other.

But, once again, there are many examples of fantastic narrative worlds like *Harry Potter*

that are, save for the estranging elements, rather realistic. While Suvin's model allows us
to account for the fact that essentializing generic labels rarely describes the text in
question in helpful ways, I find that it does not adequately describe how our reading of a
text as SF differs from a reading of a text as fantasy.

What makes the SF estrangement so peculiar and radically different from fantasy
is its relationship to the Utopian impulse. As we saw in Bloch's discussion of Brecht,
such an impulse aims at changing our present conditions. Texts that imagine alternative
realities such as fairy tales, myths, fables, horror stories, or fantasy, operate with moral
and metaphysical absolutes. They are on the other side of the "great schism" between the
science fictional and the fantastic, as Jameson puts it (*Archaeologies* 57). For the most
part, they feature epistemologies characterized by simple and static dualisms (good/evil,
right/wrong, mortal/immortal, and, most importantly, mundane/magical). SF however
operates with the complexities and ambiguities of our own "real world" epistemes.[5] In
Suvin's words, "myth is oriented toward constants and SF toward variables"
(*Metamorphoses* 27) and is therefore much less predictable in its outcome.

Jameson acknowledges that in practice these modes are not as clearly separated as
that (68). The example of *Star Wars* involves many static dualisms and elements of
magic, yet there is also moral ambiguity in the very figure of Darth Vader and his son
Luke Skywalker. The final battle is won with bravery and technology, not magic. So, is it
SF or fantasy? Some other examples appear to be more clear. Imagine if in *Fahrenheit
451* Montag did not run away to the retreat of the exiled book-lovers, but instead used a
magic spell to avert the war and restore the practice of reading (cf. Bradbury 2012). The
implication of Bradbury's masterpiece would inevitably be that we need to wait for

magical intervention to turn around counter-Utopian impulses in our own society. The impulse to change our present conditions would be much less powerful.[6]

The Utopian desire for a better society would be stifled if the only way to achieve change was to involve some kind of transcendental and absolute power that controls the narrative universe and which is, more importantly, absent from the reader, viewer, or listener's own universe. Such powers can be fate, destiny, god(s), or magic. If, for example, divine intervention is necessary to make the world a better place, then my hope, if there can be any, will be directed at the redemption by a force that is out of this world. Rather than an expression of desire, the Utopian impulse becomes an issue of faith.[7] Even the world of an alien like Mr. Spock is also *our* world, and I may aspire to his Utopia, whereas Harry Potter's world is not – or if it was, it would be unobtainable for *muggles* like us. To be clear, I do not, as Suvin does, suggest to look for certain plot points to place a text on a spectrum between SF and fantasy, but I suggest that we may read certain content elements as more or less congruous or incongruous with the here and now. This distinction between narrative worlds that are congruent with our actual world(s) and those that are incongruous is already implicitly present in Suvin's definition through the concept of cognition, and it therefore warrants a closer look.

Science Fictional Cognition

In recent years cognitive science has made a remarkable and productive impact on literary scholarship. Authors like Lisa Zunshine, for example, have taken approaches from evolutionary psychology on how our mind works and applied them to literature. N. Katherine Hayles did the same with cybernetics and digital information technology. On

the one hand, these critics are trying to explain why certain fictional characters behave

the way they do, and, on the other, to explain why we read fiction in the first place. These

debates have influenced and complicated our use of the terminology to such an extent

that we need to distinguish it from Suvin's use. I believe that, in the end, we can reconcile

them.

For Suvin, *cognition* is not a psychological problem, but a methodological one. In

his use it mainly means *understanding* according to the logic of the "Cartesian and post-

Baconian scientific method" (*Metamorphoses* 64).[8] Whether we process information in

form of a cognitive automatism or consciously deduce sense data into a statement about

our world is not of primary interest to Suvin. What matters to him is that the basic

propositions of the diegetic world, which he earlier called the imaginative framework,

can withstand such scientific rigor. "The cognition gained may not be immediately

applicable, it may be simply the enabling of the mind to receive new wavelengths, but it

eventually contributes to the understanding of the most mundane matters" (30). In one

form or another, SF always questions its own narrative premises: How is this possible?

How did we get here? Why should I believe this? If we are unable to answer these

questions, then estrangement outweighs the element of cognition and no productive

feedback to the present is possible.

Of course, cognitive processes of the kind Zunshine and her peers are interested in

are also in effect when we read or write SF, just as they are when we read or write fantasy

or realism. Zunshine's main object of inquiry is our *Theory of Mind*:

Theory of Mind is a cluster of cognitive adaptations that allows us to navigate our

social world and also structures that world. Intensely social species that we are,

> we thus read fiction because it engages, in a variety of particularity focused ways,
>
> our Theory of Mind. (162)

One of these focused ways she discusses is "mind reading" skills. The term mind-reading is used:

> interchangeably with 'Theory of Mind,' to describe our ability to explain people's
>
> behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires. Thus we engage
>
> in mind-reading when we ascribe to a person a certain mental state on the basis of
>
> her observable action. (6)

For the most part, we engage with and exercise our mind-reading skills involuntarily and subconsciously. For example, when we attempt to understand what is going on in texts that try to deceive their readers, we try to speculate about the text's theory of our minds. Octavia Butler frequently withholds information about the gender or ethnicity of her characters to trick the reader into recognizing her biased expectations, when unexpectedly it turns out the protagonist was a woman or black or in any other way different from the generic convention (cf. Butler 45).

However, it would be very difficult for us to apply our Theory of Mind to *Welle Erdball*'s implied alien listener. I argue that only SF draws our attention to these cognitive processes by confronting us with consciousnesses that are not human and contexts that are unfamiliar to us. As captain of the *Enterprise,* James T. Kirk frequently is at a loss to mind-read his alien counterparts. William Adama of *Battlestar Galactica* commands his chief scientist Gaius Baltar to build a machine that can detect Cylon

infiltrators, precisely because his Theory of Mind fails him. In Chapter 2, we will see

how our consciousness is filtered through that of one of the protagonists of Franke's

Papa Joe & Co, in an attempt to read the mind of a consciousness that turns out to be

entirely simulated by a complex machine. A full discussion of how cognitive approaches

to literature relate to SF and radio would extend beyond the focus of this study, although

we will return to Hayles' notion of "distributive cognition" briefly in Chapter 3. For now,

we can see how Suvin's notion of cognition (as scientific logic) and the more

contemporary use (Theory of Mind) relate to one another: combined with the estranging

quality of the SF world, the former draws attention to the latter and helps us exercise our

Theory of Mind in even more complex and perhaps new ways.

Suvin's enthusiasm for science as a truth-finding method and the fact that his

entire notion of cognitive estrangement rests on a Cartesian *cogito* as stable and reliable

presence is certainly problematic. The list of authors and arguments who have criticized

Cartesian essentialism is long and needs no repetition here. Especially for Michel

Foucault, the idea that reason could arrive at universal truths is highly suspicious. In his

analysis, reason and truth appeared not as unchanging and essential values but as part of

epistemic structures that enforce their own hierarchies. Instead, he argued that truths are

always framed by the particular political and social forces at play at any given moment.

We will see in Chapter 3 how SF itself can serve to critically approach this sense of truth

and knowledge. The desire to apply the present standards of rationality – with all the

ontological stability that this promises – and to be able to tell flight of fancy from

possible future is a Utopian desire. Cognitive processing, if taken to mean process of

rational understanding, is not a stable concept but a fantasy. To be clear, cognition is not

a fantasy, cognition muddled with the promises and fantasies of rationality, however, is. Foucault teaches us, many times over, that rationality has not always been the distinguishing factor to tell between "realistic" and "fantastic," "possible" and "impossible," "true" and "false," but has, along with these dichotomies themselves, a long and contentious history of its own (for example, in *The Order of Things*).

The ambiguity of a post-modern world view, as Marie-Laure Ryan points out, does not lend itself to story-telling and to the experience of narrative worlds. "This conception of space [as unstable, discontinuous] is more hostile to immersion than the mental fog that conceals contradictions, because the imagination presupposes the container of a Cartesian space for the shapes of objects to be representable at all" (*Virtual Reality* 125). This is true especially for SF worlds that often depend on recognizable scientific concepts and generalized hypotheses. In this context, we can redeem Suvin's trust in the Cartesian concept of science as a precondition for our experience of science fictional worlds, rather than a normalized and universalized ontological structure. The scientific in SF necessitates the possibility of truths, centers, and hierarchies even if the text's estranging and awe-inspiring quality is aimed at exposing them as phantasms.

Jameson argues that Suvin's use of the term cognition can be understood as Utopian in another sense as well. "The role of cognition in SF thus initially deploys the certainties and speculations of a rational and secular scientific age: Suvin's innovative use of this concept presupposes that knowledge today – Marx's General Intellect – includes the social and that therefore the reception of SF ultimately includes the utopian." (*Archaeology* 63) By acknowledging science as a collective discourse, rather than a Cartesian judgment, Jameson opens Suvin's postulate of scientific rigor up to a collective

Utopian endeavor. The introduction of Marx's *general intellect,* mentioned only in passing by Jameson, opens the idea of cognition to all intellectual production of a particular society in a particular point in time. The SF text is part of this production as much as the machine that prints the book or transmits the radio broadcast.

Moreover, our concept of cognition, our models of the mind, of human consciousness, and the human being as such, are effected by a history of technological discourses. As the work of N. Katherine Hayles shows, from Freud's writing pad to computer processing, our understanding of the human mind has always been modeled on the form of information technology available at a given time (Hayles 2008). For Friedrich Kittler, too, human imagination and intellectual production, down to the concept of the self, is always contained within the structure of the available information technology (*Gramophone* xviii). Cognition itself then changes in the process of engaging with SF's Utopian impulse as it is manifest in technological invention. Most recently the self-contained data processing capabilities of the computer and the cybernetic hive-mind of the internet have served as fruitful touchstones for discussions about the human mind, even if, as in Raymond Tallis' case, only to tell us that the "mind is not a computer" (cf. Tallis 2004). To fashion models of the mind after machines that are themselves expressions of Utopian desires suggests that our desire to understand the human mind is in itself Utopian.

How can we write a text that is so estranging as to open a new and previously unavailable perspective on the here and now, while remaining plausible at the same time, without regurgitating the same laws and privileges established by the phallogocentric tradition of reason? The Utopian, as such, is self-consciously anthropocentric, inviting

postmodern and even posthuhmanist criticism. Yet, I believe that the non-location of the

Isle of Utopia and its decentered movement within a network of codes, and its ability to

be dramatically reshaped by a single argument, a single contradiction, even on a whim,

makes it flexible enough to withstand this objection. The science fictional Utopia is

focalized through minds that are not necessarily human, that do not necessarily have

bodies as we know it (for example, the mutants in Die *Bunkermann-Kassette*); it allows

us at least to suggest perspectives otherwise unavailable to us (the artistic fantasy world

of *Die Bienenkönige*). A story told through the eyes of an alien will not actually help us

cognize the world in a radically alien way, but it can approach this perspective. New

technologies that force new habits of reading, of engaging with texts, that even create

new texts, push us further into this direction. The radio, which plugs us into its sensory

deprivation tank, is certainly one of them.

Cognitive Estrangement

By themselves, neither cognition nor estrangement are sufficient conditions for a

science fictional reading of a text. The strength of Suvin's argument and all its

derivations, including my own, lies in the combination of the two. We experience

cognitive estrangement when the narrative world is plausibly derived from our own

actual world, instead of having its own set of rules that have no conceivable place in our

empirical environment. George R.R. Martin's dragons in the *Game of Thrones* series,

Harry Potter's magical talents, either of these are incongruous with our actual world. The

genetic manipulation in *Gattaca* and even the twisted evolution of *Planet of the Apes* are

rooted in the scientific discourses of our time.[9]

Carl Freedman recognizes that, in Suvin's use, cognition "enables the science-fictional text to account rationally for its imagined world and for the connections as well as the disconnections of the latter to our own empirical world" (17). Freedman's argument takes us back to the SF/fantasy divide, or, rather, the SF/fantasy continuum, as he argues that purely fantastic texts do not exist. There are always connections as well as disconnections to our own empirical world. In fact, Jameson and Freedman would certainly agree that a world without these connections cannot be imagined or, well, cognized. He suggests to think of cognition as a "cognition effect" that does not require "any epistemological judgment external to the text itself on the rationality or irrationality of the latter's imaginings, but rather […] the attitude *of the text itself* to the kind of estrangements being performed" (18, emphasis original). It is, in other words, not important whether time travel is possible in the actual world, but whether the text proposes it as a rational possibility. C. S. Lewis' Aslan, the talking lion, would then be a science fictional character, because his existence is congruent with the epistemological structure of the fictional world of Narnia.

However, to identify the cognitive element in such hermeneutic terms poses a problem as John Fekete has pointed out. The very idea of estrangement as a Utopian impulse depends on the extra-textual connections that, if regarded as merely an attitude of the text rather than a re-contextualization of the "all-too familiar" world in which we live, would lose some of its theoretical rigor (cf. Fekete 2001). Rather than to reflect directly on our own actual world, a hermeneutic cognition effect would allow us only to reflect on the diegetic world of the text. Nevertheless, to think of cognition and estrangement as effects of the text, rather than as a pedagogical message about the here and now, which

the text might be determined to convey, allows us to limit the importance of the author's attitudes and increases the importance of the act of reading, listening, viewing as science fictional practice.

The notion of a textual effect, rather than a totalizing generic category, allows us to analyze and interpret individual elements of a text. Darth Vader's mind controlling powers in George Lucas' *Star Wars* – in fact the entire plot line about "the force" as the source of a Jedi's abilities – have no footing in our actual world. They would have to be judged as a fantastic invention. Other elements of the same franchise (diplomatic androids, interstellar alliances, trade stations on remote planets, etc.) are clearly science fictional in their exploration of the familiar in an estranged, yet plausible context.

Furthermore, I believe that Freedman's definition helps to classify texts as SF which may appear rather fantastic even if they may have at some point been conceived as thoroughly scientific. Such a shift in the cognitive and estranging effects of a text can occur, for instance, because our epistemological framework has meanwhile changed. I am particularly thinking of some works by late 19th and early 20th Century authors like Jules Verne, Kurd Lasswitz, and H.G. Wells, whose science fictional imaginings no longer have the same effect on us as those of their post-modern descendants.

Science Fictional Mimesis

How can this "new" and "strange" be (re)presented in the first place? Just how new and strange can SF get? Even in its exaggerated, speculative, or estranged form, we always present something that already has or has had a presence someplace in our actual world. It is, of course, not entirely novel to suggest that nothing can be imagined which

does not operate within the coordinates of our present system. Regardless of how we

might conceive of history – as a dialectic *Aufhebung* (Hegel), a succession of social

(Marx), biological (Darwin), or technological revolutions (Kittler) – we are never outside

of its material conditions. We are not autonomous and neither are our imaginings. This is

why Jameson is "generally inclined to think today that there is nothing in our possible

representations which was not somehow already in our historical experience"

(*Archaeology* 170). This is not to say that we can only imagine variants of what already

was – a model much too prevalent in SF writing – but that the question of "what will be

possible" has to be framed in our understanding of "what is possible." For this reason

Kurt Lasswitz writes about flying bicycles, Phillip K Dick about flying cars, and Heiner

Müller, occasionally, about spaceships. The desire for representation, a topic we will

return to in chapter 5, is then a Utopian desire in and of itself.

If SF and *Hörspiel* cannot represent completely fantastic and alien "objects" or

assume entirely fantastic and alien perspectives, what can it do that realism cannot? Seo-

Young Chu suggests that it is not SF's foremost feature to represent the counterfactual,

the unrealistic. Instead, it represents that which otherwise escapes representation. SF, she

argues in her excellent introduction to *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?,* is not

contrary to reality but "operates fully within the realm of mimesis" (3). Her "Science-

Fictional Theory of Representation" as the subtitle of her book calls it, uses a problematic

definition of mimesis as representation of the real in art. She explicitly accepts "as a

postulate the capacity of language to reflect a reality ontologically prior to

representation" (2). Since I have thus far gone through great efforts to avoid such a claim,

I will need to clarify how and why I think Chu's idea of science fictional mimesis is nevertheless useful.

Chu suggests that objects and concepts, like the global village, cybernetic hybridity, traumatic memory of war, that have only elusive referents in the real world – that is, they exist but can only be represented in terms of metaphor – become literal reality within the realm of science fictional representation. They can take the form of Asimov's villages that cover whole planets, Gibson's cyber cowboys, and Vonnegut's time traveling soldiers (cf. Chu 3). Taking a cue from Suvin and Freedman, she goes on to argue that all modes of representation, "to the extent that it is impossible to establish full mimetic correspondence between referent and representational text" (5), negotiate the dialectic between cognition and estrangement discussed earlier. In contrast to Freedman and Suvin, however, Chu argues that this negotiation is not a feature of the text or the science fictional imagination, but a feature of the object of reference. In that sense, Chu does not return to defining SF by its themes, or motifs, but by the referents it seeks to represent. Rather than a catalog or checklist of elements that, if present in sufficient number may constitute the SF text, she examines the represented object for its estranging, or wondrous, qualities and whether or not it requires a science fictional mode of representation. "A successful work of SF is one whose wondrous effect on its reader reproduces the wondrous qualities of the object or phenomenon that the work of science fiction mimetically represents" (5).

I argued earlier that the mode of engagement determines how we perceive reality, that the science fictional changes how we experience the present, and that any claim to stability and absoluteness is a Utopian proposition: impossible but necessary. I believe

we can productively utilize Chu's notion of science fictional mimesis if we acknowledge

that the object of representation is in and of itself produced by an act of interpretation and

metaphorical representation. While there is a phenomenon that we understand in terms of

a "global village," which has a real and fundamentally material basis – global

communication, global economies, global communities and identities – the need to

describe it in the form of a metaphor is a stark reminder of the *inability* of language to

reflect a reality ontologically prior to representation. That, however, makes the operation

of science fictional mimesis ever more interesting, because it is a deliberate move to

estrange ourselves from our habitually accepted forms of representation. If we conceive

of mimesis not as a form of faithfully imitating reality, but as a coming to terms with

reality (literally: defining the terms by which we engage reality in the process of trying to

represent it), then I believe we can put her definition of "science fiction as a mimetic

discourse whose objects of representation are nonimaginary yet cognitively estranging"

to good use (3).

As Ernst Bloch points out, readers experience this kind of wonder, amazement,

and awe that shakes us in the very foundation of our subjectivity in the process we earlier

referred to as estrangement. Bloch sees a parallel to Kant's notion of the sublime: "With

this [Kant's sublime] we reach the outermost limits of our subject, which begins in every

slight hint at distance; and in some sense the category, estrangement, may be excessively

stretched and strained to accommodate this play of mind: the real function of

estrangement is – and must be – the provision of a shocking and distancing mirror above

the only too familiar reality; the purpose of the mirroring is to arouse both amazement

and concern" ("Verfremdung" 125). Wonder and estrangement are processes set in

motion by a tool, a mirror in Bloch's example. A mirror, which in itself does nothing,

only releases its wondrous and estranging effects in play; that is, if someone, some

cognizing consciousness, looks into it. Estrangement is then not something the text *does*

but that the text, like the mirror, *enables*. Whether or not I am awed depends on my

reading, my engagement with the text, not alone on the text itself.

From a psychoanalytical standpoint, we have to wonder how cognitive

estrangement compares to Freud's uncanny. Since we defined the Utopian as a form of

desire, it seems only obvious to view the forms of recognition and estrangement through

the lens of Freudian discourse. For Freud, the uncanny is borne out of the cognitive

dissonance that occurs when something appears familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

That which is familiar may appear in the guise of something strange and terrifying and

that which is strange and terrifying may have traits of the known and comforting (cf.

Freud 2010). Matthew Beaumont takes a closer look at the Freudian underpinnings of

Bloch to illustrate that "The future estranges the present," because it is "lodged like a

fragment inside it" (232). In the Utopian impulse, we recognize the no-longer-conscious

(Freud), rather than the not-yet-conscious (Bloch). Rather than recognizing a repressed

event from the past, we recognize the future in the present, to the same uncanny effect

Freud describes. The effect is uncanny because it points to cracks and imperfections in

the present that are profoundly unsettling. Beaumont calls this the "historical uncanny"

(Beaumont 232). For our purposes it suffices to say that, for Freud, the uncanny is

produced a) by processes that are entirely unconscious and b) by effects of the past on the

present. Cognitive estrangement, as developed presently, is produced a) by processes that

are both unconscious (the effect of awe and wonder) and conscious (the deliberate

requirement of epistemological contiguity) and b) by effects of the future on the present.

To identify the estranging and awe-inspiring elements of a text, Bloch introduces

the term "Novum." Istvan Csicsery-Ronay (Jr.) describes the *novum* as "an intermediary,

dialectical moment that brings renewed energy into history with each appearance" (48). It

inspires hope, allows us to fantasize Utopias, but never achieves the point of materiality:

we cannot touch a *novum*. Csicsery-Ronay points out that Bloch's n*ovum* is deeply rooted

in the past by a "historical-material logic [that] is not derived from empirical experience,

but from a higher, mystical-ethical rationality inherent in the world" (48). But it is not a

messianic return of something that was lost, but the Utopian recognition of a future

renewal, that already took seed in the present and past. The renewal occurs when the right

socio-economic conditions fall together with the progressive perspective of the Utopian

imagination "so that this *novum* can break through out of mere incubation and suddenly

gain insight into itself" (*Principle* 124).

An invention as such is not a *novum*. Even though Friedrich Kittler famously

argues that a history of ideas is closely connected to a history of technology, such

invention always depends on the socio-economic particulars of the specific moment (cf.

Kittler 1999). Each new invention engenders new ways of thinking about the world and

changes these socio-economic particulars, which in turn produce new inventions. Alexei

and Cory Panshin agree that an invention can bring about a moment of "crisis and

opportunity" as well as result out of one. But it is this moment that incites a shift in the

present episteme, not the invention itself that renews our present conditions. They

consider SF a "literature of the mythic imagination" insofar as SF, through a sense of

wonder, amazement, astonishment, creates certain myths which transcend SF literature

and manifest in certain images, icons, and motifs (13). "The story of the complete life

cycle of this myth [begins] with the first faint glimmerings that 'science' might be a new

name for higher possibility, and ending with modern mythmakers able to imagine that

mankind might assume control of its own destiny, establish a galaxy wide stellar empire,

and evolve into a higher order of being. [The central ideas come from] a time prior to the

point when this literature even had a name up until the moment of crisis and opportunity

when mythmakers came to the realization that their sense of higher human potential

could no longer be contained by the name 'science' and began to use another" (12).

While the idea of SF as a myth-making genre might seem to fly in the face of Suvin's

cognitive estrangement at first (Is not the feature of a myth to normalize rather than to

estrange? Does it not point to some kind of transcendental center?), the notion of a

moment of crisis, which destabilizes the status quo, and opportunity, which points into a

hopeful future, links it directly to Bloch's and Suvin's discourse.

Suvin picks up the idea of the *novum* from Bloch but, Csicsery-Ronay observes,

he "downplays Bloch's messianic framework, bracketing out the apocalyptic shell after

extracting the pearl of the utopian urge" (49). SF literature simultaneously exposes and

examines the *novum* through the operation of cognitive estrangement. Yet inherent to the

concept of cognitive estrangement is the idea that change and renewal can only occur

against the backdrop of our current and practiced episteme. This prevents Suvin's *novum*

from becoming a form of spontaneous revolutionary force that could radically change the

status quo.

The *novum* – in Panshin's terms the moment of crisis – finds representation in the

science fictional imagination as a new motif (for example: the cyber cowboy) or a play

on an old motif (time travel). Therefore, it seems that Chu's science fictional object

shows a lot of family resemblance with Bloch's *novum*. Chu, however, dismisses Bloch's

term as mystical, because, rather than an empirical phenomenon, it was treated as a

"philosophical concept used by Ernst Bloch to signify the periodic irruption of timeless

newness into the continuum of history" (23). This is an assessment with which I strongly

disagree. As cause to Panshin's "moment of crisis and opportunity," the *novum* is a very

real site of experience. The *novum* is, of course, not a stable phenomenon that submits to

representation, but a social product (the idea of the social product, too, seems to lend

itself best to science fictional representation) and thus inherently Utopian in the sense that

it points from its production into the future and back to a (better?) present. The

representation, Chu's science fictional mimesis, is an unpinning of the novum from its

momentary, historical context but not a freeing from context *per se*. This is the critical

impulse of cognitive estrangement we have seen in Bloch, Suvin, Freedman, Jameson,

even Panshin, and now in Chu. Science fictional representation is not a positive

examination – in the sense that we can put the novum on an operating table – but a

negative one – in which we make the novum visible by amplifying the crisis or

opportunity into a speculative future. That which escapes representation because we can

only know it after the fact can be represented via the operation of science fictional

mimesis.

Chu's argument solves the problem posed by Suvin's heavy reliance on the

author's empirical environment for his concept of both cognition and estrangement. I

suggested that the effect of estrangement might wear off over time, but some older texts

retain a surprising freshness. This is not because they were written in a different historical

context than the others, but because their "science fictionness" is produced through the

process of reading/listening/viewing. What I know, what I believe, how I am situated

within the socio-economic coordinates of my interpretive community will determine if I

read something in a science fictional mode or not. This will be different for each reader,

listener, viewer and this can happen consciously ("I am now reading SF") or

subconsciously ("I am reading something and it has the cognitive effects of the science

fictional mode on me").

SF is, in a strict sense, a mode of reading characterized by the choice to take the

implausible as plausible and literal but at the same time acknowledges that it is not of this

world. This is what makes the critical force of Utopia and SF possible in the first place.

Ursula K LeGuin's Gethenians in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, whose ambiguous

biological sex creates a world without gender, are a literal reality, and rational scientific

explanations for their existence are provided. Chu might say that they represent the

cognitively estranging object of fluid gender boundaries as a literal reality in the SF

world. They are, in that sense, not ambiguous but estrange us from the heteronormative

social realities of the here and now. This negotiation is a performance of the Utopian

impulse inside the text. It is an integral part of how we tell our story and is thus a

substantial element in the production of that which we call real. Once more, Jameson:

> the debate over Utopia's representability or not, indeed over its imaginability and
>
> conceptualization, does not threaten to put an end to Utopian speculation
>
> altogether and to return us sagely to the here and now and our own empirical and

historical limits. Rather such debates find themselves drawn inside the Utopian

text, thereby becoming occasion for further Utopian productivity (*Archaeology*

142).

The desire for representation and its alleged realization in form of "inner vision,"

"photographic realism," "blind imagination" are Utopian isles themselves and can be, as

we will see in the following chapters, represented in form of Chu's science fictional

mimesis. Representation is a Utopian desire; representational art is the expression of this

desire.

Hallo! Welle Erdball!

The last verse of Bischoff's *Welle Erdball* celebrates technology in a lyrical and

poetic way. It summarizes the project of the play as a form of multifarious montage of

truths, lives, and consciousnesses all available on the radiophonic switchboard:

Umschalten! Umschalten!

Das Leben in tausend Gestalten,

Die Wahrheit in tausend Systeme gespalten!

Was sollen wir tun?

 Umschalten!

Schaltet Euch um, dann seid Ihr im Spiel.

Eins, zwei, drei, der Plumpsack geht rum.

("Switch! Switch!/ Life in a thousand guises,/ The truth split into a thousand

systems!/ What should we do?/ Switch!/ Switch yourself over, for you are in

play./ One, two, three, the *Plumpsack* goes around.")

Since the speculative alien listener from the beginning of our chapter might be unfamiliar

with the concept of poetry, this mind might answer the call as if it was a science fictional

metaphor; as a story about a machine that, with the flick of a switch, perhaps executed by

someone named *Plumpsack*, controls truth and life, via a multitude of information

technological systems. Not from this world, this alien listener would be greatly estranged

by such a reading. New perspectives and insights on the there and then of extra-terrestrial

life would become available and the status quo would be challenged. A conscious or

unconscious choice to read and listen in a different mode would radically change the

effect of the text.

　　　　The broadcast itself, directed at an unknown receiver, is a gesture toward the

Utopian potential of radio. I will spend the remainder of this study examining the

particular relation between the mode of SF, the Utopian, and the radio, especially the

radio play. My speculation about a radically different reading by an imaginary

consciousness which is unavailable to us was in itself a science fiction and a Utopian

gesture. Hopefully it engendered more cognition than estrangement. Either way, I hope to

have shown that we read/listen/view in acknowledgment that the narrative world is

different from our actual world, but we treat its elements not as metaphor, but as literal

truth. The general epistemological framework, that is the framework of plausibility of

these truths, is congruent with our own and linked, in one form or another, to the here and

now. SF is a critically productive mode of reading.

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1   Incidentally the first ever audio recording in 1877 features Edison saying the exact word "Hullo!" before singing "Mary Had a Little Lamb." He, too, addresses an alien listener (cf. Kittler 1999 and Sterne 2003).

2   For example the websites tor.com and IO9.com feature a number of blogs about SF, about technology that is so advanced it seems like it comes out of an SF narrative, and, blended with the above, posts that could be read as SF proper.

3   A brief, illustrative anecdote may be permitted at this point: A good friend of mine, now a successful journalist, refused to read novels and rarely watched fiction films as the elements that we consider plausible and realistic (happy endings, chance meetings etc.) struck him as highly estranging. Of course, it is precisely the "unrealistic" yet naturalized attitudes Natural Narratology is tackling these past few years.

4   Of course humor, famously argued by Freud, and also breaks up our familiar world. Yet, it seems to me that such estrangement affirms the present conditions more than it breaks them. Humor does not present a plausible alternative but an implausible one (cf. Sheehan 2009)

5   In fact, SF is only possible in the current epistemic structure of the world. Based on Copernicus, Galileo first conceives of the Universe as an endless space. In Foucault's view, this "constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open space" ("Heterotopias") marks the transition from Middle Ages into a new, Early Modern period. SF only works in such an open space and is therefore a uniquely modern form of literary production.

6   Benjamin Bennett distinguishes conservative tendencies of writing and the revolutionary tendencies of the theater (Bennett 2005). Martin Sheehan distinguishes the conservative tendencies of conventional comedy from the progressive tendencies of radical comedy (Sheehan 2009). Maybe, for a future study, it would be possible to distinguish between these two tendencies in realism and fantasy. I do not see how fantasy can be revolutionary without significant epistemological overlap with the actual world. This, of course, would make it SF.

7   It is therefore no coincidence that the Copernican Revolution, which practically took magic (religious or otherwise) out of the equation, coincides with the first classic texts of Science Fiction: Keppler's *Somnium*, which shows the known world from the perspective of another planet. More's classic Utopian text, too, divorces its program from matters of Christian dogma and is characterized by a surprising degree of religious relativism.

8   Bacon, of course, laid down much of this scientific method, in his own Utopian program, which he called "New Atlantis" in 1624.

9   In 2011 *Planet of the Apes* even spawned a sequel *The Rise of the Planet of the Apes* to more plausibly make the connection between the 1968 classic dystopia and the contemporary practice of pharmaceutical testing on primates.

Radiophonic Utopian Communities: The Dictator's Voice in Herbert W. Franke's
    Papa Joe & Co

The first time Papa Joe appears, we do not hear his voice. All that makes us aware of

his appearance is a simple announcement by a priest – "Papa Joe, Papa Joe. (73)" – and

the subsequent cheers of the masses. The masses cheer although, we are told, they see

Papa Joe only on large video screens, like one might see a rock star in a stadium concert:

a larger-than-life projection that serves as some kind of hyperreal footnote to a small

indiscernible figure on the papal balcony, which seems to say: "this is what you are

seeing." While they see the mediated shadows of his presence, we hear their reactions to

these images: they express their love for their political and spiritual leader and give voice

to their ecstatic joy of being part of his community. What the masses cannot know is that

Papa Joe died long before the events of the play. A powerful machine recorded, stored,

and now replays his voice and likeness. While everyone in Papa Joe's world, in contrast

to us, the radio listeners, can see the images of Papa Joe, only those who undergo a

baptism ceremony to accept Papa Joe into their lives can hear this voice. During the

ceremony, without the knowledge or express consent of the baptized, a neuro chip is

implanted. Only if connected to the machine can his followers truly be members of Papa

Joe's community. Only then can they have their prayers heard and, most importantly,

hear his voice.

Papa Joe's physical absence, or, as we shall see, the transformation of his

physical substance into the radiophonic apparatus, figures centrally in Herbert W.

Franke's radio play *Papa Joe & Co*, from 1976. His voice masks the absence of his

physical body and creates an illusion of cybernetic consciousness that belongs to a new

kind of radiophonic presence. In the following pages, I want to show that this voice

speaks to us from the island of Utopia, a space in between the actual here and the

fictional there.

If I succeed, we will be able to understand how we as listeners/readers/viewers

imagine ourselves as part of radically Utopian communities. In fact, we literally become

part of such communities via the process of radiophony. As Allen S.Weiss puts it so

eloquently:

> For radiophony is not only a matter of audiophonic invention, but also of sound
>
> diffusion and listener circuits or feedback. Thus the paradox of radio: a
>
> universally public transmission is heard in the most private of circumstances; the
>
> thematic specificity of each individual broadcast, its imaginary scenario, is heard
>
> within an infinitely diverse set of nonspecific situations, different for each
>
> listener; the radio's putative shared solidarity of auditors in fact achieves their
>
> atomization as well as a reification of the imagination. (6)

My argument will take the form of a feedback loop, which I will trace from the user's

posthuman subjectivity through radiophonic circuitry to the atomized masses who people

Utopian empires of simulation and back. By tuning in, it bears repeating, we cannot help

but become citizens of Utopia.

The author of *Papa Joe & Co*, Austrian Herbert W. Franke, is one of the most

prolific SF writers in the German language. Despite the size and quality of his *oeuvre* –

between the early 1960s and the mid-nineties he published more than 20 novels, a great

number of essays and short stories, and produced 12 radio plays – very little critical work

has been written on him. *Papa Joe* shares none of the literary experimentalism of the eminent representatives of Germany's golden ages of radio like Bischoff or Eich, nor does it share their reputation among literary critics. Franke's radio work seems to go unnoticed by the standard surveys of German *Hörspiel,* with the two great exceptions of Dieter Hasselblatt and William B. Fischer. The latter considers it "a classic of German SF [which] can serve to document the excellence of German SF within world SF" ("Radio" 218). Fischer's enthusiasm for *Papa Joe* is largely fueled by Franke's clever use of experimental recording technology, such as mirroring the theme of sonic mind-control with *Kunstkopfstereophonie,* the technology used to record the play. It is this emphasis on technology in both the story world and the production of the play as such that lends it so well to my investigation of the Utopian dimension of the radiophonic voice.

At first glance, or rather at first listen, the joy and happiness in Papa Joe's community, with its religious and nationalistic overtones, strikes us as highly suspicious. What is Utopian about a theocratic dictatorship? Our insight into this community is filtered through the perception of the two envoys from New Europe, Boris Van Feldern (Hansjörg Felmy) and Boerk (Uwe Friedrichsen), who visit the realm of Papa Joe (Wolfgang Büttner) to establish diplomatic relations with New America. Initially, Van Feldern is so intrigued by the happiness and dedication of Papa Joe's followers that he undergoes the baptism ceremony and, without his knowledge, receives the implant that allows him to hear voices of angels and, later on, of Papa Joe himself. After a period of extreme joy and commitment to Papa Joe, Van Feldern becomes disenchanted with Papa Joe and refuses to obey his command to betray New Europe during diplomatic negotiations. For this, he is expelled from the community. He can no longer hear the

voices and experiences an extreme sense of loss and loneliness. Boerk is skeptical from the beginning and eventually, saves Van Feldern from the control of Papa Joe's technoreligion. It is Boerk who reveals Papa Joe as a radiophonic cyborg to Van Feldern and to us.

However, he keeps this secret from the people of both New America and New Europe. Boerk decides not to destroy the machine that keeps Papa Joe's voice alive, for he believes that, in the right hands, it would be a means for governments to make their citizens happy. Boerk recognizes the machine's Utopian potential as something that exists independently of the particular program it is trying to deliver. "Es gibt auch Regierungen, die nach Mitteln suchen, die Menschen intelligenter, freier, glücklicher zu machen ..." ("There are also governments looking for means to make humans more intelligent, more free, more happy..."; 125) to which Van Feldern replies "Sie haben recht, der Gedanke ist zwingend. Man kommt nicht darum herum: Müssen wir dieses System wirklich zerstören" ("You are right, the thought is compelling. There is no way of getting around it: Do we really have to destroy this system"; 125)?

Cybernetic Specters

Boerk's response is the final verbal utterance of the play, asking whether anybody, or perhaps any human, has the right to destroy such a machine: "Dürfen wir es zerstören" ("Are we allowed to destroy it"; 125)? The choice between using the machine for good, as defined by our two protagonists, or preventing its abuse by rendering it inoperable, is a moral choice and it is a choice similar to the audience's whenever it listens to the radio. Has the medium not been thoroughly tainted by the radio propaganda

of the Nazi regime? Can this medium, which was used to draw millions towards a criminal dictatorship, be used to critically reflect on itself? Van Feldern and Boerk mirror our own options when we engage with narrative realities, particularly those which describe Utopian or dystopian worlds. Like Van Feldern, we can suspend disbelief and literally immerse ourselves into Papa Joe's audile world, or, like Boerk, we engage with suspicion and never become part of this world. The stakes in this decision are higher than it may seem for the moment. Let us not forget, it is Boerk, the skeptic, who controls the narrative in the end by keeping the machine's secret to himself. And, it is Van Feldern, the believer, who suffers. To give in to the machine/narrative, it seems to say, is a dangerous and potentially fatal thing.

It strikes me that this choice between immersion into the narrative world and critical distance between rapture and rupture is a Utopian fantasy in and of itself. The choice is made the moment the radio is turned on (the book opened, the curtain raised) and turned off again. I am enraptured, immersed, repelled according to a) the particular context of perception, b) my particular psychological and cognitive disposition. While some texts lend themselves more to immersion than others, as Marie-Laure Ryan points out, I cannot choose to be immersed (9). In fact, the more I want to be immersed, the less likely it is that I will be. My point is that, while the medium's message is neither good nor bad, it is always Utopian. The Utopian impulse is inseparable from it and whether it leads to totalitarian regimes (Nazi propaganda) or their downfall (Mann's speeches) is a matter of the socio-historical circumstances.[1] The technological possibilities – that is, all the potential applications of a particular technology – are always already realities and it is the task of the Utopian explorer to recognize these potentials.

If this is true, and neither technology nor the circumstances of our engagement are neutral with regard to the actual-world consequences of the Utopian program they inherit, we have to ask who or what controls either one of them. Chapter 3 will pursue this question in greater detail, but we can already anticipate the argument that agency in this matter is suspended in the audio play (*Hör-spiel*) between the technology and its users, who find themselves diverse multitudes of producing and listening situations. The technology influences the choices an author or a producer can make, it limits what and how we can see, hear, smell or feel, but the users determine to which degree the particular technological features of the technology unfold. Whether this user is at the producing or the receiving end of the radiophonic machinery matters not. This, among others, John Cage has demonstrated so effectively with his compositions, involving radios or record players that can be manipulated by the audience, radically reducing the control of the sender over the listening experience and turning the audience into producers in their own right.[2]

Boerk's controlling influence on the apparatus that produces Papa Joe is analogous to the influence of author Herbert W. Franke and producer Dieter Hasselblatt on the apparatus that produced the play itself. Like Boerk, they frame their critique of technology with great enthusiasm for it; that is, for the very technology the play appears to criticize. The use of technology to control individuals, they appear to say, is dangerous and unethical. Yet they try make their argument and to convince the listeners with the subtle use of immersive technology. Of course, the existence of the play, as well as our discussion of it here, defies the play's own critical premise: actual control, that is, forcing listeners into a certain behavior is impossible, otherwise we could simply use the

technology to change people's minds rather than to merely raise questions. This critical

project is in itself Utopian as it acknowledges its own impossibility, while being

absolutely necessary as a self-conscious exorcism of the medium's historical role in

aligning the masses of Nazi-Germany. Only the Utopian critique of radio can neutralize

the medium's ideological ballast and return it to a state of neutral play.

   But while it is true that the radio text is always a play (*Hör – spiel*) of technology

and our engagement with it, the bodies of writer, actor, and engineer – in short, all the

bodies that produce the sounds coming to our ears – haunt the radiophonic imagination,

as well as all the instances of its uses and abuses. And while, unlike Hamlet, we cannot

get these specters to speak to us directly, they do beckon us to listen and they do exert a

certain influence over what and how we experience in our engagement with the machine.

Although Heiner Schmidt is credited with directing Franke's script for the Bayerische

Rundfunk in 1976, both Franke and Hasselblatt were closely involved with the

production, exerting a tangible influence on the final product, as William B Fischer

describes so vividly in his essay "Literatur für Leser and Listeners: Herbert W. Franke's

'Papa Joe & Co.'" Even Fischer is not entirely certain which feature of the final

production needs to be attributed to Franke and which to Hasselblatt. It is clear, Franke

and Hasselblatt haunt the play, in fact all German SF radio plays, like Papa Joe haunts

New America: from behind the scenes, or, in Papa Joe's case, from beyond the grave.

Like the dictator, they frame what we hear, how we perceive. They exert power over the

moment of perception. Furthermore, they are, like the dictator of New America, specters,

replayed and brought back to the listening present by the apparatus, over and over again.

Every time we listen to the play, every time the radio announcer (or is it a priest?) speaks

the words "A play by Herbert W. Franke" they return and take control over our minds.

"At bottom, the Specter is the future," as Derrida tells us, "it is always to come, it

presents itself only as that which could come or came back" (*Specters* 1739). Boerk's

refusal to destroy the machine, and our participation in the radiophonic technology,

threatens the return of author, producer, director, dictator. But, as we shall see, in true

Utopian fashion, these specters pull us away from the present moment into the future (or

past?) from whence they came.

In a way, our recognition of the spectral presence of critical agency (or narrative

agency as such, as we shall see in the following chapter) forces us to acknowledge N.

Katherine Hayles' postulate that humans are and have always been in a cybernetic

relationship with technology (Hayles 291). The boundaries between the machine and its

users have become so fluid, that we ought to consider ourselves no longer human. The

term, as conceived by classical humanism, operates with a natural Cartesian subjectivity

that is independent of and merely contained in an equally natural body. Instead, Hayles

suggests, we should think of ourselves as posthuman organisms for whom subjectivity is

the product of a variety of cognitive functions, one of which is its embodied form (2).

Where liberal humansim saw a conscious presence in a particular autonomous body,

posthumanism sees streams of information flowing from biological bodies into their

prosthetic technological extensions. "Moreover, the idea of the feedback loop implies that

the boundaries of the autonomous subject are up for grabs, since feedback loops can flow

not only *within* the subject but also *between* the subject and the environment" (Hayles 2;

emphasis original). Radio, it seems, allows for a flow of information of a very particular

kind, most obviously with regard to the often observed phenomenon of seemingly disembodied sound.

We will get back to the problem of the voice and its embodiment shortly. For the moment, I would like to concentrate on the specters which haunt this type of extended, intersubjective, cybernetic being. If Hayles is correct in saying that human consciousness is a mere byproduct of (biologically as well as artificially) embodied cognitive processes then any type of control over these embodiments (the specter of Franke, the listener who turns off the radio, meteorological interference etc.) is a form of taking agency over the listener's subjectivity. All these acts of exerting control, or at least at attempting to exert control, are, of course, Utopian gestures: impossible, but necessary. As I said, a lot more is at stake in Boerk and Van Feldern's final and open-ended dialogue than initially meets the ear: our very identity as autonomous liberal subjects is threatened. We are, it seems, already absorbed by Papa Joe's Utopian community.

The Voice from In Between

We can see that the boundary between the recording studio and the machine that re-samples Papa Joe is becoming more and more permeable. Specters move freely from one realm to the other, mirrors produce the outside on the inside, and centers of meaning are pushed to the margins, all via the spectrality of sound, particularly the voice. Yet even this dictator's voice, unlike the *Führer's*, is haunted by another body that also claims this voice as its own. It is possible to read Papa Joe's words silently, yet this would merely mean to engage with the transcript of an event. Much information is lost in the transfer from acoustic to graphic image. We may try to sound it out in our head, to *give* Papa Joe

a timbre, a volume, phrasing, etc. But in the end, we would only be speaking to ourselves, like Van Feldern does when he is expelled from the community. *His* voice does not speak to us from the page all by itself, but only from the radio with the aid of a borrowed larynx.

The voice cast of 1976 was comprised of, at the time, popular German TV and Film actors, with Boris van Veldern spoken by Hansjörg Felmy, Börg by Uwe Friedrichsen, and, finally, Papa Joe by Wolfgang Büttner. It is likely that at least some in the audience in 1976 would have recognized their voices. Yet, he who speaks to us *is* Papa Joe. I do not mean this in the way we may think of Hamlet as speaking to us rather than Laurence Olivier. We can still see Olivier behind Hamlet when he takes his bows. I mean it in the most literal way, that the voice coming from the radio *is* Papa Joe. It cannot take off its costume and will remain Papa Joe as there is no off-stage or off-air on the radio. Büttner's voice is re-sampled to become the voice of an *Other* for the duration of the play – it will, by the way, reincarnate as the Bunkermann in Chapter 4. The radio voice is broken up into two. It has two or more bodies, for it exists not only in New America, but also in the actual world in which Wolfgang Büttner is a minor international film star. There is no way for us to distinguish between the two. For all intents and purposes, the voice we hear *is* Papa Joe, but his voice has no single physical center but oscillates between bodies in both the narrative world and actual world.

Roland Barthes discusses this relationship between body and voice along its material trace he calls "the grain of the voice." In his example, he is not talking about the *Vorbeter* I quoted at the beginning of this chapter and who first introduces Papa Joe to us, but he is talking about a cantor nonetheless when he points out, that "[t]he voice is not

personal: it expresses nothing of the cantor, of his soul; it is not original (all Russian

cantors have roughly the same voice), and at the same time it is individual: it has us hear

a body which has no civil identity, no 'personality', but which is nevertheless a separate

body" (182). The voice, in other words, produces a trace of the body, but, as a

materiality, it has no inherent meaning. I may find it pleasurable or displeasing, soothing

or irritating, but these "adjectives," as Barthes calls them, are not a quality of what the

voice says, the "geno-text;" rather they belong to the "pheno-text" that is:

> all the phenomena, all the features which belong to the structure of the language
>
> being sung, the rules of the genre, the coded form of the melisma, the composer's
>
> idiolect, the style of the interpretation; in short, everything in the performance
>
> which is in the service of communication, representation, expression. (182)

By placing Papa Joe's message, literally, into the mouths of other people, Papa Joe's

body is written even more thoroughly out of the play and integrated into the electronic

circuits of the machine in and outside of the play. The trace of Papa Joe's body and the

body of his cantor(s) is, moreover, distorted and obfuscates as it gets filtered,

manipulated, modulated by a variety of sound media. There are megaphones, loud

speakers, recordings, all different types of sound textures that distance the masses in the

play from the source as much as Franke's audience, the masses listening at home on the

radio.

In the very first paragraph of his groundbreaking *Understanding Media*, Marshall

McLuhan makes a similar claim as to how our biological bodies and their socio-historical

contexts intersect with their artificial environments: "During the mechanical ages we had

extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned" (3). The radio is linked especially closely with our cognitive apparatus. "Even more than telephone or telegraph, radio is that extension of the central nervous system that is matched only by human speech itself" (302). Unfortunately McLuhan's analytic language remains imprecise, as he elsewhere compares the radio transmitter to the human voice (80) and so conflates speech and voice in his metaphor. Moreover, his notion of extension seems to imply a kind of technological determinism and evolutionary teleology that strikes me as misplaced. Technological change is by no means a unified human experience that gets us closer to the Telos of a Utopian state. It often poses challenges to it as, not least of all, the disastrous outcome for the techno-dystopia in *Papa Joe & Co* demonstrates so vividly. McLuhan's concept of extension always points back to one or multiple human bodies or agents as the driving force behind, and users of this technology. If the radio is both a form of extension to voice and/or speech and a rival, as McLuhan suggests, should we not think of it as something that operates on its own terms?

What we can take away from McLuhan is at least this: the voice I hear emanating from a living human body in front of me and a machine that produces a synthetic voice, here the voice on the radio and the machine that transmits it, are two separate and distinguishable objects. But they closely implicate each other in terms of how we relate to them. As N. Katherine Hayles might argue, the larynx, too, is simply a different type of technology, organic and interconnected with its artificial prosthetic extensions such as the microphone, the transmitter, the receiver, and so forth. This is why I have discussed, and

will continue to do so, the aspects of my argument about the radiophonic Utopian

community which concern the technological apparatus, along with those concerning the

act of listening, imagining, and engaging with the narrative world. They are not the same,

but they are inseparable. Without the biotechnology of larynx and middle-ear (or their

prosthetic counterparts), there would neither be a voice, nor the ability to hear it.

And, without the voice, there would not be this mystical inter-personal link that

reaches from the inside of one body to the inside of another. Jean-Luc Nancy emphasizes

that sound, in contrast to the image, operates less with the structure of mimesis (it does

not so much imitate "real life") but methexic contagion (it *is* real life and therefore

invades or carries over something from one place to the other) (Nancy 10). In that sense,

as I argued before, the voice of Papa Joe does not give an image of the dictator's

presence, it does not recall his presence in the listener's mind the way a film or

photograph would, but it purports to *be* the essence of the leader itself. The contagion of

the integrated biological body in Franke's play works in true posthuman fashion, as the

cybernetic technology that makes the voice audible inside Papa Joe's followers is

implanted directly into their brains, the mythical seat of the mind.

I suggest that it is in answer to this link between body and machine that Adorno,

in his essay on "The Radio Voice," attempts to develop a physiognomy of the radio. In it,

he likens each part of the radiophonic apparatus to an aspect of the human body complete

with ears, mouths, and diaphragms ("Radio Voice" 372f). He demands that his approach

be taken as metaphor, but that does not mean that he is not serious about it when he asks

us to think about the dial of the radio as a face behind which we speculate about the

interiority of an alien other. The face, that is, the barrier between the here and there, the

now and then, is transcended by the voice. "The radio voice, like the human voice or

face, is 'present'. At the same time, it suggests something 'behind' it. In listening, one

lacks a precise and clear consciousness of what this something is. At any rate, it appears

merely by means of the experience of it" (373). By making this comparison – which is, as

John Mowitt points out, uncomfortable even for Adorno himself (Mowitt 37) – Adorno

inadvertently emphasizes two things: one, he wants us to regard the radio as part of the

larger organism that includes the social. The users' bodies are extension to the apparatus

as much as it is theirs. It is not just a passive transmitter within a community of stable and

autonomous beings, but something that has a physical effect on these beings and their

identities as individuals and the community they form.

Secondly, society has an impact on how radio is shaped (cf. "Radio Voice" 369

and 372). What he terms the "The Radio Voice" is an in-depth description of the way

radio comes into its own as a technological and social entity. "Radio has its own voice

inasmuch as it functions as a filter for every sound. Due to the comprehensiveness of its

operation as a filter, it gains a certain autonomy in the ears of the listener" (371). It

creates a unique and recognizable sound by changing the sonic features of the material it

broadcasts (symphonic music, in his analysis, is compressed into a less dynamic sound

spectrum, some frequencies are lost, others are amplified) and, in turn, changes the way

we produce and consume this material as individuals and as social beings (music is

performed in a manner that suits the radio, while we listen with a different degree of

attentiveness, we can change volume – radio encourages atomistic listening) (cf. "Radio

Voice" 369). By insisting that radio has a voice of its own regardless of the

transmission's content, Adorno ties the materiality of the broadcast to what I would call a

fantastic radiophonic entity. The voice implies some kind of being that resonates in the

sound. John Mowitt observes that Adorno's "radio voice is different from both voices and

music, presumably because it emanates from somewhere that neither the voice nor music

can name" (33).

In his seminal analysis of speech and writing, Derrida begins by identifying a

mythical link between the voice and meaning. By exploring the double meaning of the

French *entendre* (to hear, to understand) he is able to connect the concept of hearing

one's voice and understanding the concept of selfhood. He calls it the "system of 'hearing

(understanding) - oneself-speak' through phonic substance – which *presents itself* as the

nonexterior, nonmundane, therefore nonempirical or noncontingent signifier"

(*Grammatology* 8, emphasis original). This presentation of the self to the self, exterior to

the body leads to the notion that the boundary of inside and outside is stable, yet

permeable to the voice, which can communicate the inside to the outside. This unity of

voice and meaning, of course, Derrida rejects vehemently as a myth of western

logocentrism.

Mladen Dolar picks this thought up with the intention to rehabilitate the voice as

an object that, as Mowitt puts it, "tear[s] a hole in our wholeness, meaning that [it]

mark[s] a limit of and in our identities" (25). The voice, as Dolar explains, is a peculiar

object of inquiry. It is, in fact, three different objects because in addition to "two

widespread uses of the voice – the voice as the vehicle of meaning; the voice as the

source of aesthetic admiration – there is a third level: an object voice which does not go

up in smoke in the conveyance of meaning, and does not solidify in an object of fetish

reverence, but an object which functions as a blind spot in the call and as a disturbance of

aesthetic appreciation" (4). There is the geno-textual information conveyed by the voice

and the non-verbal pheno-text, which Barthes refers to as the voice's grain (cf. Barthes

1977). On the third level, we find the object "voice" itself, which is neither a carrier of a

message, nor mere aesthetic sound object, but a message in and of itself. The voice too, in

Dolar's reading, is a medium that is also a message. Dolar's argument highlights the

problem I am trying to bring into relief here:

> There is an uncanniness in the gap which enables a machine, by purely
>
> mechanical means, to produce something so uniquely human as voice and speech.
>
> It is as if the effect could emancipate itself from its mechanical origin, and start
>
> functioning as a surplus – indeed, as the ghost in the machine; as if there were an
>
> effect without a proper cause, an effect surpassing its explicable cause – and this
>
> one of the strange properties of the voice … . (8)

As such, the voice appears as an effect of the thinking mind, a link to the subjectivity of

an *Other*:

> It is as if the voice could subjectify the machine, as if there were an effect of
>
> exposure – something becomes exposed, an unfathomable interiority of the
>
> machine irreducible to its mechanical functioning, and the first use of subjectivity
>
> would be to throw itself at the mercy of the Other, something one can best do with
>
> the voice, or can do only in one's own voice. (8)

The machine Boerk and Van Feldern do not dare destroy produces more than just a

message and is more than an object of aesthetic admiration. The machine at the

imaginary center of the play (or the bodies, – mechanical and biological – at the margins

of the play that produce its center) are "thereby producing the most human of effects, an

effect of 'interiority'" (8). His mechanically re-produced voice – just like Boerk and Van

Feldern's, or Uwe Friedrichsen and Hansjörg Felmy's – produces Papa Joe's interiority,

which, like the resultant tone, is an impossible necessity, a Utopian isle. Our engagement

with this interiority, and all the suggested interiorities networked with it (other characters,

actors, listeners etc.), is as private and individual as it is public and communal.

    This paradoxical status of the radio as being private and public, individual and

social at the same time, is addressed by Adorno, who argues that it is a unique feature of

the "Radio Voice. The radio is able to create an illusion of closeness, despite the fact that

the listener is absent from the performance and barred from the physical presence, real or

imagined, at its origin:

> To be sure that is partly due to extra-musical factors such as the attitude they [the
>
> listeners] can afford to assume at home in face of their wireless set as against the
>
> position they must take at more or less official occasions, where they are forced to
>
> keep silent on account of the person in the next seat, and take on a serious air for
>
> the sake of social prestige. Whatever the extra-musical factors account for: the
>
> illusion of closeness, which may well include them, the over amplified noises by
>
> which the radio set appears to approach its owner-victim, undoubtedly play a
>
> major part in immediate radio phenomena (347).

The owner-victim whose private space is, so to speak, invaded by the specters from the

other end of the transmission, falls prey to this illusion of a physical presence. It becomes

clear that the intimate connection to speculative interiority behind the voice (Papa Joe,

the world of New America, the sound studio, the actors etc.) is induced by the

technological structure of the machine as much as the metaphysical status of the voice in

western thought.

This public intimacy of the radio is further aided by one of the distinctive features

of radio: its mobility. Adorno argues that radio is less mobile than the phonographic

record, while temporally more immediate to the event of the broadcast. "But its mobility

is limited by precisely its 'presence,' by the uniqueness of the live event" ("Radio Voice"

379). This sense of uniqueness prevails, even if the event is a broadcast of a previously

recorded event. The pre-determined time frame ensures the sense of a particular

experience that is shared universally between all members of the audience

simultaneously. In light of the technological changes that occurred since Adorno wrote

his essay in the late 1930s, his assessment of the immobility of the radio experience

hardly holds. We can listen in the car, in supermarkets, and, as podcast for example, even

on the subway. We are not bound to our seats. Even early radio was mobile in the sense

that we could move freely within earshot and go about our business, if only the receiver

was turned up loud enough. Unlike a visit to the theater – or to the living room television

for that matter – the event of engaging with sound does not stand out, does not break

routines, and becomes part of our everyday activities. Our mind, Rudolf Arnheim

reminds us, wanders if we do not have a binding visual stimulus (8). We look at our

surroundings, read signs and notes, think, ever so briefly, about unrelated issues, only to

be even more startled when a surprising sound emanating from the world of the play,

pulls us back into the narrative.

Papa Joe's haunting presence is not limited to the page or the screen, but manifests the way only sound can, in my present surroundings. What Arnheim calls "wandering" does not weaken the entanglement of the radiophonic imagination with our actual world but strengthens it, since it blurs the line between narrative world and actual world. It would take a lot of focus to keep the two strictly separated. Because we do *not* have the darkened auditorium of the theater or the televisional living room when we drive, take the subway, or go to the store, and because we do *not* have the visual frame of the printed page, we are not only immersed in the narrative world, but the radiophonic entity from the narrative world, with its voices and sounds, crosses over to us. Papa Joe becomes part of our world and we part of his. We exist with him in the same space in between his world and ours. This space "in between" is the place where we are simultaneously immersed in and expelled from Papa Joe's Utopian community.

Utopian Empires

After the initial sounds during the opening scene of *Papa Joe* – buttons being pushed, tape being stopped, rewound or fast forwarded, played again – we can hear that a message is deciphered by means of electronic filters. A voice, not Papa Joe's, emerges from the noise and the static. It utters a warning, and it is a warning to us as much as to the intended addressee: Do not to take anything you may learn about New America at face value, suspect ulterior motives, watch out for psychological manipulation. "Bleiben Sie wachsam" ("Stay alert"; 71)! The electronic filter that scrambles this warning is a vocoder. It uses the envelope curve of one sound to render another one unintelligible. Once the process is reversed at the receiving end, the original transmission reappears.

The invention of this technology became possible, as Friedrich Kittler points out, when

scientists of the 19th century started to think about sounds in terms of frequencies and

patterns that follow the laws of math, not anatomy. As mere formula, sounds, even

voices, become independent of the resonating body that might produce them. Broken

down in such a way, sounds can be split up, separated and broken into pieces and, if so

desired, put back together again simply by analyzing their components (*Gramophone* 24).

The warning that opens the play and which emerges out of the artificial, man-made sound

scramble, is necessary: none of the sounds we hear, none of the information we get can

be taken at face value. What we hear as a mass of people (scene 2) or a car race (scene 7),

may be sounds taken from other sources, manipulated into giving us the illusion of being

earwitnesses to the actual events. This conceptual split between the sound and the

materiality of the body is what allows Papa Joe to live on. The sound of his voice is

produced and reproduced by a machine that does not imitate the body but that organizes

and reorganizes the sound of his voice.

This shift in thinking about media as extensions *of* but independent *from* the

biological body (something McLuhan was unwilling or unable to consider), was

necessitated by the demands of war, as Friedrich Kittler emphasizes (*Gramophone* 103

and 108). Simultaneously, this link to warfare forces us to think about bodies as

machines. The vocoder was initially developed for espionage, distribution of secret

orders, and, inevitably, mass murder (49). Since then, of course, Robert Moog and

Wendy Carlos liberated it from the laboratories of military bases and research universities

and released it into the pop-cultural Utopia of mass entertainment. Papa Joe and his

Utopian community that is created by his voice, are, in that sense, products of war. It

appears that Utopias, at least radiophonic ones, are always products of war: Kittler

emphasizes that the audio tape – the first mobile, cost effective, and easy-to-edit

recording medium – is, like stereophonics and the vocoder, an invention of World War II.

In 1944, British soldiers found and seized recording machinery developed by German

engineers which made it possible to produce broadcasts that were indistinguishable from

live ones (108). It was this war-time invention that made Arnheim's 1936 Utopian vision

for the future of radio drama a reality, not a decade later:

> It would be a step of great importance for the development of the art of radio
>
> drama, if every radio play which used space and montage as a means of
>
> expression were not 'performed' in the studio as if on the stage, but were recorded
>
> piecemeal on film strips like a sound-film, and the individual strips cut properly
>
> afterward and mounted as a sound-film (126).

Such filmic editing became possible thanks to the demands of the Nazi propaganda

machine.

The "world-war audiotape inaugurated the musical-acoustic present. Beyond

storage and transmission, gramophone and radio, it created empires of simulation" says

Kittler (108). These simulated empires, and Nazi Germany was one of these as much as

Papa Joe's New America, are radically Utopian, as we shall see. The radio experience of

the voice, as it occupies the space between the here and there of narrative reality and

actual world, pulls us within their boundaries. Earlier, I evoked Derrida's notion of the

specter to discuss the invisible hands of author and producer and their effect on what we

hear. In the opening scene of Franke's play, an invisible hand turns the dial of the

vocoder for us to make the connection between all that haunts the machine – all the ghosts of past suffering and enjoyment, of war and peace, conflicting ideologies and entertained masses – before our own ears. The machine's violent roots allow it to effectively colonize its users into Utopians. It makes us citizens of the "empire of simulation" on the fly.

The simulation goes as far as to build a model of the listener, a kind of universal stand-in in the studio for the particular at home. In the early seventies, *Kunstkopfstereophonie* tested the waters of a 3D listening experience by placing two microphones inside an artificial head, right where the ear drums would be, to imitate the acoustic qualities of the skull. Binaural beings are able to map sound-fields spatially because they hear sounds with a certain time difference between left and right ear. As the sound waves travel around the head, the brain calculates the sound's origin and places it into a spatial model of our surroundings. By imitating this function of spatial mapping, the *Kunstkopf* becomes a bio-technological hybrid; it is human and machine.

Again, there is a link to the destructive inventiveness of war. As Kittler elaborates, German bomber pilots in World War II used the same principle of aural mapping to navigate in the night and find their targets in Coventry and London. They received different radio signals for each side of their headphones, each signal representing one leg of an angle, the point of which was right over the drop zone. As long as both sounds, left and right, sounded like a single sound, they knew that they were on course. The pilots would be able to release their deadly load without having to see the target on the ground (*Gramophone* 100). The very principle of aural mapping was used to turn the pilots into more efficient killing machines that can go beyond the limitations of

human vision. Of course, had the enemy been able to make sense of the signals, that is, had they been able to become the machines that can understand the code, they would have been able to find the pilots and shoot them down. The Utopian fantasy would have been shattered right there and then. The enemy must not understand. In order for there to be an inside to the Utopian community, there has to be an outside. After all, to be truly progressive, Utopia has to remain the exception, or else it would become itself the status quo.

The same technology, as Kittler emphasizes, then brought stereo sound – of which the *Kunstkopf* is an extreme development – to popular music. It allowed the creation of ever more elaborate soundscapes and experiences. Even the radio itself was developed from the cumbersome and buggy apparatuses of Marconi and Edison into practical and mobile devices for military purposes. Once more, Kittler connects advances in media technology to advances in warfare. "The entertainment industry is, in any conceivable sense of the word, an abuse of army equipment" (*Gramophone* 97). The technology that gives us access to Utopia and that binds its citizens with the mythmaking capabilities of mass entertainment is the same technology that is used to kill those outside of it.

According to Dieter Hasselblatt, the Bayerischer Rundfunk offered the privilege to write for the new *Kunstkopf* technology to a handful of leading German radio authors, but only Franke rose to the challenge with *Papa Joe & Co* ("Signale" 272). As Fischer argues, the play is tailored to the specific acoustic features of spatial representation this new technology allowed. We can hear voices coming from different directions, voices closer to our ears, while others get drowned out in the noise behind us. We hear objects dropping close to us, while others seem out of reach. But my interest in the *Kunstkopf*

goes further than its ability to create a realistic psychoacoustic listening experience. More than just a technological gimmick, the model of the listener's head in the studio and the spatio-accoustic model of the studio in the listener's, further blur the line between the narrative world and the actual world, in fact, pulling Van Feldern into the studio, along with all the ghosts of the past and future, so we may be able to hear with his ears. It is a portal into a Utopian space.

Franke's sound-stage directions detail the placement of the *Kunstkopf*, the distance of the body to the microphone, and a number of other instructions concerning production. He describes his scenes like a theatrical stage or televisional set, but it is a description we cannot hear, a *mise en scène* we have to piece together according to our own parameters. Franke's imaginary stage serves the reader and the technician, but it is a stage that only the listener can experience. In the directions, he proclaims that van Feldern, the more naïve of the two envoys, will be our point of identification throughout the play. The listener, that is the war-time pilot-substitute cum *Kunstkopf*, is to be very close to him at all times; we only hear what van Feldern hears. Franke wants van Feldern to become the voice of the participating listener (Franke 72).

We are not only close, but, when van Feldern has the receiver – that is, a radiophonic device – implanted in his body and so joins the family of Papa Joe, we too hear the voices and clearly arrive inside van Feldern's head. If, via the *Kunstkopf*, our head becomes a stand-in for the bomber pilots and van Feldern's Manchurian candidacy, we become part of this spatio-temporal network as well. After all, Franke, Van Feldern, and the Nazi engineers use the same technology, and they use it to the same end. As Kittler puts it:

Survivors (of WWII) and those born later, however, are allowed to inhabit

stereophonic environments that have popularized and commercialized the

trigonometry of air battles. Ever since EMI introduced stereo records in 1957

people caught between speakers or headphones have been as controllable as

bomber pilots. (*Gramophone* 103)

Our doubles in the play – van Feldern, Papa Joe – are also doubles in our past and in our

present – the bomber pilots, the community of listeners, even Arnheim and Kittler. Van

Feldern, the focal point of the narrative, becomes a link-up into the Utopian text, not as a

center, but as a gateway, into the discourse network; a point of entry into the Utopian

community.

A Radio Mass

While Van Feldern is a stand-in for the listener, he does not automatically make

us part of the community. We enter the isle through him, but we connect to its other

inhabitants via the dictator's voice. We hear through Van Feldern, but what we hear is the

grain of the dictator's voice. Van Feldern is a link-up and Papa Joe is our hypertextual

node, the point of reference everybody seems to share, but which all experience

individually. Papa Joe is a conductor in more ways than one: he conducts in the sense of

transmission, like a metal does an electric current, and in the sense of directing, like a

concert master does an orchestra. He is, so to speak, *both medium and message*, for

where does Papa Joe end and the apparatus begin? By being a mass medium and mass

mediator, Papa Joe creates unity among a heterogeneous group of people. As the events

of the play unfold, the visiting delegation from New Europe meets a variety of people from different social and political backgrounds: a teacher with her pupils, a man who prays for his wife's health, a mad scientist, priests, and, of course, the representatives of the New American Government. The only uniting factor is their mechanical connection to Papa Joe: the implant that receives the dictator's voice.

Arnheim regards this as a problem: "Busy and idle, rich and poor, young and old, healthy and sick – they all hear the same thing. That is what is great, moving, dangerous and dreadful about our time. […] Everyone is shown the same thing, does the same thing and so everyone becomes the same" (259). Arnheim writes in 1936, around the same time that the *Volksempfänger* brings the Führer's voice into every home and four years before Thomas Mann addresses the "Deutsche Hörer!" to form his own Utopian congregation.[3] Arnheim's skepticism is understandable. "Wireless eliminates not only the boundaries between countries but also between provinces and classes of society. It insists on the unity of national culture and makes for centralisation, collectivism and standardisation" (238).

This is exactly what Adorno is worried about when he discusses the homogenizing effects of radio. The radio itself is a symptom of a society that willingly accepts the technological invasion and commodification of privacy and personhood:

The supremacy of authoritarian central institutions over the privacy of the citizens is not only promoted by radio: it is in part the historical presupposition of the existence of radio as well. The radio voice is the executor, the agency of those authorities. Just as these authorities alienate themselves from men, regarding men as mere material for the realization of their will, so does the radio voice. It is its

alienation, its reification in virtue of which it appears to speak itself. The

expression of the radio voice bears witness of the reification of society. ("Radio

Voice" 391)

Mass culture, Adorno realizes, is not simply defined by a potentially infinite and uniform

audience, but also by standardized and industrialized mass production. Simplified and

"pre-digested" renditions of bourgeois culture on the ether eradicate the need to engage

with art in a critical and edifying manner (*Culture Industry* 67). The dominant kitsch

produces and reproduces illusions and fantasies of happiness and contentment. For him,

popular radio drama is exemplified by the *Lone Ranger*, who sells trinkets and toys

directly from his imaginary world. Radio's invasion of everyday life is, to Adorno, not a

way to gain critical distance from the fantasies of reality through the operation of

cognitive estrangement, but a way to infuse this reality with commercially exploitable

desires. As with his famous critique of Jazz, Adorno can only see the commercial mass

appeal of radio and SF as a form of easily consumable literature:

> The affair of Orson Welles' broadcast 'Invasion from Mars' was a test performed
>
> by the positivistic spirit to determine its own zone of influence and one which
>
> showed that the elimination of the distinction between image and reality has
>
> already advanced to the point of a collective sickness, that the reduction of the
>
> work of art to empirical reason is already capable of turning into overt lunacy at
>
> any moment, a lunacy which the fans who send trousers to the Lone Ranger and
>
> saddles to his horse already half affect (*Culture Industry* 64).

In his point of view, the breakdown of the border between the fictional and the non-fictional, which is permeated by the voice of the dictator and which I earlier described as the place of the Utopian isle, can have only one effect: the homogenization and disempowerment of the masses and their intellectual incapacitation to the point of lunacy.

I believe that Adorno's scathing critique of the medium has as much to do with the character of the programming than the medium itself. Adorno's analysis of the radio, especially during his time at the Princeton Radio Project, takes three distinct angles: what is being played on the radio and why? What effect does this type of programming have on its audience? What is the effect of the apparatus on the material that is being transmitted (the latter constitutes the radio's voice we discussed earlier)? What he finds are indeed commercially-oriented broadcasts intended for a mass appeal. Such programming as the *Lone Ranger* and the *NBC Music Appreciation Hour* does have the homogenizing and leveling effect, with which he is concerned.

It can also be agreed that the technology, as it presents itself in the late 1930s, does seem to deprive the listener of an authentic experience of the artwork. Adorno's prime example, the farmer in the Midwest who listens to the symphonic canon on his radio, does indeed get only a technologically compromised version of the "real thing" (351). This radio no longer exists. A different radio, a radio that has become an enclave of the cultural elites that sit up late at night to listen to obscure avant-garde sound pieces and radio plays, a radio culture that produces artworks for, in, and with the medium – like John Cage's "Imaginary Landscape No 4," in which 12 radios play simultaneously whatever is on the air – is, at that point, inconceivable to him. It is therefore no surprise that he does not treat radio as a medium of autonomous art, of critical inquiry, and

progressive potential, the way I suggest we should. Radio functions, in this view, as a

mere index of the actual performance, a lesser copy of the real event, which he calls

radio's "image character" ("Radio Voice" 385). Technology's potential to reproduce

"reality" in an idealized fashion, rather than to challenge our conceptions of it, turns the

audience into the kind of dazzled and blinded populous that makes up the congregation of

Papa Joe.

Papa Joe, as both medium and message, becomes, like the *Führer*, reproducible.

This is a development Walter Benjamin is interested in when he discusses the status of

the work of art in a context of mass production and mass distribution. By becoming

technologically reproducible, the object undergoes a transformation from a unique

presence that depends on a particular temporal and spatial context to a stimulus that can

be enjoyed at any time and at any place. It loses its aura as an object of quasi-religious

contemplation and aesthetic rapture. While he describes this change as one of the

predicaments of the industrial age and "capitalist modes of production" ("Work of Art"

1051), he simultaneously welcomes it because he deems this ritualistic function

politically and aesthetically regressive. With film, photography, and sound recording,

capitalism provides the tools to abolish itself.

By "shattering of [the artwork's] tradition which is the reverse side of the present

crisis and renewal of humanity," the artwork is freed to assume active political and social

relevance (1054). Politics, it is Benjamin's hope, can become the basis for art instead of

ritual (1057). Unlike in Adorno and Arnheim, this technology can do more than dilute the

work of art to increase its mass appeal and potential for commercialization; it can do

more than manipulate the masses into behaviors desired by the ruling forces. In fact, the

media of reproduction prevent such manipulation because the "masses absorb the work of art into themselves," rather then to be absorbed by it in contemplation (1069). Benjamin points out that the propaganda of the Third Reich seeks to retain the aura in the mass media as well as "an aestheticizing of political life" (1070).

Benjamin is not blind to the kinds of commercial- and mass-oriented productions Adorno discusses, but he believes that the technology is able and obliged to pursue an educational project. In the strictest Brechtian tradition, Benjamin suggests that the radio specifically should use its technological potential not to create illusions but to reveal the mechanics behind these illusions: not to dazzle but to create a critical distance. He wants to see the stage and radio aid one another in overcoming the trappings of their specific artistic qualities in what he calls "Gemeinschaftsarbeit" ("joint venture" *Erziehungsarbeit* 773).

The media critique of Hans Magnus Enzensberger emerges from this rift between Adorno's media-pessimism and Benjamin's careful optimism. Enzensberger argues that technologies that are centrally controlled also prevent the recipient from also becoming a producer. That is why someone like Boerk, who, we may remember, refuses to destroy the machine at the end of the play because it might also be used for good, merely reiterates an inherently conservative concept of technology. Technology that is predicated on an individualized and privatized mode of communication and production will, according to Enzensberger, never be capable of creating the kind of free and egalitarian information exchange that would turn Arendt's atomized masses into Benjamin's powerful and emancipated social body:

Anyone who expects to be emancipated by technological hardware, or by a

system of hardware however structured, is the victim of an obscure belief in

progress. Anyone who imagines that freedom for the media will be established if

only everyone is busy transmitting and receiving is the dupe of a liberalism

which, decked out in contemporary colors, merely peddles the faded concepts of a

preordained harmony of social interests (109).

As long as technology serves the particular interests of its producers (regardless of

whether this producer is Papa Joe, Boerk, or Herbert Franke) it will, by definition, not

serve the interests of its audience. Only if the users also become producers – producers

not merely in the sense that they can also use the technology on a limited and private

scale, like Van Feldern, when he communicates with Papa Joe, but on a mass scale of

collective production and dissemination – can the masses operate collectively and give

voice to their heterogeneous particulars at the same time. This would eliminate the priest-

like status of the artist/author and the work of art and the masses would "themselves

become authors, the authors of history" (128).

In absence of such technology – even the invention of the internet has not

achieved this goal – Enzensberger suggests that we use the present media to turn them

against themselves and expose their structures, either by exposing the political structures

that control them, or by exploding them to the limits of their structural capabilities. In a

way, Enzensberger's vision is in itself a Utopia, impossible but necessary. It is also

radically realized in the imaginary networks I am trying to outline here. Both

Enzensberger and Benjamin, in their critique of mass media, open the door for a reading

of technology as more than a means to deceive and manipulate the masses, but as

something that has great liberating potential. Whether or not machines are entirely neutral

in this process is something we will look at in greater detail in the following chapter, but

Enzensberger's argument does show that Boerk's refusal to destroy the machine or to

share the secret of how it works – previously known only to the clerical cast of Papa

Joe's cult – only perpetuate the intellectual enslavement of the people of New America,

regardless of what message it broadcasts.

Papa Joe and Boerk expertly utilize the repressive potential of mass media: the

ritual of engaging with it, the notion of the aesthetic as a divine experience, the private

confessional with the voice of the other, the manipulative satisfaction of real social needs,

etc. Papa Joe the dictator does everything to conceal this aspect of the technology. He

inserts himself as the master who authorizes all the disseminated copies with his voice.

The voice, transmitted through the conduits of Papa Joe's radiophonic neurological

network, gives each listener the illusion of an individual connection, where it is in fact a

mass audience. Once this connection is lost, we experience, like Van Feldern, a profound

loneliness. Papa Joe's apparatus is the private confessional and the public

acknowledgment of community in a technified form of religious practice. *Papa Joe* is not

playing science against religion – the two are not mutually exclusive, as SF author and

religious leader L. Ron Hubbard might agree.

A Community of Listeners

An audience, even a mass audience, is a diverse group of people who do not and

cannot personally know each other, but they identify in terms of one or several unifying

concepts. These concepts can be national, religious, racial, aspects of fashion, style, even

the shared penchant for SF narratives. This is what Benedict Anderson calls imagined

communities. Here they are centered on a single presence: that of Papa Joe's radio voice.

For Anderson, the established structures of religious and dynastic societies are

transformed into national identities by the binding force of capitalist print culture. The

fantasy of reading together, the idea of a canon of works that constitute a national cultural

heritage, and, particularly in the case of Germany, the establishment of a standard variety

of the language, created a sense of nation as an "unproblematic, primordial given" (91):

> Finally, it is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual
>
> inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always
>
> conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that
>
> makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not
>
> so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings (7).

We might say that literacy, the hegemony of state-protected national economies, and the

allegiance to a particular cultural identity combine into a powerful Utopian impulse: a

glimpse of a Utopia that amends the status quo, which suddenly appears fragmented and

atomized, with a sense of community and identity. For Van Feldern, this glimpse is

enough to convert from one nation-state (New Europe) to another, more satisfying one

(New America).

With the advent of radio and film, the need for literacy becomes less prevalent.

Anderson comments that "radio and television, give print allies unavailable a century

ago. Multilingual broadcasting can conjure up the imagined community to illiterates and

populations with different mother-tongues" (137). It is true, nobody seems to read in

Papa Joe's world and they all rely on the great dictator and his aides to give structure and

meaning to their national identity. The voices in one's head assure participation in the

communal discourse, the collective imagination, with Papa Joe at its center. He functions

as a relay point that links the inducted member, confirmed as such by the rite of baptism,

to all others, while explicitly keeping them from one another. As a precursor to Allen S.

Weiss' assessment of the community of listeners quoted in the beginning, Hannah Arendt

refers to such a society as an atomized mass: at once structureless and highly fragmented:

> The truth is that the masses grew out of the fragments of a highly atomized
>
> society whose competitive structure and concomitant loneliness of the individual
>
> had been held in check only through membership in a class. The chief
>
> characteristic of the mass man is not brutality and backwardness, but his isolation
>
> and lack of normal social relationships (317).

The absence of hierarchies and the equality among New America's constituents appears

to be its desirable, Utopian characteristic, but it comes at the price of utter individual

isolation, as Van Feldern finds out when he is expelled. "Ich bin ausgestoßen … Ich bin

allein …" ("I am expelled …, I am alone ..."; 110). His loneliness does not stem from an

absence of other (post-)human beings, in fact he is surrounded by other individuals whom

society has rejected, but from the sudden disconnect from Papa Joe's voice:

> Nationalism, then, became the precious cement for binding together a centralized
>
> state and an atomized society, and it actually proved to be the only working, live
>
> connection between the individuals of the nation-state (Arendt 231).

Arendt identifies this communal bond as nationalism, which Franke cleverly equates with

religious dedication and practice, echoing Benjamin's critique of the auratic aesthetic

experience discussed earlier. Incapable of forming any other social bonds, the

"Ausgestossenen" spend all their energy, even at the risk of losing their life altogether,

trying to be admitted again into Papa Joe's community.

      Arnheim and Anderson think about radio in terms of its power to facilitate stable

national identities, and, in case of Adorno, stable class structures. Arendt, on the other

hand, finds many examples in which nationalist concepts were disseminated and the class

structure dissolved with the aid of the wireless. And it is true; our "Welle Edball" for

example, requires a working knowledge of German to understand it as an advocate of a

global posthuman identity. While there are plenty of German speakers who also do not

identify as German, the play's language requirement does seem to limit the potential for

transnational community building.

      Nevertheless, it would be short-sighted to read/hear *Papa Joe & Co* as an

argument that the Utopian community in the radiophonic imagination is an exclusively

national one. Joshua Mayrowitz recognizes that post-print mass media like television,

internet, and radio do not so much make us part of a McLuhanite global village, than a

community that no longer has a sense of place at all. Location, in his view, becomes less

significant for access to specific information, and so group identity and interaction do not

require specific geographical boundaries (cf. Mayrowitz 1985). Such processes of

identification are explicitly transnational and can come in the form of what Arjun

Appadurai calls "mediascapes:"

> *Mediascapes* refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce
>
> and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and
>
> film-production studios), which now are available to a growing number of private
>
> and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created
>
> by these media (35).

In Papa Joe's case, the means of production are controlled by the upper echelons in the

state's religion and indeed follow national interests. Franke himself is also given

privileged access to recording and broadcasting technology that is publicly financed and

controlled by independent broadcasting committees. Nevertheless, in an age where radio

can be broadcast freely on the internet with very inexpensive means of production,

radio's mythmaking capabilities are no less effective. What matters, as again Appadurai

explains, is that:

> Mediascapes, whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-
>
> centered [and we may add here the acoustic image, which we will discuss further
>
> in Chapter 5], narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to
>
> those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as
>
> characters, plots, and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed or
>
> imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places (35).

In other words, the Utopian community – that is, a community that is imagined despite

the individual subject's knowledge that it cannot know all the other members of this

community, and the conscious awareness that this community is predicated on freely

imagined narratives of origin and place, but which is nevertheless real to those imagining

it – does not have to be national but can form around any commonly held identifier.

This identifier, the presence at the center of the New American religion, of course,

turns out to be a void when Boerk reveals to van Feldern that Papa Joe's voice is merely a

reproduction, a mechanism that in itself is only process, but not presence. Papa Joe's

voice points away from itself and conceals the apparatus that produces it. It is realized

and takes effect only in the perception of the masses. It seems to me, then, that the

community of listeners, like the distant worlds and alternate times of the science fictional

imagination, becomes real only as the discursive knots we looked at above. Therefore,

while the experience of identity may be real and may have real-life consequences (I am a

fan of SF and I thus consume SF products such as films, books, and radio plays), the

community of which I imagine myself a part when I practice my identity is always based

on narratives and myths that are Utopian, since they point away from the existing

conditions.

Even the experience of the Nazi empire, in all its horror, took the form of Utopian

phantasm for those who longed to belong to the imagined Utopian community of the

Aryan race. This community, obviously, never truly existed, except for the duration of

the broadcast. In fact, once realized, *because* it would no longer be Utopian, the

totalitarian community would fall apart. Hannah Arendt suggests that this moment would

reveal such Utopian communities as the fantastic constructs they are:

> Experience and common sense were perfectly justified in expecting that
>
> totalitarianism in power would gradually lose its revolutionary momentum and
>
> utopian character, that the everyday business of government and the possession of

real power would moderate the pre-power claims of the movements and gradually

destroy the fictitious world of their organizations (392).

The speeches of Hitler and Goebbels, and the films of Riefenstahl and Baldur von

Schirach would not have been necessary had the Third Reich been the perfect

homogeneous community the Nazis were trying to propagate. Instead, the bodies of the

imagined German people needed to be constantly inscribed with their Utopian identity.

The bodies of the listeners are inscribed with the identity of Papa Joe's

community. The masses shout out along with the priest: "Papa Joe hat uns vereint, Papa

Joe ist unser Freund, Hört Ihr Menschen fern und nah, Papa Joe ist für euch da" ("Papa

Joe united us, Papa Joe is our friend, Hear ye people far and near, Papa Joe is there for

you"; 74). The members of New America are, as a group, ritually performing the unity

that they already experience individually, assuring each other of the network, the

corresponding outlook on the world that defines religious community. Without this ritual,

which is a kind of listener feedback to the source, the listening experience would be

radically isolating. Values, goals, morals, all the things that we might gain from a work of

art are not a presence in the work of art which we have to simply extract and receive, but

are learned in our discursive engagement with it. They only become shared values, goals,

and morals in our discursive engagement with the community of

readers/viewers/listeners. Papa Joe's community, that is the community of listeners, is as

much an imagined community as it is an imaginary community, formed around a

collective Utopian desire.

Only when the dictator's voice resounds is a collective fantasy of harmonious

community produced. Utopian fantasies, as we saw earlier, point away from the socio-

economic realities of the actual world in order to change them. "Utopian form is itself a

representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic

nature of the social totality, to the point where one cannot imagine any fundamental

change in our social existence which has not first thrown off Utopian visions like so

many sparks from a comet," (Jameson xii) as Jameson puts it. The point of dictator Papa

Joe's broadcasts and voices is, one might counter, not to incite change but to maintain the

status quo. But, just like the broadcasts of Nazi propaganda, his efforts to keep the

community from falling apart are fueled by the realization that the stability of the status

quo is a fantasy, fueled and maintained by the authority of the voice.

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[1] I believe that much of what Bennett is arguing in his excellent book on secular millennialism is an argument on manifestations of Jameson/Blochian Utopian impulses rather than classic millennial projects (cf. Bennett 2013).

[2] Benno Nietzel gave an insightful paper at the 2012 GSA in Milwaukee entitled "Culture, Entertainment, and Listening Habits in the West German Discourse on Radio during the 1950s." In it he analyzed how market research conducted by public radio stations revealed that the average listener did not live up to the great expectations of the network functionaries. Instead of focused and selective listeners they found distracted aural omnivores. Clearly the influence over the listener was not nearly as great as the producers would have imagined.

[3] From 1940 to 1943 Thomas Mann tried his luck at creating a radiophonic counter-Utopia to that of the Goebbels propaganda machine, as part of a BBC program designed for a German audience under the title "Deutsche Hörer!" (cf. Mann 1945)

Cyborg Narration: Truth and Agency in Elfiede Jelinek's *Die Bienenkönige*

The opening scene of Elfiede Jelinek's radio play *Die Bienenkönige* (*The King Bees*) is unwelcoming; unwelcoming, because it is difficult for us to get our bearings in this imaginary space. There is little to go on. For two and a half minutes, we only hear the sound of wind, interlaced with short bits of the A-minor passage from Gustav Mahler's "Tragic" Symphony (No. 6). It is mixed with electronic beeps and clicks and occasional breathing, which might suggest some kind of organic or artificial presence. It is two and a half minutes before we hear speech. In this radiophonic environment, we are even more blind than we usually are in the radio imagination. At times, we are left to wonder whether we tuned to the right frequency. Where a movie would have an establishing shot and a novel might use dialogue or narration to provide a sense of setting, all we get is an acoustic snapshot of an unknown world. This creates a radically interiorized vision that relies on our individual imagining of this SF world. This world is neither abstract nor surreal, highly immersive while utterly confusing. This radiophonic world is more dystopian than its cinematic or literary equivalents could ever be. Our standard repertoire of ways to make sense of narrative worlds falls short. Our cognitive faculties appear to be insufficient for this hostile environment. We begin to long for clarification.

What a surprise and relief when, after these two and a half minutes, we finally hear a narrator. Before the temptation to touch the dial and change the station becomes too great, he provides us with a setting. For now, he appears to be in charge of the flow of information. We have to rely on the narrative authority to guide us through this world. He insinuates that what we heard was an acoustic image of Earth's surface in the distant future. Our empirical world – the here and now – is only a faint memory. "Man sagt, die

Oberfläche wäre vorher anders gewesen in Geruch, Farbe, Form und Geschmack" ("It

was said that the surface used to be different terms of smell, color, shape, and taste," 8,

all translations of the play and Jelinek's intoduction mine). Interestingly, all the sense

categories that, according to the narrator, will have changed between now and then –

smell, color, form and taste – are not categories available to the radio. Sound is our only

link to this world and it is controlled by the narrator and the machine that transmits and

stores it. As it turns out, his authority is not absolute. The main clause "Man sagt" implies

he only knows the world which came before his own through hearsay. For much of what

he tells us, he himself relies on recorded documents from a distant past of which he has

no immediate knowledge, just as we as listeners draw from a variety of different fields of

knowledge (the canons of classical music and SF literature, scientific discourses,

especially medical, conventions of radiophonic storytelling etc.) to piece together a

coherent image of this world. Already this opening sequence raises the question: if

neither we as listeners nor the narrator are in full control of the data that feeds into the

radiophonic imagination, who or what is?

The problem of disorientation, the lack of direction (both in the space of the

diegetic environment and in terms of the formal coherence of the play), and the continued

dependence of our own cognitive process on a variety of forces outside of our control,

may serve as a metaphor for the larger critical question of this chapter and the

dissertation in general: What is the nature of the processes, cognitive or otherwise, that

allow the listener to come to any kind of critical revelation in the act of engaging with

the mode of SF and the medium of sound? After all, Suvin's notion of cognitive

estrangement suggests that we return to the present moment with some kind of fresh

realization about it. I suggest that the play challenges the concept of cognitive autonomy and critical authority. Instead, the listener enters a hybrid relationship with the cybernetic technology of the radiophonic SF text, creating a space for, what I will call "*cyborg narration*." If I am correct, then we will also have to address the issues of stable truth and communicable subjectivity, which are rooted well within the critical focus traditionally directed at Jelinek's work. I believe these issues can be addressed most effectively via two distinct but related approaches: one that focuses on the narrator and his agency in controlling the status of truth in the play, and one that focuses on the technology and its role in the cognitive processes of the listener.

Super Power/ Super Knowledge

        In Jelinek's radio play, directed by Hartmut Kirstel for the SDR in 1976, a class of male scientists turns women into cybernetic machines for procreation and sexual pleasure at the heel of a self-inflicted catastrophic event. The play describes the aftermath of an environmental disaster caused by a systemic flaw in the energy supply of a society heavily dependent on technology. Protected from the fallout, deep inside the planet, a small group of the Scientists survives (Rolf Becker, Hans-Peter Bögel, Peter Fricke, Max Kirste, et al.). Only a few women are saved by the Men, who have monopolized all knowledge of science and technology.[1] The surviving Women were also underground but closer to the surface and, thus, more exposed to the damaging effects of the catastrophe than their saviors (Kirsten Dehne, Kornelia Frobes, Hanelore Hoger, Eva-Maria Klatt, et al.). The rescue comes at a great price: most of the Women turn out to be infertile. They are drugged and sedated by the Men and made to serve them sexually. The Men refer to

these women derogatorily as Hetis after the ancient Greek *hetaerae*, semi-liberated

concubines. The few Women who are still capable of bearing children, referred to as

Mutas, are placed into small individual support units, in which they are kept alive by

feeding tubes, life-support systems, and sedatives. The Men refer to these units as

Bienenwaben (honeycombs). The mechanized care allows the Mutas to give birth four

times a year – however, only to sons. The Sons, one of whom turns out to be the narrator,

also become servants to the Scientists. As a rule, those who are perfectly average with

regard to their intellectual and physical capabilities are kept alive. The others are

harvested for their organs. But even those who survive as slaves are terminated once they

show signs of exhaustion or reach a level of intellectual maturity that might threaten the

Kings. Together with the Hetis, the Sons finally overthrow the regime of their makers and

escape to the surface.

Other scholars have pointed out the centrality of gender and power discourses in

Jelinek's work (cf. Konzett 2007). Some, like Doris Koller and Tobe Levin, have even

traced these themes in great detail through her work for radio (cf. Koller 2007; Levin

1991). Koller and Tobin each argue that, in the case of *Die Bienenkönige,* Jelinek is

particularly interested in how certain discourses (science, technology, and art, as well as

family, sexuality, and procreation) reinforce power binaries, particularly the oppression of

women. As Jelinek herself puts it in a spoken introduction to the play, on the occasion of

the first repeat broadcast in 1990:

> Mir lag in den 'Bienenkönigen' am Herzen, mit Hilfe einer breit angelegten
>
> Gesellschaftsvision von Herren und Knechten bzw. Mägden die Folge unserer

patriarchalisch ausgerichteten und auf Ausbeutung von Schwächeren basierenden

Kultur in letzten Konsequenz vorzuführen.

("With the 'Bee-Kings' my heartfelt intention was to present – by means of a far-

reaching social vision of lords and knaves, or rather maids – the effects of our

culture, which is patriarchally conceived and founded on exploitation of the weak,

in their last consequence"; "Vorrede")

My approach, while based on these insightful discussions, will nevertheless be a different

one. By looking at these thematic elements and motifs, I would like to continue our

discussion of the implications of the particular choice of mode (SF) and medium (radio)

for our understanding of reading/listening/viewing as a critical project in the first place.

Elfriede Jelinek has a particular relationship to SF. "Ich habe eine Leidenschaft

für Trivialliteratur, und ganz besonders für Kriminal- und Science-Fiction-Geschichten"

("I have a passion for belletristic fiction, and especially so for mystery and science fiction

stories"; "Vorrede"). There is little doubt that Jelinek is one of the most prolific writers

working in the German language today. Her work spans practically every medium in

which a writer could work, from numerous novels and plays to film, hypertext,

installation, and, not least, the radio. Yet, only those very familiar with her *oeuvre* will

think of her as a writer of SF. Jelinek has been known to take popular genres like the

Heimatroman, the fairy tale, and the *Volksbühne,* and turn them on their head. More often

than not, she presents herself as a critic of a particular genre, as much as she does the

subject matter treated in a particular generic mode. Formulaic clichés are sometimes

revealed as manifestations of power structures and disenfranchisement. This is certainly also true for her use of SF.

However, Allyson Fiddler uses the example of Jelinek's references to comic books and television programs to show that, more often than not, the author uses these forms to criticize certain social issues, rather than to criticize the forms and generic markers themselves (Fiddler 134). As previously mentioned, for Jelinek, SF and genre-literature are ways to explore social developments by distorting them and presenting an image to us as if through a fun house mirror. Fiddler suggests that Jelinek does not appear to make fun of the science fictional mode itself, but sees it as a way to interrogate "weak spots" or "breaking points" in our present social and cultural environment. Jelinek says, "Die Schwachstellen sind in dem, was man täglich sieht, bereits vorhanden, aber ihre Auswirkungen in die Zukunft werden überprüft" ("Weak spots are already present in what one sees daily, but their effects into the future are tested"; "Vorrede"). SF allows us to play through the present propositions to the extreme. This is the case:

> … vor allem in jener Zukunfts-Literatur, die nicht einfach mit Hilfe
> phantasievoller Technologie-Spielereien letztlich doch nur die alten
> abgeschmackten Themen transportiert und daher genauso gut im neunzehnten
> Jahrhundert spielen könnte (natürlich mit Robotern und Laser-Kanonen gewürzt),
> sondern in der Social Fiction-Literatur, die sich mit Gesellschaftsmodellen
> beschäftigt und diese exemplarisch ausprobiert .
>
> ("… particularly in the kind of futuristic literature that does not simply transport
> vulgar and tired themes by means of fantastic techno-gimmickry, and which could
> therefore be set just as well in the nineteenth century (of course spiced up with

robots and laser guns), but in social fiction literature, that deals with social models

and which tries them out in an exemplary fashion"; "Vorrede")

Jelinek appears to view SF as a critical tool or technology with specific capabilities and

characteristics. What these capabilities and characteristics are, this chapter hopes to

clarify further.

My first line of inquiry pursues a narratological problem posed by the play's own

techno-critical trajectory. The narrator is presented as the guarantor of truth, at the same

time as he – and it is without doubt a male narrator – is framed by the narrative

impossibilities of science fiction: What is the ontological status of radiophonic

"evidence" from the future? How can we believe a narrator if his authority depends on

the truthfulness of the very events he is reporting? Of course, much has been written

about reliable and unreliable, even manipulative narrators, and we will briefly address

such narratorial strategies later on. But I am concerned here with a narrator who, due to

the temporal peculiarity of the science fictional mode, has no choice but to deceive us and

we have no choice but to be deceived. If we did not believe him at least insofar that we

accept his unique narrative perspective as someone who has witnessed our future past, the

entire narrative would fall apart. While we will deal with sound artifacts from such a

future and their role in our practice of remembering the future in more detail in Chapter

4, I would like to look at the interplay of truth and science fictional narrative (*Wahrheit*

und SF Dichtung if you will) presently.

The second line of inquiry has to do with our own complicity – simply by tuning

in – in maintaining the very power structures imposed by the medium. By placing the

listener in the role of a machine hybrid, we find ourselves sedated, passive, inactive and

turned into an organic extension of the sound technology with which we are engaging.

This, of course, raises the question of posthuman subjectivity which we have already

touched on and will revisit again. My argument here is that the radio, by turning us into

the particular cyborg we met in *Papa Joe & Co,* subjects us to the very powers and

agencies the play appears to criticize. Furthermore, the choice of medium complicates the

play's seemingly binary setup (good vs. evil, women vs. men, nature vs. machines etc.[2]).

Rather than providing the moral certainty of clear-cut structural lines, the radio narrative

is undone in performing its own deconstruction.

In each case, medium/technology and messenger/narrative mode, the critical

discourses of the play are dependent on the very objects of their critique. As such, the

play performs a Utopian gesture that is characteristic of much of literary and media

criticism. From Plato, who argues against writing as a form of preserving true knowledge

in the form of written dialogue in the *Republic*, to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who argues

against the suitability of language as a means of absolute communication in the form of a

written letter in *Letter to Lord Chandos*, to the Fluxus artists, who take on the commercial

art market by opening their own mail-order shops, theorists and artists have attempted to

interrogate the shortcomings and problems of particular cultural practices by means of

engaging in these very practices. Radio is no exception. Brecht's "Flug der Lindberghs"

for example, "is not to be of use to the present-day radio but to alter it" (*On Theater* 32).

This clearly Utopian enterprise tries to reform the passive listener into an active producer.

What all these examples, and there is an infinite number of them, have in common is that

they attempt to take agency over their object of criticism (writing/knowledge,

language/communication, artistic production/market forces, radio/passive reception) by turning the object against itself.

An analysis of the relationship between the two types of agencies – narrative and technological – and their critical part in framing truth claims will reveal "knowledge of reality" and "autonomous objectivity" as Utopian concepts. I believe that this is a particularly rewarding approach to *Die Bienenkönige* not least because, in the context of this dissertation, it raises questions about the nature of the Utopian as a critical tool and the science fictional as a critical practice. As tool and practice, they seem to operate with an underlying claim to the kind of autonomous objectivity the narrator and the listener struggle to achieve in the beginning minutes of the play. After all, the very idea of cognitive estrangement seems to suggest that, with the necessary estranged distance, we can come to truthful conclusions about the world that are otherwise concealed from us. I admit that in my discussion of SF in Chapter 1, I gave the impression that I agreed with this notion of a singular and knowable reader/listener/viewer. But rather than as a dialectical operation executed by an autonomous subject within the Enlightenment tradition, I would like to conceive of the project of critique in the tradition of Michel Foucault. Instead of a search for universal values, an impossibility in Foucault's eyes, criticism is a "historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying" (quoted in Dreyfus 46). This is not to say that I will undertake a Foucauldian genealogy or archaeology in this chapter. Alternatively, I will combine his sense of criticism as the study of what allows us to constitute ourselves as (human) subjects, with the type of

question posed by theorists of cyber-technology like N. Katherine Hayles and Donna

Haraway.

For N. Katherine Hayles the subject engaged in this critical operation is not an

essential presence within the human self, but a byproduct of the interplay of various

biological and technological cognitive processes. Rather than to think of it as something

that *exists* some place inside the body, she suggests thinking about subjectivity as

something that *happens*. Cognition, so her argument goes, involves more than the brain

or neurological networks but also the remainder of the human body: its natural, socio-

cultural, and technological extensions and environments. That means that the question for

Hayles is not *if* cognition happens (which it obviously does, or else we would not

experience the confusion at the beginning of the play) but where (that is, which embodied

forms of cognition take part in the process). In other words, the reading "I/we" is never

the agent who determines the path along which the narrative world is explored, but is

rather produced by the cognitive technique of experiencing narrative worlds via

reading/viewing/listening:

> In the posthuman view […] conscious agency has never been 'in control.' In fact,
>
> the very illusion of control bespeaks a fundamental ignorance about the nature of
>
> the emergent processes through which consciousness, the organism, and the
>
> environment are constituted. Mastery through the exercise of autonomous will is
>
> merely the story consciousness tells itself to explain results that actually come
>
> about through chaotic dynamics and emergent structures (Hayles 288).

The desire to preserve notions of autonomy and free will is born out of "a vision of the human in which conscious agency is the essence of human identity. Sacrifice this, and we humans are hopelessly compromised, contaminated with mechanic alienness in the very heart of our humanity" (288).[3]

For us as posthuman listeners, this is a problem, because it means that the integrity of our subjectivity is threatened by the act of listening itself. We become part of the machine. Is not the mass medium aimed at our consumer needs? Is not every element of production obscured by the medium? The same cybernetic machinery that narrates the Women, Scientists, and Slaves in the play, and even keeps the narrator in check, has agency over us and controls our access to the truth. To paraphrase Foucault's definition of transcendental critique quoted above, I propose that, in this dissertation, I am undertaking a science fictional investigation into the technological conditions that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are – and might be – doing, thinking, saying. In the sense that I hope to reveal some kind of valuable insight, despite this pessimistic definition of subjective agency, such a critical operation is thoroughly Utopian: impossible, but very necessary.

The entire critical project Jelinek is embarking on here appears to have a similar Utopian underpinning. In that sense, our project is a self-analyzing one, which investigates the very tools outlined in the introduction as well as Chapter 1. What kinds of results will a Utopian argument produce and what kinds of Utopian truths can the science fictional reveal? Jelinek's play is an example for how we can represent this conception of distributed cognition and hybrid subjectivity to a perceiving mind whose

self-conception is still deeply rooted in the humanist view of subjectivity. This is science

fictional mimesis that serves to critically explore the Bee-State as a cybernetic hive-mind.

I believe it is helpful to consider Foucault's neologism "power/knowledge" for

our investigation of truth and reality in Jelinek's play. It helps us to draw a connection

between the concepts of subjectivity on the one hand and truth, knowledge, power, and

authority on the other. Knowledge and power, as Foucault shows first in *Discipline and*

Punish, are in a closely interconnected relationship (27f). Of course, as the subheading of

this section indicates, in SF the relationship between knowledge and power is often

exploded to that of super knowledge and super power. They are not variables external to

each other, but constituent elements of one another. Foucault is not interested in

knowledge as accumulated data, but in the historical conditions that allow us to

accumulate this data in the first place (i.e. make it knowable). At the same time, he looks

at how this data is turned into knowledge and how this knowledge warrants practices of

control and power that organize and categorize the world to be able to produce more

knowledge as well as to decide which types of knowledge are relevant and which ones

are not.

The Scientists in Jelinek's play maintain their control over what is or is not truth

by what Joseph Rouse calls "epistemic sovereignty" (103). The parallels between the

conditions for the construction and maintenance of political power and the conditions for

the construction and maintenance of epistemic certainty are easy to recognize: "Recall the

crucial constituents of political sovereignty; a unitary regime, representing legitimacy

through law, established from an impartial standpoint above particular conflicts, and

enforced through discontinuous interventions which aim to suppress illegitimacy" (103).

These same networks of knowledge and power also produce the subjects – knowing and known – through discoursive formation.

Hayles' conception of subjectivity and free will echoes Foucault's notion of subjectivity as a construct. Even though he speaks of agency with regard to the power/knowledge dynamic, it is not guided by the notion of an autonomous free will, capable of critical self-assessment by reason, as the humanist tradition of Kant or Descartes suggests. Instead, for Foucault, subjectivity is, as Christopher Norris so succinctly articulates it, "constructed through and through by the various discourses, conventions, or regulative codes that alone provide a means of 'esthetic' self-fashioning in the absence of any other normative standard. For on this account the subject is indeed nothing more than a localized point of intersection, a product of the various contending forces that define its very conditions of possibility" (160). While Foucault is interested in the socio-historical conditions that allow for the emergence of the individual self, Hayles is concerned with the techno-cognitive processes that produce it. The two, so the underlying argument of the present essay holds, go hand in hand.

A significant aspect for the present discussion of Foucault's conception of power/knowledge, and the related issues of truth and authority, is that their production necessarily requires the marginalization and silencing of contradictory voices. So, how can we break free from the political and epistemic sovereignty? Charles Taylor points out that "There can be no such thing as a truth independent of its regime, unless it be that of another. So that liberation in the name of 'truth' could only be the substitution of power for this one" (94). The narrator in Jelinek's play seeks to find a new truth that allows him to break free from the regime of the Scientists. When he and his fellow Slaves arrive at

the planet surface, they immediately lay down a new law of categories and structures that make this new/old world knowable. Subject/object relations are produced. It appears that the science fictional inquiry promised by the author is a futile exercise insofar as it merely privileges one truth over another. I suggest, once more, that the Utopian self-consciously acknowledges this futility and treats truth as a temporary construct. It never aims for the stability of epistemic sovereignty. It is enough to destabilize the present conditions, but not enough to establish an alternative. Jelinek's play allows us to undermine the status quo not by giving us instructions or showing an alternative (a Utopian program *would* do that) but by momentarily removing us from the here and now (the Utopian impulse).

As I see it, to find an approach that creates enough distance from the present conditions to analyze them, without pretending to offer a better, perhaps final, solution would be in the spirit of Foucault's own critical project. In an interview with Hubert Dreyfus, when asked where we could look to find answers to the most pressing questions of the present, he replied: "I am not looking for an alternative; you can't find the solution of a problem in the solution of another problem raised at another moment by another people" (quoted in Dreyfus 231). Of course, Foucault looked to the past to show the historical specificity of power/knowledge formations of the present, while the authors discussed in this dissertation look at the present by looking into the future with the technology of SF. Any analyst of the structures that produce truth and knowledge is always already caught up in and subject to the very power structures she is trying to uncover.

Techno narratives: how can the narrator tell the truth about the future?

When the Hetis and the Sons escape from their subterranean prison, they find that the formerly contaminated and threatening surface has meanwhile restored itself to paradisiacal living conditions. It becomes "die Welt, in deren Leere sie [the Sons] vielleicht wieder eine unzumutbare Belastung sein werden. Oder auch nicht, es liegt ganz in ihren Händen, nicht in denen ihrer Väter" ("the world, in whose emptiness they might become an unacceptable burden. Or perhaps not, it is completely in their hands, not in their fathers", "Vorrede"). The above statement is part of the introductory speech quoted before and so constitutes some kind of overt statement of the author's intention. Yet, no implication of free will or agency, such as Jelinek claims, appears in the play itself. Instead, one of the nameless Hetis characterizes the human society as a panoptic community, in which everybody observes everybody else. Nature, she implies, is chaotic and in no need of observation. "Ob Personen, die einander ständig im Auge behalten, einer Landschaft, die man keineswegs im Auge behalten kann, einer Landschaft, die am Ende in eine gedachte Linie übergeht, überhaupt zuzumuten sind" ("Can people, who keep an eye on one another at all times, be released onto a landscape, which one cannot keep an eye on, a landscape, which, in the end, dissolves into an imaginary line", 48)? Even here, at the end of the play, we understand that there is no cognition, no coming to terms with the world, without the artificial constructs – in this case, an imaginary horizon – by which we make sense of the raw data that surrounds us.

The chance for a new beginning, which the author hypothesizes in her introduction, turns out to be a mere adjustment to the integration of posthuman subjectivity into a larger system. A new and better society, a Utopian world, is not one in

which the myth of autonomous subjectivity and a mind independent of its body is *restored*, but one where it is *understood* as a fantasy. Ironically, it is this myth of autonomous subjectivity that leads to the hierarchical privileging of the Bee-Kings as indispensable intellectual leaders, protectors of knowledge, and rulers of epistemic hegemony. A Utopia in which the individual can successfully resist the dominant power structure would have to be a world in which we understand the interdependent role of biology and technology in the process of cognition and the accidental origin of subjectivity and selfhood.

What are the narrative agencies that present this world, that draw the imaginary lines, in this artificial hierarchy of individual minds? What does this do to the role of the homodiegetic narrator? Can we sustain the notion prominently advocated by Dorrit Cohn, that narrative is a way to make the consciousness of others transparent to us (5)? Is the very notion of a mind autonomous from ours, that experiences and presents the events, not also a myth? In this section I argue that, instead of a fictional but autonomous mind, the narrator is a form of cybernetic technology, and, as such, a sonic embodiment of distributed cognition.

The play has two narrative levels: the diegetic level of the frame narrator, who looks back at a series of events in his own past, and the level of the metadiegetic world contained in a series of audio documents, which he presents as evidence for his story.[4] He starts out as an omniscient and impartial presenter of events but, as it turns out, he is far from impartial. As direct offspring of the Bee-Kings and the enslaved women, he has a stake in the way the events are portrayed. The story of the catastrophe is revealed as the story of his origin and the moral dilemma of the species' survival as his own. He is

transformed from a presenter of documents to a voice within the documents and conducts a hybrid existence by being the frame of reference *to* the events, while, at the same time, being framed *by* the events. How can we trust him?

In general, we can distinguish two main strategies to establish what is and is not true within fictional worlds: the Reality Principle and the Mutual Belief Principle, which were originally proposed by Kendall L. Walton and then adapted by many other theorists of narrative worlds and fictionality (cf. Walton 1990). Most recently, Frank Zipfel has presented a helpful reconsideration of both principles, which I will mainly refer to here (cf. Zipfel 2011). The Reality Principle suggests that we assume a set of core primary truths that are similar to the primary truths we set for the actual world. Moreover, a fictional world may pose its own core fictional truth that may contradict those of the actual world. In that case, a fictional truth must be congruous with those fictional core truths (Zipfel 111, Walton 145). The Mutual Belief Principle amends the Reality Principle, insofar as it takes historical cultural differences between the world of the reader and the world of the writer into account (Zipfel 112, Walton 151). This way, we can account for the fact that a fictional truth does not become untrue, if, by scientific discovery or ideological shift, the core primary truths of the actual world change. According to the Mutual Belief Principle, we should consider a fictional truth that which was mutually believed to be true by the reader and writer at the time the work was written, unless contradicted by a core truth established in the work. Suvin's estranging elements would be prime examples for such truths established in contradiction to the actual world beliefs. Time travel, faster than light speed, shape shifting, are all established truths of certain SF worlds.

However, for Zipfel, neither the Reality Principle nor the Mutual Belief Principle satisfactorily addresses how we establish core truth in texts that are set in a time or reality different from either the reader's or the writer's (112). How can I know what is real and what is not in an alternative history or a fantasy world? Zipfel suggests, rather than to serve as a mathematical formula to determine truth from untruth, we ought to regard these principles as reading strategies. "Consequently we may read the Reality Principle more as a strategy to block unreasonable departures from the actual world in the construction of fictional world and much less as a strategy to import actual states of affairs to a fictional world" (113). I would like to point out that, taken as a readerly strategy, these approaches to the text resemble our previous definition of a mode of reading. The SF mode requires us much less to import certain core truths from the actual world into the fictional world than to block departures from it. The fictional truth, of course, become literal truths, first within the fictional world (power/knowledge literally produces its own slave cast) and secondly in the actual world where they ideally illuminate something about the make-up of the here and now (perhaps that the hegemonic structure of power/knowledge is something we may want to resist).

Neither of the approaches mentioned thus far answers how it is that certain elements of the narrative world can become truths of the text, even if they contradict our knowledge of the real world. By whose authority do we accept what we hear as truth or dismiss it as deception? Marie-Laure Ryan suggests that readers make a distinction between the world as it is depicted by the narrator (NAW = narratorial actual world) and by the text in general (TAW = textual actual world). If they are congruous, we can speak of a reliable narrator (*Possible Worlds* viii). A narrator is unreliable if TAW differs from

NAW. What I have called narrative world thus far is more or less synonymous with TAW

but can differ greatly from NAW. Zipfel notes, that even with this useful distinction in

mind, it remains necessary to apply strategies like the Reality and the Mutual Belief

Principles to understand the nature of TAW in the first place (127). I would argue that in

a narrative world, which is fundamentally based on its (estranging) incongruity with the

actual world, it is even more difficult to determine the make-up of the textual world. Is

the narrator lying when he says that the Women were able to give birth four times a year?

What is the status of the recorded evidence? Is it a type of objectively stored version of

TAW? This difficulty has to do with the cognitive link, demanded by Suvin, between the

fictional world and the actual world. Something, or someone, establishes this logical

reason for the presence of an element that does not exist in the here and now and

authorizes its presence.

On at least three occasions in *die Bienenkönige*, the logical structure of TAW

fractures and gives the listeners brief glimpses into the mechanics of narrative authority.

The catastrophe, we may remember, was directly or indirectly the result of an energy and

nutrition crisis caused by overpopulation. Since the disaster reduced the population to a

fraction of its former size, this problem no longer posed a threat:

> Man mußte sich nun nicht mehr Sorgen um das Energieversorgungsprogramm für
>
> 35 Milliarden Energieversorgungsanwärter machen, sonder nur mehr Sorgen um
>
> das Energieversorgungsprogramm für einen relativ kleinen und exklusiven
>
> Personenkreis, von dem man allerdings noch nicht genau wußte, wie klein er
>
> tatsächlich war.

("One no longer had to worry about an energy supply program for 35 billion

energy supply recipients, but only worry about an energy supply program for a

relatively small and exclusive circle, of which it was however not known, just

how small it actually was"; 15)

If we leave the cynicism of this statement aside, and if we disregard Jelinek's clever use

of bureaucratic language to underline this cynicism, we have to acknowledge the cogent

logic of this argument. To illustrate just how efficient the reduction in population has

been, he gives an example: "Dafür allerdings hätte auch das Wasserkraftwerk eines

mittleren Gebirgsbaches ausgereicht, was immer das sein mochte und selbstverständlich

als es noch Gebirgsbäche gegeben hatte" ("For this, the hydro plant of a small mountain

creek would have sufficed, whatever this might have been and, of course, when there still

were mountain creeks"; 15). This seems like a helpful analogy at first, yet while the

analogy works for us, it does not work for him. He does not, by his own account, know

the object "Wasserkraftwerk eines mittleren Gebirgsbach" to which he compares the

energy requirements of a society that preceded his own. This is as if we compared the

energy needs of ancient Mayans to a long forgotten form of energy generation that

predates even them. It is impossible.

The authority of this figure of speech lies outside of both NAW and TAW,

outside of his field of control. He makes a statement that, by the logic of the narrative, is

impossible and, for once, unnecessary. That is, the analogy is unnecessary for us to

understand the structure of a populace radically reduced in size by disaster. It is not

unnecessary if our hypothesis that Jelinek's play is also a critique of the mode and the

medium. Logical fractures like these expose the narrative agencies as effects of the play's

critical project rather than as agencies in their own right. The narrator is posthuman

insofar as his subjectivity, his will, and agency are byproducts of the science fictional

radiophonic technology. Rather than an independent subjectivity that presents the events

to us, he is an artificial intelligence, a cyborg narrator.[5]

      While this is probably the most overt breach of the narrative logic of the play (if

there were more, the play might switch to a different mode altogether and become satire

or farce), there are several other more subtle ones. After the Scientists assess the damage,

the narrator presents the cold data of the catastrophe: the death toll and the number of

survivors. Exactly 50 women survive, "eine erstaunlich runde Summe" ("an astonishingly

round number") as he judges, "Eine Laune der Natur vermutlich" ("probably a whim of

nature"; 17). From a scientific perspective, 50 survivors is statistically no more or less

probable than 49 or 51. Yet, the mathematical symmetry strikes the narrator as

particularly artificial and unnatural. If nature fits smoothly into the system of categories,

as he seems to suggest, it becomes properly artificial. If they match up, attention is drawn

to the artificiality of the system. Moreover, the term "Laune der Natur," suggests that

nature possesses a degree of agency, even a sense of irony. Nature, however, becomes an

entity with a capacity for irony only through the external system which is used to

describe and discipline it. Only if read through the grid of scientific order can we

recognize, or rather, produce the coincidentally "round" number of female survivors. The

truth is not just the truth if it corresponds with our concept of reality. It also needs to be

presented in a plausible and credible fashion. The narrator fumbles because a round

number seems unrealistic or planned, "too good to be true." In this sense, the narrator not

only confirms what is true and what is not, and so stabilizes the Utopian isle, but also makes truth literary, that is, credible in terms of its conformity to its own, self-imposed literary conventions. The laws by which the narrator abides are neither TAW nor NAW, nor do they apply in the listener's actual world. Instead, he is subject to the limitations imposed by the story-telling technology that is SF.

The odd, self-revealing incongruity in the narrative logic is not limited to the narrator's frame commentary but extends to the meta-diegetic world of the Scientists and the Women. Worried about the sustainability of a society based on sons only, the Scientists put all their efforts into manipulating the Mutas to give birth to female children as well. The desired birth of a daughter is announced by the voice of a computer by the name of Brutus.[6] Brutus calls: "Chefbiologe Asimov in das Bio-Labor! Chefbiologe Asimov in das Bio-Labor" ("Principle biologist Asimov to the bio-laboratory"; 38)! The name "Asimov" is most readily associated with the Russian-born American SF author of the same name. What may first seem as a mere nod to the SF canon is, however, the beginning of the end for the Bee-State. The birth of the daughter distracts the Scientists and allows the Sons to escape with the Hetis. But, it is also the end of the established order in another sense. Isaac Asimov famously devised the three laws of robotics, which, at least within his fictional worlds, ensure the dominance of the "natural" over the "artificial" by programming a robot to never injure a human, even if obedience to this law comes at the cost of the robot's own safety (*I, Robot* 37).[7] More importantly for my point here, they introduce the idea of cybernetics as an ethical dilemma.[8] After Asimov, we have to think of artificial consciousness as something that needs to be legislated in order to protect the hegemony of biological consciousness. Robot intelligence becomes, in a

legal sense, subject to the human race. This threatens the integrity of the subject as conceived of in liberal humanism. To mention his name at such a crucial moment in the play, at least to the initiated, is to call attention to the questionable status of the machine, especially of the artificial intelligence that narrates our story, as a passive and objective observer.

It is, moreover, an ironic break from the principle of science fictional realism. Just like a round number of victims is too good to be true (although technically plausible), the idea that a chief biologist could have the same name as one of the foremost authors of SF is estranging (although technically plausible as well). In both cases, the logic of the narrative mode is breached by radically adhering to it. The self-conscious allusion to a canonical SF writer raises our awareness that we are indeed interacting with forms of technology, radio as well as SF, ourselves. Asimov, SF writer and fictional biologist, reaches out from the diegetic world not only into the here and now, but into the very structure of the mode.

The laws of the SF mode, which require us to adhere to a principle of science fictional realism, authenticate his statements. The narrative frame, the idea that he looks back at events that are in our future, also places the narrator in a position of knowledge. Lastly, as we shall see in the next section, the recordings give credibility to the narrator. The sounds of the narrative frame and the sounds of the metadiegetic events stored on the recording equipment are connected by sound recording technology and by radiophonic transmissions. The technology that allows his voice to appear on our radio is the same that produces the recordings that serve him as proof for the truthfulness of his tale. Or, to put it differently, that which produces the narrator – the technology that allows the

radiophonic narrator to emerge from the radiophonic text – re-produces him in the

metadiegetic past of his own science fictional history.

 In this peculiar *mise en abyme* – the act of listening to an act of listening – the

narrator presents (recorded) sound via (transmitted) sound. In doing so, he conceals the

documents as artifacts from us, as I have no way of experiencing the documents in any

way other than hearing them radiophonically. I cannot analyze them, touch them, or date

them. They are separated from me by an acousmatic veil that conceals the events from

me, save for their sounds. Pythagoras allegedly taught behind such a veil to prevent his

students from being distracted from his words. In addition, it must have greatly increased

the authority of his words and integrated his students into a kind of radiophonic apparatus

similar to the one we are discussing here. With such distance in place, I can only

speculate about the existence of the events behind the screen. The narrative, its evidence,

and any sense of corporeal presence of either the narrator or the apparatus that produces

him are transformed into a kind of spectral presence which demands our trust and belief

in the documentary power of the aural document. As John Mowitt points out, the problem

raised by the acousmatic barrier is "not disembodiment but delocalization" of the entity

that controls the relation between vision and sound (15). As a guide through the narrative

world, he becomes part of our distributed cybernetic cognition. He is, in a way, a

resultant subjectivity just like our own. His spectral existence is embodied by the

artificial technology of the radiophonic apparatus, the critical technology of SF, and the

biological technology of the listener's body: a cyborg narrator. As a resultant of

necessities dictated by the mode of SF and the status of the sound document in radio, we

accept the narrator's authority as part of the technological imagination of the radio,

despite clear evidence to the contrary.

Sound Documentation: Utopian certainty

        Before we can explore the technological side of our posthuman existence, we

have to investigate whether the practice of SF and the technology of the radio are the

adequate equipment to do so. If the gaps and fractures in the science fictional logic are as

obvious as I stated in the previous section, how can we be sure that there is a claim to any

kind of truth at all? How can we know there is a critical project that we as readers are

invited to take seriously? What is it that the cyborg narrator is, or is not, communicating?

We know from the previous section that his truth claims apply only to a purely narrative

truth, which takes effect only within the epistemological structure of the narrative world.

But, by extension, it also speaks the impossible – dare we say Utopian – truth that *all*

truth claims are relative to their particular epistemological framework, rather than being

transcendentally applicable. The truths and authorities by which we operate are all, in a

way, science fictions, insofar as they constitute a speculative hypothesis about the present

conditions and their Utopian, future-oriented potential. They are not eternal and can be

overhauled by other, more coherent conceptions of the actual world. Knowledge and the

communicability of absolute truth is one of this play's cognitively estranging objects.

        The narrator actively maintains the aura of certainty with a dialectical solipsism

that is weighted with the authority of scientific reason: a) the recordings, which are his

prime evidence for the events that occurred before and during the early stages of his own

life-time, were made by the Scientists and their Women for their own benefit, b) you do

not lie to yourself, c) therefore the recordings represent the truth:

> Wir haben die Aufzeichnungen der früheren Könige dafür zu Hilfe genommen.
>
> [...] Sie haben es natürlich nicht zu unserem, sondern zu ihrem Besten
>
> aufgeschrieben. Was die Wahrheit jedoch betrifft, zählt es nicht, ob sie zu
>
> irgendjemandes Besten aufgezeichnet wird, sondern, daß sie wahr ist. Sie hören
>
> also die Wahrheit.
>
> ("We used the recordings of the former kings. […] They, naturally, did not record
>
> them for our, but for their own benefit. As far as truth is concerned, it does not
>
> matter, whether or not it was recorded for someone's benefit, but that it is true.
>
> You are thus listening to the truth"; 8)

He invokes the authority of what Foucault called a *dispositif,* that is, all the aligned

agents, structures, instruments that aide in the distribution of power ("Confessions" 194).

In his case, the instrument of power is the documentary apparatus itself. Record tapes,

such is the claim, have documentary authority because they are produced by an apparatus

that allows indiscriminate access to the events themselves, and the events themselves are

true because they were recorded without the intention of deception and therefore have to

constitute a reliable account of the events. We shall see whether this logic holds up.

Truth claims in story-telling environments that rely heavily and self-consciously

on technology will always be particular to the medium in which they are presented

because such techno-narratives will integrate the listener/viewer/reader into the

technological apparatus to a different degree. Phonetic writing, as Kittler argues in

Aufschreibesysteme, consciously presents itself as a transcription of the author (441f).

Access to the texts' "true meaning" appears to be concealed from us by the system of

inscription. Knowledge of whether or not things are real or fictional is deferred to the

writer. Whether we conceive of this writer as empirical or implied does not matter for my

argument. The point is, we as "users" of the technology of phonetic writing are at the

mercy of another and left to create our own truths and interpretations in the process of

reading.

Sound technology breaks this link between knowledge and author, and stores "the

real" directly and indiscriminately with regard to interpretation and possible meaning.

The phonograph, for instance, is such a "machine that records noises regardless of so-

called meaning" (Kittler *Gramophone* 85). While I generally agree with this notion, and I

have referred to it previously, I have two critical caveats in the present context. Just

because technology may be able to store all it can, without filtering according to

meaning, does not mean that it stores all there is. It filters simply by its own technological

limitations. Adorno specifically refers to the interplay of filtering and selective

amplification in his search for the radio's unique sonic qualities. "Radio has its own voice

inasmuch as it functions as a filter for every sound" ("Radio Voice" 371). Secondly, if

the amount of data is substantial enough, it requires a presenter. One of the central

concerns of contemporary engineers of information technology is to figure out a way to

weed out the incredible amounts of data we are able to collect and store in this day and

age. The map already covers the terrain. Whether this pre-sorting is done by a machine or

by a human, access to the real the way Kittler suggested exists only as a theoretical

potentiality but is practically impossible. This alone could suffice to deem technological

objectivity as a Utopian concept (but of course, there is more). Our presenter is the

homodiegetic narrator, who – and this gets us back to our discussion – relies for his

promise of absolute truth on a questionable source of authority.

On both levels, the impartiality of the apparatus and the logical deduction of

authority put the narrator's critical argument on shaky ground. We know since Freud that

we cannot trust our own judgments when it comes to understanding our own motivations,

desires, and needs. And we know since Lacan that the language used to express these

judgments bars us further from assessing what is real and what is not. Language, to

grossly simplify Lacan's argument, does not represent reality but structures the real

according to an arbitrarily imposed symbolic order. And, lastly, we know since McLuhan

that the medium through which we communicate produces its own discourses and truths;

it becomes the message itself, to paraphrase his famous slogan. If we cannot trust the

recording to reproduce the real, if we cannot trust the language to represent the real, and

if we cannot trust the voices in the recording to know their own truths, then what is the

nature of this *Wahrheit* the narrator promises?

There is, as Walter Benjamin points out, a strange relationship between factual

reporting and fictional telling. But first, I am faced with a terminological problem.

Benjamin uses the German word *Information* in the sense of a report on facts that is

"Nachricht" or "Kunde", not in the sense of raw data, which is how theorists of IT like N.

Katherine Hayles would use it. For the sake of considering Benjamin's argument, I will

briefly use the term "data" to mean "information" and the German *"Information"* to

mean the relaying of facts. Returning to Benjamin, plausibility is the key to perceiving

data as *Information*. *Information*, he argues, has its own ontological status and borrows

its authoritative privilege from the miraculous:

> Information, however, lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is
>
> that it appear "understandable in itself." Often it is no more exact than the
>
> intelligence of earlier centuries was. But while the latter was inclined to borrow
>
> from the miraculous, it is indispensable for information to sound plausible.
>
> Because of this it proves incompatible with the spirit of storytelling ("Storyteller"
>
> 89).

Information is only useful if it is plausible. Yet, plausibility does not mean truth, or

reality, but conformity with the dominant model of the world. I therefore disagree with

Benjamin that *Information* is incompatible with the "spirit of narrative." On the contrary,

the establishment of a world – that is, building *Information,* as well as information, into a

coherent interpretive structure that allows us to experience it as immersive reality –

always requires a form of narrative. A true relaying of pure information (or of "the real")

is possible only in the form of signals, raw data, absent any meaning (Hayles 51). Once

we engage it, deduce meaning from it, it becomes a text with its own contexts and laws of

causation; a – perhaps Utopian – world of sorts. The larger the gaps in the structural logic

of this world, the more necessary does the narrative agent become.

        According to Allyson Fiddler, Jelinek frequently deals with issues of reality and

representation. "In this text [*Michael, Ein Jugendbuch fuer die Infantilgesellschaft*]

Jelinek succeeds in debunking the myth of expressive realism by bringing down the

hitherto clear-cut parameters of 'wirklichkeit' on the one hand, and 'erzaehlung,' on the

other" (lower case in original, 137). The narrator also makes this distinction. He insists

that he is not giving an "Erklärung" ("explanation") for *why* things happened, but an

"Erzählung" ("narration") of *how* they happened. "Es wird keine Erklärung, sondern eine

Erzählung werden" ("This will not be an explanation, but a narration"; 8). Rather than to

interpret the events of the past, or to explain them, the narrator wants to simply present

them. He invites us, it appears, to draw our own conclusion. The documents are to speak

for themselves, tell their own story, free from any pedagogical agenda. Despite this

promise, it is now evident that documents can never speak for themselves, in fact, several

times throughout the play, it takes the narrator's intervention to make them speak for us.

Wherever the scenario spins out of control, the narrator steps in and, like a

dungeon master in a game of *Dungeons & Dragons*, he sets the scene straight.[9] He

bridges gaps by informing us about what happened, but he may also be the one causing

these gaps as he chooses not to present certain documents. He orders the documents and

gives them a narrative continuity they would otherwise not have. Of course, ordering,

contextualizing, presenting are the defining characteristics of a narrative agent.

"Ultimately the question of narrative agency in drama boils down to whether a play's

narrative 'agent' shows up as an overt teller figure […] or remains an impersonal, covert

show-er or arranger function" as Manfred Jahn points out (671). Jelinek's narrator is

clearly an "overt teller figure," but one that tries to conceal his power over the narrative.

The narrative events are given the status of documents, documents with a questionable

provenance as we saw above. For the illusion of truth to remain intact, the narrator, like

all Utopian narrators, has to refuse to acknowledge his role in the establishment of the

play's science fictional ontology.

Truth, particularly in the cognitively estranging context of SF, is not about making falsifiable statements about the material constitution of world, but about something entirely different. I suggest that the radio play, when it brings up the motif of *Wahrheit,* makes statements about the status of truth and the conditions under which we can speak of truth as such. It presents truth as a Utopian proposition: something that is set as a necessary but impossible condition. Truth itself is one of the cognitively estranging objects on display here. The promise of truthfulness is a promise of ontological stability, of solid ground on which to tread. The narrator's cognitively estranging dialectic of scientific self-evidentiality leads us onto the isle of Utopia.

Techno Neutrality: Guns Don't Kill People?

In the opening section of this essay, we took another look at the problematic privilege the concept of human subjectivity is given over the idea of a hybrid subjectivity. For now, I would like to turn my attention to the other side of this problem, namely, the status technology is given. As we have seen, the narrator presents recording as a type of information technology, a technology that processes data without assigning meaning. Kittler is right in pointing out that the advent of sound media allowed storage of the real without the intervention of a personal interpreter who decides which information is significant and which is not (*Gramophone* 85). However, for our narrator, Kittler's observation turns into the false belief that such media allow us access to the events "as they really are." Once we recognize these demands on technology as Utopian, we have to ask: How can a narrative, which is based on a technological hypothesis, particularly one that, like the radio play, requires technology to be experienced, have any kind of effect on

the here and now, let alone execute any kind of techno-critical project? I suggest it can because the science fictional mode allows us to explore the Utopian potential of the technology in a way which always loops back to the present moment. Cognitive estrangement happens not in spite of, but *because* of, the fact that technology does not give objective and neutral access to the real. For the listener/reader/viewer to recognize this, we merely have to take the science fictional thought experiment so far that the technology itself becomes cognitively estranging.

Science fictional technology always conceals, through narrative ellipsis, the process of its own becoming and narrates only its own neutrality, which is not neutral at all. We never learn enough about how the fictional technology was invented, how it was introduced into common usage, or let alone how it works to use the text as a blueprint for developing it.[10] Still, we do learn enough to find it plausibly existing within our own world. This type of plausibility is, as we saw in Chapter 1, the precondition for cognitive estrangement. Without it, there would be only estrangement. If, on the other hand, the technology was fully explained, it would no longer be estranging but merely cognitive – the same way a construction manual is cognitive, however estranging it may be to the layperson.

While the technology may not give us access to the real, we have to be sure that the real of the fictional world is the same as ours. The real itself – or as Suvin calls it, the "physics" of the fictional world – has to be neutral. "The literary genres in which physics is in some magical or religious way determined by ethics, instead of being neutral toward the hero or the total human population of the presented World, deny the autonomy of physics and can properly be called metaphysical" (*Metamorphosis* 19). Suvin goes on to

argue that SF is non-metaphysical by this definition but also non-naturalistic at the same time, insofar as it contains elements that are absent from our actual world, however plausibly derived from it. The insistence on the autonomy of physical reality implies that SF is particularly suited to investigate the impact of certain technologies on human society. But it is also, as Jelinek seems to suggest, a way to examine how humans may or may not use a certain technology.

The old argument comes to mind in which pro-gun activists and opponents of strict legislative gun regulation in the U.S. claim that guns are neutral by nature and that it is, rather, the human element that makes them deadly weapons: "Guns don't kill people, people kill people."[11] When the Hetis in the end reach the surface of the planet again, we are confronted with the question whether the surviving Sons learned a lesson and manage to create a better future with the Women or whether time will simply repeat itself because such is the inevitable impact of technology on "pure" nature. Is the posthuman presence not already too much for the planet? They wonder "ob nicht schon unser Atem zu schwer sein wird" ("whether or not even our breath will be too heavy"; 49). Or, is it technology, which corrupts human nature? When in *Papa Joe & Co* Boerk implies that he plans to use Papa Joe's technology to manipulate a new society, when in *Die Bunkermann-Kassette* the Bunkermann tapes over and cannibalizes the artifacts of the past, we are confronted with the same dilemma of whether or not technology is, in principle, neutral while the human element is the one that cannot be trusted.

I propose to consider Kittler's comment that recording technology filters what it records passively, simply by nature of its technological specifics, in combination with Manfred Jahn's argument that "the question of narrative agency in drama boils down to

whether a play's narrative 'agent' shows up as an overt teller figure […] or remains an impersonal, covert show-er or arranger function" (671). It will shortly become clear how and why. What does this have to do with the cynical stance of the pro-gun lobby on the use and abuse of weapons: "Guns don't kill people?" Technology, this statement appears to say, has no agency. Guns may indeed not kill people, but as technology, they can serve only a very limited number of functions. They are part of hybrid cognitive networks. As artificial extensions of the biological body, they change the way we perceive our place in the world, how we react to it, and how we cognize it. The close mechanical relationship between guns and photographic equipment Kittler reveals in his work shows that the leap from killing to narrative is not that far.[12] As author of this dissertation, I can explore the possibilities of the written word (however limited I may be by the law of the dissertation genre, of course), but my limitations with regard to using sound should be rather apparent to readers who wish to actually hear the quotes from the plays rather than to simply read them. In the process of using technology, it exerts a certain influence over what its user can or cannot do. It becomes a covert show-er, arranger of reality. This seems apparent with regard to representational media, but it expands to the use of weapons, food processors, vehicles and so on. Each one of these technologies will serve a certain purpose as much as it makes this certain purpose available to us in the first place. People kill people with guns, they were made to kill. The option to decide to use it, its Utopian potential in Bloch's terms, is embodied by the device itself.

The technological abilities and limitations of the machine constitute a kind of filter because not all information is recorded and not all information can be reproduced. In Baudrillard's terminology, the perfect map would cover the terrain which it is trying to

represent. Similarly, the acoustic filter that produces Adorno's "Radio Voice" is the price

we pay for not going to the performance itself. A perfect reproduction would take the

form of the concert we are trying to broadcast. The *Enterprise* of *Star Trek: the Next*

Generation features several holodecks: large spaces that create an immersive reality and

allow the crew to experience the past rather than to just read about it. Of course, a study

of the French Revolution in this medium would take as long as the French Revolution

itself. An exploration of the future would be even more problematic because the perfect

simulacrum of the events that lead to our future would require knowledge of the events as

they will occur. This would, of course, turn science fictional speculation into a blueprint.

The Utopian isle would no longer be impossible, but rather, be defined by its possibility.

In other words, we need the technological media filter on our narrative reality to be able

to experience complex pasts like the French Revolution and to explore Utopian

potentialities of our future. We, as listeners, are willingly complicit in the illusion to save

the integrity of the play's Utopian proposition. The fact that we can only hear but not see

should be a constant reminder that we are operating with limited data. It is the missing

data that makes the available data more plausible and allows us to explore it.

The catastrophe which destroys the society of the *Bienenkönige*, and which is at

the center of our narrative, makes this abundantly clear. It defies the narrator's premise

that we could simply listen in on the events and make sense of them. We could not

become witnesses to the dilemma of the Bee-State without the gaps and breaks that

narrative logic requires. Of course, these gaps and breaks are concealed by the alleged

documentary neutrality of the technology. We hear the explosion, but only the narrator

can give us an accurate idea of the scope of the devastation. We cannot hear how many

people died, how many buildings were destroyed, how the social fabric was affected.

Someone needs to tell us. Shortly before the "Miller Effekt," as the Scientists call the

systemic error in the machine, destroys the established order, one of the Scientists notices

the disconnect between the raw information and the narrative frame that gives us our

sense of possible world. "Das Messgerät ist in Ordnung. Die Werte aber sind in

Unordnung" ("The gauge is in order. The values, however, are out of order"; 12). The

measurements themselves behave unruly, they do not subject to the order imposed by the

interpretive apparatus. The status of science as an independent and stable and truth-

making discourse, the autonomous anchor that makes Suvin's cognition possible,

becomes unreliable. The breakdown of the established order necessitates a cyborg

narrator who orders and presents the events. "Cybernetic people kill people."

This ordering and presenting function, as we saw, is not the privilege of the

narrative voice, but is already covertly operating in the medium itself. Technology does

not show us the world as it is, but shows us the world as it is interpreted according its

own Utopian potential. The play uses the cognitively estranging powers of SF to

dismantle the myth of science's neutrality. This task of interrogating science and

technology's neutrality constitutes one of the critical projects in the play, both explicitly,

in the moral dilemma of the Scientists, and implicitly, via the technological and narrative

agencies at play.

Please Rewind: Hybrid Agency and Hybrid Subjectivity

At this point, we come full circle. How do all the hybrid agencies on all three

levels (metadiegetic, diegetic, and non-diegetic) connect? When we look at the role of the

cyborg narrator and the impossibility of the machine to remain neutral, we can see that

the limitations technology imposes on our access to the real make technology a narrative

agent in its own right: technology orders, contextualizes, presents. Even if I acknowledge

that what I write or what I am able to record is determined by the tools I use, I still have

no choice but to use these tools to write and record and accept their agency in my

narrative project.

Such is the situation in *die Bienenkönige* when the Scientists depend on the same

tools that caused the catastrophe to secure their survival. Science fictional mimesis on the

radio allows us to represent this problem in a cognitively estranging way, and

inadvertently makes the listeners part of the mimetic process. It is a mutually dependent

relationship in which the actual world begets the non-actual world, which in turn frames

what the actual world can be in the first place. One of the Scientists describes this

relationship as such: "Sie sind die Spenderinnen von Leben. / Wir sind die Erhalter von

Leben" ("They are the givers of life./ We are the conservators of life"; 19). The Women

need the Men to survive; the Men need the Women for the species to survive. For the

Mutas, this survival depends on the very machine that enslaves them. As it is revealed

much later in the story, the heavy sedation the Mutas are put under by the Men is what

prevents them from giving birth to daughters. With regard to our discussion of narrative

agency, and I am using here the dehumanizing terminology of the Scientists, the output is

guaranteed but limited by the technology. On another level, we might put it this way: the

very machine that guarantees their existence enslaves and ultimately kills them. Without

the radio to create the narrative world in which they exist, they would not have needed to

go through all the pain and suffering, only to be switched off into non existence, both on a diegetic and a non-diegetic level.

As the Women give birth, or serve as means of sexual pleasure for the Men, their minds are preoccupied by a simulated world, in which the Women discuss Mahler and the world of music and art:

> [D]ie sprechen wie die Programme der philharmonischen Konzerte, obwohl ihnen der einst revolutionäre Gehalt der Kunst, die sie konsumieren und von der nur mehr ein paar Fetzen übrig sind, schon längst abhandengekommen ist.
> ("They talk like the programs of philharmonic concerts, even though they long lost the former revolutionary content of the art they are consuming, and of which only a few fragments have survived."; "Vorrede"]

This virtual reality is designed by the Scientists to to prevent the Women from becoming aware of the fact that their biological existence is used to produce offspring. The illusion is produced by the machine (for the mutas) and, in the course of the play, revealed by the machine (for the listener). For the Mutas (and to a point the Hetis) the virtual world is still intact. It is a world produced by the medium, with which they are in a hybrid relationship. When this meta-reality, the reality that exists on top of another reality, is switched off, the Women die. The metaphor of the Muta's hybrid existence, cynically described as that of a Queen-Bee ("Unsere Bienenköniginnen"; 20), mirrors the hybrid nature of the cybernetic relationship between the listener on the one hand and the radio on the other. As listeners, we are also absorbed by this other world (even though the separation is not absolute as I show in Chapter 2), and prevented from becoming fully

aware of the physical contexts our biological existence. We, too, enter into a kind of meta-reality but we are likely to survive our re-entry into the familiar world. Yet if the process of cognitive estrangement truly works, we come back as different people and see a slightly different world.

It might be noted that cyber-theorists who, like Donna Haraway, see the metaphor of the cyborg as a way to challenge dyadic power structures such as gender and race, might object that the genders in *Die Bienenkönige* are clearly defined and in no way fluid. The cybernetic technology does not enable the individuals in the play to assert agency over their bodies, it does not allow them to transgress body boundaries. In fact, the cybernetic technology is used precisely for the opposite. The Women are enslaved, exploited *as* technology, and overall forced into passivity. Such objection would certainly be justified. However, I believe that, if we conceive of what is happening in Jelinek's play as a collective integration of the entire Bee-State into a cybernetic network, we can understand it as a posthuman collective hive-mind of distributed cognition. As much as the Women are limited in their agency, they constitute an essential part of the overall mechanics and still wield a certain power over the Men, in a cybernetic master/slave dialectic. Without the Women's willingness to act according to their role within the bee-society – a willingness that becomes obvious once they awake from their drug-induced daze and become capable of bearing daughters – the Men would lose their sovereignty.

The Sons actively stabilize the Kings' power as well. Power/knowledge structures, Foucault argues, are maintained if the dominant agents can predict the reactions of the other agents. An agent's power reaches only so far as his "*dispositifs,*" the aligned agents and instruments that dispose and enable this power (Rouse 108). The

alignment can happen by force, as in the case of the Mutas and the Hetis, or by complicity as with the Sons and us, the listeners. In a scene between two Slaves from two different generations (note Jelinek's use of scientific terminology) the older complains about a feeling of fatigue and is immediately called in for termination. A much younger Slave ("Fünfte Generation") replaces him. Sure of their own superiority over previous generations, the two remaining Slaves assuage each other's fears about their own termination. "Sie [future generations] werden nie so gross und gut werden wie wir von den Fünfern" ("Future generations will never be as big and good as we of the fives"; 37). In doing so, they actively uphold the power of the Kings over them. "Wenn die Königsväter das beschlossen haben, dann wissen sie auch, warum" ("If the king fathers decided it that way, then they will know why"; 37). Even the machines themselves partake in this Foucauldian dynamic. While the Scientists control and maintain the machinery, they are entirely dependent on it for the continued distribution and exercise of power as well as their sheer survival. Once more, the machines are not simply instruments of power but are invested with a certain power, in their own right.

In the end, the unwelcoming soundscape of the opening section has become clearer to us, perhaps even slightly more inviting. This perceptual change occurred, not because we have any more knowledge of its real or true condition, but because we were able to create a more comprehensive narrative that can now serve us as an interpretive model by which we can begin to make sense of it. In that sense, the narrator kept his promise of giving us an "Erzählung" rather than an "Erklärung." We arrived at this model by a process of distributed cognition. In this process, cognitive estrangement, that is, the essentially science fictional, earns a peculiar function. It allows us to cognize the

Utopian in the sense we have been using it thus far. What *Die Bienenkönige* illustrates is

that truth, as something that directly and verifiably corresponds to the real, is a Utopian

proposition: necessary but impossible. All types of immersive narratives operate under

this proposition, which in Jelinek's play is formulated and personalized by the narrator.

Through the spectral distance between the listener's world and the diegesis that is

enforced by the acousmatic veil, radio play makes the Utopian nature of its own

ontological structure abundantly clear. By employing the defining characteristics of the

SF mode, *Die Bienenkönige* is able to represent this recognition as a cognitively

estranging object.

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1   Only very few of the figures in the play are given proper names and these names are inconsistently used (Abra, Asimov, Brutus). In the script they are referred to only as F, M, K, S (for Frau, Mann, Kind, Sohn oder Sklave) plus the addition of a number. Therefore I choose to capitalize the terms Scientists, Women, Sons, Slaves etc. wherever they designate groups of characters in the play rather than the common usage as a general collective noun.

2   For an in-depth discussion of gender and ethics see Tobe Levin, 1991. Levin however ignores the question of medium.

3   For an exploration of the philosophical implications of modern information technology that maintains traditional humanist views of an autonomous human self, see Bradley B. Onishi's excellent article on Heidegger's influence on both "transhumanism" and "posthumanism." While posthumanism is characterized by distributive cognition and the absence of an autonomous subject, transhumanism is ultra-humanist insofar as it strives to maintain the concept of a human nature that utilizes technology for its own transcendental goals (Onishi 2011).

4   Jelinek developed and published the material also as a short story. The narrative perspective is very different insofar as the narrator is an (disembodied!) alien explorer who finds traces of a past civilization which, like an archeologist, he or she tries to piece together. Its implications for the play would require a separate comparative analysis and distract us from the question of truth, subjectivity, and cyborg narration. The self-reflexive use of the medium is, however, the same: in the short story, it is found text documents that tell the meta-diegetic story (cf. Jelinek 1978).

5   Marie-Laure Ryan compares strategies employed by programmers or actual artificial intelligences to convince users that they are dealing with another autonomous consciousness. She never goes as far as to conceive of the narrator as an actual artificial intelligence the way I propose here. (cf. Ryan 1991)

6   "Brutus" is perhaps a reference to the son-like traitor who led the assassination against the demi-god dictator Caesar. There, Brutus shook the foundations of a male-dominated plutocracy which regarded the plebs and peasants as their children with themselves as care-takers, much like the future Bienenkönige, who attain demigod status by controlling technology. Brutus the computer is spoken by a female voice-actor, a twist not indicated in the written version of the play. In the script it seems that the computer is genderless. Without trying to read too much into the director's decision here, I suggest that there is a motif of the machine as woman, or woman as machine, that is repeated later on in the figures of the Mutas, the Bienenköniginnen. It is this female voice/machine that in each case announces the downfall of the existing order.

7   1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. 2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. 3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws (Asimov 2004). Susan Leigh Anderson argues that Asimov later rejected these laws as a basis for an ethical engagement with intelligent machines, as it effectively enslaves them (Anderson 2009).

8   In fact, Karel Capek first raised this issue in *RUR*, but with much less popular impact.

9   Dungeons & Dragons is a role-playing board game designed by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and has been published and reissued by TSR since 1974. Players of D&D will explore a fictional world created almost exclusively in the participants' imagination. The plot unfolds according to a system of chance and character points acquired in a characters' narrative development. It is the dungeon master's responsibility to ensure that the narrative and character development remain plausible according to the rules of the game and do not succumb to logical gaps. Because this comes with unlimited power over the world of the game, the master remains external to it. Unlike the narrator in Jelinek's play, he has no stake in it.

10 Of course, sometimes science tries (successfully) to fill in the blanks trailing SF's speculative inventiveness. In 2012, for example, NASA scientists suggested that controlled warps of spacetime would allow a form of transportation that would break the speed of light. *Star Trek* has used this technology since 1966 (cf. Steadman).

11 It is unclear who coined the phrase originally. It was never an official NRA slogan, but widely used by supporters and spokespeople of the U.S. gun lobby as well as its opponents.

12   According to him, the mechanical principle that allows rapid bullet fire is the same as the one that allows rapid exposure of consecutive photographs. "The history of the movie camera thus coincides with the history of automatic weapons. The transport of pictures only repeats the transport of bullets. In order to focus on and fix objects moving through space, such as people, there are two procedures: to shoot and to film" (*Gramophone* 124).

Remembering the Nuclear Apocalypse: Cold War Science Fiction in the
Radiophonic Imagination in Ulrich Horstmann's *Die Bunkermann-Kassette*

Imagine an exhibit in a museum of cultural history. Labeled as artifact H9 in display case XX you find a piece of outdated technology: an electromagnetic recording tape. On it: prog rock of the 1970s, lots of Hammond organ, and guitars resembling Led Zepplin and Grobschnitt, as well as the rumbling noise of a tape played too many times. So far, the opening scenario in Ulrich Horstmann's 1979 radio play *Die Bunkermann-Kassette* is not particularly futuristic, nor is it difficult to imagine. In fact, as you are reading this, there are sound storage media on display in several museums and library exhibits in the US, Germany and other places around the world.[1] They are peculiar sites of memory. Their status as artifact speaks to the technological contexts of their time, while their content, the sonic objects they store, carries the sounds of the past *into* the present and turns the site of memory into a practice of experiencing the past *as* present.[2]

There is something else that is peculiar about the record tape on display in Horstmann's imaginary museum. In addition to the sounds of western Cold War pop culture, it contains the last sounds of humanity as we know it: the dying words of the last specimen of our own species. We hear oral testimony from a world in which one of the worst fears of the Cold War – the annihilation of the human race in nuclear overkill – has become a reality. The tape is a sonic object that simultaneously stores the sounds of our past, present, and apocalyptic future. They are sounds from another place which is, as we listen, also right here and now. In the radiophonic imagination, the apocalypse enters collective memory. The now anachronistic technology of the tape is an artifact of unrealized potential: that which could have been. As SF radio play, the Cold War is given

an extended history, a history of a hot war that never was. It is at the same time familiar

and present (as lived experience, institutionalized memory, cultural narrative, etc.) and

remains a speculative possibility (as tentative civil defense scenario, narrative trope of an

uncertain future).[3] This chapter will examine the strategies and effects by which the play

engages these aspects of memory and recollection, temporality, and history along two

formal layers: genre and medium. The experience is a Utopian memory that, through an

act of re-remembering the present as a future event, undoes the myth of history as an

objectively knowable line of teleological causation. The historical nature of science

fiction (in contrast to the ahistorical nature of fantasy), combined with the form of the

radio play and the medium audio tape, produces an especially unsettling narrative of the

Cold War as, at once, historical reality and hyperrealistic fiction, rewriting our experience

into ever more artifactual modes of recollection.

We are not, in the strictest sense, listening to the past. The play does not contain

the sounds of sirens, or nuclear warning systems, or other any other sounds that R.

Murray Schafer would call a *soundmark*.[4] Nor does the Bunkermann himself talk about

the sounds of the Cold War in some type of *earwitness report* as Carolyn Birdsall defines

them.[5] What we experience when we listen to the *Bunkermann-Kassette* is much more

akin to *déjà vu* that gives us an uncanny sense of familiarity without actually overtly

indicating the object that is to be recalled. Walter Benjamin suggests that the visual

metaphor of *déjà vu* for this kind of memory may be imprecise. Instead the memory, in

this case of the Cold War, comes as an echo of the past "awakened by a call"

("Chronicle" 59). Echoes are distorted, modulated versions of the original moment,

recognizable more on an emotional than on a formal level. In Horstmann's play the

echoes are sounds from another place which become, as we listen, our own here and now. By way of the radiophonic imagination, the apocalypse echoes in the listeners' collective memory.

The play, as described above, opens with music. Soon we hear the voice of a docent (Ilse Neubauer), who guides us through the imaginary museum and introduces the artifact. When she restarts the cassette tape that gives the work its name, we hear the autobiographical narrative of 79-year-old Klaus Steintal the self-described *Bunkermann* (Wolfgang Büttner). At the time of the recording, Steintal is the survivor of a nuclear war. Unspecified political powers, we find out, emptied their arsenals in a last war effort, only to wipe out all human life on the planet – all life, except for the Bunkermann and a new species of post-nuclear mutants with the intellectual abilities of children, the social structure of ancient tribes, and the enormous physical strength of primates (Gottfried John, Rolf Zacher, et al.). Under these circumstances, a bunker, which gives Steintal his nickname, becomes his home and safe haven. He likens its protective and comforting qualities to a womb: "nein, nein, kein Grab! In den Decken im Winter wie im Mutterschoß … man läuft nicht weg von der Mutter" ("no, no, not a grave! In the blankets in winter like a womb … one does not run away from the mother"; 210, my translation). The bunker, along with the tape recorder and Steintal himself, is the only material relic of the Cold War that has survived the catastrophe.[6]

As the narrative progresses, the Bunkermann reveals more details about the aftermath of the catastrophe that occurred in his past that is our future. He describes death from radiation poisoning and fatal conflicts among the survivors over the scarce remaining resources. He recalls how these conflicts eventually escalated to the point of

murder and cannibalism. After a long period of solitude, Steintal tells us, he encountered

the mutants, who regarded him as a "Weiser, Orakel und Halbgott" ("wise man, oracle,

and demi-god"; 211). As the Bunkermann records the story of his past, we also become

earwitnesses to his present. Fights break out over the possession of the tape recorder, to

which the mutants refer as the *Kriegsgerät* ("machine from the war") and *Echokasten*

("echo box") – the latter, perhaps an allusion to Benjamin's aforementioned observation

that memory acts like an echo from the past. In the end, they kill the Bunkermann

because they believe that his essence, in form of his voice, has been safely transferred to

and stored in the machine. They devour his body, which they now believe to be merely an

empty and superfluous shell. With the only person who knows how to operate the

machine gone, the recording abruptly stops. The play ends with the sounds of the same

rock-music with which it began. It was on the tape originally, a memory from before the

war, which the Bunkermann had partially erased for the purpose of preserving his own

memories.

The author, Ulrich Horstmann (b. 1949), has been a prominent figure in German

literary circles, and regularly appears on TV talk-shows, radio (particularly in the 80s and

early 90s), and in newspaper *Feuilletons* since the late 1970s. His work for radio and

theater is limited to the short but productive period of twelve years from 1978 to 1990.

He is also a professor of English at the University of Giessen, Germany, and recipient of

the Kleist Prize in 1988. Klaus Steintal appears in a number of novels, volumes of poetry,

and philosophical works, but only once as the ill-fated Bunkermann. Raja Autze und

Frank Müller identify Steintal as a kind of poetic alter-ego for Horstmann, a not quite

autobiographical but not entirely fictional personification of his philosophy (Autze and

Müller 16f.). While overall, the different iterations of this figure do not belong to a

coherent narrative world, they do form a coherent metaphor which is deeply grounded in

Horstmann's signature blend of nihilism and anti-humanism he calls "anthropofugal

philosophy." In its most basic form, the anthropofugal is a critique of anthropocentrism

through the "Blickwinkel einer spekulativen Menschenflucht" ("perspective of a

speculative flight from humanity"; "Untier" 8) Horstmann initiates this flight as an:

> Auf-Distanz-Gehen des Untiers zu sich selbst und seiner Geschichte, ein
>
> unparteiisches Zusehen, ein Aussetzen des scheinbar universalen
>
> Sympathiegebotes mit der Gattung, der der Nachdenkende selbst angehört, ein
>
> Kappen der affektiven Bindungen.
>
> ("from itself and its history, an impartial observation, an interruption of the
>
> seemingly universal commandment for sympathy with the species, of which the
>
> observer is also a part, a truncation of the affective ties"; 8).

Horstmann places his Steintal character in the position of the observer of humanity as

often as he makes him an example for everything he finds wrong with it. In the present

play, Steintal is simultaneously victim and perpetrator, last representative of humanity

and its worst offender.

Recording the Apocalyptic Non-Event

By placing the audio tape at the center of the play, *Die Bunkermann-Kassette*

draws attention to the medium itself. Such attention is warranted because, especially

when it is on display in a museum of the future, magnetic tape can serve as a site of Cold

War memory in the following two ways: explicitly, because it may store sounds from this

particular period (in this case, rock music), and implicitly, because it is the conflict's

quintessential sound technology. It came into existence during WWII, was commercially

available shortly after. It replaced the dominant sound media of WWI – the phonographic

record – and of WWII – the radio – as media of mass sound dissemination. There was,

strictly speaking, some overlap. The vinyl record was widely used far into the 1980s and

"home recording" in form of Edison's phonographic cylinder was already en vogue in the

last quarter of the 19th Century. But I am concerned here with the type of media that by

their sheer market dominance, presence and availability throughout all social

demographics, have to be considered media of the masses. The audio tape was more

mobile and flexible than the vinyl record and had the added effect that sounds could now

also be easily recorded at relatively affordable cost. Sound recording was no longer a

pleasure of the Victorian upper class or of experimental sound laboratories, but slowly

became a commodity for increasingly lower income levels. Furthermore, their longevity

and sound quality far surpassed that of the fragile pre-WWII recording devices.

Where the radio allowed the individual to partake in a mass experience from the

safety of their own living room, the phonographic record allowed individual

programming choices that still depended on the availability of industrially produced

sound artifacts in the form of vinyl discs. With the tape recorder, unique copies of sound

could be produced at home and stored seemingly outside the reach of what Adorno calls,

the "culture industry" (*Culture Industry* 98). Rather than consuming standardized cultural

goods, listeners could, within limits, seize control of the means of production and create

their own programming. Whereas the radio is the medium of the atomized masses, as we

saw in Chapter 2, the tape recorder allowed the formation of smaller, localized

communities of listeners while, at the same time, it amplified the mass capabilities of

radio itself.[7] Horstmann's play explores this intersection of the extremely private and

personalized form of sound documentation and – by placing this recording in a museum

as well as on the radio for our future nostalgia – its mass dissemination.

For awhile, radio, records, and tape recorders existed in a kind of symbiotic co-

existence. Radio DJs would play vinyl discs on the radio and music fans would record

them off the radio. Simultaneously, the very sound of radio was changed when magnetic

tape made the editing of radio features and plays fast and easy. Even the music marketed

on vinyl was radically changed by the flexibility with which tape recorders allowed

artists to work and experiment in the studio. There can be no doubt that the common

factor that connected and radically changed all these pre-Cold War media was the record

tape. Ultimately, in the early 90s, coinciding almost exactly with the end of the Cold

War, analog tape recording became obsolete when it was replaced by compact discs and

various other forms of digital home recording. From a media or sound studies

perspective, a tape recorder, or a work of art about a tape recorder, like Burroughs' *Nova

Trilogy,* Cage's *Water Walk,* Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, and Coppola's *The

Conversation*, even if not explicitly developed as central theme, will always implicitly be

about the Cold War and the Cold War experience.

When I speak of the Cold War experience, I am aware that this period was not

singularly and homogeneously experienced everywhere and at all times. In fact, even its

beginning and end are different in different places. By treating the Cold War as a non-

event, I am speaking of the idealized western perspective, which is in and of itself a

fantasy. For those Germans who were killed at the attempt to cross the inner German border or whose families were torn apart, for those Czechs who died in the Prague Spring, those Americans who went to Korea or Vietnam, the Koreans or Vietnamese soldiers and civilians who fought with or against them, and for many, many more, the Cold War was a very tangible and present experience. Yet, oddly, these experiences are not necessarily part of our cultural memory as Cold War events *per se*. Perhaps because these conflicts were fought abroad and came to our living rooms via radio and television only, we do not generally mark the iconic Cold War experience along these events. Or, perhaps, they did not make it into standard Cold War narratives because they were to complex and morally ambiguous to fit into the almost Manichean dichotomy of West versus East. Much of cultural production, particularly in pop culture, during the Cold War was "directed, for example, at proving superiority over the enemy, at demonstrating the evilness of the other side, and to warn of enemies within one's own nation" (Starck 3). This had the effect that the "average" or "typical" western experience was one of anxious anticipation of some kind of disastrous armed escalation of the conflict, and ultimate relief in the early 1990s when it seemed that it was averted.

The moral and political ambiguity of this experience reflects the moral and political ambiguity that characterized the period of the second Cold War (1979-1985) in general. The two super-powers and their allies found themselves pressured into immense military aggression as a form of self-defense in a colossal military and ideological stalemate. The anticipation of ultimate destruction was, in effect, what assured that nuclear escalation remained a non-event. Bernd Greiner suggests that, in order to maintain heightened alertness of the general population despite the constant deferral of

direct combat between the adversaries, civil defense agencies on both sides used "Angst explizit [als ein] Mittel der politischen Kommunikation" ("fear deliberately as a means of political communication"; 17, my translation). Fear of nuclear war became the emotional underpinning of the era's ideological dichotomy, which was powerfully and painfully symbolized by the Iron Curtain that separated Horstmann's home country.

Helplessness in the face of the threat of total (self-)destruction spawned a body of narrative scenarios that played out what would happen should the conflict turn from cold to hot. "For the 'reality' of the nuclear age and the fable of nuclear war are perhaps distinct, but they are not two separate things" as Derrida puts it in an essay on the deferred nature of the nuclear apocalypse in the 1980s ("Apocalypse" 23). They are related insofar as:

> 'Reality,' let's say the encompassing institution of the nuclear age, is constructed by the fable, on the basis of an event that has never happened (except in fantasy, and that is not nothing at all), an event of which one can only speak, an event whose advent remains an invention by men (in all the senses of the word 'invention') or which, rather, remains to be invented. An invention because it depends upon new technical mechanisms, to be sure, but an invention also because it does exist and especially because, at whatever point it should come into existence, it would be a grand premiere appearance (24).

The nuclear age is, he goes on to argue, a literary invention because it is through textual representation (literary, technical, economic, social) that we anticipate the apocalypse "in order to make a place for it or to prevent it from taking place" (28). Science fictional

objects like the *Bunkermann-Kassette* (both the fictional artifact and the play itself) figure centrally in this collective practice of preemptive memory and shape our understanding of the Cold War as the memory of a real non-event.

The fictional *Bunkermann-Kassette* is an artifact that is at once a personal record of lived memory and a public site of memory on exhibit in a museum. The non-diegetic object of this essay, the radio play itself, is also a site of memory that is both private and public, experienced under unique and personal circumstances and disseminated on a mass scale. It gives testimony to the 1970s when it was written and produces, but resonates with us more than thirty years later. As such, it should be considered an experiential site of prosthetic memory. Prosthetic memory is a term coined by Alison Landsberg to refer to a:

> new form of memory, which [...] emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history […] In the process [Landsberg is] describing, the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics. (2)

In the case of *Die Bunkermann-Kassette,* our prosthetic memory is one of a non-event. Not even the people who lived through the Cold War in Germany experienced the nuclear apocalypse, yet have deeply felt memories of it as a looming scenario. The

Bunkermann's personal, if fictional, memory comes to the visitor of the imaginary

museum in the form of a mass representation. The listeners then and now, the readers of

Horstmann's different *Steintal* writings, and even the reader of this dissertation

experience these memories and make them their own. They are not necessarily shared

memories. In fact Landsberg emphasizes that they are not "collective" in the traditional

sense developed by Maurice Halbwachs (Landsberg 8). Two listeners will likely develop

different prosthetic memories based on their own personal histories, but they are

engendered by the same experiential event.

    Thinking about the *Kassette* as a site of prosthetic memory also highlights a

pedagogical element – a kind of imaginary museum pedagogy. Prosthetic memories,

Landsberg emphasizes, "help condition how a person thinks about the world and might

be instrumental in articulating an ethical relation to the other" (21). Beyond the mere

"what if" of the play's premise, the Bunkermann faces issues that go beyond the specifics

of nuclear war. The Bunkermann finds himself ripped from his familiar contexts and

structures, which places him in a deep crisis of identity. In his struggle for survival, he is

forced to give up ethical and moral concerns that previously defined him as a human

being. Our own estrangement is here mirrored in the protagonist's crisis, forcing us to

re-cognize our own present and identity.

    Our perspective on the record tape as Cold War technology and the notion of a,

however generalized, Cold War experience is, of course, privileged in yet another way.

As the tape's future audience, we listen to the tape from the perspective of a survivor. It

is, after all, a tape displayed in a museum. Horstmann writes as a Cold War

contemporary, long before digital sound storage and computerized editing is even thought

of. To him, the cassette tape is not a nostalgic artifact but the most prominent artifact of

present-day pop-culture. Similarly, an end to the Cold War, the reunification, and the

collapse of the East-Block are still twenty years away – mere science fiction, one might

say.

Horstmann uses the mode of SF to examine the human condition in general and

this period of the Cold War in particular. *Die Bunkermann-Kassette* first aired April 6,

1979 on the Bayerische Rundfunk (BR). Four years later, Horstmann presents his

philosophical magnum opus *Das Untier: Konturen einer Philosophie der*

Menschenflucht. The text exudes unveiled disgust with a variety of cultural articulations

that range from military parades to the allegedly ineffective do-goodery of the peace

movement:

> Die Apokalypse steht ins Haus. Wir Untiere wissen es längst, und wir wissen es
>
> alle. Hinter dem Parteiengezänk, den Auf- und Abrüstungsdebatten, den
>
> Militärparaden und Anti-Kriegsmärschen, hinter der Fassade des Friedenswillens
>
> und der endlosen Waffenstillstände gibt es eine heimliche Übereinkunft, ein
>
> unausgesprochenes großes Einverständnis: dass wir ein Ende machen müssen mit
>
> uns und unseresgleichen, sobald und so gründlich wie möglich – ohne Pardon,
>
> ohne Skrupel und ohne Überlebende.
>
> ("The apocalypse is afoot. We beasts have long known, and we all know. Behind
>
> the political quarreling, debates about arming and disarming, the military parades
>
> and anti-war marches, behind the facade of peace talks and endless armistices,
>
> there is a secret agreement, an unspoken mutual understanding: that we have to

put an end to ourselves and our equals, as soon and as thoroughly as possible –

without pardon, without scruples and without survivors.”; “Untier” 7)

Such cultural pessimism is a near-satirical assessment of the self-destructive tendencies

of the arms race and mutually assured destruction that dominated this phase of the Cold

War. Seen through the lens of anthropofugal philosophy, such an assessment can only

happen if we distance ourselves from humanity itself, to take a dispassionate outside

look, as a form of “Gedankenspiele” ‘mind games’ (*Bunkermann* 205). This outside

view becomes possible through the tape in the imaginary museum of the future and the

Bunkermann’s reminiscence of a past that is also the future that the listeners fear.

Horstmann shows that the object of this anxiety can best be represented by way of a

speculative and hypothetical future – the very mode of representation that characterizes

SF. We may remember that concepts, which are so estranging that they cannot easily be

represented with conventional realist mimesis, can be represented by science fictional

mimesis. The traumatic anticipation of the complete annihilation of the present conditions

is certainly such a cognitively estranging referent. We have to read a work of art like *Die*

Bunkermann-Kassette as a form of cognitively estranging mimesis of this anxiety.

Of course, the Bunkermann Klaus Steintal himself never uses the biblical term

“apocalypse.” Instead, he uses a term the mutants invented: “Große Einfachung” – the

“Grand Simplification” of the world. And indeed, for him as well as for us, the complex

history of the Cold War becomes easily broken down into the time before and after the

catastrophe. Similarly to the biblical understanding of apocalypse as a moment of

judgment and, potentially, redemption, the Grand Simplification punished those who

were reckless. Although, as the Bunkermann’s death proves, there is no redemption.

Wolfgang Lueckel argues in his excellent doctoral dissertation on "Atomic Apocalypse –

'Nuclear Fiction' in German Literature and Culture" that German Cold War literature

rejects the traditional biblical apocalypse as a redemptive motif and explores "the atomic

apocalypse as another step towards the technical facilitation of genocide, preceded by the

Jewish Holocaust with its gas chambers and ovens" (iii). This "dark side" of technology

is bracketed in Horstmann's play in favor of an emphasis on the human element of this

development from industrialized murder to complete self-destruction. Technology serves

as the connecting thread between our past and our future, but is, in and of itself, not to

blame. Much in accord with Horstmann's anthropofugal philosophy, the humans

themselves are at fault and only a radical renewal of what it means to be human – both

morally and biologically – can bring change. As listeners, that is as visitors to the

museum of the future and implied offspring of the mutants, we are part of this renewal.

We are, in a sense, redeemed already, and the technology of radio and tape recorder allow

us to connect to this future past and learn our lesson, over and over again.

At first glance, we might envision the Bunkermann as the enduring and morally

superior survivor of humanity's folly – an equivalent of Charlton Heston's George Taylor

in *Planet of the Apes* (1968) who, upon finding out that the world dominated by apes is in

fact future earth in the final scene of the film, exclaims: "You maniacs! You blew it up!

Oh, damn you! Goddamn you all to hell!" While the Bunkermann shares this

disappointment with his fellow humans, Horstmann goes to great lengths to depict the

Bunkermann as an average person, whose identity and ethics have been compromised by

the extreme duress of his struggle for survival. He is not a heroic figure like George

Taylor (or a ridiculous one for that matter) but a victim of no one in particular. No

superpower is held accountable. That is not to say that the narrative itself is not strikingly

similar to those of the historical twentieth-century world wars. The Bunkermann refers to

himself as an "Überlebender des 3. Krieges" ("survivor of the third war"; 209). No

specific political ideologies are mentioned. The political and military leaders appear as

faceless entities, disconnected from the common person and the effects this conflict

might have on them: "weiß der Himmel, was die alles noch aus den Arsenalen geholt

haben, als es ohnehin schon zu spät war" ("heaven knows what they pulled from their

armories, even after it was too late"; 211). Despite his disgust with "them" in charge, the

Bunkermann's desire to survive causes him to commit acts of cruelty against his own

kind as well. In this sense, he reflects the dynamic of fear and violence on a magnified

scale. His increasing moral depravity and eventual death at the hands of the mutants is

not a tragedy but, as I hope to show, an inevitability, even a necessity, of the play's

speculative setup.

A Museum of Sounds from the Future

        The guide of Horstmann's imaginary museum, like an overly eager docent, sets

up the interpretive frame of the play. She suggests that a museum of the past displays

artifacts that tell the history of humanity: "Wer etwas über die Vorgeschichte unserer

Gattung erfahren will, der geht in ein Museum" ("Who wants to learn something about

the pre-history of our species, goes to a museum"; 205: 1996).[8] A museum of the future,

on the other hand, needs to speculate, imagine, play games of thoughts and ideas: "Wer

etwas über die Nachgeschichte unserer Gattung erfahren will, der ist auf Spekulationen

angewiesen – oder besser: auf Gedankenspiele" ("Who wants to learn something about

the post-history depends on speculation – or better: on mind games."; 205: 1996).

Knowledge of the future is, as our guide explains, acquired through a type of game.

Without going into ludological detail with my argument here, I want to emphasize that

the metaphor "mind games" suggests on the one hand that the mental experiment takes

place in the imaginative self-representation of a cognitive apparatus and, on the other,

that it follows a rigorous set of rules. Furthermore, it suggests that the outcome is defined

to a significant degree by the players, in contrast to an experiment, which, if set up

correctly, can run by itself according to its own parameters. Analogies to the kinds of

literary and media theory come to mind which emphasize the interplay between medium

and user in the production of meaning. Rather than arriving at a previously defined

meaning, reading is a (mind) game that produces meaning in the process of playing. The

experiment of exploring our post-history, in other words, is a process of reading the

present along a defined set of rules, which are here dictated by the genre (SF) and the

medium (radio).

We are assured that all will be in order and not random in this museum of the

future. "Aber keine Sorge, auch hier hat alles seine Ordnung. Die Experten einer

umgekehrten Archäologie sind ebenso geschäftig und gewissenhaft wie ihre

Spiegelbilder in der Wirklichkeit" ("But do not worry, here too, everything has its order.

The experts of a reversed archeology are as industrious and diligent as their counterparts

in real life"; 205: 1996). Nothing here happens by accident. The relics of the future are

organized and well curated by experts of reverse archeology.

In an essay on curatorship, Boris Groĭs argues that "Every exhibition tells a story,

by directing the viewer through the exhibition in a particular order; the exhibition space is

always a narrative space" (44). To place objects – in Groĭs' analysis these are works of

art – in such a narrative space, means to place them in relative dialogue and challenge

their phantasmal status as autonomous objects of aesthetic contemplation. Narrative

context undermines the auratic status of the artwork as much as its technical

reproducibility does. A museum of the future in particular – a space that depends on

"Spekulationen" and "Gedankenspiele" – problematizes the idea that the object possesses

some kind of inherent value or truth prior to its narrativization. An object from the future

is an object from the future through narrative only, or else it would be an object of the

present. If the docent in Horstmann's play deliberately promises such curatorial impact

on the object on display, he invites the type of contemplation and engagement that is

productive and deliberately generates meaning, rather than the passive and purposeless

experience of rupture imagined by humanist aesthetics.[9]

        This does not mean that the ability or perhaps the burden of producing meaning

rests entirely on the spectator as some kind of autonomous self. In Chapter 3, we saw that

cognition and production of meaning is a process distributed among a variety of organic

and artificial embodiments. Furthermore, socio-economic contexts anchor the spectator's

potential for narrative interpretation within the particular historic episteme. I visit the

museum of the future from the perspective of a present moment of which I, according to

Bloch, can have no knowledge. Fredrik Jameson calls this unearthing of thick layers of

imaginary description *Archeologies of the Future*. The task of a Jamesonean archeologist

would be to ask, what do our imaginings of the future say about the particular historical

circumstances that produced them, or, what kinds of futures do the particular historical

circumstances allow us to imagine (Jameson 99)? For example, in the case of the

Bunkermann-Kassette, as a reverse archeologist my (at least partial) answer would be that

the historical specifics of the Cold War, as it presented itself in West Germany of 1979

produced the play's pessimistic vision of a nuclear apocalypse.

All science fictional spaces and all radiophonic imaginings exist in some relation

to historical time. As Gerard Genette says, all narrative is either "present, past, or future

tense" (215). But they may also be none of the above and exist on a completely different

temporal and spatial plane altogether. In such a world, we may dine at the end of the

Universe, tilting back and forth between our own world and some other, unrelated world

as if we were dining in Douglas Adams' Miliways. Such temporal trajectories, the kind

that do not intersect with ours, are characteristic for the fantasy genre. In science fiction,

we are not only transported to an alternative time, but the experience of this alternative

needs to plausibly relate to our sense of temporality and history. Without this link to what

we have come to understand as our reality, the fictional world is located on a completely

different temporal trajectory. We cannot hope to become Harry Potter or Frodo Baggins,

but we can become James T. Kirk, William Adama, or the Bunkermann. In the science

fictional mode, radiophonic imagination is able to stage an historic non-event that

becomes a shared experience for an imagined community.

The very notion of a relic from the future suggests that, if we talk about the future,

we have to talk about it as if it is our past, following the laws, experiences, and categories

of our present. A future world entirely alien to our frame of experience is, as Jameson

points out, inconceivable (118). How can we name what does not yet exist, except by

framing it in terms of things that do? Kurd Lasswitz imagined flying bikes as the vehicle

of the future in 1871 because because the concept of disembodied travel through

computer networks was not available to him. Hoverboards, smell pianos, and jetpacks are all visions of the future that are particular to the time in which they were imagined. Representation of the radically alien and otherly would, we should add, require a language largely unknown to us. This is, of course, an impossibility as Jameson points out, because "it is the human body which is called upon to register the alien interaction with its own emotions and physical spasms: language and expression seeming only to belong to the human side of the mutual opposition" (118). That is why the language spoken in our future – in Horstmann's vision, the language of the mutants – is made of the rubble of the past. "Muß habent … meines da … hungerthungerthungert … beiß beiß … nä brenn nä … muß habent … Echokasten … meines da … " ("Must havs … mine there … hungershungershungers … bite bite … nope burn nope .. must havs … Echobox … mine there …"; 208). When we hear the childish language of the mutants, it is also a broken version of our own language; broken here in the sense of shards and pieces that clearly belong to a larger system – the system that produced the *Kriegsgerät* which stores it – and also broken in the sense that to us, who are in possession of knowledge of the larger system, it is no longer fully functional. In a way, that is the position of the reader of SF, as we are always confronted with shards of our own culture in new, often unintelligible contexts. We are looking back at these shards as if on an archeological dig, one that uses radio *Hörspiel* rather than brushes, hammers, and pickaxes as excavation tools.

A museum is a space where artifacts give testimony of different worlds. The fourth principle Foucault establishes to characterize heterotopian spaces specifies that "heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time" ("Heterotopias"). Museums are

heterotopias because they bring together objects form a variety of different times and

places at a specific time and place. In this space, we can simultaneously relate to all these

different times and places, thus creating the illusion of a localized but nevertheless

endless temporal (heterochronic) and spatial (heterotopic) universe. Moreover, they serve

as a kind of vault in which we attempt to store time itself:

> there are heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time, for example museums
>
> and libraries, Museums and libraries have become heterotopias in which time
>
> never stops building up and topping its own summit, whereas in the seventeenth
>
> century, even at the end of the century, museums and libraries where the
>
> expression of an individual choice. ("Heterotopias")

Museums and libraries strive for completeness. They conceive of themselves as

representative cross-sections in their field. A museum like Horstmann's is possible only

in this new conception of the museum as a heterotopic and heterochronic locale. A

systematic glimpse into the future past, a speculative *Gedankenspiel*, is not possible in

the monadic setting of a personal collection of artifacts, but only in the context of

accumulated collective knowledge. This is true even if the notion of "completeness" is in

and of itself a fantasy.

In our reading of and interaction with these artifacts – yes, the museum of the

future allows us to play with the exhibit – a museum is a place where we tell narratives of

our past, in fact, *create* our shared past as Jan Assmann has argued (cf. Assmann 1992).

Sometimes we can relate to these artifacts, but most often they are so strange and alien,

that, rather than to use them to be immersed into a different historical period, we have to

frame them in terms of our own epistemic sense of the world. Sometimes these narratives

are pure science fiction in the sense that they constitute the best educated guess based on

the elements we know. Just think of a museum dedicated to the Stone Age and a diorama

of cave men and women using their tools. Such a display tries to immerse us into a

narrative of the past and to provide us with a certain verisimilitude. Yet, no amount of

research will allow us to experience the past *as* cave-woman or man. Immersion into the

past is making a come-back in museum pedagogy since its first occurrence in the 19th

century under the guise of "living history" and reenactments. In *Bunkermann-Kassette* we

are immersed into the space of this other world, not through an interactive reenactment,

but through the artifact itself, through a tape.

The tape has the other world literally stored, encoded in magnetized strips, in its

physical form. While handwriting is a trace on paper of the body that wrote it and print a

trace of the machine, neither of these typically supplement the verisimilitude of the

narrative world itself, but merely give evidence to the act of writing or printing. An

epistolary novel may, of course, use handwriting to suggest the "realness" of the letters,

yet such measures are rather the exception to the rule and are impractical for mass

production. Films and photos reproduce the image of the body but do not store traces of

the body itself; they merely indicate it. Indexicality, developed by Charles Sanders Peirce

as part of his comprehensive semiotics, in the strictest sense denotes a relationship

between sign and referent that is causal and direct (51). The relationship between an

object and a photo of said object is indexical, because there could be no image without

the object.[10] It seems tempting to suggest that such is the relationship between the sound

on the tape and its referent. After all, does not the sound of a dog on the radio indicate a

dog? I suggest that, unlike a scroll or a book, a photograph or a film, the magnetic tape

contains more than just the likeness of the sounds of bodies, ambiance, music, etc.

Ideally, a sound recording is an imprint of all the sonic qualities of the sound object and

so the object becomes literally reproducible. An image of a dog is not a dog, a recording

of a bark is not a dog, but a recording of a bark is indeed a bark; however, one that does

not require the dog. It is this sense of presence that leads the mutants to believe that they

can kill the Bunkermann's body and store his essence on tape, where actually all they

stored was the sonic information that constitutes his voice. This sense of presence also

allows the sound artifact in the museum of the future to give such a powerful testimony

of the atomic apocalypse as some kind of trace of the future.

　　　The debate on realism – that is, the mimetic correspondence between the "real

world" and its reproduction – has been largely limited to the image. But theorists of the

image soon realized that it was not so much the ability of photography to capture

"reality" that gave it its unique status among other forms of representation, but the

Utopian promise that it could. André Bazin suggested as early as 1945 that the

photographic image draws its "irrational power" to convince us of its objectivity, not

from the actual faithfulness of the image to the empirical live experience, but from the

spectator's desire to reproduce and store reality (Bazin 14). Nevertheless, for Bazin, the

relationship between reality and the photograph is still indexical because it is chiefly a

form of reproducing (or indicating) the referent rather than storage.

　　　Digital photography and computer-generated imagery (CGI) problematize this

fantasy of realism because the image no longer requires a real-life referent. Martin Lister

suggests that even fully digital imagery draws from the "irrational power" over the

viewer described by Bazin. "Even when the cameras and lenses employed are virtual, the images produced are rendered photo-realistic, they borrow photography's currency, its deeply historical 'reality effect', simply in order to have meaning" (Lister 252). While no longer limited by the real in what it *could* depict, digital photography strives to surpass analog photography in how well it emulates reality. Lister explains that the hyperreality of the digital image is fueled by the same analog desire to "reproduce and store reality" Bazin observed in 1945. It constitutes a kind of "cyborg vision; the vision of a hybrid-human machine" (254). Expanding on my argument in the previous chapter, I argue that the radiophonic is also a form of posthuman representation, a kind of "cyborg audition." Radio prefigures the challenges to indexicality that digital photography and CGI impose on analog photography insofar as it too appears indexical to a referent that is radically imaginary. The acoustic objects, the sounds of the apocalypse that are without referent except in the fable of the nuclear war, are stored, reproduced and give us the effect of reality of this other, future world which is so familiar to the Cold War listener.

Don Drucker learns of the technological effort that is put into creating these indices without referent when he observes the amount of work required by a couple of NPR engineers as they try to create realistic soundscapes for a radio feature about duck hunting. Not the actual recording of the sound is used, but a highly engineered version that fulfills the audience's auditory expectations (Drucker 326). Consequently Drucker calls the very idea of "natural" or "unmediated" sound into question and proposes that the acoustic text is constructed by the listener. Adorno brings up the same issue when he notices that we can describe how a certain sound appears altered by a particular radio receiver. We cannot, however, identify what a radio "naturally" sounds like, except by

comparison with the source. "There is no criterion for the 'natural' sound of mechanically

reproduced music but the faithfulness to the live sound. If the 'natural' sound becomes

problematic, the ideal of faithfulness becomes problematic too" ("Radio Voice" 346).

Dieter Hasselblatt describes the production of Horstmann's play as a sensual and

stimulating listening experience:

> *Die Bunkermann-Kassette* hat als Protagonisten ein elektronisch-akustisches
>
> Gerät, einen Kassettenrecorder, der nach dem großen Knall irgendwo in
>
> irgendwelchen Bunkern übrig geblieben ist, und da gibt es einen alten Mann,
>
> der *Bunkermann* genannt wird und von den strahlengeschädigten Jüngeren
>
> schließlich verzehrt wird. Und diesem Hörspiel geschehen (geschehen?...) Dinge,
>
> die keine Bebilderung aushalten würden: die Schlachtung, der Fress-Orgasmus
>
> von Menschen an einem Menschen... Meine Charakterisierung von Ulrich
>
> Horstmanns Hörspiel müsste lauten: widerlich gut. Daran ist die Realisation durch
>
> Bernd Lau wesentlich beteiligt. In diesem Hörspiel gibt es eine minutenlange
>
> Passage, in der keine Sprache, keine semantische Information auf dem Wege des
>
> Wortes zu hören ist, sondern ausschließlich Geschmatze, Gewürge,
>
> Geschlinge – in keinem Film adäquat darstellbar, denn der Bunkermann, dieser
>
> alte Mann, der den letzten Krieg überlebt hat, wird von Affenmenschen verzehrt.
>
> Sie haben Hunger, und seine Stimme ist ja in dem Gerät drin.
>
> ("The protagonist of *Die Bunkermann-Kassette* is an electro-acoustic device, a
>
> tape recorder, which, after the big boom, remained in some bunker, and there is an
>
> old man, called *Bunkermann,* who is finally consumed by the radiation damaged
>
> youth. And in this radio play things happen (happen?...), that could not withstand

illustration: the butchering, the food-orgasm of humans on a human … My

characterization of Ulrich Horstmann's play ought to be: disgustingly good. The

production by Bernd Lau has a big part in that. In this play there is a minute-long

passage, in which no language, no semantic information by way of the word can

be heard, but only lip-smacking, gagging, gorging – not adequatly representable

in any film, because the Bunkermann, this old man, who survived the last war, is

being devoured by these ape-people. They are hungry, and his voice is inside the

machine."; Hasselblatt 1993, my translation)

We have to wonder, what makes the visual representation of mutants feasting on

the play's protagonist less adequate than the aural one?[11] Let us remember that the

museum guide asked that we play a game of the mind. If we *saw* the Bunkermann record

his message, if we *saw* him being eaten by the mutants, we would have to ask through

whose eyes we are watching. The narrative perspective would no longer be that of the

Bunkermann and, most importantly, the tape would lose its status as museal artifact.

Where found footage films like *The Blair Witch Project* or *Cloverfield* show us the events

through the perspective of the hand-held camera but leave us outside of the world

depicted on the footage, the *Bunkermann-Kassette* allows us to direct our aural attention

to any sound and to turn our head anywhere. While there is a point-of-listening, as Alan

Beck demonstrates, it lacks the focused clarity of the visual image. I can hear if

something is in the distance, or if it is in the same room, or outside, but my imaginary

experience will be unique to me and how I navigate the soundscape of the play. "It is

radio drama's mimetic shortfall, its limited mimesis, that allows the listener so much

scope for individual expressiveness" (Beck 5.2). The fantastic distinction between

presence (sound) and trace (body, image) we discussed earlier is important here. Rather

than reading *about* the Bunkermann or reading a transcription of his words, rather than

seeing an image *of* him, we hear, magnetically stored on the tape, his own voice. From

the past future of the nuclear apocalypse, the Bunkermann is projected into the particular

circumstance of our moment of perception.

Aesthetically, Horstmann and his director at the Bayerische Rundfunk (BR)

Bernd Lau pull all the registers available to radio production to create a plausible and

immersive vision of the future that also accommodates our sense of realism. Horstmann's

stage directions list the seemingly infinite possibilities of what the listener should hear:

> Die Horde fällt über Bunkermanns Leiche her. Stoff zerreißt. Fleisch wird
>
> zerschnitten, Knochen werden gebrochen. Es entsteht Streit um die besten Stücke,
>
> der mit Schlägen, Gebrüll und anderen Lautäußerungen ausgefochten wird. Sie
>
> Sequenz muß mit äußerster Intensität ausgespielt werden.
>
> ("The horde devours the Bunkermann's body. Fabric is being torn. Meat is being
>
> cut, bones are being broken. There is a quarrel over the best pieces, which is
>
> fought with beating, roaring, and other animalistic evocations. The sequence must
>
> be acted with the utmost intensity"; 213).

As its production is based solely on sound, the details of what is going on remain much

less clear to the listeners than that. The narrative scenario will be very different for each

individual listener. Horstmann and Lau avoid conventional radiophonic storytelling

devices, such as having one of the characters describe the scene, or by using more easily

identifiable sounds. It appears that narrative clarity is secondary to the reality effect that arises from simulating the act of recording itself, especially recording with a damaged device. We do not need to agree on the details of what is happening on the tape, as long as we can believe that this is a tape recorded as the last testimony of the only remaining human survivor of a total nuclear war.

Needless to say, a convincing simulation of the Bunkermann's amateurish and sloppy editing and the technological failure of his equipment requires an expert in sound engineering if they are to be recognized as such within the narrative context. There is, for example, a passage right after the introductory speech by the museum guide ends, which consists only of the inarticulate voices of the mutants alternating with sounds of rock music. They accidently record themselves, start the tape, and then go back to recording. This passage lasts for almost five minutes. Within that time, the only point of orientation within the narrative comes from the tape itself. The clever use of sound filters and distortion marks the music as diegetic but older than the other bits of sound and only specialized knowledge of a tape recorder will make cuts and interruptions "accidentally" audible.

Other examples for the sonic dramaturgy employed by Horstmann and Lau are the sound of wind blowing into the microphone, the sounds of bodies rubbing against the recorder, and the roughness of the cuts and edits that appear surprisingly mid-sentence or that deliberately obfuscate scene changes. Particularly the use of non-verbal sounds ("lip-smacking, gagging, gorging," among others) creates a narrative world that, in its ambiguity, is as unsettling as it is immersive. At the same time, these immersive sounds of bodies and diegetic environment expose the medium with its Utopian potential as a

fantasy. The expertly crafted appearance of amateurish roughness of the Bunkermann's

recording undoes the seamless suture to which we are used in radio production and

presents the medium in an unfamiliar, estranged way. The deliberate exposition of the

breaks and cuts presents the scenario of a post-apocalyptic home recording with a high

degree of plausibility and realism. At the same time it reveals the materiality of the

medium as such. Now that our attention has been drawn to the "tapeness" of the

recording, we may consider the editorial effort that went into creating it.

Of course, this attention to materiality, the deliberate foregrounding of the

apparatus itself, is also a form of obfuscation. We might, on a technologically very basic

level, remember that the polarity of the planet erases any magnetic recording over time

by reorganizing its magnetic patterns. As we speak, the sounds of the 70s are perishing

unless they are transferred to digital storage media, and even then they have an expiration

date. The acoustically credible depiction of the futuristic soundscape conceals the fact

that the object on display, like so many objects from the future, is a fake. As a mere

speculative scenario, Horstmann's trust in the power of magnetic tape to represent or let

alone survive the apocalypse is a technological Cold War fantasy in and of itself.

The Bunkermann takes an active role in hastening the disappearance of these Cold

War remains. As he tapes his story over the artifact from our present – the tape of rock

music – he destroys it in the process. He laments the fact that he will no longer be able to

listen to the music. Echoes of his past (that is, our present) are erased so that his present

(that is, our future) can be preserved. The Bunkermann compares his tape to a medieval

palimpsest:

Ich lösche diese unersetzlichen Tondokumente aus der Vorkriegszeit mit

derselben Rechtfertigung, mit der man antike Handschriften vernichtet und das

Pergament für eigene Aufzeichnungen benutzt hat: aus Materialmangel,

Eigenliebe und Mitteilungsbedürfnis.

("I delete these irreplaceable sound documents from before the war with the same

justification with which one used to destroy antique manuscripts and used the

parchment for one's own records: because of a scarcity of resources, narcissism,

and a need to communicate" (209).

The overwriting and subsequent destruction of earlier information is a matter of survival

for the Bunkermann.

This is mirrored in his acts of cannibalism, to which he also felt compelled when

resources became scarce. This admission to these acts, however, was neither overt nor

voluntary but, rather, caused by the decaying integrity of the storage medium. A

confession of cannibalistic acts recorded earlier, survives as a technological malfunction:

it is a residual presence in the background of his recording. The music from our present is

taped over, but he also records over his own recordings several times in an apparent

attempt to control how posterity remembers him. This form of editing the acoustic text is

foiled by the machine itself. Two voices of the Bunkermann can be heard at the same

time: the intended and the accidental. Once more, technological failure in the narrative

world translates into sophisticated radio dramaturgy. His recording erases the traces of

the past and his cannibalism brings the human species to the brink of extinction. Only the

structure of this multi-layered palimpsest, however, allows his story to survive as an

archeological artifact of the future. If we indeed believe that it is a form of rewriting the

present via the future, then cognitive estrangement is an equally destructive creative

force, a form of cannibalism.[12]

    Like our example of the cavemen diorama in a museum of natural history, the

hyperreal representation of the nuclear apocalyplse is based on our best educated guess.

Sound, as we just saw, can create such a world in a particularly immersive manner. For

Dieter Hasselblatt, director of the BR's *Hörspiel* division and vocal advocate of German

SF, Horstmann's play therefore constitutes one of the best science fiction radio plays ever

made:

> Gibt es Hörspiele, die Science-Fiction-Hörspiele par excellence sind? Da wären z.
>
> B. *Ausbruch* von Heinz-Joachim Frank (1973), *Papa Joe & Co.* von Herbert W.
>
> Franke oder Ulrich Horstmann *Die Bunkermann-Kassette* (1979) – alles
>
> Hörspiele, deren Realisation in einem anderen Vermittlungs-Medium nicht
>
> möglich ist.
>
> ("Are there radio plays that are science fiction radio plays par excellence? There
>
> is *Ausbruch* by Heinz-Joachim Frank (1973), *Papa Joe & Co.* by Herbert W.
>
> Franke or Ulrich Horstmann *Die Bunkermann-Kassette* (1979) – all of them radio
>
> plays, whose realisation would have been impossible in another medium.";
>
> Hasselblatt 1993)

Even though he does not spell it out, Hasselblatt clearly sees an affinity between the

speculative mode of SF and the *Hörspiel*. The connection between listening and

recollection discussed earlier, the echo from another time, appears to resonate particularly

well in a narrative environment that is characterized by hypothetical explorations of
temporality.

Memory of the future

Of course, we also have to ask why the Cold War lends itself so well to these
types of representation and imagination. The answer becomes apparent when we combine
our discussion of the medium and the genre with our earlier considerations of what
exactly it is that constitutes the Cold War experience. How can we talk about a war that
wasn't? About the fears and anxieties that come with a crisis that, ultimately, was
averted? What sites of memory can we have for battles that weren't fought? Out of the
multitude of perspectives on the Cold War, Horstmann chooses one and allows us to go
beyond what actually happened and indulge in the fantasy of what many constantly
feared would happen. The Bunkermann's fate spells out, in no uncertain terms, the
traumatic experience of a generation. Only through this connection does the Cold War,
which is defined largely as absence, become a tangible reality. Only by connecting a
fictional threat to a real threat does the Bunkermann's story become ours. The scenario of
a nuclear disaster and the development of a mutant species is, to a certain extent,
plausible and links the Bunkermann's experience to our present. By playing out one of
the most prominent fears of the Cold War, the scenario directly connects us to the present
of Horstmann's contemporary audience while it also links the Bunkermann's experience
to our past. On the radio, we all become the Bunkermann.

This omnipresence and survival of the Bunkermann, which earlier I referred to as
a future scenario and narrative trope, can easily be seen in the continued popularity of

apocalyptic visions of the future. The apocalypse, as should be clear now, can only be remembered in a speculative *Museum der Zukunkft* of some kind. Even as I write this, the "end times" are a popular scenario as *The Walking Dead, Revolution, Battlestar Galactica* and many other television shows can attest, let alone novels, comics, movies, and, yes, radio plays. Yet there is something specific about the cold war apocalypse: instead of global warfare, zombies and vampires, cyborgs and technological failure are experiencing a renaissance from their respective Victorian beginnings. Terrorism and global capitalism are now projected into the future. What connects the Bunkermann's struggle against the mutants to Rick Grimes' resistance against the zombies is a struggle to come to terms with what it means to be human in a time of utter and absolute crisis.

The distant and impartial perspective on humanity which Horstmann postulates in his anthropofugal philosophy, allows us to see humanity as something that may very well be destined for deserved destruction, if we take the Bunkermann as a *pars pro toto* example of how human beings react to life or death situations. Perhaps the stage should be cleared for the mutants. At the same time, as we do not recognize ourselves in the Bunkermann, the play raises questions about the degree to which artifacts, like the tape in the museum of the future, can fulfill such an exemplary function. History and memory are narrative modes which, in the context of conventional museal storytelling become highly prescriptive and normative. In the form of SF radio, these modes create a prosthetic memory of the future. As such, they possess a destructive and potentially catastrophic influence on existing narratives of the past and present. By destroying the technology, Horstmann's mutants bring this force momentarily to a halt. But even they will be, historically speaking, consumed by us: we are their future, as we are looking

back at them in our imaginary museum. The Cold War as looming nuclear apocalypse is a scenario post-reading, post-recording, and post-writing, at the same time, it is imaginable only through the force of reading, recording, and writing; re-reading, re-recording, and re-writing. We are also their past, as we speculate about them in an unfulfilled but fearfully anticipated future. Horstmann's radiophonic museum, a museum that cannibalizes the present through the temporal logic of SF, makes the Cold War both memorable and re-cognizable in a historical artifact of the future. That is what merits this reverse archeological dig: we uncover imaginary and cognitively estranging artifacts that allow us to remember the anticipated outcome of the Cold War, the non-event of nuclear overkill.

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1   The 2006 special exhibit "Schauplatz Hörspiel - Bilder, Töne, Technik" at the Deutsches
    Technikmuseum in Berlin or the "National Jukebox" that streams historic recordings kept at the Library
    of Congress are two examples for exhibits that feature recorded sound and recording devices as
    historical objects. The Museum of Modern Art in New York City (MoMA) announced a sound exhibit
    called "Soundings: A Contemporary Score" for the autumn of 2013.

2   Sound-bites from the past tend to have the status of sound quotes. Longer bits of sounds from the past,
    like an entire radio play or an entire speech, or broadcast of any kind, tend to immerse the listener in a
    sense that does not strike me as all that different from the original listening event. While a recording of
    a broadcast from the 1930s sounds very different to one from the 1970s, the 1960s and 1990s sound
    pretty much alike. Sound, in contrast to film cannot be as easily dated by *mise en scène*, production
    value, or aesthetic preferences alone. There is no black and white sound.

3   There are other speculative histories of the Cold War from around the same time and they are equally
    pessimistic about the future. The militaristic future of *Raumpatrouille Orion* features a secret
    intelligence agency that, remotely controlled by an invading alien species, attempts to overthrow its
    own terrestrial government.

4   "The term soundmark is derived from landmark and refers to a community sound which is unique or
    possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community. Once a
    soundmark has been indetified, it deserves to be protected, for soundmarks make the acoustic life of the
    community unique" (cf. Schafer 6).

5   Birdsall conducts interviews in which she asks the interviewees to describe the sounds of their past. She
    also triggers certain memories by playing old recordings for them. "In contrast to the visualist
    associations with witnessing, [her work] engages with the concept of earwitnessing" (cf. Birdsall 169).
    Rather than using recorded sound to become an earwitness, she talks to people who were earwitnesses
    at the time these sounds belonged to the sonic culture. The Bunkermann is such a witness of the Cold
    War but the memories he relays to us in his narrative, post-date this historical period.

6   Bunkers, particularly civil defense shelters of the Cold War, are unique sites of memory as well (cf.
    Marszolek 2008).

7   The ability to easily multiply and distribute certain types of music that did not get regular airplay,
    particularly in the publicly controlled radio system of West Germany, must have, I speculate, at least in
    part, contributed to the fractured national identities of western cold war societies. Where radio helped
    shape the main-stream, audio tape helped form the counter culture.

8   The introductory speech by the guide is very different in the actual BR 1979 production and the printed
    version of 1996. The gist is similar, but the words are not. I will indicate which version I am quoting by
    giving the year of publication. A transcript of that portion of the actual broadcast can be found in the
    appendix.

9   There are many challengers to this type of aesthetics in the tradition of Baumgarten and Kant. Most
    recently, see Bennett 2013.

10 An iconic relationship, Peirce's terminology, would exist between the object and a representation that
    repeats features of the object, without depending on the object itself. A symbolic relationship exists if
    the representation is merely an arbitrary placeholder for the object. Signs can show features that are
    indexical, iconic, or symbolic to varying degrees (cf. Peirce 51).

11 It is possible that Hasselblatt is concerned with questions of decency here. It would have indeed been
    difficult to *show* the devouring of a human body on German television in the 1970s. From a standpoint
    of representability, I find that the lack of ambiguity would make the visual even more "disgustingly
    good" than the sonic.

12 This line of inquiry can only be hinted at here. For an in-depth discussion of cannibalism and literature,
    see Maggie Kilgour and Kristen Guest in Guest 2001.

Fassbinder's Utopian dreamscapes in *Keiner ist böse und keiner ist gut*

        In Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Keiner ist böse und keiner ist gut*, some of the

characters discuss their future within the realm of radiophonic imagination:

        Petrov *halblinks* Die Farben werden wunderbar sein, ein riesiges Kaleidoskop.

        Wir sind alle darin. Wir sind ein Teil davon.

        Jeanne *rechts außen* Und Fische.

        Elvira *links außen* Und Fische.[1]

        ("Petrov *half left* The colors will be wonderful, a giant kaleidoscope. We are all in

        it. We are a part of it./ Jeanne *far right* And Fishes./ Elvira *far left* And Fishes .";

        604, all translations of the play mine)

What does it mean that the artificial intelligences that populate the diegetic world

understand their environment in profoundly visual terms like colors and kaleidoscopes?

Terms, moreover, to which the audience from their vantage point in the here and now

cannot easily relate. Is not our experience of what happens within a radio play always

refracted like it is through a kaleidoscope? Bits and pieces are familiar, yet they are

mirrored *ad infinitum* and refracted until they become unrecognizable. How can we come

to terms with those components of the radiophonic experience that can only be described

as visual in nature?

        Radio has frequently been described as stage for the blind (Döhl), acoustic cinema

(Arnheim), the sight unseen (Guralnick), theatre of sound (Rattigan), or theatre of the

mind (Stanton). What all of these descriptions have in common is that they clearly allude

to the fact that there is indeed a visual component to this allegedly blind medium? In a

previous chapter, I have talked about how the visual stimuli of the listener's environment

foster a cross-over between the narrative world and the site of experience that creates the

unique in-between space of the radiophonic imagination. Metaphors like the ones listed

above, however, emphasize another kind of visual component: the inner vision of the

listener. The exploration of this inner vision will be at the center of the present chapter.

Elissa Guralnick points out that this is a worthwhile undertaking, because while radio

"exhibits no images whatsoever, it is none the less profoundly visual" (3).

How can we talk about our internal experience, if what we cannot point to an

empirical referent in the form of an object, image, or really anything that can serve as a

model for the visual representation of sound? What if there is nothing other than the

sounds that trigger these visions? Rainer Werner Fassbinder, known mainly as an iconic

film-maker and representative of "New German Cinema" in the young Federal Republic,

seems to propose an answer in his SF Hörspiel *Keiner ist böse und keiner ist gut (Keiner*

from here on). Both the Utopian impulse and the blindness of verbal language are framed

by the concept of dreams. In the following pages, I will attempt to read Fassbinder's play

as a work of theory that provides us with the missing piece of our discussion of the

Utopian by tracing the relationships between radiophonic imagination and dream

imagination. The play links the dream motif closely to the problems of incomplete

transmission, communication, and ontological certainty, exposing them as fantasies that

the play allows us to self-announce within the dream discourse.

Naturally, since little can be said about what dreams "really" look like, we will

not be able to treat the dream as a blueprint for how we visualize narratives that are told

via media which are not primarily visual. Little is gained by simply saying that radio

plays are visualized like dreams. Nor will I put the play onto my acoustic couch to try to

analyze it *as* a dream and perform a, say, psychoanalytic reading of its content, let alone

of the dreaming characters in the play. Instead, I suggest treating "dream" as a metaphor

that helps us understand the visual component of these media on both a formal and a

functional level. At the very least, it should give us a better grasp of the way Fassbinder

uses dream as a structural element in the play.

Lorna Martens traces the dream as a literary motif as far back as 17th Century

author Pedro Calderón. Common to the motif's appearance in literary traditions is "the

fascinating proximity of dream and life: the intense hyperclarity of dreams on the one

hand, and the melodramatic, unpredictable, dreamlike quality of life on the other" (131).

Where for Calderón this paradigm serves to prove a didactic point about the ephemerality

of life, the authors of nineteenth century Vienna gave it a distinctly more psychological

twist. Dream's lifelike quality was grounded on the notion that the dream world was a

window into either the otherwise imperceptible order of life or the dark abyss of the

human subconscious. To pull Martens onto the Utopian island of our present discussion,

we might be permitted to paraphrase her with Suvin's terminology by saying that, in the

literary tradition from Calderón, and from Shakespeare to Schnitzler and Freud, the

dream motif has served to represent a cognitively estranging referent: the Utopian desire

for knowledge of the, perhaps imaginary, forces that impact us in our daily lives and that

are beyond the empirically perceptible.

Dream discourse, as we know since Freud, is a discourse of desire. In dreams,

according to him, we allow ourselves to fulfill repressed desires that during the day we

ban to the dark corners of our subconscious. This would mean that things we envision in

dreams always appear, in one form or another, how we wish them to be: such is the

Utopian imagination. As I said, while we will continue to touch on Freud's complex

study throughout this chapter, I want to avoid a specifically psychoanalytical reading of

the material at hand. Instead I want to play up the similarities in the Utopian desires that

characterize psychoanalysis and technology. Volker Kaiser and Robert Leventhal

describe these parallel impulses in the following way:

> Psychoanalysis, at least in Freud's writing, guarantees the possibility of the
>
> transmission or transference (*Übertragung*) that will lift the symptom and produce
>
> the narrative, while technology promises the rulership over the random event, and
>
> seeks to eliminate the noise, jamming, and distortions intrinsic to our electrical
>
> circuits. Psychoanalysis and technology share this belief in the possibility of the
>
> transmission, although both are implicated in a discursive process that questions
>
> the clarity and presence of direct transmission. (158)

Whereas psychoanalysis promises to take us beyond the dream text and to understand

what is behind it, the radio promises to take us beyond the (white) noise to a deferred

reality at the other end of the transmission. Therefore, the analytical vocabulary Freud

develops to describe the processes that obfuscate and interfere with transmission appears

to me to be particularly well suited to describe what happens when we visualize SF

narratives in the radiophonic imagination. If I am correct in this, then the sections on

Traumarbeit 'dream-work' in his magnum opus *Traumdeutung* (*Interpretation of*

Dreams) would be a useful analytical toolbox to uncover this process of noisy

transmission.

In these sections Freud outlines the formal processes that allow the latent dream content, which escapes representation, to be articulated as manifest dream content (*Traumdeutung* 284). For now, even at the risk of oversimplifying the Freudian approach, I would like to highlight the following aspects which will recur in the respective sections of this chapter: First of all, for our analysis of the radiophonic imagination, it is important to remember that latent and manifest dream content are not two separate realms, but merely two articulations of the same psychological processes. Freud, of course, wants to actually translate the manifest dream content, that which we actually dream, into the latent content, that which we have repressed and which comes out in the dream (*Traumdeutung* 147). As Derrida points out, he treats each text as "versions (mises en scène) of the same subject matter in two different languages" ("Freud" 218). Each one constitutes an attempt at representing the unrepresentable.

Secondly, as I already mentioned, dreams are a form of wish-fulfillment (*Traumdeutung* 136). It is important to remember that in Freud's view we do not merely remember our wishes and desires in dreams; we actually seek and, for the most part, achieve their fulfillment. It is a somatic necessity that is played out in the act of dreaming (and, to a degree, daydreaming) (110). Thirdly, the building blocks of our dreams are firmly based in our experience of the world. We cannot dream what we do not also consciously or subconsciously know in waking life. Even if we do not remember their source or they appear in an unrecognizable guise, the things we encounter in dream imagination are a more or less estranged version of the familiar (175). Lastly, Freud devises a number of processes that constitute the actual dream-work (such as condensation, displacement, symbolism, and secondary revision), by which the dreamer

tries to disguise the latent dream content, the wishes and desires, to evade the self-censoring instance of the super-ego (284). That is why dreams need to be interpreted and are not self-evident. In many of the case studies, Freud reaches a point where he concedes that such interpretation is not a translation but always entails a degree of speculation and that it leaves a remainder, whose latent content cannot be definitively determined.

The Freudian language of present desires and future fulfillment makes the formal analysis of the dream most suitable for a formal analysis of the Utopian impulse, which, as argued throughout this dissertation, is in itself an expression of desire that manifests in various phantasms and imaginings. As I said, we will return to Freud at various points in the following discussion, but, of course, Freud is not the only one who tries to uncover why we dream and what it may mean when we do. For Nietzsche, too, dreams have a cathartic function. But rather than fulfillment of repressed desires, they offer the artistically inclined a glimpse of the ground of life itself:

> Wie nun der Philosoph zur Wirklichkeit des Daseins, so verhält sich der künstlerisch erregbare Mensch zur Wirklichkeit des Traumes. Er sieht genau und gern zu: denn aus diesen Bildern deutet er sich das Leben, an diesen Vorgängen übt er sich für das Leben.
>
> ("So the artistically sensitive man responds to the reality of the dream the same way as the philosopher responds to the reality of existence; he pays close attention and derives pleasure from it: for out of these images he interprets life for himself, in these images he trains himself for life"; *Werke* 22; *Birth* 20).

Dreams, Nietzsche suggests, are associated with the idea of the Apollonian – that is, with

the idealized, individuated, aestheticized reality that is ordered by concepts and this order

is as artificial as it is necessary. Dreams, thus, belong simultaneously to the realm of

creative invention and scientific structure: in other words, SF.

Nietzsche insists that dream needs to respect the line between reality

("Wirklichkeit des Daseins"), and dream world ("Wirklichkeit des Traumes"). To get lost

in either extreme would mean to lose the positive and necessary effect of one on the

other. That is why, in "Traum und Kultur," he suggests that the dream state gives us

pause from the rationalized and ordered world and connects us with an existence that is

more affect- and desire-driven and one that our waking mind would be ashamed to

recognize. At the same time we need firm belief in the idea of reality or we would be

hopelessly lost in hallucinations. "Also: im Schlaf und Traum machen wir das Pensum

früheren Menschentums noch einmal durch" ("Thus in sleep and dreams we repeat once

again the curriculum of earlier mankind"; *Werke* 454; "Dream" 16). Nietzsche, like

Freud, presents dream as the realm of the repressed in which we can experience that

which our rational and culturally produced mind has no access to. Dream, whether as

wish-fulfillment or window into the abyss, is a Utopian state.

I am afraid that this is not the place to develop a complete overview of the current

status in dream research. John Sutton's entry on "Dreaming" in the recently published

Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Psychology provides such an introduction much

better than I possibly could here. Sutton surveys the most state-of-the-art contributions to

the study of dreams from the areas of physiology, psychology, and phenomenology, and

points out connections to current debates in philosophy. For our purpose, the most

rewarding takeaway is that the various studies of recent years have yet to answer the

question of whether or not dreams are meaningful (and if so, what that meaning is) or

merely a by-product of physiological or even psychopathological processes. Sutton points

out that it is specifically this rift where a rewarding philosophical line of inquiry might

begin. The question, is "Most broadly, is dreaming a quasi-perceptual hallucination or an

imaginative construct" (536)? Sutton exemplifies the basic divide in the interdisciplinary

field of dream studies with two of its most prominent representatives, Mark Solms and J.

Allan Hobson:

> Solms' view of the formal characteristics of dreams [...] is close to Hobson's
>
> account of dreams as essentially bizarre and dream narratives as paradigmatically
>
> implausible. Where for Solms dreams are bizarre because they are disguised
>
> wishes, dreaming for Hobson is a form of psychosis or delirium. (Sutton 532)

This means two things for our present project: for one, if there is a general agreement on

the formal aspects of dreams, then a comparison between the radiophonic imagination

and dream imagination is still possible and rewarding. This is slightly complicated by the

fact that precisely because of this bizarreness we cannot adequately grasp, let alone

communicate, our visual experience of either dreams or non-visual literary narratives. In

this context, it should be noted that none of the approaches mentioned in Sutton's survey

have a reliable way of accessing the dream itself. They all rely on physiological

observations (mapping of neurological paths in the brain, for example) or data sampled

from subjects who reported their dreams verbally. Fassbinder embraces this problem in

the present play. His use of the dream motif is organized around the problem of

incomprehensibility and distorted transmission, the problem of not hearing or understanding clearly, the problem of interpretation and communication. Of course, in the end, all these are variants on the problem of accessing latent and hidden desires beyond their manifest articulations.

The other useful outcome of Sutton's survey is the realization that there are only limited consequences for our project of whether or not we can know the "why" of dreams. We can be content that either case – quasi-perceptual hallucination or imaginative construct – produces a rich text that has inspired a plethora of interpretive approaches. If we treat the dream as such a text, then perhaps we can learn as much about radio narrative from our experiences with dream narratives as we can learn about dream narratives from our reading of radio narratives. In a sense, I believe Fassbinder's play is concerned with both.

If we agree that the Utopian impulse is an expression of unfulfilled desire, then the estranging nature of SF could be seen as a collective wish-fulfillment because it allows us to articulate what otherwise escapes representation. In that case the play and, most importantly, our visual experience of this play constitute a veritable dream text and a meaningfully distorted snapshot of the here and now. Perhaps *Hörspiel* is the only possible way to represent the experience of a dream. In his seminal essay on the mental visualization of acoustic media, Martin Esslin asserts that "Concentrated listening to a radio play is thus more akin to the experience one undergoes when *dreaming* than to that of the reader of a novel: the mind turned inwards to a field of internal vision" (7). Film is too specific in its visual representation or recreation of dream – how often do we watch dream sequences in film that do not even remotely mirror our own dream experience. The

novel and other written forms do not have the inevitable pace that forces us to move on

without giving us time to halt and indulge a particularly vivid visual description or to

interpret a challenging *mise en scène*. Radio is the one medium which accounts for both

the unrecordability and the aesthetic heterogeneity of the visual. It allows us to record a

visual experience with sound.

It could be objected that, if anything, the connection between soundscapes and

dream worlds is merely tangential. After all, in "Freud and the Scene of Writing" Derrida

points out that dream discourse for Freud is strictly pictorial. "The overall writing of

dreams exceeds phonetic writing and puts speech back in its place. As in hieroglyphics or

rebuses, voice is circumvented" ("Scene of Writing" 218). Rather than a form of

transcription of content, which would make writing a secondary form of representation,

writing in dream becomes an active form of producing world. This is also true in

Hörspiel, where the spoken word – in both the geno- *and* phenotextual aspects – becomes

image and produces content and meaning that is beyond the control or even knowledge of

the author, actor, or producer.

Other authors have pointed out that Freud's emphasis on the image as object

establishes a connection between film and the subconscious (cf. Metz 1977). I think this

is either too simplistic or too exclusive a connection to make. In the radio play, the voice,

and with it the spoken word, constitute a discursive element in a system of writing

("writing" in Derrida's sense, not as mere transcription of sound) as our encounter with

Papa Joe in Chapter 2 taught us. In fact, in many of the plays analyzed in this study –

especially in *Die Bienenkönige* and *Keiner,* both of which we could, with regard to acting

technique, easily place in the tradition of Brecht's epic theater – the actors speak in a non-

naturalistic, theatrical style that exposes their statements as objects of analysis and
reflection rather than overt and unambiguous "truth." They force us to become not just
witnesses but active participants in the discourse. I believe that the example of *Keiner*
demonstrates elegantly that a revision of the privilege of the image as the post-modern
object of critique and a rehabilitation of the voice is long overdue.[2]

     Keiner is a complex and, with roughly 28 minutes, rather short radio play. At its
core, the play is about a family of five spanning three generations: daughter Jeanne
(Regina Hackethal), son Christoph (Fabian Brinkmann), mother Elvira (Hannah
Schygulla), father Petrov (Peer Raben), and the Grandfather (Walter Sedlmayr). Together
they experience the end of the world in an oppressive society ruled by an obscure
presence known as "Big Brother." Rather than experience these events as a terrifying
disaster, they describe them as a liberating experience, the kind that breaks open the
oppressiveness and staleness of the status quo, through which we are guided by a present-
tense narrator (Fassbinder). Knowledge of the apocalypse is spread through a shared
dream which establishes an unspeakable connection between friends and strangers. The
dream imagination creates a community of experience, interpretation, and practice:

> Jeanne *links halbnah* Ich habe dich geträumt und Mama und Papa. Und ihr habt
> mich geträumt. Aber ich habe auch euren Traum gesehen. Und der Christoph in
> eurem Traum hat wieder dich geträumt und Mama und Papa. Und ich habe etwas
> gehört. Töne – die haben einen Zusammenhang ergeben.
>
> ("Jeanne *left half close* I dreamed of you and Mom and Dad. And you dreamed
> me. But I also saw your dream. And Christoph in your dream in turn dreamed you

and Mom and Dad. And I heard something. Sounds – they formed a pattern.";

596)

Jeanne hears sounds that make sense to her. She experiences something that parallels our

sonic encounter with her world. It is also fully visual. The fact that she describes this

vision as a dream that was shared and known by the other characters ties the sensual

experience of the characters in with our discussions of SF as cognitively estranging

practice and the radiophonic imagination as a form of distributed cognition.

Dream Laboratory: *Neues Hörspiel* and the Senses

Keiner first aired 1972 at the Bayerischer Rundfunk as the last one of

Fassbinder's four radio plays written between 1970 and 1972. Generally, this period of

Hörspiel-production is referred to as *Neues Hörspiel.* The newness to which the term

alludes refers to the medium's "celebrated rebirth" (Kahn 332), after the Nazis had soiled

both medium and genre with its propaganda machinery (cf. Döhl 1992). This era was

reigned in to great public recognition by Wolfgang Borchert's *Draußen vor der Tür* in

1947 and Günther Eich's *Träume* in 1950. Eich's *Träume*, it should be noted, also marks

the first explicit appearance of the dream metaphor on the radio circuit. Mark Cory notes

"The more telling measure of his [Eich's] achievement for the history of the Hörspiel,

however, was the proliferation of dream plays, as studio after studio became a kind of

acoustical dream laboratory" (351). If Eich's play turned the studios of the *Neues*

Hörspiel into a dream laboratory, it also turned its listeners into dream interpreters

(psycho-) analysts, and therapists. To navigate an acoustic dreamscape always means to interpret the manifest dream-text in search of the "real" latent content.

Besides being a new beginning in ideological terms, *Neues Hörspiel* also marked a new beginning in aesthetic terms. Borchert, for instance, was the first in a long series of post-war writers who utilized the medium's unique aesthetic possibilities and thus finally heeded Rudolf Arnheim's and Friedrich Knilli's respective calls for a purely radio-specific form of acoustic art. Unlike the pioneers of avant-garde Weimar radio art, the authors of the *Neues Hörspiel* used the radio as a means of storytelling, illusion making, and world creation, not as the pure *Schallspiel* Knilli had in mind (cf. Knilli 1961). This does not mean that avant-garde experiments had come to an end after World War II. As Cory points out, "New Hörspiel" is linked "in a fascinating pattern of continuity and discontinuity" with Weimar avant-garde radio and classic radio plays as theater for the blind (331). Of the four main plays investigated in this dissertation, Fassbinder's play is certainly the one that features this avant-garde experimentation most prominently. Lastly, the term *Neues Hörspiel* is nowadays so closely affiliated with this experimentation and rebellion against the established bourgeois entertainment that it has achieved classic status of its own. Much like New German Cinema, of which Fassbinder is also a prime representative, *Neues Hörspiel* appears as a golden age of radio in the Federal Republic.

Thus, squarely planted within the tradition of *Neues Hörspiel, Keiner* is a vehicle not just of any Utopian social desire but of a historically particular and critically scrutinized one. The fantasy of overcoming the "Big Brother" state with cathartic violence echoes the rhetoric of the '68 student revolutions and the armed terrorism of the RAF in particular.[3] Despite his close ties to the RAF and the activist left, he considered

"direct action stupid and the turn to armed violence self-defeating" (Elsaesser 26). What

better mode to further investigate the Utopian impulse at the heart of all the protests,

without having to directly evaluate and take sides in the historical events themselves, than

science fiction? What better way than SF to describe the *Lebensgefühl* in the young

republic without directly engaging with the historical particulars of the time?

  Within this political context, Fassbinder pursues his own Utopian project as

Jürgen Kasten argues:

> Der freie Sturm der Gefühle, egal auf welcher Seite eines gesellschaftlichen
>
> Wertesystems sie einzuordnen wären, das war die grosse [*sic*] Utopie des Rainer
>
> Werner Fassbinder. Völlig frei hiess [*sic*] für ihn alle Artikulationsformen
>
> menschlicher Existenz zuzulassen, die Zartheit der Liebe ebenso wie die Brutalität
>
> des Bösen, die häufig doch nur die Kehrseite derselben Medaille sind. Fassbinders
>
> Utopie ist naiv und anarchistisch. Sie postuliert, dass sich die Welt in einem
>
> chaotischen freien Spiel der Gefühle von Individuen ausdifferenziert und nirgends
>
> anders. Jegliche gesellschaftliche Norm, uns sei sie noch so wohlmeinend
>
> formuliert, führt in seiner Weltsicht unweigerlich zur Unterdrückung und
>
> definitiven Unmöglichkeit einer freien Entfaltung von Menschlichkeit.
>
> ("The free *Sturm* of emotions, regardless on which side of the social value system
>
> they would have to be located, that was the grand Utopia of Rainer Werner
>
> Fassbinder. Completely free, to him, meant to allow all articulations of human
>
> existence, the tenderness of love as well as the brutality of evil, which are often
>
> only two sides of the same coin. Fassbinder's Utopia is naïve and anarchistic. It
>
> postulates that the world comes into its own in a free chaotic play of emotions of

individuals and nowhere else. Every social norm, no matter how well intentioned,

leads in his world view inevitably to oppression and a definite impossibility of the

free development of humanity"; 37; my translation).

According to Kasten, Fassbinder explores the possibilities and impossibilities of total

communication and freedom from the constraints of social norms. I argue that in *Keiner*,

Fassbinder uses the dream metaphor and science fictional mimesis to represent and

explore such a Utopian idea.

In the SF television classic *Welt am Draht, Fassbinder* also explores these

possibilities using what Thomas Elsaesser calls "Impossible Viewing Positions" (61):

Fassbinder's narratives are at once embodied in and suspended by these relays of

looks and poses, gestures and gazes, knitting the characters together in a dynamic

that has all the affective density and emotional claustrophobia of lived human

relations while preserving the immateriality of a dream or a ghost-story.

Metaphorizing once more, one could say that if the vicious circles entrap a

character in his fate, they can also ensnare the spectators in an infernal machine

into which they are both ambushed and seduced. (62)

Only one year before his monumental *Welt am Draht* airs, Fassbinder uses the radio to

explore dream, distortion, impossible perspectives, and more as a form to develop this

relationship between listener, character, and apparatus. *Keiner* is thus literally a "Versuch

über Science-fiction" 'trial with (or experiment about) science fiction', as the subtitle

calls it. In *Keiner*, he translates the filmic devices described by Elsaesser into sound devices via the metaphor of the dream.

Far from being a Utopian counter-model to the *Bundesrepublik,* Fassbinder creates a world that is initially characterized by one dominant feature: it is featureless. "Nichts reitzt! Nichts!" ("Nothing tempts! Nothing!"; 593). The dystopia of *Keiner* is not a realistic mirroring of 1970s Germany, nor is it an ahistorical fantastic scenario, with few or no touchstones with the here and now. The very featurelessness that the narrator establishes in the beginning could be read as the cognitively estranged referent of the bourgeois "Spießertum" and the oppressive conservative establishment, against which the student movement in Germany was rebelling, and which Fassbinder makes a central issue in his works again and again (cf. Elsaesser 1996; Kasten 1992).

This world seems to be a better one as it is always new, always open. "Alle Häuser sind immer neu. Sie haben lange Flure und keine Türen. Jeder könnte in jede Wohnung" ("All houses are always new. They have long hallways and no doors. Everyone could enter every apartment"; 593). This depiction is quite different from the paranoid and narrow-minded society of closed doors and high fences that Fassbinder depicts in movies like *A Year with 13 Moons* (1978) or *Ali, Fear Eats the Soul* (1974) to characterize, or perhaps caricature, the bourgeois society of post-war Germany. No doors are needed, no protection of property, not because *Keiner* features a Utopian community that knows no personal property and thus no envy and theft, but simply because the life of others is not enticing. Its featurelessness means that it is a society which is not tempting. "Jeder könnte in jede Wohnung, wenn es ihn reizte. Aber es reizt nichts.

Nichts. Nichts. Nichts reizt" ("Everybody could enter every apartment, if it tempted him. But nothing tempts. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing tempts"; 593).

The German word "reizen" can, like the English "to tempt," be used as either an active verb ("I tempt someone") or a passive verb ("I am tempted by someone"). But in contrast to "to tempt" or "to entice," it can also have the sense of "to stimulate." It is also frequently used in the sense of sensory input, mechanical, and instinctive triggering ("Pollen reizt die Tränendrüsen." "Pollen aggravates the tear ducts."). By giving the phrase a grammatical subject that is empirically absent ("nichts") the verb is open to all of these meanings: a world without the possibility of temptation, a world without the possibility of stimulation. This world is not without stimulation. In fact, it is a radically stimulating one. Are we not already part of the radiophonic world presented in the dialogue I quoted in the beginning of this chapter, where colors and visual refractions bring together the (science) fictional entities of this play and the biological entities that listen to it?

The heterodiegetic narrator speaks in present tense but is not part of this scenario, which makes him different from the narrator in *die Bienenkönige*, who is also part of the diegetic world, and *die Bunkermannkassette*, where the museum's guide merely sets the frame of the narrative and the Bunkermann himself narrates his origin story. The particular narrative situation of *Keiner* gives us a sense of immediacy, it makes us witnesses – but witnesses who are also outside, and which are kept outside by the narrative apparatus itself. We are not part of this world, even though we peek at it in "real time," so to speak. The narrator does not clarify anything in terms of content or plot. He

does not give a back story but places us in *medias res*, in a world that is, at first glance, quite different from our own.

When the narrator emphasizes that "Nichts reizt," he does more than to suggest a world of boredom, routine, and narrow social codes that create a uniform and homogeneous society. He places us into a sensory deprivation tank. We can even push this further by saying it is a world that, in terms of narrative experience, can only be established fully on the radio, which is also sensory deprived. It is a *tabula rasa* which, unlike a written text, is paced by the machine and does not give me the chance to go back and critically compensate for the sensory limitation. Much like the world in the play, the radio provides a world that is as free and open as it is limited and deprived. Narrative time is radically equal to narrated time here, so rather than to read about a world "ohne Eigenschaften," I am transported to a world with all features and none. I am as much in the hands of the narrative agent as I am free to resist: I could go into any room, if it enticed me.

Of course, there is stimulation after all; we hear Marlene Dietrich sing a Christmas song, "Kleiner Trommelmann" 'The Little Drummer Boy,' we hear Elvis sing "Silent Night," we hear Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." There is nothing inherently science fictional about these pieces of music. The narrator's introductory words – and perhaps the context provided by the broadcast's extradiegetic announcer and the play's appearance in the programming schedule on May 5, 1972 – makes them appear odd and out of place. In this context, they have a fundamentally estranging effect. Like the music in *Bunkermann-Kassette* and *Die Bienenkönige,* these songs are relics from another time. The present-tense narration, then, erases this distance and we are immediately in the suspended

present of science fictional time. Is "die Dietrich" a memory of the actual world that we

have but which the people in the world of *Keiner* do not share (imagine playing this to

someone unfamiliar with her work and significance for both Germany and Fassbinder), or

is it a futurized "something" that merely links our past, their past, our future and theirs,

much like in *Bunkermann-Kassette*? Either way, the song is an intrusion of the actual

world into the play, as well as an intrusion of the play into the here and now. It functions

as a connective node much like van Feldern's head did in *Papa Joe*, except here it does

not affect our narrative perspective and focalization within the diegetic world, but serves

as a connective tissue between their world and ours. The songs are intertextual and

intermedial signifiers that demand deciphering.

Music bridges the gap between the science fictional world and the world of the

listener. Elvira and her family hear Marlene Dietrich as well, but they do not know her.

"Erzähler *sehr nah/sehr direkt/Mitte* Sie hören. Aber sie wissen nicht was das ist"

("Narrator *very close/ very direct/ middle* They hear. But they do not know what it is";

593). Music is the most affective and direct connection between us and them. Like the

world of the Bunkermann, the world of the play gets linked with our trajectory of time by

popular music. Yet, despite the familiarity, we cannot understand the music, as we do not

share the context. As decontextualized objects that cannot be taken at their usual face

value, they may remind us of objects as they appear in the uncanny of Freudian dream

logic. Elvira and Petrov worry when they hear the music for the first time in their lives

and check on their children. They worry because of their unfamiliarity with the

phenomenon of music; we worry, because we do not understand what is going on in

spite, or rather because, of our familiarity. Marlene Dietrich is part of a manifest sound

text whose latent content we have yet to uncover.

It seems to me that such a form of representation is particularly suited to the

aesthetic requirements of the *Neues Hörspiel.* Rather than imitating the stage or the

movie screen, or to simply read out novels and short stories and so to underutilize the

potential of the radiophonic apparatus, *Neues Hörspiel* makes the lack of visual,

olfactory, tactile *Reiz* its very virtue, and compensates with its own radiophonic means.

Moreover, like a dream, visual, olfactory, tactile, and other stimuli are incorporated into

the diegetic world via the body of the listener/dreamer. The particular of the recipient

finds its way uncontrollably into the world of the narrative and distorts it, or is distorted

by it. The emphasis of *Neues Hörspiel* on the uniqueness of the radio is, I believe, an

emphasis on the dream-like quality of its own imaginative repertoire. The radio is, in a

sense, a dream machine.

Dream Vision

Certainly, to think of radio as a visual medium, despite and because of its sensory

deprivation, is not without precedent. Reinhard Döhl establishes this connection in his

Typologie at great length. The pioneers of Weimar radio "Weill, auch Bischhoff, Flesch,

Alfred Braun und andere haben sich in ihren Überlegungen zu einer rundfunkeigenen,

einer Radiokunst immer wieder auf den Film bezogen, und dies sowohl theoretisch als

auch praktisch" ("Weill, also Bischoff, Flesch, Alfred Braun and others turned, in their

reflections on a broadcast specific radio art, again and again to film, and this theoretically

as well as practically"; 14, my translation). We can account for this connection partly

because the first radio plays that were not performed live in front of a microphone were

recorded onto the sound strip of early sound-film stock. This, for the first time, allowed

for editing and manipulation long after the voice talent had already left the studio. Voice

and body were separated for the first time in media history, as Kittler emphasizes, and the

coherence of the narrative world depended less on the quality of performance than on the

virtuosity with which the producer used the apparatus (*Gramophone* 44). Arnheim

regarded this as a great liberation:

> It would be a step of great importance for the development of the art of radio
>
> drama, if every radio play which used space and montage as a means of
>
> expression were not 'performed' in the studio as if on the stage, but were recorded
>
> piecemeal on film strips like a sound-film, and the individual strips cut properly
>
> afterward and mounted as a sound-film. This would be superfluous in plays
>
> depending entirely on the words, plays in which there was absolutely no question
>
> of the voices sounding in materialized space nor of scenic indication by sounds,
>
> nor of rapid changes of scene. But it is correspondingly more important for filmic
>
> wireless plays (126).

The term "filmic" here refers to the use of editing techniques that were first developed by

the pioneers of film: montage, fade, cross-fade, superimposition, etc. These techniques

create a spatial dimension, a completeness of world, where there is otherwise only an

image moving two-dimensionally through time. Moreover, as Eisenstein and the

representatives of Russian formalism famously suggest, editing images creates larger

semiotic units, which enhance the effect of the image, guide the viewer's attention, and

allow for associative connections that otherwise would be difficult to achieve. Alfred

Braun, one of the early pioneers of German radio confirms this link between film form

and the syntactical repertoire of dream "With its 'accelerated dreamlike succession of

colorful and rapidly passing, jumping images, its abbreviations, and superimpositions its

speed its change from close-up to long shot with fade-in, fade-out, fade-over' the early

radio play 'consciously transferred film technology to radio" (quoted in Kittler 173). The

model ties the formal possibilities of film directly in with the model of dream,

particularly since Eisenstein's uses of montage closely resemble Freud's basic operations

of *Traumarbeit:* condensation, displacement, representation, and symbolism (cf.

Eisenstein 1977; Metz 1977).

Film as a model for radio art, of course, was soon replaced by a different, more

radio-specific approach. An external model by which to grasp radio's potential was no

longer necessary and "the filmic and the radiogenic were to import *l'art pour l'art* into

the optical and acoustic realms" (Kittler 172). Just like there was a desire to create a form

of art that used film in an absolute, non-referential way, early on, the same was demanded

of radio. But, as Döhl tells us:

> Bereits 1925 hatte ja, [...] der Komponist und Rundfunkkritiker Kurt Weill
>
> parallel zu einer absoluten Radiokunst an eine Filmkunst (ohne) Handlung,
>
> Thema oder auch nur inneren Zusammenhang gedacht und geschrieben: der
>
> absolute Film sei eine "melodische" Kunst die nach musikalischen Gesetzen
>
> erarbeitet sei, die absolute Radiokunst dagegen eine Erweiterung der Musik.
>
> ("Already in 1925, composer and radio critic Kurt Weill thought and wrote about
>
> an absolute radio art parallel to a film art without plot, motif or even any internal

structure: the absolute film were a 'melodic' art, which functions based on

musical laws, the absolute radio art, however, were an extension of music"; *Das*

Neue Hörspiel 14, my translation)

As a non-referential art, radio is no longer distinguishable from music that is performed

in front of a live audience, particularly avant-garde experiments in Weimar such as

Walter Ruttmann's urban portraits in found sound, and the early *Bundesrepublik* where

Karlheinz Stockhausen experimented with aleatory electronic sounds at the WDR radio

workshop. Found sounds, speechless voices, accidental sounds, and even silence served

as raw material for both composers and storytellers. With film as a visual art following

compositional principles of absolute music and radio as a form of music in its own right

radio makes the full circle back to sound.

       There, unfortunately, are two problems with this analogy. As we touched on in the

previous chapters, particularly Chapter 2, there is no such thing as a purely radiophonic

art. Even if we, as Döhl does, conceive of this "pure sound art" as a type of music, we

still have to acknowledge that the medium of transmission is also a medium of

transformation, which changes it from "music" into something else entirely. Even music,

if broadcast, is contaminated and changed by the medium itself. Therefore an analysis in

purely musical terms (pretending, for a moment, that there was such a thing as purely

musical analysis) would not give us the whole picture. Radiophonic sound art is always a

multi-media text. There are interferences of visual stimuli at the site of listening (as

discussed in the previous chapter), there are interferences of sound like static crackles and

bits of other stations – the latter two are more or less replaced in the era of digital high

fidelity radio by the distracting temptation to easily flip between channels and the

interference of other sensory stimuli that accompany the aural.[4] The radio is, because of

its sensory peculiarity, a medium of cognitive estrangement since too many factors on the

site of perception cannot be controlled, and because the radio always points back to its

own impurities. It never fully overpowers our sensory intake in the way cinema, theater,

or television does. There will always be intrusions of other modes of representation into

the experience of the artwork, intrusions that will have to be considered with regard to an

analysis of the text. They are, in fact, part of the text.

This means that the idea of a pure "Radiokunst" is an illusion, a Utopian fantasy.

There is little or no difference between a narrative radio play and an abstract sound

collage with regard to the *radiophonicity* of either text.[5] As long as they are broadcast

they become the same intertextual and intermedial object into which we project our

Utopian fantasies and which cognitively estranges us from the here and now. The play

itself acknowledges this dynamic with the intrusion of Marlene Dietrich into the science

fictional world of *Keiner*, which, as it is not in itself narrative, is an example for linking

the diegetic world of the play with its outside. Dietrich's song is no longer just a piece of

music but, once more, a media node, further networked by the apparatus itself. It

connects and signifies all these levels of world and media, and offers them for

signification simultaneously.

The second problem of using film, rather than theater or novels, as a model for

radiophonic expression is, as Kittler points out, that it conceals and reverses some of the

features characteristic of the medium. The radio emphasizes continuity, not breaks, it

conceals cuts, rather than highlighting contrasts. A radical scene change or montage of

disparate images, as film famously allows, becomes a continuous whole, unified by the y-axis of time, on the radio. "Therefore, when pioneers of the radio play such as Breslau's Walter Bischoff were looking for genuinely radio-specific (funkisch) means of expression, they studied the parallel medium of silent films and considered the fade-out, not the cut, as a possible model" (Kittler *Gramophone* 118). It is this unifying continuity that allows Marlene Dietrich's original recording to become part of the diegesis, while on the screen her image would force a scene change, a transport to a different location, a different cinematic world, a mimetic link. Sound can resurrect the specters of the past much more easily than the image, as we also saw in Chapter 2. It can also embed them into the reality of the dietetic world much more flawlessly, concealing any fractures or breaks.[6] This unifying continuity resembles dream logic, where we rarely notice a scene change, an impossible transition, a temporal or spatial ellipsis. In dream, too, specters come to haunt us without necessarily disrupting the fabric of the text. Unlike Hamlet, we do not have to fear that Marlene puts nature out of joint.

Kittler suggests that this sense of continuity the radio produces links sound recording to the Lacanian order of the real. Film is, however, according to him, linked to the imaginary, not only because it is image-based, but because it is a surface for the audience's projections and self-deceptions. "Stop trick and montage, slow motion and time lapse only translate technology into the desires of the audience. As phantasms of our deluded eyes, cuts reproduce the continuities and regularities of motion. Phonography and feature film correspond to one another as do the real and the imaginary" (119). Filming, Kittler reminds us, means to cut up an action into little bits, individual images, which are then fused into continuous action in the process of projection. Sound recording

means to produce a continuous trace of the real and then to cut it up, if desired, later on. It

allows us to pick and choose from the original material. The connection to the real or

imaginary, respectively, is a feature of the medium itself.[7] "The fact that cuts stood at the

beginning of visual data processing but entered acoustic data processing only at the end

can then be seen as a fundamental difference in terms of our sensory registration. That

difference inaugurated the distinction between the imaginary and the real" (Kittler 118).

Kittler is far from suggesting that sound has any kind of primacy or purity over vision.

He merely suggests that in order to make sense of an image, we need to project our

fantasy of that image's wholeness onto the image, despite its fractured nature, whereas

when listening to sound we are trying to make sense and give order to information that

was stored without respect to any order, meaning or sense-making.

Kittler's carefully introduced psychoanalytic angle builds an additional bridge

from the machine to the world of dreams. Freud and Lacan, the grandmasters of

psychoanalysis, each saw dreams as a form of wish-fulfillment. In Freud's view they

express and, thus, fulfill the subconscious wishes of the dreamer, and in Lacan's view the

dream analysis itself projects the analyst's desires and wishes onto the dream text (cf.

Lacan 495ff.). The idea of such projection of the self onto the other, and the

misrecognition of the other as the self, is, of course, the crux of Lacan's notion of the

imaginary. The conflict between Freud's and Lacan's concept of the dream – either

expression of the repressed self, or image of the self-produced by the other – becomes

insubstantial, or, rather, is a symptom of a systemic problem in talking about dreams:

how do we gain access to the dream text, in the first place? We cannot record dreams as

such.

In his 1933 radio play *Lichtenberg: Ein Querschnitt*, Walter Benjamin appears to give a specifically radiophonic, and, moreover, science fictional answer. The radio apparatus and the radiophonic imagination induced by the apparatus appear in the play as means to externalize specific discourses (science, art, dreams) and so to make them available for analysis. The play is explicitly referred to as a *Hörmodell* 'listening model' and is part of Benjamin's small but influential body of work especially dedicated to radio. Like Adorno, Benjamin consistently oscillates between writing for radio (speeches, plays, conversations) and about radio (on programming as well as the apparatus itself). Specifically designated as a model for how we listen, *Lichtenberg* is both for and about the medium. I would like to encourage the reader to examine John Mowitt's excellent analysis of the play and its place in Benjamin's larger philosophical oeuvre (Mowitt 2011). Here, I will focus on the idea that Benjamin discusses his *Hörmodell* in terms that are deeply visual.

Fittingly, he does so in the mode of science fiction. A committee for "Erdforschung" ("earth studies" 697) is assembled on the moon to study humanity. The lunar dwellers have a small number of machines at their disposal, as the narrator explains:

> Der Maschinenpark der Gesellschaft für Erdforschung beschränkt sich auf drei
> Apparate, deren Bedienung einfacher ist, als die einer Kaffeemühle. Wir haben da
> erstens ein Spectrophon, durch welches alles gehört und gesehen wird, was auf
> der Erde vorgeht; ein Parlamonium, mit dessen Hilfe die für die durch
> Sphärenmusik verwöhnten Mondbewohner oft lästige Menschenrede in Musik
> übersetzt werden kann, und drittens ein Oneiroskop, mit welchem die Träume der

Irdischen beobachtet werden können. Das ist wegen des Interesses für die

Psychoanalyse, das auf dem Mond herrscht, von Bedeutung.

("The machinery of the Society for Earth Research is limited to three devices

whose operation is easier than a coffee grinder. We've got first a Spectrophon

through which everything is seen and heard that is happening on the ground, a

Parlamonium that allows the moon dwellers, who are spoiled by music of the

spheres, to translate the often annoying human speech into music, and thirdly

Oneiroskop with which the dreams of earthly things can be observed. This is

significant because of the interest in psychoanalysis, which prevails on the

moon."; 697, my translation).

Mowitt points out that, from the perspective of the lunar scientists, the earthlings are cast

as the aliens in the play. As the intended audience of the play (the play was not produced

during Benjamin's lifetime), the earthlings are listening to and hearing about themselves

through alien ears. "It establishes that listening is modeled in *Lichtenberg* so as to place

listeners, as it were, outside themselves – and not just anywhere, but outside in precisely

that which is 'alien' to them. Radio, then, effects an interplanetary delocalization. In

receiving its signals you know that you are not where you think you are" (Mowitt 66).

Earlier, in the context of *Papa Joe* and the *Kunstkopf* technology, we discussed the idea

of auditory displacement as an effect of the apparatus. Benjamin recognizes that the

radiophonic structure of displacement and alienation from the self and from the present

moment figures closely in the logic of dream and SF respectively.

As true psychoanalysts, the *Mondkomitee* observes dreams as symptoms of the subconscious and, in the process of analysis, translates them into speech. The science fictional Oneiroskop makes dreams available for observation and study, but to us, the listeners, they come in form of verbal transcription. A member of the committee tells us what he sees. Ultimately, with the aid of the Parlemonium, the earthly speech is further translated into "Music of the Spheres." In the course of the play, the observers go through different stages of interpreting the collected materials. At no point do they reach a definite conclusion or a diagnosis of the human condition. The collective experience of audition and the discursive process of analysis produce a uniquely private visual experience of the object of inquiry (the events on earth and the invisible processes that motivate the earthlings' actions) to the effect that the boundary between public and private becomes permeable to the same degree that the boundary between visual and auditory breaks down. "This figures centrally in Benjamin's model, joining to reflexivity and alienation the decidedly epistemological problem of how knowledge mediates and thus orders the relations among the senses in general, but between hearing and seeing in particular" (Mowitt 69). I suggest that, more than a model of listening, the play is a model of visualizing that which cannot be seen, namely, seeing through the experience of sound.

From a therapeutic stand point, the problem remains: we may be able to experience the world of dreams with the aid of sound, but we cannot communicate this experience. Kittler dedicates a long section of *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* to Freud's resistance to using recording devices in therapy. Freud, he argues, had turned himself into a recording device, writing down the patient's dreams, free associations, and so forth.

The therapist/machine filters sense from nonsense – a task the patient cannot be trusted to accomplish – and, thus, makes the unconscious and repressed heard. Electronic recording devices can fulfill this function and place the patient on the same level as the analyst. "No writing material or filter interposes itself between the unconscious and its storage, no consciousness making the 'selections' disdained by Freud creates order" (Kittler 92). The analyst's function is, in a way, reduced to a transmitter. It is, however, a transmitter that, as we saw above, changes the transmission and contaminates it with features specific to the medium. Kittler himself remains silent about the static crackles and modulations when he testifies to the medium's indiscriminate indifference to meaning. It is true, like Freud's imaginary "machine therapist," the medium records without sorting the information according to some kind of order, but it does, as specified by Adorno in "The Radio Voice," filter and modulate according to its own technological laws; a principle we discussed in Chapter 3.

According to Freud, the only way to uncover the repressed and censored latent content of a dream is by analyzing the dream text that the dreamer has to tell the analyst/machine. Dreamers cannot write down their own dreams (although Freud does it anyway) because they would filter out those nonsensical bits and pieces that give access to the unconscious. In *Keiner,* Elvira tries to talk to someone in order to register the dream event with the Other. She asks all the voices she encounters about their dreams. As if she read Kittler's and Freud's metaphorical play book, Elvira turns to a machine-therapist and transmits her dream via the telephone by calling randomly chosen numbers in remote parts of the world. Her only obstacle between Elvira and the Utopian promise of total transmission, is the phone operator, who, like the therapist, does not dream

herself. In fact, the operator does not even understand what it is that Elvira wants. She is not part of Elvira's actual world anymore, and, instead, like the Grandfather, part of ours. Our world is that of the machine, of those who did not share Elvira's dream and who do not understand.

Our inability to understand Elvira, that is to truly connect with her on a level of shared stable meaning, is mirrored by those voices in the play which we cannot comprehend already at the phenomenological level of the aural. Both their phenotextual and genotextual constitution are drowned out, distorted by other voices, music, sounds. There are also those voices which are clear but in an unfamiliar language, drawing our attention to their genotextual difference. The motif of interferences, be they produced by insufficient knowledge of the code, the transmission apparatus, or a censoring authority, finds its way from the world of the play into the safe haven of our living room. The familiar is made unfamiliar by the familiar phenomenon of incomprehension: cognitive estrangement as soon as we tune in.

Distortion: Language and Intelligibility

The problem of incomprehensibility is more than a problem of transcription; it is also one of transmission. This raises another problem with regard to the radiophonic imagination. How does one envision something one does not understand? We react to the grain of the sound, as we saw in Chapter 2, but, while rich in information and meaning, it cannot be enough to formulate a vision of a coherent narrative universe. Or, rather, we do form such a vision the same way we speculate about the nature of strange noises coming from next door, but about which we have little in the way of certainty. Do we simply fill

in the gaps, the way a person telling a dream might smooth over incoherent elements of the dream narrative, or do we take the incomprehensible as abstract units that do not contain geno-textual information? The latter seems to be unlikely, since sound becomes noise if we cannot assign it a plausible place in the aural text. As in a dream, everything is significant, if for no other reason than that it is part of it in the first place. Its presence demands our analytical attention.

The radio play, particularly *Keiner*, necessitates repeated listens. But the fulfillment of this need is denied by the apparatus itself. In a conversation, repetition might be demanded by some type of illocutionary act on the part of the recipient (for example: "Wiederholen Sie bitte!" ("Please repeat!")), but on the radio, repeated listens are prevented by the state of technology and the institution of the radiophonic broadcast. Unless recorded off the radio, and thus transferred onto a different medium, or unless one were in possession of the original tapes, one would have to wait for another broadcast. Even then, repetition would mean to disrupt or destroy the text.[8] Besides, the printed script, with translations of the Greek and Arabic passages, was not published until long after the initial broadcast. It cannot serve as a decoder, either. Even within the world of the play, understanding, that is making sense of that world, seems to be a problem. Elvira, Petrov, and the others frequently fail to understand each other. At the same time, the shared dream privileges them to a kind of comprehension and knowledge that, even with repeated listens, is impossible to acquire for us in the here and now. Neither magic nor machine, the cognitively estranging object in *Keiner* is not the apocalypse but the impossibility of knowing this world with any degree of epistemic certainty.

When Elvira tries to make sense of her dream via the telephone, she reaches a

man in Athens, who speaks Greek and tells her – so we are told by Elvira, and we have to

take her word for it – that he did dream the same dream as she.[9] Unless one is familiar

with the Greek language, we are again missing a key element of the play, namely, the

manifest content of the shared dream: everybody dreams everybody else and there will be

an end to the known world that night. "Grieche *griechisch gesprochen* Ich habe geträumt,

dass er starb, und dass alles, was ich sehe, mich nicht sieht und alles was ich träume mich

träumt. Und dass ein Ende sein wird heute, das habe ich gewusst" ("Greek *spoken in*

Greek I dreamed that he died and that everything that I see does not see me and that

everything that I dream, dreams me. And that there will be an end today, this I knew";

599). Again, this knowledge, or rather this information, is kept from the listener, who

does not speak Greek or own the script which provides the translation. If it is true, and

the impossibility of representation is the cognitively estranging object to be represented,

then content of the dream, much like Poe's purloined letter in Lacan's reading, must be

kept from the reader and safely be returned to its origin (cf. Muller and Richardson

1988). Yet it is possible to find out what the Greek man says if one has the necessary skill

set. It is as if Poe's letter was not hidden, but written in an alien code. Elvira understands

despite the fact that, by her own admission, she knows no Greek.

We cannot understand, we cannot repeat, we have no time to consult another text

or learn how to decipher another code. The form of the play forces its pace on us and we

necessarily comply. Therefore, the reality of the narrative world will be distorted. The

internal visual representation of a world that I cannot understand, both acoustically and

conceptually, will necessarily have an estranging effect. Since I cannot fully decipher the

logic of a world I do not understand, I will not be able to predict the events enough to produce a coherent image of what this world may be like. I may imagine a room with large windows as the setting of the events, but far into the play a character may complain about the room having none at all. Or, I may imagine the environment to be like ours. Jeanne's mention of "Fische" in the passage quoted in the beginning refracts this logic into the strangely beautiful yet incomprehensible world of a sonic kaleidoscope. Why "Fische"? Where do they belong in this order? The logic of the here and now does not necessarily apply. In its extreme, our efforts to piece together a coherent narrative structure will produce a fundamentally alien and unsettling world. Dream representation, the uncanny representation of the most familiar as the most unfamiliar, is a form of science fictional representation.

Elvira screams because she is so happy and restless she could burst. "Ich schreie. Hörst du nicht wie ich schreie" ("I am screaming. Do you not hear how I am screaming"; 597)? Petrov understands her but we cannot even hear her. "Petrov *rechts nah* Du bist glücklich, Elvira. Du möchtest schreien, weil du so glücklich bist" ("Petrov *right close* You are happy, Elvira. You want to scream, because you are so happy"; 597). Again, we have no access to all the information while the characters have it – but, unlike Poe's famous letter, it is not just concealed from us, it is not even part of the same world. The characters live in a world only they can possibly understand. The very epistemic structure of this world is unknown to us. "Aber der Schrei ist in dir. Und – der Schrei ist in mir. Die Welt ist der Schrei" ("But the scream is in you. And – the scream is in me. The world is the scream"; 597). As for Büchner's Lenz, the world is the scream which we cannot hear. But a scream is also precisely that which we should hear with the particular medium

of radio. The absence of the scream, its non-articulation, allows us access into their world

only insofar as we know it exists but we cannot cross over. Our blind imagination is thus

misguided and is only a deduction. This, of course, is always the case with fiction. There

is no right way to imagine narrative worlds or to fill in the gaps. Yet the world of Jeanne,

Christoph, Elvira, Petrov, and the Grandfather is, in its distance from us, more real than a

world in which we could have heard Elvira scream. It is there, beyond our grasp.

Similarly, to be sure, our world is beyond their grasp. For Elvira it means a silent scream,

for Christoph it means to see colors he cannot talk about since he does not know their

names.

As Doris Sommer argues in *Bilingual Aesthetic*, multilingualism, the switching

between languages, codes, modes of expression, means to comfortably navigate a world

without stable absolutes. She suggests that "Teaching bilinguals about deconstruction is

almost redundant" (xix). It is this suspension in uncertainty that simultaneously liberates

and terrifies Petrov, Elvira, and the others in *Keiner*. Besides Greek, Arabic is the most

prominent "other" language. The script gives the words in German but the listener is at a

loss to understand. Even the German translation (or is the Arabic the translation of

Fassbinder's German words?) does not give the narrative world we have thus far

encountered any structure or stability. The Arab speaks a poetic fragment about someone

leaving home, saying his goodbyes. If we were to understand him, we could take it as a

foreshadowing of the final catastrophe that all the figures in the play seem to be

anticipating. Instead, the Arabic passage has the effect of alienating and estranging,

without any cognition. It becomes pure phenotext but with the knowledge that there is a

recipient who can understand. That recipient is, however, not us, which challenges our

authority over the production of meaning. It is this threat to the hegemony of the

privileged language, here German, broadcast into German living rooms, that Doris

Sommer celebrates in her study and which is so liberating to Elvira and her family.[10]

This fantasy of understanding, a transmission free of resistance and modulation, is

itself a fantasy of the age of modern media. Kittler refers to it as the "age of nonsense"

(86), because "Everything that speakers, because they are speaking, cannot also think

flows into recording devices whose storage capacity is only surpassed by their

indifference" (Kittler 86). That is why "This nonsense is always already the unconscious"

(86). It should be stated clearly that I am not after identifying a more authentic expression

of the subconscious of some sort of Cartesian ego. The same powers that turn this

"nonsense" into sense, whichever they may be, are at work in any text. The fact that we

have a recording of the radio play when we do not have a recording of the dream does not

change the fact that we have no recording of the mental processes involved in making

sense of the radio play. My analysis of what happens when we listen to the radio, what

happens when we imagine science fictional worlds, is just as vague and speculative as the

analysis of a dream. Ultimately understanding is a Utopian desire which finds expression

in any attempt to communicate. Communication, raised from its immediate utilitarian

position, is the cognitively estranging object of inquiry. Communication is possible, the

Utopian desire fulfilled, only for the fictitious bodies in the radiophonic dream world of

Keiner.

Materials of Dreams: Memories of Beauty

In the *Hörspiel*, the Utopian is a state in which the formerly sensory deprived environment is perceived as "reizvoll," full of stimulus. It is also a state of confusion, instability, ambiguity, and play. The parents speak of their ability to suddenly hear music, while the children speak of colors: "Es waren so viele Farben. Es hat richtig geglüht" ("There were so many colors. It truly glowed"; 595). The narrator, who is never clearly enough distinguished from the couple and blends with their world, describes other sensory stimuli like smell and taste. "Aber nicht nur Musik ist – oder Nachrichten aus einer anderen Sprache – es ist Geruch – es ist Geschmack" ("But not only music is – or news in a different language – it is smell – it is taste"; 594). All of them speak about the experience of beauty. Neither of them is able to find words for this experience or to relate it to a stable system of memory references.

To dream about beauty without memory of it is an odd proposition, not least because memory is one of the key building blocks of dreams. Freud agrees on this with contemporary dream psychologists (cf. Sutton). In *Traumdeutung* he suggests:

> Es kommt zunächst vor, dass im Trauminhalt ein Material auftritt, welches man dann im Wachen nicht als zu seinem Wissen und Erleben gehörig erkennt. ("It often happens that matter appears in the dream content which one cannot recognize later in the waking state as belonging to one's knowledge and experience."; *Traumdeutung* 28; *Interpretation* 11)

Memory in dreams is distinctly visual and akin to how we visualize radio narratives. Sutton distinguishes two modes of recollection. "Sometimes I remember events in my personal past from the inside, experiencing the scene from my own past perspective;

sometimes in contrast, I see myself in the remembered scene" (537). Dream can move events and experiences center stage which were marginalized in our waking life. In fact, we may not always remember that we experienced them in the first place. Moreover, their appearance may be so distorted by the different forms of *Traumarbeit* that we cannot recognize them at all. The family in Fassbinder's play struggles to reconcile these dream memories with their knowledge of the waking world. The shared dream in *Keiner* brings memories of beauty to the surface that do not register as readily available information, but as a faded notion of another world. To Petrov, the sudden outburst of sensual stimulus is an unsettling mistake "Irgendwo ist ein Fehler" ("Somewhere, there is a flaw", 594).

Upon remembering words and images, Petrov tries to label them with a larger concept which is familiar to us, but only a vague memory to him. Here, words designate experience but lack a place in a signifying order. "Michelangelo. Warum kennen wir Michelangelo nicht? Es war doch Michelangelo" ("Michelangelo. Why do we not know Michelangelo? It was Michelangelo, wasn't it"; 595)? The indicators of this indeterminate "something" cannot be decoded properly; experience cannot be processed into knowledge; it cannot even be understood as experience. In the same scene, the family is discussing its experience of an image. An image that, provided we have previous knowledge of it, we can conjure up before our eyes: Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. If we are familiar with the iconography, we could recognize – that is, remember our visual experience with – the image of Adam receiving the spark of life from a personified God:

Jeanne *links halbnah* Hän-de. Hände.

Petrov *rechts nah* Hände... Adam und Gott.

Elvira *rechts nah* Adam und...?

Petrov *rechts nah* Gott. Es war die Schöpfung.

("Jeanne *left semi-close* Han – ds. Hands./ Petrov *right close* Hands... Adam and

God./ Elvira *right close* Adam and …?/ Petrov *right close* God. It was creation.";

595)

Again, understanding is based on this hinge between individual consciousnesses, this

common reference, albeit the ability to actually share world experience. We can, of

course, never truly share our experience. We can merely relate to fluctuating common

points of reference that make up our shared ontological framework. This is one of the

reasons we engage with works of art in the first place, to practice our skills to navigate

this framework and to create more hinges and nodes in it. As Nietzsche put it in the

passage quoted earlier "an diesen Vorgängen übt er sich für das Leben" ("for out of these

images he interprets life for himself, in these images he trains himself for life"; *Werke* 22;

Birth 20).

The radio exercises our ability to relate our sense of the world to that of others

particularly well because it focuses on only one channel of information: sound. When we

hear sounds of something in a Hörspiel but cannot identify what they are indicating, we

recognize them as sound and not mere noise – a distinction that in and of itself depends

on our familiarity with the conceptual network – we distinguish a pattern, but no

cognition beyond the phenotextual experience is possible. Only if we know what a

spaceship is *supposed* to sound like, will we know what it is that we hear. Without this

contextual knowledge, meaning is produced on an individual monadic level and cannot

be communicated. Making sense of the science fictional object on the radio takes the

form of Wittgenstein's private language, which is, as he aptly demonstrates, not a

language at all (Wittgenstein 243ff). I might believe what I am hearing is a spaceship.

Someone else may think it is a motorcycle. There is no universal response. Like the

dream world, the inner world of the characters is a world hermetically closed off from

anyone else, and can only be discussed through reference points outside of itself. Elvira

smells flowers, but her assurance that the olfactory experience indicates gorse does not

lead Petrov to experience gorse "Glaub mir – das riecht" ("Believe me – this smells";

594)! Instead, to him, the sense experience is merely a further step to destabilizing his

known universe "Irgendwo ist ein Fehler" ("Somewhere, there is a flaw"; 594). Beauty,

identity, and pleasure, are all labels for experiences that have no value by themselves.

They need to be put into play – Wittgenstein's famous language games – to mean

anything at all. In our case, this game of meaning making takes the form of a *Hör – spiel,*

a listening game.

Similarly, when the daughter Jeanne rips off the heads of her dolls, we cannot

know why. Her brother Christoph, however, knows intuitively: "Ja, ich versteh dich"

("Yes, I understand you"; 595). The siblings understand what we do not understand; they

know what we do not know. This seems to me to be part of the formally bizarre dream

logic of the play. While I dream, the world of the dream seems to make sense.

Astonishment and wonder rarely have the effect of destabilizing the dream scenario. I can

rip the head off an object I love, the way Jeanne does with her doll, as a gesture of

appreciation. Such behavior would seem erratic to the twenty-first century listener: in

fact, it is behavior we try to discourage in our children. Without further explanation, without knowing what Christoph knows, such action causes a sense of estrangement.

On the one hand, it causes the kind of Brechtian estrangement that destroys the immersive illusion of a coherent narrative world. If we wanted to make sense of a girl who rips the heads of her dolls to show her love, and who is understood in doing so by her sibling, we would need to step back, break the immersion, and read the scenario *as* scenario on a symbolic or metaphoric level rather than as a hypothetical extension of our own world. Simultaneously, because of the dream-like flow of the, otherwise absurd, events, we experience another kind of estrangement. Despite the dream logic, or rather because of it, the cognitive connection to the here and now is maintained – we *know* what it is like to dream, even if we do not *share* the dream. We begin to experience this world on its own terms, because it resembles our own nightly estrangement from our familiar surroundings.

Other connections between the dream world and the non-diegetic world exist as well – explicitly in form of shared touchstones like Marlene, Elvis, and Vivaldi, and implicitly because the scenario of a shared dream-like experience that allows a community to expand its own conceptual framework beyond the *reizlose* environment previously provided and controlled by an intrusive state apparatus is somewhat plausible. Fassbinder manages to simultaneously estrange us in Bloch and Suvin's sense, alienate us in the sense of Brecht, and make us feel (uncannily) at home in the sense of Freud.

The figures in the play rediscover their environment as beautiful because they dreamed. The dream connects them to memories they do not consciously understand and these memories connect them to our world. The initial lack of "Reiz" is reversed into an

abundance of stimuli. Somehow, the dream made it possible for them to perceive

previously unnoticed phenomena as stimuli. The Arab says "Schönes, das du nicht als

schön siehst, ist nicht schön" ("Something beautiful, that you do not see as beautiful, is

not beautiful"; 596). He suggests that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and not a stable

truth. Nowhere is there talk of the kind of disinterested, universal and necessary

transcendent experience that Kant places at the heart of his discussion of beauty in his

Critique of Judgement. The transformative experience of Elvira and the others make

clear: there is no pre-conceptual judgment of beauty, but instead, as the Arab says, you

have to see something *as* beautiful, in order to find it beautiful. In *Keiner*, beauty is

always presented as a discursive play that negotiates the aesthetic assessment of the

world. We, too, conceptualize a sonic world that, as we listen, we see with our eyes and

our eyes only. It is precisely the family's conceptual coming to terms with the pheno-text

we are witnessing. There is no positive change in the phenomenological make-up of the

world. The environment is not suddenly more beautiful. Not the world has changed for

Elvira and Petrov, but their mode of reading it.

Wish-Fulfillment and Daydreaming

        In the midst of discovering their ability to produce beauty and meaning from the

previously dull and meaningless, Elvira and Petrov also experience happiness. The ability

to experience beauty and the ability to experience happiness are two very different things.

While *Keiner* seems to suggest that beauty is a concept which is produced in the kinds of

socio-historic discourses that frame the "eye of the beholder" happiness seems to be an

affective reaction, an instinct triggered by something, a bio-chemical automatism. Or is

it? What is it that makes them happy? "Warum sind wir nie fröhlich gewesen?" ("Why

were we never happy?"; 596) asks Elvira. Petrov suggests an answer: "Wir hatten keine

Musik" ("We didn't have music"). Happiness, Elvira and Petrov argue, is most closely

affiliated with music, it even depends on music. Why privilege music? All the diegetic

music in the play (Marlene, Elvis, Vivaldi) is pre-recorded in the world of the listener; no

one performs music in the play. I suggest that music, as the one sound stimulus that

comes into the world of the play from the outside via sound storage media, stands in for

recording media as such and particularly for the radio itself. To understand this link

between the radio and happiness, via music and sound, we have to look more closely at

the role music plays in *Keiner* beyond its status as nostalgic artifact, which we discussed

above.

Musical experience, sound experience, is the only experience we share with the

figures that populate the diegetic world. Rather than to learn about the content of the

shared dream, the collective vision, which was the reason for the sudden burst of sensual

stimulation and overwhelming happiness, we get aural stimuli in the form of different

linguistic codes (German, English, Arabic, Greek) and music. While Marlene and Elvis

also stimulate on the genotextual level of the word, Vivaldi is instrumental and a

particularly interesting choice. An example of *Programmusik*, his *Four Seasons* tells a

loose narrative of events. We have to know the four accompanying sonnets to be able to

access the narrative world the music is trying to create. In the context of the play,

however, this extra-musical knowledge is not available. Vivaldi becomes a mere

stimulus, not a work of art with its own corresponding discourses:

Elvira *rechts nah* Was weiß [*sic*] du von dieser Musik?

> Petrov *rechts nah* **Es** hieß Vivaldi. Ich … ich weiß nichts von dieser Musik.
>
> ("Elvira *right close* What do you know of this music?/ Petrov *right close* **It** was
>
> called Vivaldi. I … know nothing of this music."; 595, bold emphasis mine).

The couple talks about the "Vivaldi" as a label, which marks the music as such and not the body who wrote it. They also talk about the beauty of the musical sounds, but not about the why, how, and what. In *die Bienenkönige,* by contrast, the Women talk about music in terms of genre, era, and composer, even about music theory and performance aspects. There, classical music is the trigger for going through the motions of an art conversation, a glimpse into the structures that determine who we can be. We know what these women are doing, we can pass judgment, and we share their world via Mahler. Here in *Keiner,* Vivaldi, like Marlene and Elvis, becomes the membrane that separates our world from that of the narrative. As in a dream, we share the signifier but we are barred from the world in which its meaning can be localized.

Musicologist Fred E. Maus suggests that the process of listening to instrumental music can be meaningfully described with the analytical tools provided by narratology (cf. Maus 1997). Certain developments of musical motifs over the course of a piece can be analyzed like literary motifs or character development. Changes of speed and mood may be akin to types of elypses and analepsis. Musical themes may be read as forshadowing. Even narrative agents and implied authors can be determined. Such analysis can account for the affective and immersive experience that the reception of music can be (301). These types of narrative worlds do not require the same rational causality on which, according to Ryan, the ability to lose oneself in the narrative world

depends. Of course, narrative descriptions are mere tools to analyze and describe musical experience; they are not means to read the latent content behind the manifest musical text. Narrative worlds created by instrumental music can be as irrational and erratic as dreams without destroying the immersiveness of the narrative fabric.

In the light of Maus' suggestions we can consider Vivaldi, and with him all music, to be a kind of *Hörspiel* in the *Hörspiel*, a narrative within a narrative. We are, in effect listening to the characters listening, much like Hamlet watches his uncle as he watches a play within a play. As John Mowitt explains, such is "the mode of reflexivity by which Hamlet plans to catch the conscience, *sans* Oneiroscops [the device from Benjamin's play discussed earlier], of the king" (67).[11] The music in *Keiner* plays with the Utopian hope that we may gain access to the workings of the characters minds, by observing their engagement with a common referent. Unfortunately music is – and in that it mirrors our experience of the play – a narrative on whose content, let alone meaning, nobody can agree.

What kind of dream is music in *Keiner*? Music is a dream language, in which, if properly stimulated, we can hide our subconscious wishes and dreams, without the pretense of communicating them. This is an active process, unlike the nocturnal automatism that the "Freudian Robot" exercises, but a creative act, more akin to the Appolonian *Traum* Nietzsche develops in *The Birth of Tragedy* and which we discussed above.[12] Freud talks about this kind of creative fantasizing in his remarks on the *Tagtraum* in the *Traumdeutung*, which he picks up again in *Der Dichter und das Phantasieren*. For him, there is a close connection between dreaming whilst asleep and daydreaming:

>Wie die Träume sind sie Wunscherfüllungen; wie die Träume basieren sie zum
>
>guten Teil auf den Eindrücken infantiler Erlebnisse; wie die Träume erfreuen sie
>
>sich eines gewissen Nachlasses der Zensur für ihre Schöpfungen.
>
>("Like dreams, they are fulfilments of wishes; like dreams a good part of them are
>
>based upon the impressions of childish experiences ; like dreams their creations
>
>enjoy a certain amount of indulgence from the censor"; (*Traumdeutung* 485;
>
>*Dream* 250).

Daydreams are fantasies which are driven by, mainly, unconscious desires and memories,

and framed by the momentary socio-economic conditions. Freud emphasizes that the

fantasies are, again consciously or subconsciously, oriented at a future fulfillment of a

present desire that was seeded in the past. In dreams, we find "Vergangenes,

Gegenwärtiges, Zukünftiges wie an der Schnur des durchlaufenden Wunsches

aneinandergereiht" ("past, present and future [...] strung together on the thread of one

desire that unites all three"; *Der Dichter; Uncanny* 29). The creative act of daydreaming

strongly resembles the manifestations of the Utopian impulse.

Bloch recognizes this resemblance and emphasizes that Freud's assessment, that

the daydream be a subcategory of the night dream, is a false one:

>Das Luftschloß ist keine Vorstufe zum nächtlichen Labyrinth, eher liegen noch
>
>die nächtlichen Labyrinthe als Keller unter dem täglichen Luftschloß.
>
>("The castle in the air is not a stepping-stone to the nocturnal labyrinth, if
>
>anything, the nocturnal labyrinths lie like cellars beneath the daytime castle in the
>
>air." *Prinzip* 98; *Principle* 87)

In daydream rather than in its nocturnal counterpart, Bloch sees the creative potential to

effect change. He postulates four characteristics of the daydream: 1) it is less distorted

than the night dream; 2) the ego remains in charge, rather than a play thing for the

subconscious; 3) the daydream is not a solitary process that deals exclusively with the

psyche of the individual but with the world in which the dreamer operates, 4) the

daydream does not end when the sleeper awakes (88-95):

> Die Tagphantasie startet wie der Nachttraum mit Wünschen, aber führt sie
>
> radikal zu Ende, will an den Erfüllungsort.
>
> ("The day-fantasy begins like the night-dream with wishes, but carries them
>
> radically to their conclusion, wants to get to the place of their fulfillment." 107;
>
> 95)

This last quote, in particular, shows Bloch's uninhibited optimism with regard to the

creative potential of the daydream. Many an objection could be raised to counter his list

of characteristics. For example, his faith in the clarity with which we can know and

address our wishes (Elvira's screams are an indicator that she does not at all know what

she wants and needs) and the degree to which the super-ego cedes influence over the ego

in waking state (the Big Brother needs to die before the characters in Fassbinder's play

can even experience the environment on their own terms) display an almost naïve

enthusiasm for self-invention. This enthusiasm is mirrored in his belief that daydreams,

or castles in the air, are always expressions of a wish that positively affects others and

that they are always taken to a place of fulfillment. Nevertheless, Bloch's attempt to raise

the status of the daydream shows that it is a genuinely Utopian articulation of desire for change.

Freud's notion of the daydream breaches any strict separation of Utopian desire (for example, the desire for epistemic certainty) and the Utopian state (for example, the collective aesthetic experience of music that seems to connect all those who hear on an immediate level). To (day)dream means to have achieved some kind of Utopian fulfillment of desire, if only under the condition that it is a) a highly unstable, and effusive place to be and b) even though my body produces this dream text, this inner vision, this fantasy, it is not fully available for me to either interpret, retain, or communicate. As Jameson points out:

> Freud thus leaves us with a perspective in which the dimensions within the daydreaming wish-fulfillment are themselves restructured and reorganized around two distinct pairs of oppositions: for now, alongside the tension between the objective and subjective, we find ourselves obliged, in the openly aesthetic context, to accommodate an opposition between the particular and the universal which is also intimately related to that between the writer and his public, or in other words, between the individual and the collective (47).

Is it possible to universalize Fassbinder's wish-fulfillment and reproduce it, via Elvia, Petrov, and the others on a collective level? The way I read Jameson here is that, rather than analyze the writer's wishes and desires, we recognize that daydreaming as literary production will produce a text that is anchored in the collective and historical means of production:

Wish-fulfillments are after all by definition never real fulfillments of desire; and

must presumably always be marked by the hollowness of absence of failure at the

heart of their most dearly fantasized visions (a point Bloch never tired of making).

Even the process of wish-fulfillment includes a kind of reality principle of its

own, intent on not making things too easy for itself, accumulating the objections

and the reality problems that stand in its way so as the more triumphantly and

'realistically' to overcome them (83).

Utopian texts as collective wish-fulfillment are as much monuments to the unfulfilled

desire as they are the fulfillment themselves. The fact that Elvira and Petrov understand

one another, is the unfulfillable Utopian desire, and, by not understanding them, we

understand and share this desire for the duration of the play. It is this understanding, this

agreement, which is cause of their happiness. "Für den Rest haben wir Musik" ("For

everything else we have music"; 596). Music as a daydream medium is, as suggested

above, a stand-in for the radio, which is the dream-textual medium of wish-fulfillment.

The grandfather is not barred from comprehension because he does not engage in

their discourse in the first place. "Großvater *Mitte halbnah* Ich kann viele Worte, die du

sagst, nicht verstehen" ("Grandfather *middle semi-close* Many of the words you say, I

cannot understand"; 601). He still lives in a world without stimuli, a world that needs no

categories, no labels, and no signification. As they look at the grandfather sleeping, the

narrator points out an absence: the absence of worry in Grandfather. Grandfather's sleep

is dreamless, a state of radical unconsciousness. His sleep is not the kind of creative and

shared dream experience of Elvira, Petrov, and the children. He is excluded from their

world much like someone is excluded from the atomized community of listeners because

he does not have a radio and so cannot partake in the collectivity of radiophonic world

building. Grandfather is like a citizen of Papa Joe's community who never heard the

voice of the dictator in the first place. Petrov accordingly suspects: "Irgendwo ist ein

Fehler." There is a problem with the contiguity of grandfather's world and Petrov's. Is

that why we cannot understand? Because we are more like Grandfather? Is there a

problem with the world as such? Theirs or ours? Maybe our mode of listening is faulty

and that is why we cannot be part of the community of understanding? Towards the end,

Grandfather dies. The prediction of the end of the world would have been meaningless to

him. Dream as wish-fulfillment, Utopian state, blind imagination is of no consequence

for a man who is not part of technologically distributed cognition or the socially

discursive game of meaning-making, which in this play is constituted by the elusive

shared dream. He is, in a sense, non-existent. His grandson already forgets him "Ich hatte

Großvater gern. Aber ich kann mich nicht daran erinnern" ("I liked grandfather well. But

I cannot remember it"; 603).

Grandfather's death introduces the motif of fate into the play, suggesting that

everything was planned accordingly and not accidental. "Araber *halblinks nah/ es wird

Arabisch gesprochen* Gott macht keine Fehler. Er kann wollen was er will" ("Arab *half

left close/ Arabic is spoken* God makes no mistakes. He can want whatever he wants";

602). With Big Brother, the nondescript leader and oppressor from deep within the SF

canon, gone or powerless, fate cannot have many agents. Perhaps it is, as in the end of

Goethe's *Faust I*, the voice from above the stage, the God-director-writer who decides

about fates and about the make-up of the world in question. Maybe, not coincidentally,

we receive another piece of science fictional world building that has, in its concreteness,
an estranging effect more like the ones we have seen in the other chapters. Elvira calls the
Verbrennungskomando 'burn patrol' to come for grandfather. Such a scenario
(reminiscent of the plague doctors in medieval times, here, transported to the end times)
is not atypical for post-apocalyptic SF, yet it stands out as one of the few tangible pieces
of world in *Keiner*. SF itself becomes an uncanny memory.

Fantasy and Desire and the End of the World

Why, we have to ask, is the notion of the end of the world so liberating? Should
not the sudden burst of sensual stimuli, of discursive meaning, and of beauty and
happiness make our characters dread the finality of existence? On the contrary: on one
level, the end means simply that Elvira and Petrov do not have to fear Big Brother
anymore. Big Brother is dead, but the short period between his death and the end of the
world is the only one free of his oppression. Revenge for breaking the state-enforced
rules of conduct does not have to be feared. "Elvira *rechts nah* Petrov! Die Rache! Du
fürchtest die Rache nicht mehr" ("Elvira *right close* Petrov! Revenge! You no longer fear
revenge" 600). The *tristesse* and lack of stimuli might have been a result of the
oppressive power of Big Brother, but now that his power is not total anymore, it has
become possible again to be happy.

As noted before, the very mention of Big Brother alludes to George Orwell's
dystopian vision of a totalitarian regime that controls the way its citizens remember the
past. In doing so, Orwell speculates, it controls the future as well as the present. Indeed,
Orwell's protagonist Winston Smith faces a problem similar to the family in Fassbinder's

play. He can never be sure whether or not other people remember the world – and

therefore see the present – the way he does. The regime controls the world through

constant surveillance of all channels of communication, from speech and writing, to body

language, and even the surrounding objects. No connection, even the superficial and

incomplete kinds of connections Elvira and Petrov make, are possible in *1984.* A sense of

the actual world, in Orwell's novel, is not something that is arrived at in the process of

discourse and play, but by absolute law of the dictator, much like Papa Joe. Winston

cannot think beyond the limitations set by the rules of his world. In the end, there are

only two ways to escape: conformity or suicide. Or the death of Big Brother himself. In

Fassbinder's play, this world comes to an end completely and gives way for plays of

signification and meaning that were – literally – unthinkable previously.

  The end of the world does not only allow the transgression of the existing order, it

also provides a new peculiar kind of stability. As the only thing that provides any external

certainty, the apocalypse can fill the void left behind by Big Brother only incompletely,

as some kind of negative force. Earlier, when Elvira complained about her inability to

scream, much like in dream logic, her scream was silenced by the structure of the old

symbolic order, embodied by the overbearing power of Big Brother. Impotent remnants

of the old system of order, like the burn-patrol that comes to pick up the dead, still haunt

it, but to no effect. Now, that even the old order maintained by the authority of the Big

Brother has collapsed and Grandfather, another remnant of this old world, has passed,

Elvira takes over and sends her children to bed to maintain a reliable structure. Christoph

points out that the mother steps in as a double for the Big Brother. "Du bist der große

Bruder. Du, Mutter" ("You are the Big Brother. You, mother"; 606)! She becomes the

diegetic embodiment of Freud's censor, or Nietzsche's rationalistic and ordering

principle that keeps the dream world from running wild. The children recognize that all

order, all law is manufactured and that all stability imposes a power structure that

ultimately leads back to the strict categorical order and *Reizlosigkeit* at beginning of our

scenario:

> Jeanne *links außen* Was für eine Ordnung ist das, die du da meinst.
>
> Elvira *halblinks* Ordnung. Ordnung eben. Jemand hat Recht und jemand nicht.
>
> Und Pflichten. Jeder hat Pflichten.
>
> Christoph *rechts außen* Und jemand ist besser als jemand. Nicht. Du bist der
>
> große Bruder. Du, Mutter!
>
> Petrov *halbrechts* Wir tun so, als wäre Verzweiflung, wo gar nicht Verzweiflung
>
> ist.
>
> Jeanne *links außen* Keiner ist gut und keiner ist böse.
>
> Christoph *rechts außen* Keiner hat Recht und keiner hat Unrecht.
>
> ("Jeanne *far left* What kind of order is that, to which you are referring./ Elvira *half*
>
> *left* Order. Just Order. Someone is right and someone is not. And duties. Everyone
>
> has duties./ Christoph *far right* And someone is better than no one. Not. You are
>
> the big brother. You, mother!/ Petrov *half right* We pretend, as if there were
>
> desperation, where there is no desperation. / Jeanne *far left* No one is good and no
>
> one is bad./ Christoph *far right* No one is right and no one is wrong."; 606)

By stating the title of the play "Keiner ist gut und keiner ist böse," Jeanne seems to recall

the passage in Nietzsche we discussed in the beginning when he states that dreams

connect us to a more affect- and desire-driven world free from the rationalized and

ordered restrictions that dates back to the mythical beginnings of mankind (*Werke* 454).

In our discussion, we recognized the want to reach this world as a Utopian desire. The

end times are times of radical relativism. This does not mean that this world is out of

control, or that things do not matter anymore. Much to the contrary, things, as we have

seen, matter more than before, but not in terms of their truth value – which would require

the kind of order the mother is trying to maintain and which her children reject – but in

terms of their *Reiz*-value.

      We, too, are participants in a shared dream text that gives us an allusion of mutual

understanding. William Stanton wonders "whether we populate our unconscious with the

narratives coming from the impersonal boxes of the loudspeakers; or whether what we

encounter is some sort of simulacrum of another, dreaming, mind" (103). This other

unconscious is not, like the Greek whom Elvira calls, a specific presence on the other end

of the line "but a complex, allusive acoustic *bricolage*" (Stanton 103). Like Elvira and

her family, Stanton views this exploration of the *implied* other on the opposite side of the

acousmatic veil as a liberating experience. Jeanne and Christoph seem to recognize the

short-livedness of this experience of freedom: "Das ist eine Lüge. Wie genau ihr das

wisst" ("This is a lie. How well you know that"; 606)! What allows us all to have the

same "dream" in form of Fassbinder's play is the radio with its own institutionalized

structures and signifying systems.

      This also means that these world-building structures – "world" here as a

threatening, terrifying concept – expand beyond the radio into our actual world, the here

and now. As I hope to have shown, we can examine these structures and principles under

the magnification of a) the dream-like form and structure of the play and b) the mode of

the science fictional, which allows us to represent the cognitively estranging concepts of

communication and understanding. The play begins and ends, and with it the world of

Elvira and her family. It has boundaries. Death, the end, is salvation from the structural

powers in place and thus allows rebirth under different terms. After all, as Kittler points

out, the "realm of the dead is as extensive as the storage and transmission capabilities of a

given culture" (13).

Unfortunately, we are not absolved, redeemed by the explosion that puts an end to

the world of the characters and which they anticipated in their dreams. We do not enter

an age of beauty, happiness, and total communication. On the contrary, we are told by the

narrator, who in the end for the first time uses the past tense that everything died and

turned into happiness and bliss. "Als alles starb, alles zu Farbe wurde und Glück, da war

sekundenlang Verwirrung im All" ("When all died, all became color and happiness, there

were a few seconds of confusion in the universe"; 606). The destruction of the symbolic

order requires a new one. We cannot experience the world without such a principle,

except as a Utopian construct. The *Hörspiel* ends, but it is also a beginning as it loops

back to its own opening: framed by Marlene Dietrich's "Little Drummer Boy," which

fills the void post-catastrophe. The Arab speaks again, somehow removed from the

diegetic world – the apocalypse did not destroy him, the narrator, nor us, the listeners –

providing a bridge into our world. Now, post-apocalypse, we can finally understand the

Arab. The narrator translates his words into German, but only a fraction, just enough so

we understand that we have looped back to the beginning, allowing us to experience

without understanding, to produce meaning without communication, to experience beauty

without the frame of order, all over again. "Aber sogleich fand sich Vorhandenes zu

Vorhandenem und wurde Beginn" ("But right away, the existing found the existing and

became beginning"; 606).

The anticipated end of the world provides a sense of happiness because it

promises change. This promise of change is a Utopian impulse, a moment of hope in

Bloch's sense. Fassbinder's scenario provides closure only insofar as the world as we

know it, or as it was made available by the *Hörspiel* text, is coming to an end. We do not

know what comes next. There is no manifest Utopian space for us to experience, no

flights of fancy possible. The end of the world is not an end of all that can be

experienced, but merely an end of the world constructed by this particular text. The voice

of the narrator, who did not die in the apocalypse, comes to us from a place unavailable

to the family, a place that is off-stage, outside of their world. This narrative, and

subjective perspective, suggests that the blank slate of the post-disaster world is no longer

blank.

This Utopia is, then, one outside of history. Rather than history's end, it is a new

beginning. The Utopian impulse is related to the end of things. Jameson reminds us that

Utopian imagination is locked into the present and cannot expand beyond its own modes

of production. What Fassbinder's *Hörspiel* offers is not a vision of what the world should

be like, but how it can be dreamt at all. The logic of the dream and the collectivity of the

manifest dream text are crucial to our knowledge of fate as a Utopian impulse. It points to

a public and social future, rather than one that is private and singular, but it does so, in

acknowledgment of the very impossibility of this project. Christoph realizes that the

abolition of the ordering principle, Big Brother, as a way to experience the world in new

terms (beauty, happiness, total communication) is a Utopian dream: necessary and impossible:

> Christoph *rechts außen* Sci-ence-fiction
>
> Elvira *halb links* Was sagst du?
>
> Christoph *rechts außen* Ich lebe.
>
> ("Christoph *far right* Sci-ence-fiction/ Elvira *half left* What are you saying?/
>
> Christoph *far right* I am alive."; 605)

The radio lends itself well to this kind of representation, precisely because it cannot represent, or does not need to represent, that post-apocalypse. By looking at dream as a metaphor, I hope to have shown that radio has a long tradition of conceiving its own visual component in terms of a Utopian project: dream as the world of the uninhibited and unalienated unconscious. If treated as a science fictional metaphor, radio formulates this desire as a cognitively estranging object. We are partaking in the private knowledge of these figures, not because it is shown to us, or because we read about it, but precisely because we imagine their Utopian dreamscape at the pace and form of a dream along with them. Like Elvira and her family, we wake up, cognitively estranged, to a new and, perhaps, more beautiful world.

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1. The stage directions in italics designate the distance from the microphone, as well as the placement on the stereophonic panorama. Unlike Horstmann and Franke, Fassbinder describes only the uniquely radiophonic technological parameters, rather than an elaborate scene, for which the director would have to find a radio-specific translation.

2. Jonathan Sterne makes a similar proposition when he discusses that the advent of sound recording turned sound and private/public soundscapes into commodities. "Sound was commodified; it became something that can be bought and sold. These facts trouble the cliché that modern science and rationality were outgrowths of visual culture and visual thinking. They urge us to rethink exactly what we mean by the *privilege* of vision and images. To take seriously the role of sound and hearing in modern life is to trouble the visualist definition of *modernity*" (Sterne 3).

3. The *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF), also known as the Baader-Meinhoff Gang, was a radical left-wing group whose militant heyday coincides directly with Fassbinder's most productive phase as a director and writer of Radio and Film.

4. Digital radio allows the station, for example, to send textual messages across the display that has replaced the dial or analogue radios. The messages may or may not have anything to do with the program. A disaster like "War of the worlds" could have been averted by digital radio, since listeners would not have to wait for the 30 minute interruption to know to what they were listening.

5. By radiophonicity I mean the quality of operating with the unique features of audio broadcast technology. Kittler refers to this as "funkisch." I avoid the Winthrop-Young and Wutz translation "radio-specific" because it conceals the fact that radiophonicity could theoretically occur in places other than the radio. The point of this section in the chapter is precisely to underline that a purely radio-specific text is a fantasy.

6. Marlene Dietrich is a common trope in Fassbinder's films. In *Lili Marleen* (1981) Fassbinder shows a record player or screens to bring the actual Marlene into the diegetic world. Modern CGI somewhat challenges this argument as footage can be manipulated to bring Marlene back to life. This is, however, not a technique in the sense of a cut, but in the sense of blending. It is, in a way, a radiophonic use of original or found sound.

7. Digital recording, of course, means that either medium cuts the real up and puts it back together. In contrast to the film strip Kittler is concerned with, we have not into individual images, but samples.

8. In the *Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes suggests that we never read texts from top to bottom but create our own by skipping, re-reading, interrupting etc. While this is true for the radio, it requires me to intervene with a different type of technology (recorder, player etc). It is not inherently possible with the means of the radio as it is.

9. According to Avital Ronell, the telephone is a medium that works with the schizophrenic logic of "stationary mobility" (4). With that in mind, Elvira is calling herself as much as an Other, similarly to the logic of our radiophonic imagination which is always an imagination of the self rather than an Other.

10. Of course, it is also this traveling between languages that informs many of Freud's dream interpretations. Even his concept of fetishism is based on a bilingual pun (Glanz/ Glance). See "Fetishism." (1927) *Standard Edition*, 21, pp. 152-159.

11. The Oneiroscope appears in Walter Benjamin's *Lichtenberg* (Cf. Benjamin 1991)

12. Lydia H. Liu argues in *The Freudian Robot – Digital Media and the Future of the Unconscious* that "any networked being that embodies the feedback loop of human-machine simulacra and cannot free her/him/itself from the cybernetic unconscious is a Freudian robot" (2).

Feedback, Modulation, and Resonance

At this point in our study, I will pursue one more Utopian proposition. I will

produce the critical feedback suggested, or perhaps demanded, by the argument I

presented in the previous chapters, because, every critical pursuit that takes the

proposition of the Utopian seriously needs to come back to where it began. If I made my

home on the Utopian isle, never to return to the point of departure, it would no longer be

a Utopian impulse implied by and inherent to the present conditions, but the kind of

positivist and absolute departure Adorno and Bloch warn us about. It would be the

moment of stagnation and rest that Faust achieves only by striking a bargain with

Mephisto and which Jeanne and her family are so eager to get away from that they prefer

the end of the world over it. A comprehensive summary that is also a stopping point has

to be an invitation for further critical inquiry, or else it would become a kind of law, a law

that would reduce the Utopian paradox to ideological certainty. Therefore, in these last

few pages, I will do nothing less than attempt another impossible act that is also

necessary.

The very term conclusion suggests that there is a final answer to the problems

proposed in the chapters or an unshakeable definition of terms. This, of course, can never

be the case, even in texts that do not explicitly deal with the Utopian. If that were so, then

why not simply read the conclusion and be done with it? The conclusion is, rather, like

the resultant tone, an effect of play between phenomena that are not themselves the

conclusion. A conclusion is a Utopian act, a proposition into the future in the guise of a

hermeneutic seal and self-sufficient entity. It closes the entire text off, but opens it at the

same time. The idea of conclusiveness belongs to an episteme that is limited rather than

limitless, closed instead of open-ended, absolute instead of relative – in other words, conclusiveness belongs to the mode of fantasy, not science fiction. My inquiry into the Utopian impulse of radiophonic imagination would have been unsuccessful if it was to lead to the stable territory of a lexical entry.

In the beginning, I proposed a science fictional reading of the Utopian metaphor: as a literal reality, despite my conscious knowledge that it is a playful engagement with a hypothetical idea. I furthermore proposed that this playful engagement appears in a particularly powerful form in the radiophonic imagination. Like the Utopian, the radiophonic imagination occupies a place in-between that is both imaginary and real, that is simultaneously here and there, now and then. I described the Utopian as a paradox, a productive self-contradiction that is necessary and impossible, essential and immaterial.

I proposed to think of the radiophonic as a form of relating to the world that is conscious or makes us conscious of the fact that these relationships are always formed according to the fantasies and myths that form the foundation of our sense of the world and that are themselves expressions of Utopian desires. Radiophony is at once formative and destructive with regard to these fantasies and allows for a unique relationship to our object of inquiry.

SF, finally, I propose to conceive of not as a genre, but a mode of perception. If we perceive science fictionally, we treat speculative realities as literal ones, whilst maintaining a cognitive connection to the epistemic structure that determines our knowledge of the actual world. It allows us to represent and subsequently submit to a thorough critique of cognitively estranging objects that otherwise elude our cognitive grasp. Some of the Utopian objects we identified were: massive social bodies of shared

communal identity (Chapter 2), objective knowledge of truth and reality (Chapter 3),

prosthetic memory and representation of actual and non-actual events (Chapter 4),

autonomous judgment and absolute communication (Chapter 5).

Utopia (critical tool), the radiophonic (relation to the world), SF (mode of
perception) are all approaches to interrogate what we have come to accept, or are no
longer willing to accept, as our reality.

In the light of these observations, I suggest that the only way to conclude – that is,

to regard these observations as absolute, is to maintain science fictional distance between

us and the object of inquiry. We read or listen from the point of a survivor. I mentioned

this before but I want to bring it up briefly again. Because we are able to hear or read the

story, there must be a future after the future (or alternative present) that is the diegetic

reality. We are the offspring of the mutants that kill the Bunkermann. Their inability to

understand him has, apparently, been overcome by some kind of evolutionary process

that allows us to visit a museum of the future. Otherwise, there would be no memory of

him at all. That same way, we are the offspring of the Bienenkönige and we are part of

the world that comes after Jeanne and Petrov. We are looking back at the future. In

reading this conclusion, we are looking back at a journey to Utopia that is at once a

testimony of the past (my readings and observations over the course of three years) and a

testimony of the future (the suggestion that my readings will somehow matter to or even

resemble future ones) and a speculative impulse into the future (future readings of the

plays and responses to my observations). Such inquiry has to be open-ended. It is, thus,

radically Utopian.

It *is,* however, *not* a science fiction. It is not a mind game that explores a speculative hypothesis outside of the experiential framework for the actual world but necessarily within its epistemological structure. We could, of course, read it science fictionally, as an alternative reality that has a direct and logical connection to ours – after all, sense-making, all production of truth out of data, is a form of world building that is either congruent or incongruent with my sense of the here and now – but it does not primarily present an alternative, non-actual reality. On the contrary, I believe that it describes something very real and very tangible.

Resonance: A kind of Afterword

I feel that my mother's statement, which I have chosen as the epigraph for these pages, and that, over the years, I have heard her utter at least a dozen times in one form or another, will help demonstrate this. It can furthermore serve as a defensive guard against accusations that our present discussion may be a purely scholarly one and one that describes nothing but the hopeful imaginings of a science fiction and radio enthusiast whose Utopian desire to somehow legitimize his guilty pleasure of enjoying a pulp cultural genre and an outdated medium by giving it a theoretical foundation, is made manifest in the work at hand.[1] Does the central argument of the last few hundred pages – that we engage in critical inquiry of the myths and desires that constitute our epistemological image of the present conditions whenever we encounter narratives in the mode of science fiction, and that radio drama operates with the same myths and fantasies it destroys in the act of listening, and that this is somehow a half-conscious, dream-like operation on the part of the listener – does this argument not place a heavy burden on the

listener (or reader/viewer)? Does this actually happen or is it in itself a Utopian fantasy, ideal but nowhere to be found?

       To explain why I believe that my mother's continuous and continuously unsatisfied request for a "proper" radio in the kitchen can answer these questions, I have to, briefly, become anecdotal and biographical. Both my parents have always worked long hours in their arts and crafts store in rural Westphalia, leaving little time for the home-making duties expected of a mother of two in the late 70s through early 90s, when the children finally moved away and the store closed for good. While my father took care of the paperwork for the store or made blanks for porcelain dolls in the attic which were to be sold in the store later on, or while he did odd jobs around the house, and while the children were doing whatever children of a German middle-class family were expected to do at the time (in my case, that often included listening to audio plays on cassette tape or on the radio, or even recording my own with the most primitive recording equipment by taping over my brother's tapes, much like the Bunkermann tapes over the sounds of the previous generation), my mother usually spent time in her "room of her own," which was, for the most part, the kitchen.

       It was her space not as much for cooking, as for paperwork, epistolary or telephonic correspondences, reading, smoking, and getting away from the rest of the family every now and then. Whether or not she was in the kitchen could be determined, even without seeing or hearing her, by whether or not one could hear the sound of the radio. I genuinely believe that, for her, listening to the radio – news, music, reportage, discussions, plays, and more music – expanded this place beyond its narrow confines in the actual world. As I said, she never considered herself as much of a home-maker but

also never truly questioned what was, without saying, expected of a married woman of her generation. I do not want to present my mother as a Victorian wife, chained to the stove by socially dictated gender roles – far from it. In fact, I applaud my parents for making this a deliberate and conscious arrangement rather than accepting it as a natural socially or biologically given. I do, however, think that radio had a large part in the success of this particular division of labor. After all, we each listened to the radio in our separate private spaces, resigned to our respective roles in the household. The radio served as a line to the outside world, a way to stay informed, a form of entertainment, but also a companion, a connection to a larger social body, an escape route. All the activities that happened in my parents' kitchen were somehow connected to a larger world of sounds, voices, implied bodies and imagined communities. Radio, in a very direct way, fulfilled the Utopian desire to be there and elsewhere – a desire that, in absence of a radio, remained unfulfilled for the three Sesame Street monsters we met in the introduction.[2]

Coincidentally, the kitchen was also, in all the houses in which we ever lived, including the one where my parents live now, the place with the worst radio reception. My mother's desire for a "proper" radio, one that does not lose reception, that gets all the desired stations, that does not suffer from interference, and that is, above all, easy and flexible to operate, speaks therefore of another Utopian desire: the desire of fidelity, of verisimilitude, of a clear channel on which to travel into this expansion of the actual world. There is, somewhere in there, this firm belief that technology will improve to a point where the boundary between the body and its technological extensions becomes inaudible.[3]

In that sense, despite the fact that she could never relate to my own enthusiasm for SF, my mother actively engaged via the medium of radio in the mode of science fiction. My mother appeared to read the radio technology as an extension of the cybernetic body, able to access virtual realities without any organic/artificial boundary. This is a Utopian impulse and, for the most part, still a hypothetical mind game, a possible rather than actual world. For my mother it was a literal reality within the imaginary universe of the kitchen. The problem has never been solved to my mother's satisfaction. Even the smallest infidelities would draw her wrath toward the piece of equipment in her kitchen and make her demand a new one.

Our journey began with a problem of sound and, as a true feedback should, it ends there. Modulated by the present discussion, it appears no longer as the bilingual interference that gives birth to the concept of Utopia as a place that is good and nowhere, but as a technological interference, namely the kind which caused my mother to constantly struggle with bad reception and to render the satisfaction of her Utopian desires incomplete. It is in the contradictory imperfections, distortions, and modulations that Utopia remains the desirable island that pulls us away from the status quo. Without them, it would be the hyperreal simulation of a perfect world which covers up, rather than exposes, the fractures of the present.

It is unlikely that my mother will find herself in these paragraphs, let alone agree with my speculations. But that is rather my point. I believe that my observations over the last few chapters provide the theoretical tools to uncover these desires and the unconscious myths and fantasies that produce them and allow us to critically assess them, without the need to dismiss them as a mere result of intricate and conspirative

manipulations by the hegemonic powers of the day. Moreover, a deeper foray into

Utopian territory – not just to analyze concrete models of different Utopian spaces, but

mostly, as I have done, to analyze the Utopian impulses that drive them – will be a great

step toward identifying and dismantling these manipulations. I believe that if we can

understand the productive and progressive effect speculative thinking has on the present

conditions, and if we can trace the Utopian underpinnings of so many of the myths and

fantasies that guide our intellectual and physical movements in the world, then our

journey onto the Utopian isle was a success.

[1] I am defending against anything but a straw man here. Conference panels that include the names of characters from popular television series are frequently mocked in the arts and style sections of major newspapers. Books that discuss zombies, vampires, and aliens often do so ironically, to give a light touch to more "serious" fair, or to attract young, non-academic readers.

[2] Television, a staple in futuristic US kitchens since the late 50s, could not have done this, since, when distracted by whatever activities one pursues there, etc. the televisional image becomes irrelevant anyhow and turns it into a medium primarily defined by sound.

[3] For an in depth-study of how sound technology embraces the concept of fidelity in an attempt to make itself inaudible see Sterne 2003.

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