'Drawing for me means communication':
Anke Feuchtenberger and German Art Comics after 1989

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, whose strength, intelligence and perseverance inspired me to pursue graduate studies and whose unwavering support has gotten me through it. I hope to be the mother to my daughter that you have been to me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Lastly, I would also like to acknowledge the many women in my life that have inspired and supported me. I want to thank my mother and sister for always checking in on me and pushing me further. I would also like to express my gratitude to Annette and Jennifer Schropp for accepting me into their family and supporting me through the years. Finally, a special thanks goes out to my daughter, Mackenzie, whose energy, kind spirit and perpetual silliness has kept me grounded and focused.

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation, "'Drawing for me means communication': Anke Feuchtenberger and German Art Comics after 1989," investigates the art of East German graphic artist Anke Feuchtenberger, one of the most important individuals and teachers working in German comics today. Trained during the GDR's most experimental decade of artistic production, Feuchtenberger brought elements of the East German avant-garde, traditional printmaking techniques, the legacy of German expressionism, and politics of German unification to bear on art comics after 1989. She thereby pushed German graphic novels into a new realm, redefining the medium in cultural, political and aesthetic terms. My dissertation analyzes the content and visual language of her work as it engaged the politics of unification and transnational discourses on feminism, reflects the aesthetic legacy of the East German avant-garde and contributed to the development of an independent German art comics scene.

Chapter One provides historical contexts for the dissertation's investigation, outlining the history of German comics and the process of East Germany's adoption of German expressionism into official aesthetic policy before examining the sources of Feuchtenberger's German expressionist visual rhetoric. Integrating the influence of Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly's *RAW* magazine (1980-1991) as an important factor in the development of Feuchtenberger aesthetics, I explore how her expressionist visual rhetoric connects a number of art historical periods, including early twentieth century

expressionism, East German neo-expressionism and poster art, and the visual language of American alternative comics.

Chapter Two situates Feuchtenberger's comics within the politics of German unification to investigate how her activism and her poster work for the East German Women's Movement informed the content, atmosphere and aesthetics of the her graphic art between 1989 and 1995.

Chapter Three applies the previous chapter's understanding of Feuchtenberger's feminist politics to a formal analysis of her comics and their intertexts. I identify the visual, verbal and narratological language that she engages in *Mutterkuchen* (1995) as part of a project to develop a feminine form of graphic expression that undermines patriarchal master narratives formally and in terms of content.

Chapter Four examines Feuchtenberger and Katrin de Vries's *Hure H* triology as it deconstructs the cultural nexus of the whore figure through an abstracted and highly symbolic representation of female experience. The analysis focuses on how Feuchtenberger engages commonly occurring literary and rhetorical tropes to draw out a more potent understanding of female sexuality, one that is defined by the agency of the women themselves, that differs in every individual, and that is in conversation with Camille Paglia's *Sexual Personae* (1990).

My conclusion considers the larger impact of Feuchtenberger, investigating her role in contemporary German comics as both a practitioner and teacher. As one of the most prevalent artists working in graphic art after 1989, who contributed fundamentally to the forming of a German comics avant-garde by developing a new visual and narratological grammar of political art comics, I argue that the history of German comics – and

specifically the graphic art of this artist – is an important and heretofore underestimated

chapter in the larger art history of united Germany.

INTRODUCTION

Comics after 1989 and the Legacy of East German Artistic Practice

In 1991, the East German graphic arts collective PGH Glühende Zukunft (1989-1993) hosted an art opening in their workshop and exhibition space at Oderberger Straße 17. The studio in Prenzlauer Berg had operated as the headquarters of the group since before the fall of the Wall in 1989.[1] At the top of the stairs through a door on the left was the collective's twenty-square-meter workshop shared by its four members, Anke Feuchtenberger, Henning Wagenbreth, Detlev Beck, and Holger Fickelscherer.[2] With printing presses under windows bearing gold-varnished frames in a room decorated with pirate flags and black, red and gold flowered cloth, no less than a hundred guests encountered a cacophony of color and a deluge of media.[3]

According to descriptions of this exhibition and others, the displays looked something like this: prints were hung next to paintings, political and theater posters were exhibited alongside postcards, magazine and newspaper illustration, flyers, and leaflets were displayed adjacent to comic strips and matchboxes – with themes, figures, subject matter and formal characteristics moving between the various media. Although most of PGH's artistic production only truly began after the fall of the Berlin Wall, their diverse

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[1] Volker Handloik, "The Dealers – die Adressen," *taz* (Berlin, Germany)*,* July 12, 1991, 2; Handloik, "Arrivierte Kunst und nachrückender Unmut," *taz* (Berlin, Germany)*,* May 8, 1991, 23.
[2] "PGH Glühende Zukunft präsentiert skurrile Geschichten von Mark Beyer – Amy und Jordan in der Großstadt," *neues deutschland,* Feb. 19, 1994, www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/470666.amy-und-jordan-in-der-grossstadt.html.
[3] Marianne, "Zehn Fingerkuppen für den Hummer," *taz* (Berlin, Germany), Feb. 11, 1991, 28.

artistic output, political engagement, and fluidity between formal, aesthetic, and stylistic

boundaries recalled a rich array of precedents that reflected the group's interests in the

East German avant-garde, international graphic arts, early German modernism, and the

history of comic art. Furthermore, PGH's attention to the politics of the moment, and

particularly Feuchtenberger's role in the feminist activism around 1989 and mobilization

of contemporary Germany's gender dynamics in her work, an important subject of this

dissertation, were immediately apparent.

A play on words for the East German organizations "Produktionsgenossenschaft

des Handwerks" ["Production Association of Craft"] and "Gärtnerische

Produktionsgenossenschaft Blühende Zukunft" ["Horticultural Production Association

Flourishing Future"], PGH was founded by graphic art students Feuchtenberger and

Wagenbreth in their final year at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee.[4] Classically

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[4] Wagenbreth grew up in Eberswalde in a house full of scientists. His parents were biologists and his sisters physicians, making Wagenbreth the only person in his immediately family to pursue the arts. His parents, however, had many artist and designer friends. According to an interview, Wagenbreth recognized very early on that artists had the most freedom in the GDR – even when the freedom was restricted – and decided to follow that path himself. Wagenbreth's first important influence was Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*. He recalls how the book triggered his love for popular prints and illustrations. It is easy to see how *Struwwelpeter* peaked Wagenbreth's fascination with caricature and the grotesque, which remained focal points of his work throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Wagenbreth subsequently became interested in artists in the history of popular prints who were not easily recognized as exceptional draftsman, as their figuration was not necessarily realistic. However, these artists were "able to invent forms, invent abstractions to display complicated content in a convincing simplicity" – artists, one could speculate, such as Frans Masereel and other German expressionists. Before being accepted into the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee (1982-1987), Wagenbreth interned with Walter Graetz, the brother of his geography teacher, basketball coach and later mayor of Eberswalde. Graetz ran a small but high-quality print workshop in East Berlin, where he produced art prints in originally offset print technics. Wagenbreth recalls how all the important Berlin graphic artists experimented there: "Theater, music and art posters were printed, colour separations were made with a big reproduction camera or directly by hand. Printing inks were mixed manually." His time with Graetz's workshop influenced Wagenbreth's technical understanding of the whole printing process, enabling him to consider not only the "design process of drawing but also the creative intervention of the production of print media." By the 1980s, Wagenbreth's artistic interests had evolved, and he became more attracted to subjective approaches to drawing modelled by Jiri Salamoun in Prague and neo-expressionist *Plakatkünstle*r Volker Pfüller in East Berlin. Upon being accepted at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee, Wagenbreth studied the craftsmanship of letter setting, drawing, photo and printing, but soon he specialized in illustration and typography. His first major success was illustrating a 5th grade history book for the Slavic minority in East Germany, the Sorbs, printed in 1988. Wagenbreth, interview with Charles Hively, www.wagenbreth.de/projekt.php?rubrik=Interview.

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trained in the fine arts at one of East Germany's most prominent artist academies,

Feuchtenberger and Wagenbreth specialized in graphic art, producing posters and book

illustration in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) upon graduating in 1988 and

1987, respectively. While characterized as one of the last avant-garde groups of the GDR,

PGH was not as much an instigator of the revolution of 1989, as it was born of it.[5] Active

during the *Montagsdemonstrationen* (Monday Demonstrations) during the final months

of East Germany, Feuchtenberger and Wagenbreth sought to find their artistic voice

politically ("sich politisch eine Stimme zu verschaffen") through print work, attempting

to promote political change through graphic means.[6]

PGH printed graphics, postcards and posters, as well as caricatures and comic strips

to distribute around Prenzlauer Berg in the fall of 1989, pinning them to house doors

before circulating them at demonstrations.[7] Years later, Wagenbreth recounts how

printmaking figured into his political activism:

> Dass Kunst wichtig ist als Nahrung für das eigene Selbstverständnis. Dass
> Kunst ein Experimentierfeld ist, wo man solche Fragen erst einmal auf dem
> Papier erprobt, bevor man auf eine Demo geht oder in den Knast. Dass man
> ein Plakat macht und deshalb wird eine Scheibe eingeschlagen.[8]

On November 4th, 1989, PGH handed out 500 linocut fliers "zur Hebung der

revolutionären Moral" for one GDR Mark per sheet. Five days later, the Berlin Wall fell,

and PGH were among the first artists to paint on its Eastern side only three weeks later.[9]

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[5] Wagenbreth, interview by Niels Beintker, "Zonen Untergrund: Eine kleine Geschichte der Avantgarden in der DDR," *Bayerischer Rundfunk: Bayern 2*, Oct. 4 2016, www.br.de/radio/bayern2/sendungen/nachtstudio/avantgarde-kunst-ddr-ticha-100.html, transcript, 19.

[6] Wagenbreth, "Zonen Untergrund," 20.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 22.

[9] Werner Tammen, *PGH Glühende Zukunft* (Berlin: Galerie am Chamissoplatz, 1991), 3; Tom Mustroph, "Die Mauer wurde auch im Osten bunt," *Neues Deutschland,* Nov. 22, 2004*,* www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/63225.die-mauer-wurde-auch-im-osten-bunt.html.

PGH embodied the political engagement, playfulness, expressionist aesthetics, and disregard for medium-specific boundaries that came out of East Germany's creative class in the last decade of the GDR. Artists and intellectuals such as painter Bernhard Heisig, sculptor Fritz Cremer, and art historian Hermann Raum had already begun to undermine the rigid aesthetic policies of East Germany in the 1960s, while artists such as Wolfgang Mattheuer, Werner Tübke, and Heisig were standardizing the expressionist and surrealist aesthetic turn from Soviet-style socialist realism. Furthermore, graphic artists such as Volker Pfüller, Hubert Riedel and Helmut Brade modernized the aesthetics of East German *Plakatkunst* (poster art), "forcing the people to think" through their visual experiments in poster design.[10]

Emerging at this precise moment in time, PGH found themselves in a good political and aesthetic position to play with medium, form, and subject matter in new and exciting ways, adapting the East German artistic traditions of the previous four decades and engaging in the politics of the moment. Furthermore, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, PGH was also introduced to international trends in comic art for the first time in a meaningful way. Lastly, the sudden collapse of the GDR opened up an artistic, intellectual and technical space for them to engage national and transnational political discourse without fear of censorship or recourse. Through this combination of East German artistic traditions, the politics of unification, transnational discourses on feminism, and historical and contemporary movements in expressionism and comic art, PGH revolutionized the graphic arts of united Germany.

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[10] Simone Tippach-Schneider, "Without a city wall: Poster Art in the former GDR" *Affice* 3-4, no. 12 (1992): 55.

After the fall of the Wall, PGH grew to four members, when Detlef Beck and Holger Fickelscherer joined Feuchtenberger and Wagenbreth in Wagenbreth's East German apartment at Oderberger Straße 17.[11] In the year before German unification, they continued to draw attention to themselves through their art actions, [12] such as their graffiti in support of Mauerpark (fig. I.1) and political posters, such as Wagenbreth's "Gründungstreffen Neues Forum" (fig. I.3) and Feuchtenberger's "Alle Frauen sind mutig! stark! schön!" (fig. I.4).

Fig. I.1: PGH Glühende Zukunft, "Mauerpark Statt Autobahn," Schablonen Graffiti, 1990.
Fig. I.2: PGH Glühende Zukunft, "Das Bein hat es eiliger als der Kopf," Schablonen Graffiti, 1990.

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[11] Mustroph, "Die Mauer wurde auch im Osten bunt," n.p.
[12] Beate Grubert-Thurow and Werner Tammen, *Aufgekratzt*, (Zurick: Edition Moderne, 1997)*,* 7.

Fig. I.3: Wagenbreth, "Gründungstreffen Neues Forum," 1989.
Fig. I.4: Feuchtenberger, "Alle Frauen sind mutig! stark! schön!" ["All women are brave! strong! beautiful! Independent Women's Association. For women and children too, a worry-free future in the European house."] Campaign poster for March 1990 East German parliamentary elections. Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, 1990.

After November 1989, however, PGH*'s* collaboration changed fundamentally, mainly taking the form of group exhibitions, while the artists primarily worked autonomously.[13] Feuchtenberger and Wagenbreth returned to the skills they had developed in their training at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee and started producing art, posters, and illustration for theaters, newspapers and magazines, and book projects. While Feuchtenberger continued her work in the political sphere as the most visible artist of the East German Unabhängiger Frauenverband (Independent Women's Association), she also began creating comics. Despite the turn from public spaces to published volumes, the revolutionary spirit of 1989 remained an important element of Feuchtenberger's work for years to come and, as this dissertation shows, traces of

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[13] Darija Šimunović, *Die deutschsprachige Comic-Avantgarde: Geschichte, Künstler, Rezeption.* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008), 48.

Feuchtenberger's feminist politics before, during, and after unification continued as a red thread throughout her artistic production into the 1990s and beyond.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

Five months after their studio exhibition, on Saturday, July 13th, 1991, visitors to the opening night of PGH's group exhibition at the Galerie am Chamissoplatz were greeted by a similar multimedia environment engaging the politics of unification. In addition to an East German songwriter, who sang an ode to the former General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) in the backroom, political and theater posters hung next to prints, which hung next to paintings and comics.[14]

Fig. I.5: *PGH Glühende Zukunft*, ed. Werner Tammen (Berlin: Galerie am Chamissoplatz, 1991), 5-7.

The accompanying catalog provides readers with a sense of the work on display. The collection opens by foregrounding the group's political engagement – while also introducing PGH's playfulness with the history of comics in general – with three postcards that feature a mouse driving a car roughly the size of the city of Berlin shouting "Vertrauen Sie der Knautschzone!" ["Trust the crumple zone!"], four tanks-turned-fire-

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[14] Hagen Winter, "O-Volkskunst am Chamissoplatz" *taz* (Berlin, Germany)*,* July 15, 1991, 24.

trucks dousing water out of picture plane with "Die Diktatur ist tot… Wasserwerfer in die Kunstproduction" ["The dictatorship is dead… water cannons into the production of art"] written below, and the torso of a naked mother displaying her middle finger to the audience and stating "Ich bin nicht eure Mickey Mouse" [I am not your Mickey Mouse"], while her child peeks at the viewer from behind her back. The images on the following pages continue to demonstrate how PGH's work thematizes the politics of the unification, presenting a photograph of the collective painting on the Berlin Wall only weeks after November 9th, 1989, and reproductions from their politically motivated graffiti art actions (fig. I.5).

Turning to Feuchtenberger's profile, it is clear that the artist's individual work also espouses the politics of moment. Her political posters featured in the exhibition promote the feminist agenda of the Independent Women's Association and the Green Party, foreshadowing her future feminist projects in graphic narrative through both content and aesthetics. While her comic art presented in the catalog also echoes these politics, by focusing on female experience, sexual politics, misogyny, and everyday patriarchy, Feuchtenberger's theater posters demonstrate how she engages visually with textual, dramaturgical, and musical material.

The representational language of her work moves back and forth between heavy black and white lines – which bear the hand of the artist in the utter absence of straightness – and planes of color, while the style of Feuchtenberger's figures alternates between folk art forms and the grotesque caricature reminiscent of German expressionism of the post-WWI period. With their bright colors, Feuchtenberger's theater posters for William Shakespeare's *Othello* and Bertolt Brecht's *Ball* and the film and music event

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"Lieder der Roma" contrast sharply with her paintings in soft pastel shades – and even more so with Feuchtenberger's black and white comic strip co-authored with Michaela Beck.

This single example of Feuchtenberger's comic art in the Galerie am Chamissoplatz exhibition catalog, "Horror-Skop," shows how certain visual practices persist from her earliest to latest projects. Thematizing female experience, everyday patriarchal existence, and the politics of German unification, "Horror-Skop" demonstrates many of the characteristics of her later work, including Feuchtenberger's inclination towards detailed patterning and interest in the female body and gender politics. Furthermore, Feuchtenberger's expressionist influences are also apparent at this early stage in the grotesque and deformed bodies that recall the work of George Grosz and Otto Dix across the comics' twelve panels (fig. I.6).

Fig. I.6: Feuchtenberger, "Horror-Skop," in *PGH Glühende Zukunft*, 14-15.

"Horror-Skop" follows twelve women presented in twelve situations characteristic of female experience.[15] Each panel thematizes one of the twelve astrological signs, depicting a woman in a social, political or private situation and framed by advice written in the typical format of a horoscope. However, as the title of the comic strip suggests, the panels do not forecast the future of the individual presented, like a horoscope; instead, they typify female oppression by society, politics, men or one another. For example, a woman walks red-faced by a "sex video show" holding a child's hand as a man observes her casually; a soon-to-be mother measures her waistline in an act that recalls the contradiction between a woman's role as mother and society's demand for thinness; a woman sits upright and austere across from her employer as he signs her pink slip while groping her under the table; and a middle-aged woman sits in the center of an ornately wallpapered room sobbing over German unification with a picture of Erich Honecker hanging on the wall behind her and an East German flag in her hand. An important reference to the politics of the unification period, this panel demonstrates how Feuchtenberger unites German politics, and specifically the politics of unification, with a critique of female oppression. The artist investigates this theme throughout the first decade of her career, also connecting later feminist projects with such politics. Her subsequent endeavors to illuminate patriarchal oppression and undermine patriarchal master narratives and heteronormative tropes in *Mutterkuchen* (1995) and the *Hure H* trilogy (1996-2007) thereby recall her activism that began around 1989.

While Feuchtenberger's representation of each of these circumstances in "Horror-Skop" portrays a pessimistic view of female experience, the panel text is ambiguous, creating a tension between word and image that, as an inherent capacity of the medium

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[15] Ursula Yilla-Häberlin, "Anke Feuchtenberger," *Connexions 47* (1995): 20.

that the artists often exploits, is typical of her narrative style. This juxtaposition is particularly striking in the panel for the astrological sign "Fische" ["Pisces"]. Presented in front of the backdrop of industrially manufactured and prefabricated high-rise apartment buildings – perhaps East German *Plattenbausiedlungen* – and under a starry night sky, a woman in a tattered dress stands barefoot at the end of brick wall. She leans forward with a boulder tied around her neck dragging her towards a body of water. The river or lake below is populated by fish, connecting the image with its astrological symbol. With a treasure chest nestled amongst the plant life, the water appears to be inviting the figure into her deathbed.

The text above the image, however, presents a very different view, describing the water as a place for rejuvenation instead of suicide: "Stehen Sie nicht so depressiv in der Gegend herum. Bewegen Sie sich viel in frischem Wasser. Am Ende wird alles gut" ["Don't stand around so depressed. Get a lot of exercise in fresh water. In the end, everything will be fine"]. Mobilizing *galgenhumor* (gallows humor), the horo/horror-scope's suggestion that exercise and a little fresh water would do the woman some good is at odds with the dark reality she is facing. It echoes the type of intertextuality, text and image combination, and mocking of political and popular slogans characteristic of Dada, another period of German modernism influential in Feuchtenberger's work that is in fact directly referenced in the catalog's opening postcards, where the sirens of tanks-turned-fire-trucks scream "tatüdada" instead of "tatütata" (fig. I.5). However, its subject matter is also a criticism of the stigmatization of mental illness. This panel visually conveys the hopelessness and social isolation of women suffering from depression, a subject that returns again in *Mutterkuchen* and Feuchtenberger's thematization of suicide. The

aesthetic style of the panels foreshadows the artist's embrace of the woodcut print

aesthetic in the detailed patterning of her development of depth, planes of black and white

to produce a sense of space, and utter absence of rectilinear line-work. Ultimately, instead

of a horoscope, a term that is etymologically derived from the Greek *hōroskopos* where

hōra means 'time' and *skopos* 'observer,' Feuchtenberger's' "Horror-Skop" positions the

viewer as observer to the horrors women experience on a daily basis.

<center>*   *   *</center>

Feuchtenberger's colleague, Henning Wagenbreth's artistic production similarly

reflects the politics of the period, also displaying the influences of post-WWI German

expressionism and contemporary unification. His work bridges the politics of pre- and

post-1989 economies, capturing the hypocrisy of the failing East German system as well

as the ironies of capitalism he encountered after unification.
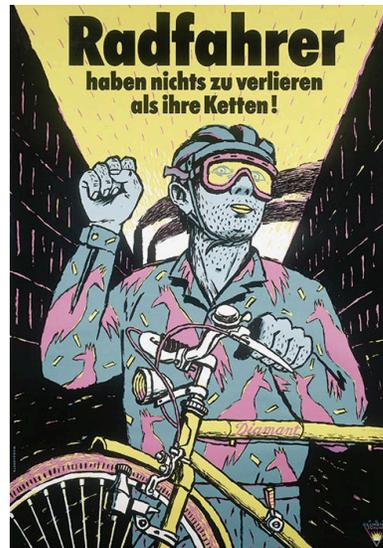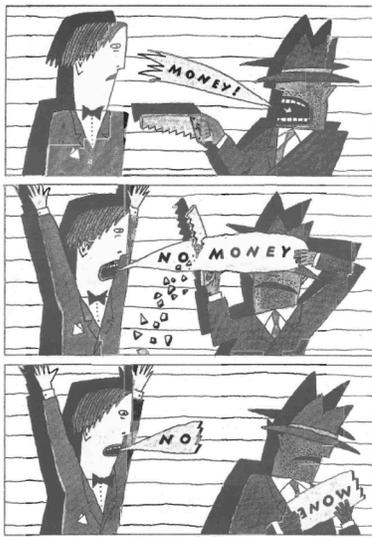
Fig. I.7: Wagenbreth, untitled, in *PGH Glühende Zukunft*, 31.
Fig. I.8: Wagenbreth, "Radfahrer haben nichts zu verlieren als ihre Ketten," in *PGH Glühende Zukunft*, 32.

Wagenbreth's poster "Radfahrer haben nichts zu verlieren als ihre Ketten" (fig.

I.8) is an important early example of this impulse in his poster art also on display at the

<center>12</center>

Galerie am Chamissoplatz. Three months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Wagenbreth distributed his poster around Berlin, mostly posting it where shuttered stores had been turned into artist studios or bicycle cellars.[16] Punning on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' famous quote from the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, the figure stands defiantly in front of an architectural backdrop with smokestacks spewing smoke into the horizon below the slogan "Radfahrer haben nichts zu verlieren als ihre Ketten" ["Bike riders have nothing to lose but their chains"].[17] He raises his right fist, while the other is positioned firmly on the left handle bar of a bicycle bearing the brand name "Diamant." Wearing a helmet, riding glasses and an iconic 80s tracksuit in teal and pink, Wagenbreth's reinterpretation of the East German proletariat made a mockery of the plight of the worker. The visual pun here again echoes the type of text/image hybridity, intertextuality, and play with popular and political slogans characteristic of Dada as well as post-1968 political, subversive discourse; however, it is also intrinsic to the comics medium, demonstrating his interest in the combination of word and image even at this early stage. Furthermore, it also recalls the type of coded messages frequent of the East German art poster, a form of graphic art that escaped oversight due to its small print runs often exhibited in independent exhibitions spaces and rich in subversive commentary delivered through metaphor, myth, and intertexts.

In an interview, Wagenbreath recounts how this poster was a "Pietätsbruch mit der kommunistischen Ikonografie" that blatantly undermined both the self-imagining of

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[16] Wagenbreth, "Zonen Untergrund," 20.
[17] "Mögen die herrschenden Klassen vor einer kommunistischen Revolution zittern. Die Proletarier haben nichts in ihr zu verlieren als ihre Ketten. Sie haben eine Welt zu gewinnen. Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt euch!" Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, (Berlin: Europäischer Literaturverlag, 2016), 86.

the *Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat* and the dictates of socialist realism.[18] Even while standing in front of the factory, Wagenbreth depicts his worker as leisure-seeking but also mobile and independent of automotive transport, which in turn is perhaps a commentary on white-collar, middle class lives of the members of the upper echelon of the East German government. The poster drew the attention of the *Stasi*, but the GDR secret police had more important things to focus on during the autumn of 1989.[19]

The two artists to join PGH after its founding by Feuchtenberger and Wagenbreth, Holger Fickelscherer and Detlev Beck, maintained a much more exclusive commitment to comic art. Fickelscherer later worked as a cartoonist for Berlin's left-leaning daily *TAZ* and the bi-weekly magazine *ZITTY*. His comic style is lighthearted and playful, often portraying animals, engaging stereotypes, and capitalizing on double meanings and wordplay. Similarly, Beck's art exhibits his strengths as an illustrator and his inclination towards caricature. His sketchy style echoes editorial cartooning and illustration in satirical magazines, gesturing to his later work for magazines and newspapers, including *Stern*, *die Zeit*, *Reader's Digest*, *Natur*, *gesundheit + gesellschaft* and *Eulenspiegel*.

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With classical training in the fine arts, PGH's emphasis on comics rendered this artist collective unique in the post-1989 German art scene, but the way in which Feuchtenberger developed her individual style, which drew heavily on German expressionism, contemporary politics, formal and textual hybridity and intertextuality, was revolutionary for the post-unification period. Feuchtenberger's graphic art broke down distinctions between media, blurring the formal boundaries between comics and

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[18] Wagenbreth, "Zonen Untergrund," 20.
[19] Ibid.

posters art, while also engaging the gender politics of the moment. In addition to bringing

new technical, aesthetic and narratological strategies to German comics, such as the

aesthetic of the woodblock print and the layered, coded and ambivalent politics of the

East German avant-garde, Feuchtenberger's aesthetics and politics transferred the

revolutionary spirit of German unification and expressionist poster art into German

comics after 1989, while her East German training lent legitimacy to the comics form,

elevating the medium and garnering both national and international audiences.

As one of the most prolific East German graphic artists working in comics after

1989, Feuchtenberger was definitive in the development of the German comic avant-

garde. Trained at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee from 1983 to 1988,

Feuchtenberger carried over traditional printmaking techniques, the East German legacies

of German expressionism and surrealism, and the revolutionary aesthetics of communist

poster art to comics during the 1990s.[20] Drawing upon East German artistic sources –

including the socialist theater, Soviet poster design, and a restored interest in the

European avant-gardes – Feuchtenberger integrated new visual and narrative strategies

into her sequential art, setting them in dialog with contemporary political discourses,

transnational feminisms, and the aesthetics of European modernism.

Furthermore, as part of the last generation of the East German avant-garde,

Feuchtenberger brought its spirit of confrontational playfulness and its politically

subversive art to comics after 1989. The East German avant-garde possessed a decidedly

intermedial and intertextual character – a fluidity of form – which featured formal and

textual hybridity that worked against medium-specific boundaries and divisions between

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[20] Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff, "Feuchtenberger," in *Comics Made in Germany: 60 Jahre Comics Aus Deutschland 1947-2007* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 77.

artistic genres.[21] During the last three decades of the GDR, painters staged improvised music and produced Super 8 film, poets turned their texts into images, and musicians became performance artists. Feuchtenberger, and to a similar extent Wagenbreth, brought a similarly innovative fluidity of form and blurring of boundaries to comics in the 1990s by working in comics, posters, and animation simultaneously. For example, Feuchtenberger staged the introductory comic in *Mutterkuchen*, *"Die Strudel Petra,"* as a multimedia experience shortly after the fall of the wall. With the comics' panels presented with voice-over narration in an animated short screened in front of a three-dimensional labyrinth at an exhibition space in West Berlin, Feuchtenberger's graphic narrative transcended traditional boundaries between media.[22] Accordingly, her sequential art reflected the formal qualities of her poster design and theater work and vice versa as early as 1993. Furthermore, Feuchtenberger's comics and posters existed in conversation with other aspects of her artistic production as well as with transnational literary canons, political discourses, and theory, drawing upon numerous intertexts in her graphic narration and poster design. She engaged international political, feminist and aesthetic discourses to develop new representational strategies and narrative techniques, bringing the prehistory of comics – such as Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* – to the foreground of the united German comics scene. Lastly, in addition to her critical role as a practitioner in the German comic avant-garde after 1989, Feuchtenberger became an important teacher of graphic art when she joined the Hochschule für Angewandte

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[21] Claus Löser, "Media in the Interim: Independent Film in East Germany before and after 1989," in *After the Avant-garde: Contemporary German and Austrian Experimental Film,* ed. Randall Halle and Reinhild Steingröver (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 95.
[22] Feuchtenberger in discussion with the author, June 2016.

Wissenschaften in Hamburg in 1997. Consequently, she has had a lasting impact on comic art both as it emerged throughout the 1990s and today.

My dissertation investigates the work of Anke Feuchtenberger in the context of German comics, the gender politics before, during and after German unification and East German artistic practice to illustrate how East German politics and artistic practice *before* the fall of the Berlin Wall informed artistic practice *after* the collapse of the GDR. To this end, I examine Feuchtenberger's graphic art to determine to what extent she changed the cultural landscape of unified Germany by bringing the aesthetic and political sensibilities of the East German avant-garde to bear on German comics after 1989. While adopting and adapting new visual strategies in the united German graphic arts, Feuchtenberger remained in conversation with the politics, artistic practice and aesthetic history of East Germany after 1989; yet, she also engaged transnational literary canons, discourses on feminism and the aesthetics of expressionism, contributing to the development of a politically engaged, artistically bold, formally complex and highly intertextual comics avant-garde that had a lasting impact on united German comics, dissolving the boundaries between high and low art and demonstrating the artistic possibilities of the comics medium to national and international audiences.

To this end, my dissertation introduces post-unification graphic arts as the primary medium through which East German artistic practice broke into the united German art scene after 1989, highlighting the emergence of PGH, and specifically, Feuchtenberger. Individual chapters examine the art and the politics of German unification before and after 1991 through Feuchtenberger's graphic art, revealing the imprint of East German

artistic practice, discourses on feminism and movements in expressionism on the united German art scene.

While exhibitions on German comics have noted the impact of East German artistic traditions on German comics after 1989, no extended scholarly investigation has endeavored to situate the East German avant-garde as an important influencing factor. My dissertation therefore intervenes in discourses on German comics to incorporate Feuchtenberger's aesthetics and politics as fundamental holdovers of this area of alternative East German artistic practice; however, this project also furthers a more nuanced appreciation of the role other East German artistic traditions, such as *Plakatkunst*, in combination with various international manifestations of expressionism, such as the one that proliferated in Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly's *RAW* (1980-1991). My dissertation therefore builds on the research on East German comics that began in exhibition catalogs in the early 1990s, while also bringing American alternative comics into dialogue with the post-89 comics scene, stressing their common reference to early 20th century expressionism.

However, before examining the impact of the East German artistic practice on German comics and graphic art after unification, a short history of alternative and independent artistic production in the East German underground art scene before 1989 is required. Closing with an evaluation of how German art has been rehistoricized (both successfully and problematically) since 1989 to include both East and West German art histories, I argue for the value of looking at East German artistic practice after 1989 to show how the impact of unification on East German art, artists and artistic traditions

produced a rich body of work even after the opening of the East German borders that

warrants closer examination.

The East German Avant-Garde Before and After 1989

The collapse of the GDR influences interpretation of the artistic production that

emerged in the decade before November 1989. After all, the demise of the Soviet Union's

satellite state was in part due to the efforts of artists, writers, and intellectuals who had

been advocating for change and reform since the 1960s. While the fall of the Berlin Wall

seemed like a sudden event to those protesting in the *Montagsdemonstrationen*, it was the

culmination of more than a decade of steady economic decline and civil unrest, as public

discontent and the political, cultural and social critique of the intellectual and cultural

elite came together.[23]

For example, the Lutheran protestant church had been steadily undermining state

control since 1978, harboring dissenting voices in a forum controlled by the church. The

church officials of the 1970s were not yet ready to jeopardize their position vis-à-vis the

state and tried to tame dissent by providing a safe space for meetings.[24] However, after

1984, groups focusing on human rights and environmental politics that met in churches

diversified and grew beyond church control. Furthermore, the East German economic

situation worsened, leading to increasing dissatisfaction among the general population,

which manifested in political protests organised by intellectuals and church groups

throughout the 1980s.

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[23] For more information see Mary Fulbrook's *The History of German 1918-2008* (Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) and Charles Maier's *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[24] Fulbrook, *The History of German 1918-2008*, 269.

On September 10th, 1989, the Hungarian Communist regime opened its borders to Austria, facilitating East German vacationers' detour to the West.[25] On October 9, 1989, Leipzig authorities refused to quell public protest with factory militias and armored vehicles. A month later on November 4th, 1989, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets. Within five days, on November 9th, 1989, the 75th anniversary of the revolution that brought down the Wilhelmine Empire, the growing discontent and public unrest culminated in the unexpected opening of the Berlin Wall, at which point thousands of East German citizens streamed into West Berlin.

Artists, authors and, in particular, activists from the East German theater scene marched en masse at the weekly *Montagsdemonstrationen* in the months before November 9th, 1989. Yet, even those members of the East German intelligentsia not participating in the protests – autonomous artists, writers and thinkers who did not rely on a regular income from a state-sanction institution – played an essential role in the events that preceded opening the GDR borders on that fateful day.[26] They were an exceedingly diverse group of individuals with a wide range of opinions that varied from ultra-supportive to utterly critical of the prospect of political unification with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).[27] Ultimately, even with free expression and creative pursuits severely limited by state censorship, the East German intelligentsia had been laying the groundwork for political reform for decades.

In an attempt to politicize all aspects of lived experience, state socialism had collapsed the distinctions between the private and public domains of life while also trying

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[25] Maier, *Dissolution*, 32.
[26] Laura McGee, "Revolution in the studio? The DEFA's fourth generation of film directors and their reform efforts in the last decade of the GDR," *Film History* 15 (2003): 444.
[27] Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 208.

to control every aspect of it. GDR cultural authorities therefore sought to regulate artistic production through an extensive infrastructure of state programs, censorship agencies and officially sanctioned artist organizations and venues. East German art and culture consequently became as important a site for political protest and activism as it was for conformity and affirmation.

In fact, East German cultural authorities were forced to repeatedly loosen the rigid dogma of socialist realism in the face of public discontent. Mary Fullbrook's conception of East Germany's "participatory dictatorship" is particularly helpful in understanding the negotiation that occurred between the people and the state with regard to SED policies. The implicit "social contract" that existed between the citizens and the government provided the people with effective – if limited – veto power.[28] Eventually, citizens of the GDR "were not only enabled, but actively encouraged, to voice their opinions in a variety of (well-controlled) ways."[29] Through consistent – and sometimes public – discussion critical of aesthetic doctrine, the history of art in the GDR transformed into "a history of the softening of ideologically-based positions," as the official policy on artistic practice and the aesthetic politics of form and style changed dramatically, even reversing itself periodically, over the course of the GDR.[30] In some cases, the policies artists and intellectuals criticized on one given day became part of the official aesthetics of East

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[28] Fullbrook, *The People's State*, 7-13.
[29] Such as letters of complaint reports by trade union officials, parliamentary committees and investigative commissions and inquiries. Dealing with a wide variety of questions relating to housing, transport, childcare, shopping, the demands of shift work, among others. See Mary Fullbrook's chapter "The people's own voices? The culture of complain and the privatization of protest" in *The People's State* for an expanded discussion.
[30] Matthias Flügge, "The Changing Arts Situation in Eastern Germany since 1990," in *Cultures in Conflict: Visual Arts in Eastern Germany since 1990*, ed. Marion Fishel Deshmukh (Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1998), 21. Bernhard Heisig's speech at the 5th Congress of the VBK (Verband des bildenden Künstler) in 1964 is an excellent example of how pressure from artists led to shifts in official aesthetic policy.

Germany within a relatively short period of time.[31] The arts, and particularly the visual arts, were thereby rendered an essential battlefield on which East Germans artists and intellectuals gained political and cultural traction, becoming a breeding ground for political and aesthetic activism through artists, authors and intellectuals' experimentation with nonconformist forms.

While laws and aesthetic policies aimed at controlling all arenas of public life remained potent until the last days of the GDR, their application was far less sweeping in its final decade.[32] This was not overtly apparent until the punk-rebellion of the 1980s, which has been read as symptomatic of the loss of control of GDR censoring agencies;[33] however it was perceptible in many areas of East German art and culture.

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Signs of inner transformation had been building for a decade in the artistic underground. Examples might include the bohemian subculture connected through dissident samizdat poetry in Prenzlauer Berg and GDR literature that acquired a pervasive tone of disaffected irony.[34] For the last generation of intellectuals, in particular, protest found expression in less traditional means, such as rock music and poetry, film, organized readings, graffiti, the church-affiliated peace initiatives and environmental efforts.[35]

Alternative, counterculture and independent art scenes became increasingly active throughout the late 1970s in all areas of artistic practice, growing into undeniable cultural forces to be reckoned with by the 1980s. The Super 8 independent film, founded by

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[31] Flügge, "The Changing Arts Situation in Eastern Germany since 1990," 21.
[32] Löser, "Media in the Interim," 101.
[33] Ibid.; Maier, *Dissolution,* 32.
[34] Maier, *Dissolution,* 4.
[35] Ibid*.,* 32.

visual artists working in multi-media in the late 1970s scene, such as A.R. Penck, boomed even outside of Berlin by the middle of next decade.[36] As a testament to the scene's cultural clout, GDR authorities made overt attempts to involve the independent film scene in the official canon of cultural policies shortly before East Germany's political collapse.[37] Even the official Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA) filmmakers worked to liberalize the mode and content of film production throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which culminated in the drafting of the Statut für eine künstlerische Produktionsgruppe (Statute for an Artistic Production) on October 28th, 1989.[38]

Independent rock bands, officially titled "amateur bands," produced and recorded music in private homes and venues throughout late 1970s and 1980s; by 1986, however, *Ostrock* was playing on the radio, and in March 1988 the East German record label AMIGA announced its plan to produce an LP highlighting the independent music scene.[39] The album, *Die anderen Bands,* was released in July and featured four rock bands, immediately selling out.[40] Furthermore, by the 1980s Western bands were even invited to play in East Berlin, culminating in the Bruce Springsteen concert in East Berlin in July 1988.[41]

Similarly, East German theater was an ever-present force of political conflict, debate and resistance. Despite avid and strict censorship, the theater became an important space for political confrontation, with even timeless classics by William Shakespeare and

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[36] Löser, "Media in the Interim," 103.
[37] Ibid.
[38] McGee, "Revolution in the studio?" 444.
[39] Lutz Schramm, a producer and disc jockey with the GDR youth station DT 64 showcased alternative rock bands in his two-hour radio program on Saturday evenings called "Parocktikum," Martin Watson's "Flüstern & Schreien': Punks, Rock Music and the Revolution in the GDR," *German Life and Letters* 46, no. 2 (April 1993), especially pages 165-167.
[40] Löser, "Media in the Interim," 103
[41] Maier, *Dissolution,* 32; Watson, "Flüstern & Schreien," 162.

Friedrich Schiller serving as critical commentary on the contemporary moment.[42] In the visual arts, artists such as Willi Sitte, Wolfgang Mattheuer, Bernhard Heisig, and Werner Tübke, all of whom publically and privately fought political battles over their artistic ideals, were considered "export market champions" by the 1970s, with East German artists regularly showing in West Germany by the 1980s.[43] Furthermore, the avant-garde art scene pioneered by a generation of younger artists became increasingly present during the 1980s, as demonstrated by Gerd Harry "Judy" Lybke's gallery Eigen+Art in Leipzig, Jürgen Schweinebraden's so-called self-help gallery in East Berlin and the art scene publications *Undsoweiter* in Dresden, *Schaden* in East Berlin and *A-Drei's Samizdat* in Karl-Marx-Stadt.[44] These emergent alternative venues featured "wild" readings, happenings, concerts, plays, and film screenings either in private spaces or as part of the community outreach of protestant churches.[45]

In particular, East German printmaking reflected "the gradual easing of censorship policies and artists' increasing knowledge of, and interest in, experimental art."[46] Poster art in communist Europe in general had important political and cultural status even before artistic experimentation began. In addition to its advertising capacity, it emerged as a weapon of social struggle during the Russian Revolution of 1917 prior to becoming a medium of artistic expression independent of the commercial market place.[47]

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[42] For more information see Jutta Braun and Michael Schäbitz's *Von der Bühne auf die Straße* (Berlin: Vorwerk, 2016).

[43] Flügge, "The Changing Arts Situation in Eastern Germany," 21; April Eisman, "East German Art and the Permeability of the Berlin Wall" *German Studies Review* 38, no. 3 (October 2015): 597.

[44] Löser, "Media in the Interim," 102.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Grey Art Gallery, "Künstlerplakate: Artists' Posters from East Germany, 1967–1990," *New York University*, last modified Sept. 21, 2010, www.nyu.edu/about /news-publications/news/2010/september/knstlerplakate-artists-posters-from-east-germany-19671990.html.

[47] Jame Aulich and Marta Sylvestrova, *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe 1945-95,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 1.

Despite the official political goals and aesthetic dictates of *Plakatkunst*, East German poster art – especially in the cultural sphere – developed a new standard of representation after 1960.[48] With the emergence of the "art poster" as an important medium of artistic experimentation in the GDR, which itself dated back to early German expressionism, East German posters were an important avenue for resisting the pressure to conform to the dictates of socialist realism starting in the late 1970s. [49] Likened to the role of funerary sculptors under Russian imperial rule by exiled Polish artist Jan Sawka, graphic design – and, especially, the art poster – were forgotten genres and therefore lent themselves to subversive reappropriation.[50] Produced in small quantities, art posters circumvented state censorship, which required official approval for any reproductions over a hundred copies. German poster art and specifically theater, exhibition and art posters became relatively safe spaces to practice experimental aesthetics.[51] They thereby "skirted the edges of ideological orthodoxy," with East German *Plakatkunst* exhibiting surrealist, Dadaist, expressionist and abstract artistic strategies from the 1970s onward.[52]

Ultimately, by the last Congress of the Artists' Association of the GDR in 1988, "socialist realism" was officially replaced altogether with "Art in Socialism."[53] Authors, artists and intellectuals had made a significant win in terms of East German aesthetic

[48] Tobia Bezzola and Rene Grohnert, Vorwort, in *Anschlage von "Drüben": DDR-Plakate 1949-1990* (Göttingen : Steidl, 2015), 6.

[49] Gunter Ziller, Einführung to *Künstlerplakate der DDR, 1967-1990,* eds. Ingrid Mössinger and Katharina Metz (Chemnitz: Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, 2015), 8; Aulich and Sylvestrova, *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe,* 1.

[50] Aulich and Sylvestrova, *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe,* 1.

[51] Ziller, "Einführung," 8; Grey Art Gallery, "Künstlerplakate," n.p.

[52] Grey Art Gallery, "Künstlerplakate," n.p.

[53] Ulrike Groeschen, "From Socialist Realism to Art in Socialism," in in *Cultures in Conflict: Visual Arts in Eastern Germany since 1990*, ed. Marion Fishel Deshmukh (Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1998), 47.

policy. The Party was forced to return artistic power to the artists, thereby also demonstrating their concession to the inevitability of reform. [54]

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This spirit of political confrontation and its aesthetics did not suddenly disappear with the Wall in 1989. While the exhibition *L'autre Allemagne hors les murs* in Paris in January 1990, only two months after the opening of the Berlin Wall, has been called "die erste und gleichzeitig letzte Werkschau der ostdeutschen Subkultur," the tradition of radical East German art continued even after 1989, though in a much diminished capacity.[55] Investigating the artistic output of East German artists after 1989 illuminates both the complexities of East German artists reinventing themselves after the collapse of the GDR and the impact of unification and the capitalist art market on East German artists.

While East German artistic production continued, many of its cultural spheres did not maintain their previous strength in united Germany. This was especially true of GDR film. While the last films of the DEFA studio, for example, *Letztes aus der DaDaeR* (1990, Jörg Foth), *Das Land hinter dem Regenbogen* (1992, Herwig Kipping), and *Banale Tage* (1992, Peter Weiz), were all highly experimental in nature,[56] few DEFA directors continued to have successful careers after 1989. Directors Andreas Kleinert and Andreas Dresen, documentary filmmaker Volker Koepp, and screenwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase represent some notable exceptions.[57]The experimental East German film of the Super 8 scene, however, produced in isolation in the East and "largely unencumbered

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[54] Ibid., 53.

[55] Paul Kaiser and Claudia Petzold, *Boheme und Diktatur in der DDR* (Berlin: Fannei & Walz, 1997), 13.

[56] McGee, ""Revolution in the studio?" 460.

[57] Brigitta B Wagner, ed. Introduction to *DEFA after East Germany* (Rochester, New York : Camden House, 2014), 4-5.

by awareness of international trends of modern filmic techniques," was met with perplexity, ignorance, or even arrogant rejection from West German filmmakers and connoisseurs.[58]

Similarly, in the field of music, established GDR composers, who once stood at the center of a small music scene in East Germany, found themselves on the periphery of a much larger one after unification. While they were not subject to public accusations of complicity with the totalitarian regime like their colleagues in the visual arts and literature, "their reception in western Germany was one of silence."[59] With the exception of the compilation *Musik in Deutschland 1950-1990,* which featured composers from East and West Germany, very few attempts were made to incorporate GDR musicians into the cultural history of united Germany.[60]

Lastly, GDR theater, an essential forum for artistic innovation and political intervention, was fundamentally undermined when it came to light how many of its most active members had served as informants to the East German secret police.[61]

With a few important exceptions, East German artistic practice generally moved to the margins of the united German art scene.[62] Ultimately, artists who participated in the protests that precipitated the collapse of East Germany – both in demonstrations and through artistic practice – and experienced its demise from the eastern side of the Wall,

[58] Löser, "Media in the Interim," 107.
[59] Kelly, "Reflective Nostalgia and Diasporic Memory," 117.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Kaiser and Petzold, *Boheme und Diktatur,* 362.
[62] Already by the mid 1980s the center of East German subculture Prenzlauer Berg, for example, had become noticeably quieter, as more and more artists and intellectuals used the neighborhood as a transition space to the west: "Der soziale Kontext einer für das Leben im Prenzlauer Berg bislang typischen 'Not- und Solidargemeinschaft' verliert sich jedoch zunehmend in der realen Agonie der späten DDR und dem grassierenden Exodus in den Westen." In some ways, East Germany's pre-1989 avant-garde art scenes had already rendered themselves ineffectual through their general relocation to the West before the fall of the Wall. See Paul Kaiser and Claudia Petzold's *Boheme und Diktatur in der DDR,* specifically page 341, and Claus Löser's "Media in the Interim: Independent Film in East Germany Before and After 1989" in *After the Avant-garde: Contemporary German and Austrian Experimental Film* (2008) for further information.

found themselves in a very different situation after 1989 and struggled to acclimate.[63] In fact, the changes could not have been more extreme.

East German art historian and curator Eckhart Gillen notes that approximately four hundred local galleries and thirty-nine state-run galleries collapsed after 1989. Moreover, art was neither purchased nor commissioned by the political, organizational, regional, or local institutions that had previously supported artistic production in East Germany, such as the SED, Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend, FDJ), and local industry.[64] Lastly, many of these artists had worked for years to undermine the state apparatus, trying to circumvent state censorship or establish their own countercultural alternatives.[65] Artists working in film, in particular, who had been subject to special technical, formal and thematic restrictions, were able to produce their art under entirely different circumstances after 1989.[66] While this technical and political liberation was long sought after, filmmakers struggled with the sudden disappearance of their very particular working conditions.[67]

One of the primary problems facing East German artists was their removal from the society that had defined them – even in an oppositional sense: "Their self-

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[63] There did exist, however, significant interest in the dissident artists that had immigrated to West Germany before 1989. For artists such as Georg Baselitz (born 1938, left East Germany in 1957), Gerhard Richter (born 1932, left East German in 1961), A.R. Penck (born 1939-2017, left East German in 1980), Ralf Kerbach (born 1956, left East German in 1982) Cornelia Schleime (born 1953, left East German in 1984) and Lutz Dammbeck (born 1948, left East German in 1986), who left East Germany before the fall of the Wall and continued practicing art in West Berlin, their success is an entirely different story.[63] The neo-expressionist work of Penck and Baselitz, in particular, was interventional in the emergence of New German Figuration in the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike many of their East German colleagues who only entered the West German art market after 1989, Baselitz, Richter and Penck became household names in postwar German painting.

[64] Marilyn Reuschemeyer, "East German Art Before and After," in *Art and the State: The Visual Arts in Comparative Perspective 1989*, eds. Victoria Alexander and Marilyn Rueschemeyer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 138.

[65] Löser, "Media in the Interim," 107.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

understanding in many cases had been shaped by the artistic world – with its particular

contradictions – in which they had always worked as well as by an intense engagement

with their own society."[68] The disappearance of inner resistance and of their

institutionalized opponent temporarily rendered both their positions and their art

superfluous.[69]

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A selection of artists featured at the three-day *L'autre Allemagne hors les mursin*

("The Other Germany Outside the Walls," 1990) in Paris three months after the fall of the

Wall gives a clearer view of East Germany's independent art scene, as well as how artists

succeeded – or failed – to reorient their art after 1989. Organized in collaboration

between East German art historian and curator Christoph Tannert (born 1955), who was

very active in the East German avant-garde at the time, and French journalist Maurice

Najman (1948-1999), *L'autre Allemagne* exhibited the work of almost two hundred non-

state-sanction and politically controversial East German visual and performance artists.

The art on display included work by PGH-members Anke Feuchtenberger, Henning

Wagenbreth and Holger Fickelscherer. Showcasing the East German alternative art scene

by presenting art rarely exhibited in the GDR in the former La Villette slaughterhouses

on the outskirts of Paris, *L'autre Allemagne* was a monumental enterprise that exhibited

an important – and unseen – sector of East German artistic production. Sadly, the rapid

organization, short duration and international venue left few archival or scholarly traces.

A documentary film made of the exhibition by Gerd Kroske, *The Villette* (1990),

provides an impression of the atmosphere, the exhibited art and goals of the three-day

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[68] Reuschemeyer, "East German Art Before and After," 142.
[69] Löser, "Media in the Interim," 107.

event.[70] The film focuses on the work of filmmaker and painter Jürgen Böttcher (*Strawalde*), painter and performance artist Via Lewandowsky, neo-expressionist painters Trak Wendisch and Klaus Killisch, and photographer Helga Paris, along with lesser-known dancer-turned-teacher and choreographer Conny Hege and printmaker Hanns Schimansky. Furthermore, the documentary incorporates commentary by the artists and curators on the state of the scene before and immediately after November 9th, 1989, the goals of the exhibition and the future of East German artistic production, demonstrating the optimism of this juncture in the unification process.[71]

Feuchtenberger, Wagenbreth and Fickelscherer also showed at *L'autre Allemagne*, and an examination of their pre- and post-1989 trajectory informs my understanding of the position of the East German avant-garde before and after German unification. Looking at how Böttcher, Lewandowsky, Wendisch, Killisch and Paris are also situated in exhibitions after unification shows how East German avant-garde art figured into initial attempts to rehistoricize German art after 1989. A search for these five artists in contemporary exhibitions on German art after 1989 suggests that they, like many avant-garde GDR artists, moved into the margins of German art production once interest in East German art history subsided.

Following the exhibition of work by Böttcher, Via Lewandowsky, Paris, Wendisch and Killisch after unification illustrates the comprehensiveness of post-1989 exhibitions, while also indicating blind spots in the rehistoricization of German art history after 1989. These exhibitions were generally separated into two categories: those

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[70] Kroske uses historical footage from Georges Franju's 1949 film *Le Sang des bêtes* (*Blood of the Beasts*) and texts from *Les Chants de Maldorer* (*The Songs of Maldoror*) by Comte de Lautréamont, to produce a unique cinegraphic experience of *L'autre Allemagne*.

[71] *The Villette*, directed by Gerd Kroske (1990; Babelsberg: DEFA Dokumentarfilm, 2012), DVD.

focusing on the avant-garde and subversive artists of the GDR and those focusing on its state affirmative art. Exhibitions that seek to reconstruct the East German avant-garde of the 1980s, such as the Stephanie Barron and Eckhart Gillen's exhibition *Art of Two Germanys – Cold War Cultures* (Stephan Barron and Eckhard Gillen, 2009) and *Kunst in der DDR* (Eugen Blume and Roland März, 2002, *Nationalgalerie*, Berlin)*,* feature works by nearly all of these artists. However, exhibitions that focus on East Germany's so-called "totalitarian art," such as *Deutschlandbilder: Kunst aus einem geteilten Land* (*German art: from Beckmann to Richter: images of a divided country*, Eckhart Gillen, 1997, Berlin), *Das XX Jahrhundert. Ein Jahrhundert in Kunst in Deutschland* (1999, Berlin) and *Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne* (Achim Preiß, 1999, Weimar)*,* rarely incorporated non-conformist and avant-garde GDR art.

While many of the other artists featured in *L'autre Allemagne* have generally faded from art historical collective memory on the East German avant-garde, it is clear from the *Cold War Cultures* and *Kunst in der DDR* exhibitions that it did accurately represent an important sector of East German alternative artistic production, which also included works by members of PGH Glühende Zukunft. Furthermore, the appearance of Via Lewandowsky, Böttcher, Paris, and Killisch in the exhibition catalog to the 1997 exhibition by Claudia Petzold and Paul Kaiser *Boheme und Diktatur in der DDR* confirms their importance in the East German avant-garde art scene before 1989.

It is apparent from their biographies, active websites and CVs that Trak Wendisch, Klaus Killisch, and Via Lewandowsky are still successfully producing art in united Germany, and Böttcher even released his last documentary, *Konzert im Freien,* in 2001, at the age of 70. Yet they are no longer drawing the critical acclaim or attention they once

did. These artists of the East German avant-garde continue to produce important work after 1989, exhibiting it both in Germany and abroad. However, all but Böttcher and Via Lewandowsky have essentially been written out of contemporary German film and art history since unification.

The American exhibition *German Art Now* at the Saint Louis Art Museum in 2003, for example, features many of those East German artists that fled the state before 1989, namely Penck, Richter and Baselitz, while highlighting their East German origins; yet, no single East German artist working in East Germany until the fall of the Wall is featured. Considering the emphasis on the thematization of Germany and its fraught past in the exhibition, the lack of art from the other Germany and artists working in the visual modalities of the East German avant-garde is striking.[72] Furthermore, if we compare this 2003 exhibition catalog to an edited volume by the same name as part of the *Art & Design* series from 1989, the essays and images feature the same line up: Beuys, Anselm Kiefer, Richter, Sigmar Polke, Penck, Lüpertz and Baselitz.[73] This is symptomatic of the interest in East German dissent *before 1989* popular in West Germany, which itself was in part a result of prominent dissidents landing in the West; however, it also tells us something important about the impact of German unification on East German artistic practice.[74]

While West German art galleries had access to a wealth of East German dissident art after 1989, few exhibitions capitalized on it. So how exactly did the events of 1989 change the art history of united Germany? According East German painter Bernhard Heisig's son, Johannes Heisig, the absence of GDR artists who remained in East

[72] Cornelia Homburg, *German Art Now* (New York: Merrell Publishers Limited, 2003).
[73] Andreas C Papadikis*, German Art Now* (London: Academy Group, 1989).
[74] Fulbrook, *The People's State,* 209.

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Germany until the fall of the Wall from the united German cultural landscape is yet another failure of German unification.

In a 1991 article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Heisig laments how German unification did not lead to a smooth transition for East German artists.[75] Even ten years after the fact, East German artists were shut out of the West German art market – at times even boycotted. Heisig asserts that, while East Germans had their freedom to produce art, they had lost their public.

The success of by Leipzig's Eigen+Art gallery, Carsten and Olaf Nicolai, Neo Rauch and other members of the Leipziger Schule, however, complicates Heisig's claim. Furthermore, Heisig neglects to account for the way in which East German artists transformed their artistic practice for a united German art market.[76] The trajectory of East German *Plakatkunst*, as this dissertation investigates, showcases the creativity and adaptability of East German artists after 1989. Furthermore, it demonstrates another avenue through which East German artists, and specifically the graphic artists of PGH Glühende Zukunft, found their public after 1989, in German comics.[77]

By examining how East German artistic practice adapted, mutated and transformed after unification to successfully enter the united German art market, a clearer impression of the legacy of East German artistic practice after 1989 emerges. While the

[75] Johannes Heisig, "Nun wird zur Vernissage ein bunter Hut getragen," *Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung* 279, Nov. 30, 1999, 55.
[76] Via Lewandowsky's 2009 project „Konfettiparade" commemorating the *Montagsdemonstrationen* in Leipzig, for example, which consisted of miniature business cards bearing the code names and occupations of ten thousand anonymous Stasi-informants shows how the cultural politics and totalitarian history of East German are still impacting artistic production today. Furthermore, Klaus Killisch's maintenance of the vivid colors and expressionist figuration of his pre-1989 painting and Trak Wendisch's movement from a neo-expressionist visual language to abstraction after German unification both tell us something important about the transformation of East German visual modalities after 1989.
[77] As I expand upon in Chapter One, both of the comics collectives to emerge in West Berlin alongside the collapse of East Germany, PGH Glühende Zukunft and Renate, were dominated by East German artists, with the later collective monogatari, which was formed in 1999, also featuring many East Germans among its constituents.

exceptional circumstances of PGH's success in the West German art scene may prove the

rule that many East German artists did not in fact transition into the united German art

market smoothly, looking at the graphic art of Anke Feuchtenberger reveals how East

German artistic practice transformed, adapted and mutated after 1989, bringing formal

strategies of the East German avant-garde, the aesthetics of expressionism, unification

politics and transnational feminist discourses into conversation with international comics.

East German Graphic Arts after 1989 and PGH Glühende Zukunft

The exhibition catalog to *Europe without Walls: Art, Posters and Revolution*

1989-93 (James Aulich and Time Wilcox, Manchester, 1993), which displayed posters by

Fickelscherer and discussed PGH in its introductory essay, highlights the continued

relevance of the East German graphic arts after the fall of the Wall. Pointing out the

differentiation between low and high culture in the GDR, curator James Aulich claims

that that East German graphic artists could transition easily into poster production in

united Germany without devaluing their artistic enterprise:

> In the West this is the gap between the culture of the street and the cultural
> establishment. Official high culture is found in the academies, museums,
> galleries, libraries and so on. While popular culture is stretched from the
> individualist or tribal territorial markings of the passing graffitist to the mass
> produced [sic.] culture of the marketplace. These distinctions certainly exist
> in the East but they are less clear. The ideology of socialist institutions does
> not allow for a gap between art and life. In theory, there is no market to
> intercede, nor elitist pursuit to segregate the high from the low. The artist has
> equal facility to produce a poster or an object of high art. Latterly, this
> ideology has allowed for satirical cartoonists in the former GDR, for example,
> to enter into the world of advertising in ways perhaps alien to artists in the
> West. [78]

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[78] James Aulich,"Through the Looking Glass: Visual Expression in Central Europe 1989-1993" in *Europe without Walls: Art, Posters and Revolution 1989-93* (Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1993), 32.

At the same time, however, East German poster artists faced fierce competition. In an

article by Simone Tippach-Schneider in *Affiche* in 1992, "Without a city wall: Poster Art

in the former GDR," the author comments critically on poster art since 1989:

> Since the wall fell, designers in the former GDR not only face stiff
> competition from the perfectly equipped studios in the West – they also have
> to compete with a proliferation of poster art produced on home ground. Sad to
> say, most of this work tends to conform to the standards of computer design
> and the new mediocrity. A small number of young designers are, however,
> enriching the poster world with work of international stature.[79]

Among this elite class of designers was PGH Glühende Zukunft. Tippach-

Schneider attributes their success to their commitment to radical aesthetics. While

designers in East Germany rapidly developed the same technical capabilities as their

colleagues in the West, their approach was different. East German graphic artists tended

to adhere to conventional techniques, working with tempera, wax crayon and aquarelle,

engaging collage and spray techniques, and using handset type and letters they designed

themselves. These aesthetic decisions led to visual solutions that fundamentally differed

from those of their Western colleagues. While in some ways these artistic choices were

both less refined and less spontaneous, Tippach-Schneider notes how the poster art of

GRAPPA, PGH Glühende Zukunft, xix, Volker Pfüller, H. Feliks Büttner, Wolf-Dieter

Pfennig possessed a "vivid character":

> They are personalities, just like their makers. They create a language with
> which they express their opinions and feelings of pain and pleasure, sorrow
> and joy, loneliness and company, seriousness and humour, unscrupulousness
> and conscience. The sudden adoption of computer graphics, combined with
> traditional visual language and some highly individual techniques set the tone
> of these posters. It is not so much the final result that distinguishes East
> German design from work done in the West, it is more the process of
> discovering the right form. [80]

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[79] Tippach-Schneider, "Without a city wall: Poster Art in the former GDR," 52.
[80] Ibid., 55.

Tippach-Schneider describes how the imperfections of East German *Plakatkunst* brought the posters to life. Ultimately, the risks that these East German graphic artists took in their posters made their graphic design powerful, exceptional and ultimately successful, fighting the "flood of banal visual images" typified by West German commercial design.[81]

<p align="center">*　　*　　*</p>

Feuchtenberger is still remembered as a prolific poster artist; however, it is her work in comics that constitutes her most important intervention in the united German art scene. In the spirit of Wagenbreth's political interventions, where "[e]twas selber [zu] drucken" becomes "ein Akt der Selbstbefreiung oder -artikulierung,"[82] Feuchtenberger continued to assert herself through the print culture of united Germany, but her political activism turned away from poster production after the German vote for unification in 1991 and entered her comics.

Feuchtenberger's art emerges at the junction of East and West artistic traditions to incorporate national and transnational political, feminist and aesthetic discourses showing the ruptures of 1989. Her work brings East German artistic traditions, politics and aesthetic practices into conversation with international trends in comics production and transnational discourses on feminism. Furthermore, her artistic output undermines assertions of West German hegemony in the united German art scene after 1989, while also highlighting East German artistic agency in defining important spheres of united German cultural production.

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[81] Ibid., 56.
[82] Wagenbreth, "Zonen Untergrund," 20.

In *Representing East Germany Since Unification* (2005), Paul Cooke engages

postcolonial theory to understand the fate of East German culture in post-unification

Germany. He posits that the process of German unification has been presented as a "quasi

colonial 'subjugation' of the east by the west," where West German culture has remained

hegemonic and East German culture has been suppressed, ignored and systematically

erased.[83] Most notably articulated in Wolfgang Dümcke and Fritz Vilmar's co-edited

volume *Kolonialisierung der DDR* (1996), these authors describe the post-unification

circumstances of East German culture in conventionally colonialist terms, citing the

dismantling of the East German economic system, the development of a new social

hierarchy featuring "imported" leadership from the Federal Republic, and the systemic

degradation of local practices, collective identity and shared morals as evidence.[84] Cooke

continues, however, to comment on how limiting this perception of unification may be,

remarking that the relationship between the East and West German regions after German

unification is more complex than postcolonial theory may suggest.[85] Ultimately, he

observes that the notion of the 'colonization' of East Germany is more helpful to

understand the perception and representation of the East-West German relationship than

the historical reality of unification.[86]

However, as Cooke demonstrates, the perception of East Germany as colonized

by the FRG has important consequences on the way East and West Germans "relate to the

unified state and the legacy of the past."[87] Through his analysis of the work of East

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[83] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification* (New York, NY: Berg, 2005), 2.
[84] Kristin Kopp "If your car is stolen, it will soon be in Poland," in *Postcolonial Approaches to Eastern European Cinema*, eds. Ewa Mazierska, Lars Lyngsgaard Fjord Kristensen and Eva Näripea (New York : I.B. Tauris, 2014), 48.
[85] Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification,* 2.
[86] as quoted by Kopp, "If your car is stolen, it will soon be in Poland," 49.
[87] Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification,* 2.

German intellectuals, writers and journalists, assertions about the colonization of East Germany are brought into question. I join Cooke in the efforts to ascertain the agency of East German artists in the development of contemporary German culture through the analysis of Feuchtenberger's graphic art.

Borrowing language from postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, I argue that Feuchtenberger's engagement of multiple expressionisms complements her development of fluid formal boundaries, typical of the East German avant-garde, between the media in which she works, where formerly medium-specific qualities – such as speech balloons, panels, graphic narration and sequentiality – moved between posters and comics, thereby rendering Feuchtenberger's sequential art a hybrid space of cultural production.

In his canonical text *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha continues the work of Edward Said to describe the emergence of new cultural forms through multiculturalism.[88] Rather than seeing colonialism as an event or series of events prescribed to the past, Bhabha illustrates how colonialist histories and cultures continue to be relevant in contemporary culture and thereby illustrate the inadequacies of previous understandings of cross-cultural relations.[89] Defining the terms of cultural engagement as performative, Bhabha states that representation is not the reflection of fixed and stable ethnic or cultural tradition; rather, it is a complex and on-going negotiation that "seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation."[90] Cultural theory, having moved away from the singularities of "class" and "gender" as organizational categories, has made space for an infinite number of subject positions,

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[88] Jim B. Parsons and Kelly J. Harding, "Post-Colonial Theory and Action Research," *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry* 2, no. 2 (April 2011), 4.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Homi K Bhabha, *The location of culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 3.

including race, gender, generation, geopolitical locale, etc., to open up "in-between" spaces and sites of collaboration and contestation.[91]

While discussing the post-colonial context of the developing world, Bhaba's articulation of the location of culture may also serve to illuminate the process by which a new form of comic art emerged after 1989, elucidating the way in which Feuchtenberger, Wagenbreth and a number of other East German artists redefined the comics medium on cultural, political, and aesthetic terms. Applying Bhaba's conception of cultural hybridity to Feuchtenberger's experiments in expressionism positions her adoption of this aesthetic as not only undermining the colonialist discourse of post-unification German culture; it also demonstrates how this artist incorporated global innovations in the medium. Feuchtenberger's expressionist graphic art introduces, to adopt Bhaba's language, "other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition" that estranges "any immediate access to an originary identity or a 'received' tradition," thereby complicating assertions that East German artistic practice was subjugated to West German modes of production after 1989, while also highlighting the hybrid nature of post-unification German comics. Feuchtenberger's expressionist graphic art thereby reveals in-between spaces of hybrid culture that draw together divergent expressionist traditions from various sources of influence to create new forms of culture production that "confound our definitions of tradition and modernity; realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low; and challenge normative expectations of development and progress."[92]

This understanding of the East-West hybrid nature of Feuchtenberger's work

[91] Ibid., 2.
[92] Ibid.

complicates Dümcke and Vilmar's assertion of West German cultural hegemony after 1989, demonstrating the importance of this body of work in German comics – and German art history more generally – in the 1990s and beyond. My dissertation therefore demonstrates the importance of East German artistic traditions and the agency of East German artists *alongside* international innovations in comics art in redefining spheres of "western" artistic production after 1989. Feuchtenberger's sequential art thereby produced a hybrid space of cultural representation where East German artistic practice was not subverted by Western artistic traditions but operated in tandem with them.

Furthermore, the very nature of Feuchtenberger's graphic art exhibits hybridity on a formal level. Feuchtenberger's work is characterized by the fluidity of form and inclination towards intertextuality typical of the East German avant-garde. This blurring of medium-specific boundaries allowed for themes, formal qualities, characters, and subject matter to move between the various media in which she worked. The politics of Feuchtenberger's posters entered her comics and the characters of their comics appeared in her posters, intervening in and engaging the politics of unification in both media. Moreover, encountering U.S. alternative comics and international feminist discourses for the first time, while participating in the revolution around 1989 and the politics of German unification, Feuchtenberger incorporated these influences into her graphic art. She thereby pushed German comics into a new realm, reinventing the form on cultural, political and aesthetic grounds. By redefining the potentials of the comics medium during the intense political change of 1989, Feuchtenberger has kept that moment of transition and its radical politics alive in contemporary Germany.

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The chapters of my dissertation move between media, visual and textual analysis, political thought and art historical and literary intertexts in order to develop a nuanced understanding of Feuchtenberger's many influences and assess her impact as an artist on the German comics landscape. While comics have been defined as foremost a visual medium, as in Scott McCloud's famous words, "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer,"[93] my dissertation also teases out the narrative and sequential aspects of Feuchtenberger art, emphasizing its intertextuality and self-referentiality both in literary and visual terms. I therefore refer to Feuchtenberger's comics by several names, including sequential art, comic art and graphic narrative/narration, conflating her comics with her poster art when I refer to Feuchtenberger's "graphic art."

Through visual and literary analysis, the dissertation oscillates between detailed descriptions and close readings of text, captions and intertexts, depending on the goals of the chapter. In Chapter One, for example, my emphasis on the aesthetic parallels between Feuchtenberger's graphic art focuses on visual analysis and art historical influences. The end of Chapter Four, on the other hand, investigates the way in which the polemics of Camille Paglia's psychoanalytic and cultural historical treatise *Sexual Personae* informed Feuchtenberger's feminism in the *Hure H* trilogy. In the latter context, my interpretation primarily rests on literary analysis and how the words conflate or conflict with the images to produce ambivalent messages and conflicting meanings.

Chapter One, "The Expressionist Aesthetics of Feuchtenberger's Graphic Art," is divided into three parts. The first section examines the history of sequential art as it existed prior to the Second World War before discussing the impact of censorship

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[93] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (Northampton: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), 20.

policies of the Third Reich on the medium, which essentially erased comic art from the German cultural landscape. Focusing more intently on the way comics were reinvented after WWII, Chapter One gives an overview of the German comics landscape before and after 1984, the date marking the publication of the German-speaking avant-garde comics magazine *Strapazin*, in order to situate the comics and graphic art of PGH within the alternative and independent comics scene that existed contemporary to their artistic production. Ultimately, what is striking about the discourse surrounding the German comic avant-garde is the emphasis on the influence of East German graphic artists. Chapter One therefore seeks to tease out the complexities behind the dominance of East German artists in the German comic avant-garde after 1989 and nuance scholarly understanding of their influence.

The second part of Chapter One examines the adoption and adaptation of German modernism in the GDR in anticipation of the final section, which looks at expressionism in international comics. It traces GDR aesthetic policy from its initial rejection of German expressionism in the 1940s and 1950s, through the scholarly and artistic resistance to strict definitions of socialist realism during the 1960s, to the eventual acceptance of expressionism as an official mode of representation by the 1970s. Chapter One thereby situates the expressionist visual language mobilized by Feuchtenberger in the context of the art history of German modernism before and after WWI and the aesthetic politics of neo-expressionism in East Germany before 1989, while also gesturing towards the influence of expressionist innovations in American alternative comics in the early 1980s and 1990s.

Through detailed visual analysis, the final section of Chapter One draws out the position of Feuchtenberger's aesthetic at the intersection of the three abovementioned expressionist influences, German modernism after WWI, East German neo-expressionism and American alternative comics, namely Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly's *RAW* (1980-1991). This final section considers the sources and implications of the artist's turn to German expressionism before examining Feuchtenberger's *Bärmi und Klett* series (1993-1997) to tease out the significance behind her engagement with expressionism on both aesthetic and political grounds.

Chapter Two, "The Aesthetics of Anke Feuchtenberger's Feminist Politics" begins to look at Feuchtenberger's fluidity of form in terms of her feminist activism around 1989, demonstrating how the politics of German unification informed Feuchtenberger's comics and poster art. Through an analysis of *Mutterkuchen* in connection with Feuchtenberger's poster production for the East German Independent Women's Association, Chapter Two evaluates her artistic contribution to feminist politics around 1989 and shows its implications on her sequential art.

Chapter Three, "The Feminist Graphic Expression of Anke Feuchtenberger's *Mutterkuchen*," applies Chapter Two's understanding of Feuchtenberger's feminist politics to a formal analysis of her comics to identify the visual, verbal and narratological language that she engages in her early comic art more precisely. Through detailed literary and visual analysis, Chapter Three examines how Feuchtenberger brings together literary history, metaphor and myth to develop a new form of feminist graphic expression that seeks to undermine masculine conventions of storytelling and patriarchal master narratives to unite her feminist politics with the comics form. In "Die Strudel Petra,"

Feuchtenberger adapts a classic narrative of paternal morality, *Struwwelpeter* (1845) to different ends, adopting the rhetoric of commercial advertising to forward a criticism of contemporary society and the oppression of feminine subjectivity and sexuality. In the untitled comics strip I refer to as "Marian La Luna und der Gottvater" ("Marian and God the Father"), Feuchtenberger rewrites the western world's most important paternal master narrative, the *Bible's* fall of man, to critically engage with the very foundation of the Christian religion. Finally, in "Rosen" and "No Roses," Feuchtenberger continues to dismantle gender norms. By deconstructing traditional dichotomies to redefine the symbols of femininity and masculinity, Feuchtenberger tears apart the signifieds, signifiers and signs of love, domesticity and romance, complicating contemporary conceptions of gender, relationships and heteronormativity.

Chapter Four, "*Die Hure H* Trilogy: Deconstructing W the Whore and the Power of Sex" continues the investigation of Feuchtenberger's political work by examining her best-known project, the *Hure H* series (*W the Whore*, 1996-2007), which she adapted from the prose of Katrin de Vries. Deeply metaphorical and steeped in symbolism, the *Hure H* trilogy is dark, pessimistic and packed with illusive meanings and ambivalent messages. Each volume presents three short graphic narratives on the plights of its title figure, the *Hure H*. With its protagonist immediately marked by her status as whore, the project seeks to uncover the cultural nexus hidden behind the cliché of the whore figure through the abstracted representation of female experience. In her existential search to rid herself of masculine oppression, the principle character is thereby rendered relatable to all women. The graphic narratives impart a multifaceted survey of feminine experience that relies heavily on the metaphorical convergence of images with text. Through one story

from each of the three volumes, I highlight how Feuchtenberger calls heteronormative ideals into question to deconstruct a series of hegemonic tropes of femininity: feminine desire manifesting as the desire to satisfy men; the idealization of the white dress and the perfect wedding; the perception of motherhood as innately feminine; the fetishization of the young, virgin body and, above all, the damning of empowered female sexuality as whorishness. Chapter Four therefore identifies how Feuchtenberger engages these commonly occurring literary and rhetorical motifs characteristic of the popular media to draw out a more nuanced understanding of female sexuality, one that is historically situated, emerges from the women themselves and that differs in every individual iteration. Contextualizing Feuchtenberger's reworking and rewriting of patriarchal master narratives, I examine the complex and sometimes contradictory feminism of Feuchtenberger's adaptation of Katrin de Vries's *Hure H* narratives. Focusing substantially on the textual elements of the *Hure H* series, Chapter Four investigates Feuchtenberger's project to disrupt the tropes of heteronormativity through the application of Camille Paglia feminist polemic *Sexual Personae* (1990).

Finally, the conclusion of my dissertation, "The German Comic Avant-Garde and its Exhibition Past, Present, and Future," considers the larger impact of Feuchtenberger's work, investigating her role in contemporary German comics as both practitioner and teacher. As one of the most important German comics artists working after 1989 who brought the aesthetics of the East German avant-garde and politics of German unification to bear on united German comics, I argue that the history of German comics – and specifically Feuchtenberger's graphic art – should be integrated into the art history of united Germany.

CHAPTER I

The Expressionist Aesthetics of Feuchtenberger's Graphic Art
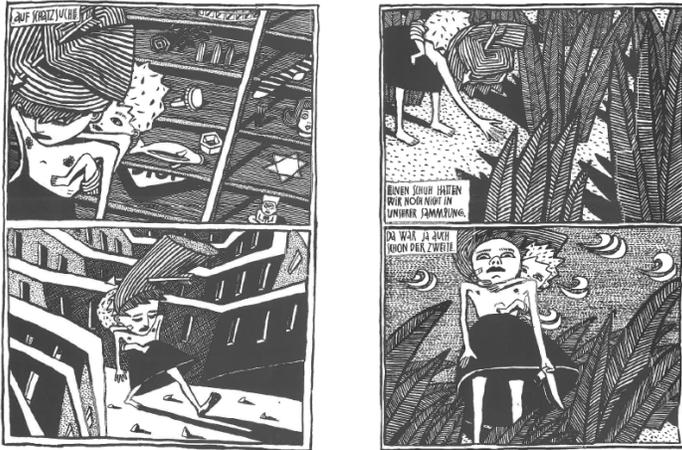
Fig. 1.1: Anke Feuchtenberger, "Bärmi und Klett: Der Schatz," in *Herzhaft und Lebenslänglich* (Berlin: Martin Barber, 1993), n.p.

A striking feature of Feuchtenberger's early work is its expressionist visual rhetoric (fig. 1.1). Emulating the aesthetic of the woodcut print, the claustrophobic and angular space of expressionist cinema, and the deformed bodies and elongated appendages of the work of expressionist forefathers Otto Dix and Georg Grosz, Feuchtenberger's sequential art recalls the aesthetics of early 20th-century German modernism.

While the techniques Feuchtenberger mastered at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee informed some of her aesthetic experiments, Feuchtenberger's expressionist influences were not entirely born of her East German artistic training. In fact, the expressionist visual rhetoric of Feuchtenberger's poster art and graphic narration diverge significantly from the experiments in neo-expressionism which occurred in the last three

decades of the GDR (see fig. 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4) and the history of German comics in general. Citing American alternative comics – specifically Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly's *RAW* magazine (1980-1991) – as important but often unacknowledged precursors for the development of Feuchtenberger's expressionist aesthetics, this chapter explores how this artist's adoption and adaptation of an expressionist representational language connects the visual rhetorics of early German expression and American alternative comics.[94] However, in order to understand Feuchtenberger's intervention in the German comics scene, the following sections provide a brief history of German comics and trace the adoption of neo-expressionism as an acceptable mode of representation in the GDR.

Fig. 1.2: Heisig, Bernhard, *Die Beharrlichkeit des Vergessens*, 1977.
Fig. 1.3: Willi Sitte, *Höllensturz in Vietnam* (Triptych, right side), 1966/67.
Fig. 1.4: Wolfgang Matteuer, *Kain*, 1965.

Comics in Postwar Germany

German comics have been a part of German-speaking culture since the 19th century. Even outside of Germany, their impact has been significant: Heinrich

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[94] Feuchtenberger's adoption of the comics medium has been attributed to their discovery of comics through *RAW* and *bandes dessinées*, but no scholar has traced their expressionistic aesthetics to the alternative comics collected in *RAW* between 1980 and 1991.

Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* (1845) and Wilhelm Busch's *Max and Moritz* (1865) are arguably two of the most important early influences on the medium's evolution. Yet after 1945 it is difficult to place the majority of comics produced in Germany solely within the history of German comics. While there was a brief period of thematic innovation directly after the Second World War, many postwar West German comics were based on American, Italian and French action and detective comics, eventually integrating international tropes, themes, and genres into the already thriving American-style comic book format. Moreover, after 1989 German comics took another unexpected turn. What materialized out of the rubble of the Berlin Wall was an independent art comics scene which drew international attention, was artistically innovative, politically engaged and dominated by East German graphic artists.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

By the end of the Second World War, the Nazis had all but abolished the German culture of cartoon and caricature that had emerged with the nation's satirical magazines around 1900 and during the Weimar period. Prior to World War Two, German art and literature exhibited tendencies that marked the beginnings of the development of comics.[95] However, Nazi Germany's complete reconfiguration of German culture and the erasure of modernism from the artistic landscape had a dramatic impact on German comics' stylistic and thematic innovations. When the National Socialists came to power, most satirical literature was either censored or provided with content that supported the regime, and many illustrators were driven away.[96] While the German comics tradition

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[95] Heinrich Hoffmann and Wilhelm Busch published their most important works, *Struwwelpeter* and *Max and Moritz,* in 1845 and 1865, and the German-speaking countries were known for their flourishing satirical magazine culture around the turn of the century.

[96] Rieke C Harmsen, "Classics," *Deutschsprachige Comics*, last modified December 2008,

had, for all intents and purposes, disappeared due to the censorship of the Third Reich, some forms of the medium remained acceptable as children's books and as an important part of commercial advertising.[97] Bernd Dolle-Weinkauf therefore asserts in *Comics: Geschichte einer populären Literaturform in Deutschland seit 1945* that the history of German comics only began in the postwar period: "Die Geschichte der Comics in Deutschland beginnt mithin in der Zeit nach dem Zusammenbruch des NS-Regimes. Alles, was sich davor ereignete im Bereich der Bildgeschichte, ist als Prähistorie zu fassen."[98]

When sequential art re-emerged in Germany after 1945, it was primarily an American comics culture, arriving by way of the backpacks and care packages of the occupying American soldiers of the postwar period.[99] American comics were eagerly accepted as part of the "blind reception" of the "American way of life" quickly thereafter, rapidly growing into a "Massenphänonomen."[100] By 1948, translations of American comic strips were running in West German newspapers,[101] with publishers soon commissioning their caricaturists and illustrators to develop their own stories.[102]

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www.goethe.de/kue/lit/prj/com/enindex.htm.

[97] Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff, *Comics: Geschichte einer populären Literaturform in Deutschland seit 1945* (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Verlag, 1990), 15; Dietger Pforte, "Deutschsprachige Comics" in *Comic strips: vom Geist der Superhelden*, ed. Hans Dieter Zimmermann (Berlin: Mann Verlag, 1970), 23. One of these exceptions that proved to become the most successful German comic during the Nazi period was the humorous comic strip *Vater und Sohn* by e. o. plauen (Erich Ohser), published between 1934 and 1937 in the *Berliner Illustrierte*. After only a year, the first anthology of the misadventures of this father-and-son duo was published and quickly sold more than 90,000 copies. Unlike French comics published at the same time, plauen's form was much closer to a traditional picture book story, and only rarely did text accompany the protagonists' antics. Germany's first successful comic book, therefore, still lacked the characteristic combination of image and text that differentiated the comic from other types of graphic narrative. For more information on e.o. Plauen, see Matthias Schneider's "e. o. plauen," *Deutschsprachige Comics*, Goethe-Institut, www.goethe.de/kue/lit/prj/com/pck/ckp/en302726.htm.

[98] Dolle-Weinkauf, *Comics,* 15.

[99] Schneider, "Manfred Schmidt," *Deutschsprachige Comics*, Goethe-Institut, last modified March 2005, www.goethe.de/kue/lit/prj/com/pck/cks/en325078.htm.

[100] Pforte, "Deutschsprachige Comics," 22

[101] Ibid., 23.

[102] Harmsen, "Classics."

However, most of the successful comics of postwar West Germany were either translations of American, Italian and French original action, adventure and detective comics or modelled after them.

Comics written originally in German throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s generally either imitated the conventions of Wilhelm Busch's *Bildgeschichten* (such as *Balduin* (1952) by Felix and Trude Richter, *Peterchens Angelerlerbnisse* (1947) by Herbert Maliskat or *Es sprach der alte Marabu* (1950) by Cefischer) or were short picture sequences with captions such as Fritz Entelmann's *Klein-Tinchens Abenteuer* (1950) and Wolf Strobels *Bimbo* (1950).[103] Manfred Schmidt's (1913–1999) *Nick Knatterton* (1950-1959) was the first successful original German comic strip after 1945 and an absolute hit.[104]

The comic boom of the 1950s brought with it a number of important German comics authors and artists among the continued proliferation of translated action and adventure comics series. In particular, artist Rolf Kauka (1917-2000), publisher Walter Lehning (1904-1971) and artist Hansrudi Wäscher (born 1928) have become iconic figures in the comic art of the early postwar period.[105]

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[103] Dolle-Weinkauff, *Comics made in Germany: Comics made in Germany : 60 Jahre Comics aus Deutschland 1947 – 2007,* (Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz, 2008), 12.

[104] Pforte, "Deutschsprachige Comics," 23; Dolle-Weinkauff, *Comics made in Germany*, 15. Published in the illustrated magazine *Quick*, *Nick Knatterton* was a parody of American detective comics, with its popularity resulting in the rise of the entire genre of action and detective comics in Germany. Through a combination of visual playfulness, word and image puns, slapstick comedy and parody, Nick Knatterton's encounters with criminal activity engaged the politics of the day, with nary a public figure escaping his visual and verbal criticisms.

[105] Kauka modeled his figures and stories after Disney-style animal characters and fairy tales. Directed at children, the strips featured harmless situational humor that offered a moralizing message. Kauka became most famous for *Fix und Foxi*, the twin mice always trying to outsmart Lupo the wolf, but Kauka Studios also produced *Münchhausen, Till Eulenspiegel, Hops, der Hase* and *Stops, der Igel,* among others. Also beginning in 1953, the Walter Lehning publishing house initiated a comics program dedicated to the adventure genre. Lehning had been licensing Italian piccolos for German publication, which appeared in original rectangular format about a third the size of an A4 page. However, among the many piccolo titles Lehning translated and distributed were also original creations by important German comics artists, such as

With the 1960s came the small press and self-published comic books of the

American underground comix scene. Manifesting as a reaction to the American Comics

Code of 1954, underground comix offered socially relevant or satirical content that

typically thematized sex, drug use and leftist politics. These American imports inspired

the emergence of a German underground comix scene on the fringes of comics

production and distribution. The politics of the era were captured in the anti-capitalist

satire of Alfred von Meysenbug's *Super-Mädchen* (1968), the leftist and anarchist

cartoons and caricatures of Gerhard Seyfried, and the feminist and LGBTQ-comics of

Franziska Becker in Alice Schwarzer's feminist magazine *Emma* (1977-) and Ralf König

(*Der bewegte Mann,* 1987).

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The comics scene in the GDR, on the other hand, looked very different. East

German cultural authorities perceived western comics as capitalist propaganda and

therefore banned them. They did, however, encourage the emergence of a children's

scene, but this material was not identified as "comics;" instead, East German authorities

labeled children's comics "Bildergeschichten" (picture-stories), a category which both

aesthetically and thematically evolved to differentiate itself from its West German

counterpart, even when characters within the pages of *Frösi* (short for "Fröhlich sein und

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Hansrudi Wäscher (born 1928). With 324 piccolos before 1960, Wäscher's series *Sigurd* (1953-1960) became the longest running adventure comic series of the 1950s and 1960s. His later series *Falk*, *Akim*, *Tibor,* and *Nick, der Weltraumfahrer* are equally recognizable and have since become iconic for the comics of the era. For a comprehensive history of German comics in the 1950s and 1960s, see Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff's *Comics. Geschichte einer populären Literaturform in Deutschland seit 1945* (1990) and *Comics made in Germany* (2008) and Reginald Rosenfeldt's *Comic-Pioniere: Die deutschen Comic-Künstler der 1950er Jahre* (2016).

singing," 1953-1991) and *Atze* (1955-1991) were directly borrowed from West German originals.[106]

From the 1950s onwards, the GDR made a considerable effort to create an indigenous comics industry.[107] The *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ), East Germany's official socialist youth organization, began to produce a magazine to aid in the orientation and guidance of socialist youth in 1948.[108] In the last few pages of *Unsere Zeitung*, which later became *Der junge Pionier*, appeared one of East Germany's first officially sanctioned children's comic strips, "Hambach" (fig. 1.5).[109] This and subsequent *Bildergeschichten* were used as political and organizational instruments.[110] They featured heroes who were themselves part of the FDJ and whose stories were intended to have a direct influence on the children reading them.[111]
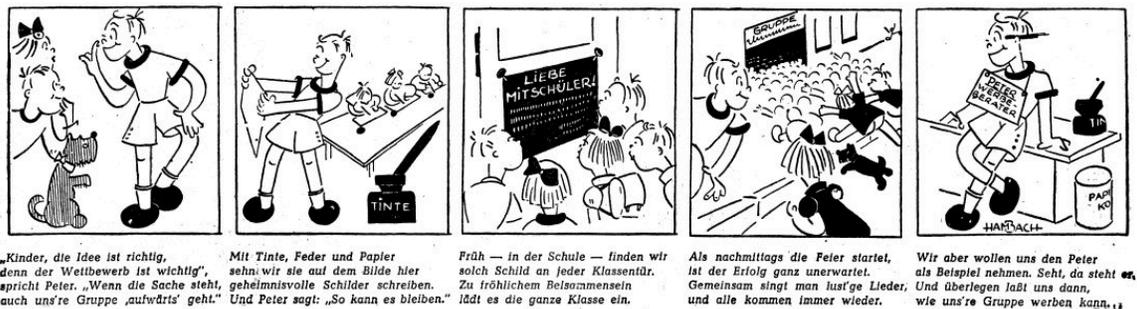
Fig. 1.5: "Hambach," *Unsere Zeitung* (June 1948).

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[106] For example, after Rolf Kauka's popular comic strip "Fix und Foxi" appeared in the FRG in 1953, East German authorities responded by creating "Fix und Fax" in 1958 in *Atze* about two socialist mice. For more information see Patrick Mayer's "Germany's Culture Wars Against Pulp Fiction" in *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany* by Karl Christian Führer and Corey Ross (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[107] John A. Lent, *Pulp Demons: International Dimensions of the Postwar Anti-comics Campaign*. (Madison [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999) 71.

[108] Gerd Lettkemann and Michael F. Scholz, *"Schuldig ist schließlich jeder… der Comics besitzt verbreitet oder nich einziehen läßt,"* (Berlin: MOSAIK Steinchen für Steinchen, 1994), 5.

[109] Ibid; "Comics in 'Unsere Zeitung'," *DDR-Comics*, accessed on 6 Sept 2017, www.ddr-comics.de/unsere.htm.

[110] Gerd Lettkemann, "Comics in der DDR," in *Fortsetzung Folgt: Comic Kultur in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1985), 318.

[111] Lettkemann and Scholz, *Schuldig ist schließlich jeder…,* 5.

Despite the success of these publications, socialist youth magazines did not satisfy the growing consumer demand for comics. West German and American comics continued to make their way through the East German borders and into the hands of GDR youth. Consequently, an East German "Anti-Comic-Kampagne" was initiated in the 1950s against the proliferation of western comics.[112] Slogans such as "First comic strips, then crime and mass graves!" and "Smut and Trash – one aspect of the imperialistic psychological war strategy" headlined in the press.[113] Western comics, it was claimed, were being distributed to tarnish youth and the socialist project, and parents and educators caught with so-called "Schund- und Schandliteratur" could be sentenced up to two years in jail.[114]

Excited to have discovered a scapegoat for the nation's youth crime, authorities took extreme measures to work towards a Western-comic-free GDR.[115] However, with uncontrollable travel between East and West Germany prior to the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, even the strictest measures were not effective in protecting East Germany from western comics. Furthermore, the fight against western comics seemed pointless without anything to replace them.[116] Thus to counter this infiltration, the FDJ called for the development of a socialist-oriented comic series.[117] It was at this time that Hannes Hegen, born Johannes Hegenbarth (1925-2014), approached the director of the Neues Leben publishing house and proposed the production of *Mosaik* (fig. 1.6 and 1.7).

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[112] Ibid, 11.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 13.
[115] Lettkemann, "Comics in der DDR," 323.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Lettkemann and Scholz, *Schuldig ist schließlich jeder…,* 14.
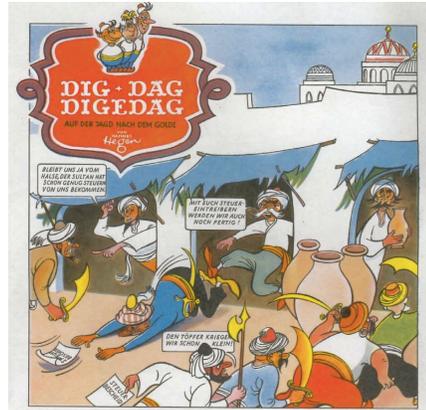
Fig. 1.6: Hannes Hegen, "Die Jagd nach dem Golde," *Mosaik* 1 (1955), cover.
Fig. 1.7: Hegen, "Auf der Jagd nach dem Golde," *Mosaik* 1 (1955), 2.

While the *Mosaik* series and comics in the GDR in general were adapted from the

western comic tradition, their aesthetic and function evolved to differentiate them in very

specific ways.[118] American-style superhero narratives, for instance, were nonexistent. Yet,

Mosaik's three main characters, Dig, Dag and Digedag were heroes nonetheless, traveling

through time helping the downtrodden throughout world history. However, in stark

contrast to the socialist hero, the Digedags embodied socialist anti-heroes. They

simultaneously provided comic relief for socialist objectors and adherents alike, while

producing a light-hearted comic space in which socialist ideals could be negotiated. Even

though their foolishness acted in contradiction to the iconography of the socialist hero,

the Digedags also exhibited traits that marked them as good socialists (fig. 1.8 and 1.9).

Fighting on the side of the oppressed and exploited, the Digedags rendered the ruling

parties across world history absurd.[119] Instead of repeating the dictums of socialist dogma,

the Digedags taught by example and illustrated to their readers the importance of being a

good socialist.

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[118] Lettkemann, "Comics in der DDR," 317.
[119] Klaus Pecher and Christoph Lüth. *Kinderzeitschriften in der DDR.* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2007)
    33.

Fig. 1.8: "Alarm in dem Raumstation," *Mosaik* 28 (1959), 3.
Fig. 1.9: *Freie Deutsch Jugend* (Young Pioneers).

The German Comic Avant-garde

1984 marked an important date in the evolution of avant-garde and art comics in German-speaking Europe, with the publication of the comics magazine *Strapazin* (1984-) in Munich. While founded in Germany, *Strapazin* moved to Switzerland after its first issue and is consequently generally considered part of the development of the Swiss comics scene. However, it also had important resonances throughout German-speaking Europe. In his catalog to the exhibition on the magazine in 2012 at the Cartoonmuseum Basel, curator, Strapazin co-editor, and lecturer at the Hochschule Luzern Christian Gasser positions *Strapazin* as fundamental in developing a German-speaking avant-garde comics scene more generally.[120] Modeled after Spiegelman and Mouly's comics anthology *RAW* (1980-1991), *Strapazin* provided a forum for young and emerging comics artists to present their work. By 1994, according to Gasser, a German comics scene had arisen, and *Strapazin* was its primary platform.[121]

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[120] Christian Gasser and Anette Gehrig, *Comics Deluxe! Das Comic Magazin Strapazin* (Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2012).
[121] Gasser and Gehrig**,** *Comics Deluxe!,* 8.

1984 also marked the founding of the International Comic-Salon in Erlangen. Initiated by authors, artists, the city of Erlangen and ICOM (*Interessenverband Comic e.V.*), a comics interest group started by a half dozen comics artists in 1981, the International Comic-Salon marked the "endgültigen Einbruch des Comics in die bundesdeutsche Kulturlandschaft."[122]

Germany's alternative and art comics boom continued through the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. Its impulse towards more artistic expression has been attributed to multiple influences, *RAW* and the East German graphic art being the two important examples I examine in this dissertation. However, Gasser and Knigge agree that the artistic character of comics after 1989 was also the result of a lack of a distinctly German comics tradition after 1945, which opened up space for experimentation in sequential art:[123]

> Das Fehlen einer deutschsprachigen Tradition, dass die Entwicklung der Comics gebremst und ihre öffentliche Anerkennung als künstlerische Gattung verhindert hatte, entpuppte sich plötzlich als die Chance, eine eigene Sprache zu entwickeln. Denn die meisten Künstler wurden nicht aus Fantum Comic-Zeichner – solche Zeichner neigen dazu, als Erwachsene Comics zu zeichnen, wie sie sie als Jugendliche geliebt haben –, sondern haben die Comics erst als Erwachsene (wieder–)endeckt und in ihnen ganz einfach das adequate Medium für ihre künstlerischen Bedürfnisses und Absichten erkannt. Vielleicht ist erst jetzt – wo allenthalben das Ende der Comics verkündet wird – im deutschen Sprachraum eine eigenständige Comic-Kultur in Entstehen begriffen.[124]

Yet, despite the emergent artistic spirit found in comics during this period, according to former editor of Carlsen and comics expert Andreas Knigge, the market fell out beneath

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[122] Achim Schnurrer, "Zum Gleit," in *Leichtmetall: Comics in der DDR* (Berlin: Edition Liane, 1990), 5.

[123] Andreas Knigge, "Das große Entenhausener Max-und-Moritz-Symposium," in *Mutanten: die deutschsprachige Comic-Avantgarde der 90er Jahre* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 1999), 28.

[124] Gasser, *Mutanten,* 10.

the scene by the middle of the 1990s.[125] Comics agent Paul Derouet observes that many

promising artists stopped producing comics because they could not live from it and

speculates that if comics artists had been given the chance to earn 2000 Marks per month,

a proper comics scene might have emerged in Germany.[126]

However, the dearth of a distinct German comics tradition post-1945 and need for

secondary employment had another important consequence for the scene. In particular, it

opened it up to East German artists after 1989, who brought with them different artistic

traditions and an ability to simultaneously work professionally as graphic artists.

Consequently, what is striking about the discourse surrounding the German comic avant-

garde is the presence of and emphasis on East German graphic artists. Histories,

exhibition catalogs and articles on German comics repeatedly connect the emergence of

an independent art comics scene in the early 1990s to the East German graphic artists

working in the medium.

For example in the exhibition catalog to *Mutanten: die deutschsprachige Comic-

Avantgarde der 90er Jahre* (1999), in addition to the founding of *Strapazin* in 1984,

Gasser marks 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall as the other essential date in the

emergence of the German comic avant-garde.[127] Describing East Berlin as the "Hochburg

der deutschen Comic-Avantgarde," Gasser restates these assertions in the exhibition

catalog on *Strapazin*.[128] Similarly, Jens Meinrenken und Mona Koch's exhibition catalog

to *Comics aus Berlin. Bilder einer Stadt* (2013) again marks German reunification as the

chronological point from which "the local comic scene started to come together and find

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[125] Knigge, "Das große Entenhausener Max-und-Moritz-Symposium," 28.
[126] Paul Derouet, "Das große Entenhausener Max-und-Moritz-Symposium," 28.
[127] Gasser, *Mutanten,* 10.
[128] Gasser and Gehrig**,** *Comics Deluxe!,* 8.

a new orientation."[129] Moreover, in his essay on the exhibit, Meinrenken positions the entire exhibition as a consequence of the "creative encounters and artistic decisions" that resulted from the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification.[130] Finally, according to Andreas Platthaus in his introductory essay to the Goethe-Institut's traveling exhibition *Comics, Manga & Co.: die neue deutsche Comic-Kultur* (2010), "German comics are back! Trends over the last twenty years," German unification was the "key event that put Germany back on the comic map," defining both its community and artistic innovations.[131] By examining the constituency, aesthetics and impact of three comics collectives to emerge in the late 1980s and early 1990s, *PGH* included, it is clear that Platthaus has made a crucial observation.

<p align="center">*   *   *</p>

The nucleus of the German comics avant-garde was Berlin, where three comic collectives emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s: PGH Glühende Zukunft, Renate, and monogatari. All three had significant ties to East Germany through the biography of their members, technical training and artistic influence. Artists trained in the GDR received extensive education in the graphic arts, which involved mastering techniques out of fashion in the art schools of the Federal Republic. Their experience with hand presses, woodcut and linocut printmaking techniques, calligraphy and book design brought new forms of artistic production to united Germany after 1989, forming the foundation upon which the avant-garde comics movement was premised.[132]

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[129] Jens Meinrenken and Ulrich Schreiber. *Comics aus Berlin. Bilder einer Stadt* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2013), 11.

[130] Meinrenken, "Comics from Berlin. Images of a City," in *Comics aus Berlin. Bilder einer Stadt* (Berlin : Vorwerk 8, 2013), 27.

[131] Platthaus, "German comics are back! Trends over the last twenty years," in *Comics, Manga & Co.: die neue deutsche Comic-Kultur* (München: Goethe-Institut München, 2010), 5.

[132] Ibid.

Around the same time PGH was founded, a second group of comics artists and aficionados came together to create the comic fanzine and library Renate, among them ATAK, CX Huth, Peter Bauer, Holger Lau, Bärnd Schmucker, Herr Auge Lorenz, and Björn Trebeljahr. Like PGH, the collective's foundation contained East German artists, ATAK, CX Huth, and Herr Auge Lorenz, the first of which has since become highly influential in the German comics scene as both practitioner and teacher.
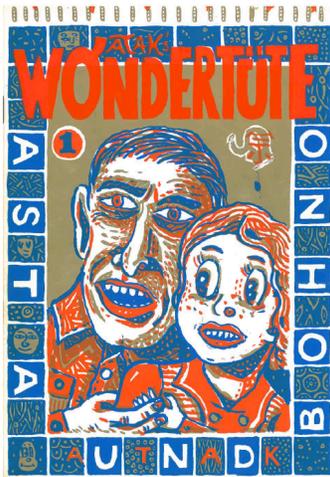
Fig. 1.10: ATAK, *Wondertüte* #1 (Berlin: Jochen Enterprises, 1997), cover.
Fig. 1.11: ATAK, *Wondertüte* #1 (Berlin: Jochen Enterprises, 1997), n.p.[133]

Born Georg Barber, ATAK is a prolific and highly experimental artist and illustrator. His work ranges both thematically and stylistically, even within the same publication. The first edition of ATAK's *Wondertüte* series, for example, mobilizes a different form of representation in every panel (fig. 1.10). While the proliferation of style in volume one was a direct result of the collaboration of twenty-six of his colleagues and friends, including Feuchtenberger, Wagenbreth, Fickelscherer, and Pfüller (fig. 1.11), it became an artistic strategy that ATAK maintained throughout his career. Furthermore, it represented a new approach to collaboration in the avant-garde comics scene. ATAK's art

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[133] The upper panels on both pages are produced by ATAK; Feuchtenberger drew the lower panel on the left page, and Fickelscherer drew the lower panel on the right page.

is highly referential, citing and emulating the styles and work of other artists that have influenced his work throughout his life, including Hergé's (Georges Remi, 1907-1983), *The Adventures of Tintin* and Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, while also remaining faithful to the tradition of children's book illustration under which he was trained.

ATAK's first engagement with comics came before the fall of the Wall as a punk in East Berlin.[134] On January 27th, 1984, the Centre Culturel Français opened its doors at Unter den Linden 37.[135] As the first independent cultural institute in East Germany, the Centre Culturel Français was described as a "legale Basis des Feindes," offering French cultural material to an East German audience hungry for international texts.[136] Among its many publications, the Centre Culturel Français granted East German artists access to examples *bande dessinée* from the well-established Franco-Belgium comic scene. While all other legal means of accessing western comics were curtailed, the Centre Culturel Français was an important venue for introducing western comics to the East German public. Furthermore, from June 24th to August 16, 1988, the center hosted an exhibition on French comics from between 1937 to 1987, the catalog for which was published in West Germany by Elefanten Press that same year.**[137]**

In his introduction to the exhibition catalog for *Mutanten: die deutschsprachige Comic-Avantgarde der 90er Jahre*, Gasser cites East Berlin's Centre Culturel Français and this exhibition as the primary contributing factors to East German comics artist's deviation from the conventions of German popular comics after 1989. However, flipping

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[134] Matthias Schneider, "ATAK," *Deutschsprachige Comics*, Goethe-Institut, last modified May 2009, www.goethe.de/kue/lit/prj/com/cav/cva/en266664.htm.
[135] Ulrich Pfeil, "'Eine legale Basis des Feindes': das Ministerium des Staatssicherheit und das *Centre Culturel Français* in Berlin," in *Kulturelle, intellektuelle und wissenschaftliche Kontakte und Netze unter Europäern im kalten Kriege* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2009), 45.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Dominique Paillarse, *Eine Grafische Kunst: Der französische Comic* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1988).

through the pages of the 1988 exhibition catalog, we find few aesthetic parallels between the comics of PGH and Renate members. So while I mark the Centre Culturel Français as a noteworthy factor in the development of the German comics avant-garde, this chapter positions *RAW* as a more essential influence in terms of aesthetic techniques and publication practices.[138]

Finally, in 1999, a group of Communication Design students at Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee, the same institution attended by PGH-founders Feuchtenberger and Wagenbreth, came together to form the comics collective monogatari.[139] Using the Japanese word for "story telling" as their title, Tim Dinter, Jens Harder, Ulli Lust, Kathi Käppel, Mawil (Markus Witzel, fig. 1.12) and Kai Pfeiffer initiated a new direction in German comics.[140] Moving away from the avant-garde comics of the early 1990s and into autobiography and comics journalism, the monogatari group focused their artistic efforts on developing a Berlin-defined comic reportage. The comics journalism of monogatari members, however, differed substantially from the tradition made famous by Joe Sacco's *Palastine*, first published in 1996. Instead of the overtly political nature of Sacco's work, monogatari focused on the day-to-day, honing in on the subtle politics of united Germany and the banal events of its citizens' daily lives.[141]

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[138] Two other East German artists joined ATAK in founding Renate, CX Huth (Christian Huth) and Peter Auge Lorenz, who often writes and works under Auge Lorenz and occasionally simply Auge. CX Huth's work is highly experimental and childlike, sometimes playful and sometimes aggressive in style. It has evolved to barely resemble traditional comics. The figures are abstracted almost beyond recognition, panels are implied at best and dialogue has slowly exited his scenes. Huth's figures were created in direct opposition to traditional comics and specifically, according to his colleague Lorenz, as a direct result of his disgust for "Enten und witzigen dicknasigen Männlein." For more information on CX Huth, see Peter Auge Lorenz, "CX Huth und das Geheimnis der ewigen Jugend," in *Mutanten: die deutschsprachige Comic-Avantgarde der 90er Jahre.* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 1999), 120.

[139] Matthias Schneider, "Jens Harder," *Deutschsprachige Comics*, Goethe-Institut, last modified January 2009, www.goethe.de/kue/lit/prj/com/cfc/cfh/en272571.htm.

[140] *monogatari*, last modified March 2005, www.monogatari.de.

[141] With only Jens Harder and Mawil born in East Germany and the aesthetic of the collective not reflecting developments in the avant-garde comics scene, the collective's interest in East German history remains on
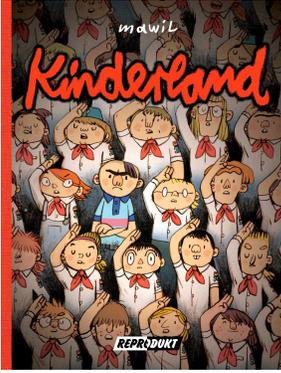
Fig. 1.12: Mawil, *Kinderland* (Berlin: Reprodukt, 2014), cover.

German Art Comics after 1989

What is particularly remarkable about the German comic avant-garde is not only the wealth of East German artists working in the scene after 1989, but also the way their work has been talked about. Exhibition catalogs, scholarship and articles that have examined German comics after 1989 have often focused on East German artistic production and the role of East German training in the development of a German scene after 1989, this dissertation included. This has ultimately produced a rather East-German-centric conception of the independent comics scene of the early 1990s that focuses on the impact of East German artistic practice, particularly at the expense of the influence of American alternative comics. This chapter builds on this research on German comics to

the margins of monogatari's artistic output. However, with Mawil's recent semi-autobiographical *Kinderland* (2014, fig. 1.12) winning the Max-und-Moritz prize for best German comic that same year and becoming the most successful comic book of a wave of publications thematizing East German history since 2009, with the collective's general interest in *Alltagskultur*, and specifically, in Ulli Lust's comic reportage of Halle-Neustadt in 2005, *Wer bleibt*, East Germans and East Germany has still figured importantly into monogatari's publication history. The work of the monogatari artists has since moved in different directions, with their comics no longer mirroring the original goals of the collective. Ulli Lust won the Max-und-Moritz prize for best German comic in 2010 for *Heute ist der letzte Tag vom Rest deines Lebens* (2009), and in 2013 turned to comic adaptation with the publication of *Flughunde*. Jens Harder is still working on his project to depict the history of humanity in comic form with *Alpha . . . Directions* published in 2010 and the first volume of *Beta…Civilizations* in 2014. Since 2006, Tim Dinter has been publishing his monthly comic strip "Lästermaul & Wohlstandskind" in the Sunday edition of the *Berliner Tagesspiegel,* with the first collection published as book form in 2011. Recently, Dinter has also moved into adaptation, with his comic based on Sven Regner's *Herr Lehmann* published in 2014.

bring US alternative comics into dialogue with the post-1989 German comics scene, stressing their common reference to early twentieth-century Expressionism.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Starting in 1994, a number of exhibitions have showcased German comics production after 1989. However, not all of them have offered a comprehensive look at the historical, social and political contexts of the period in question. *Bei Walter – Comics in Berlin* (1994), for example, focused exclusively on the sequential art, positioning East German artists, including Feuchtenberger, Fickelscherer and Beck, alongside West German artists without comment on their biography or training. Instead of reflecting on the divided history of German comics, the exhibition focused on the legitimacy of the form, advocating for future exhibition of comic art at the Akademie der Künste.

Similarly, while Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff's detailed history of comics after 1945 in the exhibition catalog to *Comics made in Germany – 60 Jahre Comics aus Deutschland* (2008) is impressive, it also falls short. The curator and comics historian focused exclusively on West German artistic production that the German comics avant-garde and the East German artists working within it receive barely a page in the over sixty pages dedicated to the history of German comics after 1945.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Goethe-Institut's *Comics, Manga & Co.: die neue deutsche Comic-Kultur* (2010) focused almost entirely on the role of East German artistic practice – and PGH in particular – in the development of the comic avant-garde. This catalog thereby effectively positioned innovations in the German comic avant-garde in the East German artistic training and aesthetics of GDR graphic arts, and specifically in PGH.

The catalog's preface begins by situating East German graphic artists as having defined the aesthetics of the scene:

> …artists from the former German Democratic Republic above all have introduced new aesthetic qualities into the German comics scene, not only by drawing on traditional graphic and printing techniques but also by incorporating contemporary artistic media such as street art or computer graphics.[142]

Its introductory essay by Platthaus continues this line of thought, stressing that East German artists "played the more active role in facilitating this return" and observing that East German essentially artists reinvented German comics.[143]

Platthaus proceeds to contextualize the innovations of the German comics avant-garde in East German artistic practice by stating that the graphic art of PGH made conscious reference to the art movement most closely associated with Germany, Expressionism, also citing this as the foundation of their international appeal.[144] He comments that Feuchtenberger and other members of PGH were not beholden to the economic demands of successful comics art production due to their employment as graphics artists, which granted them the space to experiment in the comics medium.[145] He continues his assessment of their innovations by implicating their "solid education" in the East German graphic arts, which instructed them in techniques such as hand presses, woodcut and linocut printmaking techniques, calligraphy and book design "that had long been abandoned by West German art colleges and other educational establishments."[146]

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[142] Eva Maria Schmitt and Matthias Schneider, Preface to *Comics, Manga & Co.: die neue deutsche Comic-Kultur* (München: Goethe-Institut München, 2010), 3.
[143] Platthaus, "German comics are back!," 5.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Gasser, *Mutanten,* 9.
[146] Ibid.

Platthaus thereby situates their technical and aesthetic innovations in their training in the GDR and its artistic traditions.

Platthaus's observation on the impact of East German artistic traditions was as important an intervention in the discourse surrounding German comics after 1989 as it was for my research, which builds upon Platthaus's scholarship. However, *Mutanten: die deutschsprachige Comic-Avantgarde der 90er Jahre,* the 1999 exhibition at the NRW Forum Wirtschaft und Kultur in Düsseldorf (October 29, 1999 - January 9, 2000) and accompanying catalog, offers a more nuanced understanding of the German comics avant-garde that is much closer to my own. The exhibition positions East German artists alongside West German artists in its examination of the movement's essential figures, attributing the rise of independent comics in the 1990s to two factors: the founding of the comics magazine *Strapazin* in 1984 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. However, Gasser also acknowledges the impact of *RAW* in the development of the scene and underscores the expressionist inclination in the avant-garde comics scene as early as 1984.[147] Gasser thereby positions German unification as an important factor in the development of the German comics avant-garde, while not neglecting other transnational influences.

However, even though Gasser cites the impact of *RAW* and acknowledges the expressionist impulse of the artistic representation of *Strapazin* as early as 1984, he still situates the innovation of PGH members as a result of their East German training:

> So wuchsen die Zeichnerinnen und Zeichner an der Peripherie der Comic-Zivilization auf, mußten nur wenige, dafür um so bessere westliche Einflüsse verarbeiten, und als sie, geschult an osteuropäischen Kinderbuchillustrationen, an Plakatkunst und Bühnenbildern, nach der Wende ohne Umwege über den

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[147] Ibid. Gasser notes that *Strapazin* also featured an impulse towards expressionist representation, an aspect of the international avant-garde comics scene that I examine more closely later in this chapter.

Mainstream auf *Raw* und *Strapazin* stießen, verschmolzen sie dieses Amalgam außergewöhnlicher Einflüsse zu sowohl visuell als auch narrativ höchst eigenwilligen und eigenständigen Bildergeschichten.[148]

Similarly, the 2012 exhibition at the Cartoonmuseum Basel*, Comics Delux! Das Comicmagazin Strapazin*, also curated by Gasser, highlighted the role of East German graphic artists in developing independent comics after 1989, marking PGH's entrance into the *Strapazin* family by issue 30 in 1994.[149]

Even in the catalog to the 1997 exhibition *Aufgekratzt*, curated by Gerd Dieterich and shown at the Städtisches Kunstmuseum Spendhaus Reutlingen (April 12 - May 25, 1997) and the Galerie am Chamissoplatz in Berlin (July 7- August 17, 1997), the section title on contemporary German comics positions PGH alongside *Strapazin* at the center of contemporary German comics production. [150] Likewise, in her short 1992 volume on the German-speaking comic avant-garde, Darija Simunovic situates the beginning of the scene with the early 1990s and reiterates the importance of East German artists and their particular artistic isolation for the development of the medium's avant-garde form:

> Aufgrund des verpönten Bildes von amerikanischer Comic-Kultur in der ehemaligen DDR standen die dortigen Zeichner nicht unter dem direkten Einfluss einer "westlichen" Comic-Tradition. Auf diese Weise konnte sich der kreative Ausdruck der Zeichner, die nicht regimekonform arbeiteten, unbelastet in einem alternativen Umfeld entfalten. [151]

While this is a small body of literature, it demonstrates how East German artists have been important in developing German avant-garde and art comics since 1989.

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[148] Gasser, *Mutanten,* 10.
[149] Gasser, *Comix Delux!*, 8.
[150] Tammen, *Aufgekratzt*, 6. Significantly, PGH is identified as central to contemporary German comics even four years after the collective's dissolution.
[151] Darija Simunovic, *Die deutschsprachige Comic-Avantgarde: Geschichte, Künstler, Rezeption* (Düsseldorf: Verl. Dr. Müller, 2008), 27.

Moreover, these exhibition catalogs have fundamentally informed the way German comics are talked about in scholarship, exhibitions and journalism.

This is especially true for Feuchtenberger, where comments on the artist's mobilization of the aesthetics of expressionism and engagement of her training in the graphic arts seem to imply, as Platthaus does, that Feuchtenberger and her colleagues brought German aesthetics back to German comics. My dissertation intervenes in this discussion to forward a more nuanced understanding of the factors that contributed to the development of Feuchtenberger's unique aesthetic after 1989, incorporating expressionist influences from the early 20th century and American alternative comics and demonstrating how Feuchtenberger engaged unification politics and feminism in her art.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

Even while many conversations on comics after 1989 also suggest international influences, the tenor is that comics after 1989 were *more German* than the comics that predated the fall of the Wall. Focusing on Feuchtenberger's art in particular, scholars stress the development of a unique visual language – namely expressionism – that helped precipitate a specifically German comics tradition in the 1990s. While this adoption of German expressionism was perceptible in the scene as early as 1984 as it emerged through *Stapazin*, it became more pronounced with the emergence of East German graphic artists in the united German comics scene after the fall of the Berlin Wall.[152]

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[152] Gasser, *Comics Deluxe!,* 7. The visual rhetoric of expressionism appeared with the first issue of *Strapazin*, establishing it as important aesthetic language of the German comic avant-garde already in the year of its founding; however, since *Strapazin* moved from the FRG to Switzerland after their first issue, German scholarship typically does not align it with the development of the German comics avant-garde, even though it was an important avenue for publication in all of German-speaking Europe. Furthermore, with the entrance of East German artists in the united German comics scene, the pronounced expressionist impulse of the avant-garde comics of the 1980s was overshadowed by the implications of these artists' East German artistic training.

For Simunovic, for example, it is clear that after 1989 comics "zum ersten Mal seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in Deutschland *neue* und *eigene* Comic-Kunst präsentiert wurde."[153] In the same vein, Gasser asserts that "[d]as Fehlen einer deutschsprachigen Tradition … entpuppte sich plötzlich als die Chance, eine eigene Sprache zu entwickeln."[154] Platthaus's assessment, however, articulates this position most explicitly:

> The work of the four Berliners [Anke Feuchtenberger, Henning Wagenbreth, Holger Fickelscherer, Detlef Beck] made conscious reference to Expressionism – the major modern art movement that is very closely associated with Germany – and this traditional line of approach proved very popular abroad, because something was suddenly appearing in comics from Germany that people were already familiar with from art history as one of this country's most significant accomplishment.[155]

Much like Günter Grass's problematic assertion on East German painting in 1982, "In der DDR wird deutscher gemalt," ["Painting is more German in the GDR"],[156] after 1989, by continuing to experiment with a formal language first developed by German expressionist artists between 1910 and 1933, comics by East Germans were also perceived as more German.

While there are ways in which readers can assign a qualitative "Germanness" to the aesthetics, themes and politics of the comics of Feuchtenberger and other members of PGH, specifically Wagenbreth, to imply that they are more German than the comics that came before them is problematic. In fact, it would be more accurate to ascribe this "Germanness" to a marketing strategy, as Platthaus does to a certain extent, than an intrinsic quality of the work. For, as this dissertation shows, the aesthetics of early German expressionism, were already prevalent in the avant-garde comics to emerge with

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[153] Simunovic, *Die deutschsprachige Comic-Avantgarde,* 28.
[154] Gasser, *Mutanten,* 9.
[155] Platthaus, "German comics are back!," 5.
[156] Flügge, "The Changing Arts Situation in Eastern Germany since 1990," 22.

RAW and *Strapazin* in the 1980s. Therefore, as an aesthetic impulse in comics, expressionism is difficult to describe as "German."

Instead, Feuchtenberger's aesthetics – and to a similar extent Wagenbreth's – engaged in national and transnational discourses on politics, feminism and transnational trends in expressionism, developing in conversation with international alternative comics and in dialog with the history of comic art itself – from the woodcut novels of Frans Masereel to the scraperboard comics of Spiegelman.[157] This dissertation therefore returns the transnational influences of Feuchtenberger's work to discussions on her graphic narrative. While Feuchtenberger's East German training, politics and socialization informed some aspects of the form and content of her graphic art – such as her experience and education in East German *Plakatkunst* – the influences of this artist's formal and thematic innovations are much more complex and bring a number of aesthetic and political traditions together. Through interviews with the most important figures of the German comics avant-garde, including Feuchtenberger, ATAK and Wagenbreth, and visual and textual analysis of Feuchtenberger's work, each chapter of my dissertation sets Feuchtenberger's work in conversation with international and transnational texts and

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[157] Masereel is an important figure in the context of German expressionism, its left-leaning politics and their legacy in international comics. Touted as the father of arguably the first graphic novel, Masereel began to experiment with the form of wordless woodcut novels at the end of WWI. Born in Belgium, Masereel was raised in a bourgeois family. Yet, he came to be known for his art thematizing the lives of the common people as well as anti-war and anti-capitalist sentiments. In 1918, Masereel became the first among several European and American artists of the early twentieth century to adopt the expressionist aesthetic to produce novels comprised entirely of images. Made up primarily of woodcuts prints, Masereel's "graphic novels" feature a series of illustrations that narrated a story without words, with his work possessing many of the same aesthetic qualities as the art of Brücke artists Ernst Barlach, Erich Heckel and other German Expressionists. Furthermore, like these artists – and medium in general – Masereel's woodcut novels focus on the experience of the working class. For more information on Masereel and his impact on comics, see Perry Willet's "The Cutting Edge: The Woodcut Novel of Frans Masereel and Its Influences," in *A Companion to the Literature of German Expressionism*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (New York: Camden House, 2005) and *The Silent Shout: Frans Masereel, Lynd Ward, and the Novel in Woodcuts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Libraries, 1997), and the scholarship of David A. Beronä.

contexts that pull apart the complex layers of her graphic art's influence and intervention. Furthermore, my dissertation's evaluation of the ways in which this artist brought elements of East German artistic practice to comics after 1989 also demonstrates that the comic avant-garde warrants broader representation in the wider field of German art history and, as my conclusion posits, needs to be integrated into exhibition and scholarship on contemporary art.

The Shifting Politics of East German Aesthetic Policy: from Die Brücke to Neo-expressionism

Feuchtenberger's turn to expressionism might not seem surprising considering her graphic art training at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee during the most radical and experimental decade of GDR artistic practice. By the collapse of the GDR, East German neo-expressionism was accepted as an artistic language as broadly as Soviet-style socialist realism. Furthermore, while East German *Plakatkunst* (poster art) is often naively associated with the artistic mandates of socialist realism, it was, in fact, a genre with its own set of modernist – often expressionist – aesthetics that allowed room for artistic experimentation. After the 1970s, when the legacy of classical German expressionism was officially adopted into East Germany's aesthetic traditions, expressionism became an important mode of representation in all areas of East German artistic practice.

Yet it is not the aesthetics of East German neo-expressionism that Feuchtenberger mobilizes. Instead, her early graphic art adopts the representational style of the prehistory of those aesthetics and engages early German expressionism, echoing the woodcut aesthetic of the Brücke collective before WWI as well as the anxiety, disillusion, and

politics of the Weimar period.

However, before I can pursue an examination of Feuchtenberger's expressionist aesthetics to demonstrate the significance behind this artist's move to adopt the visual language of early German modernism, the GDR's fraught relationship with these aesthetics needs to be addressed. The following section therefore traces the adoption of German expressionism into GDR aesthetic policies, highlighting how it evolved to look different than the aesthetic strategies of expressionist art popular in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

<p style="text-align: center;">*   *   *</p>

German expressionism, the leading style of German modernism, refers to a number of related artistic movements that emerged before the First World War.[158] However, it did not reach its peak until the 1920s. It is as essential to the evolution of modern art as simultaneous developments in Fauvism and Cubism in France, Futurism in Italy, and the Russian avant-garde.[159]

As a visual language, expressionism is typically defined by sharp angles, deep shadows and dramatic contrasts, surreal landscapes, extensive symbolism, and emotive and often unrealistic representation, emphasizing personal expression over objective reality and characterized by simplified or distorted forms and exaggerated color.[160] With exterior and interior worlds fusing in visual synthesis, the expression of subjective emotion became expressionists' visual subject matter.[161] However, as Glenn Lowry

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[158] Glen Lowry, Forward to *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse,* eds. Starr Figura and Peter Jelavich (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 6.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Starr Figura and Peter Jelavich, *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 10.
[161] Magdalena M. Moeller, "The Brücke and the Fauves," in *Expressionism in Germany and France from Van Gogh to Kandinsky,* ed. Timothy O. Benson (New York, NY: DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2014)*, 240.

observes in his forward to the exhibition catalog *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse*, the defining characteristic that set it apart from other modernist movements, and indeed almost any other period of art history, was the expressionist dedication to printmaking and works on paper in general.[162] While not more influential or iconic than other expressionist media, such as painting and film, it was an important aspect of artistic production for many expressionist artists.

Traced to the formation of the artist collective Die Brücke in 1905 and inspired by a feeling of dissatisfaction with the existing political and social order, German expressionism developed through the 1910s over the First World War and into the Weimar period, manifesting as a desire for revolutionary change.[163] The movement initially materialized during the period of intense social and aesthetic transformation before WWI, and its emphasis on printmaking aided expressionists in advancing their goals, including pioneering formal innovations, disseminating their images and ideas on paper, and promoting or criticizing social and political causes.[164] The woodcut print therefore became an invaluable tool of the movement, as expressionists encouraged essentially every painter of the period to turn to the graphic arts.[165] With an emphasis on geometric forms accompanied by alternating planes of solid color and carved pattern to produce texture, shading and depth, the aesthetic of the woodcut print and its variants, particularly the linocut print, are immediately recognizable and associated with German expressionism.

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[162] Lowry, "Forward," 6.
[163] Figura and Jelavich, *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse*, 10.
[164] Lowry, "Forward," 6.
[165] Figura and Jelavich, *German Expressionism*, 10.

The expressionism that re-emerged after WWI, however, looked very different than the visual language that came before it. The war had left Germany in economic and moral ruin.[166] Many German expressionists, who had enthusiastically embraced the war, were soon profoundly shocked by the grotesque realities of the battlefield. This disillusion politicized them and their art after 1918, at which point many expressionists joined the radical artists' groups that began to appear throughout Germany. But by as early as 1919, expressionists' revolutionary fervor was already being replaced by a growing disenchantment that emerged as the complicated political realities of the new German state became more pronounced.[167] Printmaking continued to be an important avenue for political intervention, in particular the socialist-leaning caricatures of Georg Grosz and the print cycles by Otto Dix and Käthe Kollwitz, most notably Dix's *The War* (1923-1924) and Kollwitz's *War* (1921-22) and *Proletariat* (1924-25). However, the tone of the expressionist graphic art to emerge after WWI was decidedly less optimistic as artists criticized the war effort and politics of the period.

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The rise of National Socialism brought an explicit end to the expressionist work of many artists in Germany. In February 1933, Kollwitz was forced to quit the Prussian Academy. Two months later, a law that allowed the dismissal of civil servants of "non-Aryan" descent was passed. As a result, Jewish and politically undesirable artists teaching at public institutions and museum directors supportive of modern art were discharged, including Max Beckmann (Städel Art School, Frankfurt) and Dix (Art Academy Dresden). Also starting in 1933, a series of "Defamatory exhibitions" toured a

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[166] Stephanie Barron, "New Objectivity: German Realism after Expressionism," in *New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic 1919-1933* (New York, NY: Prestel Publishing, 2015), 15.
[167] Ibid.

number of German cities, culminating in the *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich in 1937, which displayed 650 paintings, sculptures and prints by 112 artists, including the work of Beckmann, Kollwitz, Dix, Grosz, Heckel, and Kirchner among others. Consequently, artists began to flee Germany en masse after 1933, including expressionists Beckmann and Grosz who emigrated to the Netherlands (Beckmann, 1937) and the United States (Grosz, 1933).[168]

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In the immediate postwar period, very few stylistic differences existed between the occupied zones of divided Germany, where all artistic production attempted to distance itself from the Nazi past through a number of aesthetic practices. By 1946 cultural ambassadors were encouraging the Soviet-occupied sector to adopt Soviet socialist realism as the model for postwar German artistic production. With the founding of the GDR in 1949, the Stalinization of art was institutionalized in the battle against capitalism. Two years later, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED), adopted a policy against formalism, and in 1953, socialist realism became the official cultural policy of the GDR.

Even before the official adoption of socialist realism, however, the exclusion of the prewar avant-garde was problematic for artists and East German cultural authorities alike. Ostracizing the communist artistic production of the Weimar period alienated an entire generation of artists who had initially been very excited to witness the Red Army liberating the German people. The modern and socially conscious art of Otto Dix, Käthe Kollwitz, John Heartfield and other Weimar leftist artists was said to belong to the *prehistory* of the revolutionary worker's struggle

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[168] Iris Schmeisser, "Chronology," in *German Expressionism: The Graphic Impulse,* eds. Starr Figura and Peter Jelavich (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 281.

now resolved by the end of capitalist exploitation and the triumph of socialism in the GDR.[169]

Many artists sought to adopt socialist realism in their work but did not understand that German modernism, and their own painterly legacy, had no place in contemporary East German artistic practice. Consequently, the postwar work of Wilhelm Lachnit (fig. 1.13), Horst Strempel (fig. 1.14), Hermann Bruse (fig. 1.15), and Oskar Nerlinger (fig. 1.16), all of whom had been advocating for communism as members of the Communist Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD) during the interwar period, was categorically deemed formalist.[170] Despite the leftist focus of early expressionism, socialist realism – not prewar avant-garde art – became the official aesthetic of the GDR. These and other East German artists had to therefore either conform to the new aesthetic mandate or no longer be considered supporters of the socialist project.

Fig. 1.13 (left): Wilhelm Lachnit, *Der Tod von Dresden,* 1945.
Fig. 1.14 (center): Horst Strempel, *Nacht über Deutschland,* 1945/46.
Fig. 1.15 (right): Hermann Bruse, *Hungermarsch*, 1945/46.

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[169] Barbara McCloskey, "East German Socialist Realism in the Stalin Era," in *Art of two Germanys - Cold War Cultures*, eds. Stephanie Barron, Eckhart Gillen and Sabine Eckmann (New York: in associaton with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009), 109.

[170] Susanne Leeb, "Abstraction as International Language," in *Art of two Germanys - Cold War Cultures*, eds. Stephanie Barron, Eckhart Gillen and Sabine Eckmann (New York: in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009), 119.

Fig. 1.16: Oskar Nerlinger, *Der Letzte Soldat*, 1947.

By 1960, however, the SED began to re-evaluate its position on the proto-revolutionary art of the prewar period and began sponsoring working groups that would reverse GDR's cultural policy that lambasted German modernism and instigate the liberalization of the party's cultural politics over the following decades.[171]

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[171] A pivotal moment in this transition was art historian Ullrich Kuhirt's opening address for a symposium at the Humboldt University in Berlin in November 1960, in which he provided his reconsideration of the history of German proletarian/revolutionary art. He spoke about the tradition that harkened back to the nineteenth century and culminated in the work of Kollwitz, who had previously been harshly criticized and not regarded as a positive contributor to Socialist Realist art. In direct contradiction to the origins of socialist realist art publicized in the 1950s, Kuhirt cited the origins of German socialist realism with the founding of the KPD in 1919 and those artists aligned with the party in creating a "proletarian/revolutionary" art. Kuhirt identified the key components of socialist realism, which thematized the worker with the goal of awakening the worker's movement in Germany, while also maintaining an "organic" tie between the people and art as 'proletarian/revolutionary' and socialist realist. Importantly, Kuhirt proscribed no specific style or medium. Moreover, he considered Kollwitz's notably German expressionist memorial woodcut print for Karl Liebknecht (1920) as exemplary of the origins of socialist realism (fig. 1.17), and acknowledged the German expressionist members of the Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists of Germany (Asso), George Groz, John Heartfield, Rudolf Schlichter, Otto Dix, Otto Nagel and Oskar Nerlinger as having the most significance to East German socialist realism. See Claudia Mesch's *Modern Art at the Berlin Wall: Demarcating Culture in the Cold War Germanys* (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008), specifically pages 24-36, for an extended discussion on Kuhirt's speech and its impact.

Fig. 1.17: Käthe Kollwitz, *In Memoriam Karl Liebknecht (Gedenkblatt für Karl Liebknecht)*, woodcut print, 1920.[172]

The SED continued to maintain a stranglehold on artistic production; however, the strictness of East German socialist realist aesthetic mandates loosened. Previously unimaginable formal developments emerged in the visual arts, as East German artists slowly incorporated once-taboo modernist traditions into their art.[173] Painters adopted Kuhirt's reassessment of the origins of socialist realism, while the central committee began to tolerate modernist experimentation as long as the artistic message explicitly addressed anti-fascism, a critical foundational narrative, which established the GDR's historical roots in the anti-fascist activities of the *KPD* during the interwar period.[174]

April 1964 marked a turning point in East German aesthetics. At the 5th Congress of the VBK, art historian Hermann Raum, sculptor Fitz Cremer, and *Leipziger Schule* painter Bernhard Heisig shocked VBK administrators and members by attacking official cultural policy that

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[172] Kollwitz created this image in response to the brutal murder of communist Karl Liebknecht, who led an armed revolt against the Socialist government in January 1919. Assassinated by right-wing paramilitary units, Liebknecht is memorialized in Kollwitz's work based on traditional Christian lamentation scenes, thereby positioning Liebknecht in the role of martyr.

[173] McCloskey, "East German Socialist Realism in the Stalin Era," 116.

[174] Mesch, *Modern art at the Berlin Wall*, 34-35.

rejected the methods of modernism as unusable for socialism.[175] Warning that artistic stagnation

and provincialism would result from SED policies, Heisig spoke in favor of artistic

experimentation with modern art styles.[176] He believed artistic freedom should be given back to

the artist, and the artists themselves, not politicians, should decide what constituted communist

art. Heisig was harshly criticized for his comments and was forced to subsequently release a self-

criticism six months later to prove his loyalty to the party.[177] Official artistic doctrine did,

however, begin to ease. In his article "Wir müssen über den Form sprechen" (1964), Siegfried H.

Begenau, editor and chief of SED art publication *Bildende Kunst*, wrote that many artistic paths

could lead to realistic art, with the statement of the work being more important than the mode of

representation.[178] This perspective on socialist realist art culminated in Erich Honecker's closing

remarks at the 4th Conference of the Central Committee of the SED on December 17th, 1971,

where he concluded that "[i]f one starts out from the solid position of socialism, then there

cannot be, in my view, any taboos in the field of art and literature. That applies to both of

shaping the content and of style" ("[W]enn man von der festen Position des Sozialismus ausgeht,

kann es meines Erachtens auf dem Gebiet von Kunst und Literatur keine Tabus geben").[179] His

election marked a shift in cultural policy, and even though this official opening up of cultural

policy only lasted until 1976 when Wolf Biermann was expatriated, which also led to the a mass

exodus of artistic and intellectual figures out of the GDR, it left a lasting impact upon of all East

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[175] Ibid., 35-36.

[176] Ibid; April Eisman, "In the Crucible: Bernhard Heisig and the Hotel Deutschland Murals," in *Art Outside the Line: New Perspectives on GDR Art Culture,* eds. Elaine Kelly and Amy Wlodarski (New York: Rodopi, 2011), 26.

[177] Eisman, "Bernhard Heisig and the Cultural Politics of East German Art" (dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2007), 140-141.

[178] Ursula Peters and Roland Prügel, "The Legacy of Critical Realism in East and West," in *Art of two Germanys - Cold War Cultures*, eds. Stephanie Barron, Eckhart Gillen and Sabine Eckmann (New York: in associaton with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009), 68-70.

[179] As quoted by Sigrid Hofer, "Beyond Socialist Realism: Alternative Painting in Dresden," in *Art Outside the Line: New Perspectives on GDR Art Culture,* eds. Elaine Kelly and Amy Wlodarski (New York: Rodopi, 2011), 104.

German artistic production to come.

While the aesthetics of modernism came under attack again and again, from the 1970s onward, the SED officially changed its perspective on the prewar art of the Weimar Left. Seeking to legitimize socialist realism by claiming it naturally stemmed out of the expressionist art of the proletarian-revolutionary artists and these same artists' antifascist art of the immediate postwar period, cultural authorities began to incorporate the socially conscious art of the Association of Revolutionary Visual Artists of Germany (*Assoziation revolutionärer bildender Künstler Deutschlands*, Asso) artists and the German avant-garde into the artistic tradition of socialist realism.[180] Consequently all prewar humanist and antifascist art was reinterpreted from the 1970s onwards as early socialist art, thus creating a continuity between the socialist realism of the day and the artistic practices of Asso of the pre-Nazi period.[181]

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[180] Martin Damus, *Malerei der DDR: Funktionen der Bildenden Kunst im Realen Sozialismus* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991) 33.

[181] While GDR aesthetics evolved to adopt German expressionism into its aesthetic traditions, East German artists such as Heisig, Mattheuer and Willi Sitte developed their own variations of neo-expressionist art. While Heisig's work blatantly recalls the grotesque bodies and collapsed space of George Grosz and the political and pacifist themes of German expressionism, his art, evolving out of a different socio-political context, cannot be essentialized as German expressionist. East German neo-expressionism art may have integrated the aesthetics and themes of expressionism, but they also adapted the visual strategies of other modernist painterly movements, specifically the inter-war avant-garde. Mattheuer's dark and expressive figuration also integrated surrealist elements into the landscape and metaphorical content of his work. Sitte's paintings, on the other hand, depict abstracted figuration incorporating painterly strategies in expressing movement derived from the visual vocabulary of futurism and cubism. Their integration of modernist painterly strategies was a radical and subversive gesture that undermined socialist aesthetic doctrine to force its evolution.

Postwar German neo-expressionism also emerged in West Germany, but its development took a very different path than its adaptation in the GDR. Also called New German Figuration, this movement was spearheaded by radical painters such as Anselm Kiefer, Georg Baselitz, Jörg Immendorff, Markus Lüpertz and A.R. Penck, many of whom emigrated from East Germany and rejected the Federal Republic of Germany's dominant aesthetic of abstraction to embrace figuration as a means to address West Germany's resistance to come to terms with its National Socialist past. Importantly, several of these artists, include Beselitz and Penck, started their artistic careers in the GDR before fleeing to West Germany to find success.

Fig. 1.18: Wagenbreth, "Verständigung," 1988.
Fig. 1.19: Wagenbreth, "Neues Forum," 1989.

Feuchtenberger's education in the last decade of the GDR had already incorporated this lineage of early German expressionism. Neo-expressionist aesthetics therefore no longer offered the radical visual rhetoric they had in the 1960s and 1970s in the GDR. Instead, they possessed a stylistic language that had become a convention in some areas of East German artistic production. This was especially true in GDR poster art, and specifically in the genre of theater posters, which was both an important aspect of Feuchtenberger's training in the East German graphic arts and an essential avenue of income after 1989. Yet, like her comics, Feuchtenberger's posters after 1989 did not look anything like the neo-expressionist art of East Germany. The next section therefore compares her pre- and post-1989 graphic art to illuminate the shift in her aesthetics, positioning the expressionist visual language of American alternative comics, specifically in *RAW* magazine, as an essential contributor to the development of her artistic practice. I thereby nuance Platthaus's argument on the continuity that exists between the artists' training in the East German graphic arts and their innovations in graphic narration after the fall of the Berlin Wall by expanding on Gasser's.
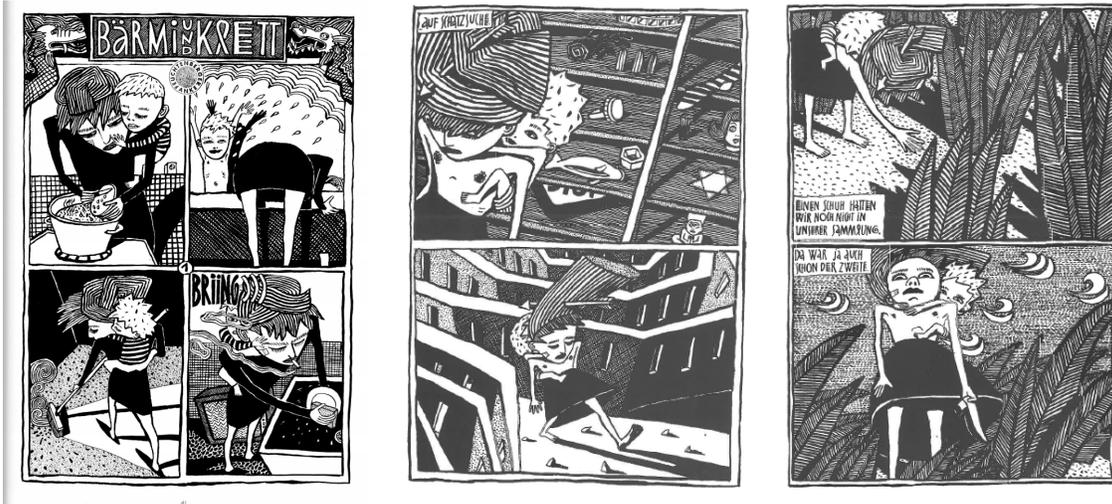
Fig. 1.20 (left): Feuchtenberger, "Bärmi und Klett," in *Schräge Schwestern,* ed. Bettina Bayerl (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1993), 41.
Fig. 1.21 (center and right): Feuchtenberger, "Bärmi und Klett: Der Schatz," n.p.
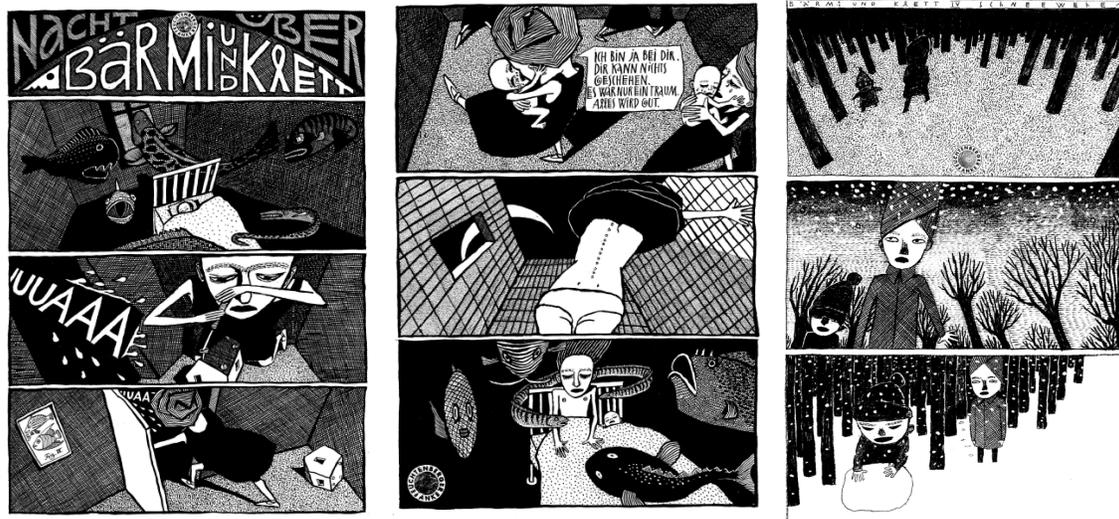
Fig. 1.22 (left and center): Feuchtenberger, "Nacht über Bärmi und Klett," in *Mutterkuchen* (Berlin: Jochen Enterprises, 1995), n.p.
Fig. 1.23 (right): Feuchtenberger, "Bärmi und Klett IV: Schneewehen," in *Die kleine Dame* (Berlin: Jochen Enterprises, 1997), n.p.

Feuchtenberger's series *Bärmi und Klett* (1993-1997) is an excellent example of the expressionist visual rhetoric in her work. Featuring surreal narratives of a mother and child as they traverse a frightening reality of strange nightmares and mysterious men in

an alienating world, the *Bärmi und Klett* series reveals hints at the origins of

Feuchtenberger's art and provides an extended look at the earliest iteration of her

aesthetic, offering clues and parallels to its inspiration and influences in early German

expressionism.

The four narratives of *Bärmi und Klett* span her first four publications: *Schräge

Schwestern* (fig. 1.20, 1993), a collection of comics from German-speaking female artists

by Elefanten Press; *Herzhaft und Lebenslänglich* (fig. 1.21, 1993), part of the *Crunch*

series edited by ATAK's brother, Martin Barber;[182] *Mutterkuchen* (fig. 1.22, 1995),

Feuchtenberger's first publication by Jochen Enterprises; and *Die kleine Dame* (fig. 1.23,

1997)*,* the artist's first collaboration with Katrin de Vries.

The narratives are highly imaginative and symbolic, offering allegorical

interpretations of the relationships between mother and child and man and woman. Their

aesthetic evolves over the half-decade of their production, but each graphic narrative

maintains unequivocal links to and a stylistic "basso continuo" with German

expressionism: the bodies Feuchtenberger represents feature sharp angles and elongated

appendages, the spaces in which action unfolds are constricted and claustrophobic, and

the perspective from which the images are drawn is angled sharply to the picture plane,

changing dramatically between panels (fig. 1.20-1.23).

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[182] Feuchtenberger's "Bärmi und Klett: Der Schatz" is also featured in the exhibition catalog *Bei Walter: Comics in Berlin* (Berlin: Ed. Monade, 1994).

Fig. 1.24: Egon Schiele, *Kneeling Nude with Raised Hands*, 1910.
Fig. 1.25: Schiele, *Nude Self-Portrait in Grey with Open Mouth*, 1910.

In Feuchtenberger's 1993 *Bärmi und Klett* graphic narrative featured in *Herzhaft und Lebenslänglich*, "Der Schatz" ["The Treasure"], the protagonist's emaciated body is represented topless with unusually long arms and unrealistically sharp shoulders, recalling the angularity, nudity and even tiny nipples of Austrian expressionist painter Egon Schiele's self-portraiture (fig. 1.24 and 1.25). The panels' perspective changes as the reader observes the protagonist and her child from four different angles across the first four panels of their search for treasure among the foliage outside of the city in which they live (fig. 1.21).

The perspective of the first panel features a view from directly in front of the protagonist, positioned perhaps in front of the figure's midsection. The second and third panels feature views from above; however, Feuchtenberger complicates the representation of space by making elements of the scene visible that contradict the perspectival view from above. For example, the lower left-hand panel of "Der Schatz" (fig. 1.21) presents the reader with a view of both the top of the protagonist's hair and the bottom of her left foot. Furthermore, the architecture behind the protagonist is towering

over her, threatening to break out of the picture plane, while the flat surfaces of the buildings' uppermost levels are also visible to the viewer. Again, in the third panel, space seems to be folding in on itself, where the viewer's perspective is simultaneously looking up from the ground, with sight almost obscured by plant life, as well as looking down from above, with the back of the heads of both the mother and child visible as they bend down to inspect the earth. With the panels' stark geometric impulse, claustrophobic and collapsing spaces, angular and nonparallel architectural lines and dramatic and changing perspectives, Feuchtenberger's art does not only hark back to the visual grammar of expressionist painting and graphic arts, it also echoes the aesthetic of expressionist cinema.

Fig. 1.26: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, directed by Robert Wiene, 1920.
Fig. 1.27: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, directed by Robert Wiene, 1920.

Specifically recalling the film stills of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920, fig. 1.26 and 1.27), which follows the story of an insane hypnotist (Werner Krauss) who uses a somnambulist (Conrad Veidt) to commit murders, *Bärmi und Klett's* distorted landscapes, collapsing and claustrophobic architectural spaces, irregular lighting, deep shadows and imaginative cityscapes mirror the aesthetic of the dark and distressing stories of the early German cinema.

Fig. 1.28: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, "Der Kranke," 1919.
Fig. 1.29: Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, "Frau in den Dünen," 1914.
Fig. 1.30: Erich Heckel , "Krankes Mädchen," 1913.

Feuchtenberger's construction of space in her panels and her figures' angular and elongated proportions recall expressionist painting on a fundamental level; however, the expressionist impression of Feuchtenberger's art rests primarily on her style of artistic representation. While not mobilizing the technical aspects of expressionist printmaking, the surface of Feuchtenberger's early art echoes the aesthetics of expressionist engraving, and specifically the art of woodcut printing.

Like in the graphic art of the founders of the expressionist artist group die Brücke (1905-1913), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938, fig. 1.28), Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (1884-1976, fig. 1.29), Erich Heckel (1883-1970, fig. 1.30) and Fritz Bleyl (1880-1966), the space represented in Feuchtenberger's work is textured with repetitive geometric forms that flatten the picture plane and patterned line-work that develops depth. However, in these images of early German modernism, figure and ground seem to merge in a way that Feuchtenberger's do not; Unlike Feuchtenberger's panels, where figure and ground are more distinct from each other, the protagonists of Schmidt-Rottluff, Heckel and Kirschner's print work blend into the "textured" space around them (nature, architectural space, etc.).

Despite this obvious contrast, Feuchtenberger's panels share important characteristics with the work of Schmidt-Rottluff, Heckel and Kirschner. Her flat and dense planes of black and white stand in stark contrast to the texture she builds in the background and foreground of her images. Her line-work is clear and bold, featuring lines that rarely blur or fade into the background. She develops her deviation in tone, saturation and shade through complex patterns of crosshatching, dots and parallel and non-parallel lines. Feuchtenberger's sense of space is thereby simultaneously flattened through the planes of black and white and assigned depth through the intricate pattern work. This visual style is particularly legible in the *Bärmi und Klett* series, but Feuchtenberger's mobilization of the woodcut print aesthetic is apparent in all of her work between 1993 and 2003.

While Feuchtenberger's black and white palette recalls the print work of the Brücke collective, her emphasis on the female body and the intimate relationship between mother and child echoes the engravings of another important German expressionist printmaker, Käthe Kollwitz, and the sequentiality of her art furthermore points to the influence of Frans Masereel's woodcut novels. Yet, despite the implication of this artistic strategy and visual references to the woodcut print aesthetic, Feuchtenberger does not employ the technical aspects of such printmaking; instead, she mobilizes the characteristic texture of expressionist engraving with pencil and ink on paper, painstakingly reproducing the geometry and detailed patterning of the medium by hand. She thereby creates works that emulate the printmaking culture of Germany before World War I, while they still possess traces of the artist's hand and signature style. In fact, the woodcut print aesthetic is just one of many expressionist influences that the artist integrates to produce her unique

visual aesthetic.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

Feuchtenberger began working as a graphic designer after completing her degree in 1988, but with her graduation from the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee coinciding with the collapse of the GDR, her career did not take off until after 1989. Trained in the East German graphic arts, Feuchtenberger turned to poster art to make a living when the Wall fell.[183] She quickly became famous for her posters for the East German feminist activist group, the Independent Women's Association, but Feuchtenberger actually began her graphic art career working in the theaters of soon-to-be united Germany. Her work in theater posters during the early 1990s was a particularly important site for the sort of artistic experiment, expressionist aesthetics and cultural, formal and textual hybridity I argue emerge out of the artistic production of Feuchtenberger and Wagenbreth after 1989.
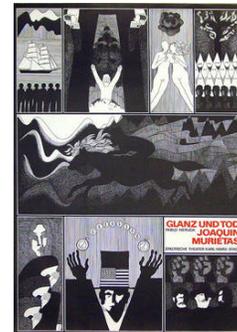
Fig. 1.31 (left): Volker Pfüller, "Totentanz," 1986.
Fig. 1.32 (center left): Pfüller, "Bertolt Brecht: Baal," Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, 1982.
Fig. 1.33 (center right): Jürgen Henker, "Celestina," Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1981.
Fig. 1.34 (right): Wilfried Manthei, "Glanz und Tod Joaquin Murietas," Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1974.

Often dark in subject matter, radical in style and experimental in form and

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[183] "Interview with German Artist Anke Feuchtenberger," *Invicta Indie Art*, last modified January 2014 invictaindiearts.blogspot.com/2014/01/interview-with-german-artist-anke.html. Feuchtenberger's colleague Wagenbreth also turned to poster design after 1989, primarily for theaters, producing posters for Ikarontheater, Theaterhaus Jena, Schauspiel Bonn, Puppentheater Dresden and Puppentheater Halle between 1990 and 1999.

composition, East German theater posters shared little in common with the larger category of *Plakatkunst* dominated by the production of propaganda posters. Volker Pfüller's "Totentanz" (fig. 1.31) for instance, produced in 1986 for the Deutsches Theater, is an excellent example of the prevalence of experimental expressionist aesthetics that flatten space, distort representational realism, lean heavily on expressive rendering and brushwork. The poster also features hand-drawn lettering instead of traditional typefaces, of which there were few in East Germany.[184] Pfüller's oeuvre and other examples of the medium from East German *Plakatkünstler* (poster artists) shows how East German theater posters possessed an aesthetic loyalty to neo-expressionist representation and were a site for artistic experimentation during the last two decades of the GDR.

Feuchtenberger's pre- and post-1989 artistic production both present expressionist visual strategies; however, like the aesthetics of their post-1989 comics, the expressionist visual rhetoric of their posters before and after the collapse of East Germany are not one and the same. Feuchtenberger was trained in the art of *Plakatkunst* and a great admirer of Volker Pfüller specifically, considering him a mentor and role model.[185] She was therefore aware of the expressionist visual language common in East German theater posters, even adopting a similar aesthetic style *before* 1989; however, this was not the visual language she mobilized in her post-unification artistic production. Parallels exist between the poster art of Feuchtenberger and the neo-expressionist poster art of the East German theater, namely composition, hand-drawn lettering and the flattening of space, but the expressionist aesthetics of Feuchtenberger's graphic art – like in her comics –

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[184] Rose Epple, "Design Culture with Restraints," *Eye Magazine* (Summer 2016), www.eyemagazine.com/review/article/design-culture-with-constraints.

[185] "Interview with german artist Anke Feuchtenberger," n.p.

predominantly emulates the visual rhetoric of the woodcut print. Examining the aesthetics of Feuchtenberger's poster design directly before and after the fall of the Wall in comparison with Pfüller's work reinforces my reading of Feuchtenberger's movement away from a specifically East German style of neo-expressionism in her graphic art and teases out this subtle shift in her aesthetics after 1989, while also illustrating the innovative way in which the formal boundaries between media in which she was working – namely, comics and poster art – were fluid.

Fig. 1.35: Feuchtenberger, Film Festival for *Fünf Abende,* circa 1988.

For Feuchtenberger's final project for her degree at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee she created the publicity material for a Russian (Soviet) Film Festival – film posters, portraits of Russian actors, and theatre costumes.[186] Much of this material is lost, but the poster Feuchtenberger created for the 1979 film *Fünf Abende,* directed by Nikita Mikhalkov and starring Ludmila Gurtschenko, remains (fig. 1.35). As one of the few examples of her pre-1989 poster art, I read this poster as representative of this era in her artistic production.[187] Comparing it to the work of Pfüller illustrates some common visual strategies of this period in German *Theaterplakatkunst* (theater poster art) and the pervasiveness of neo-expressionism in the genre in the GDR in the late 1980s.

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[186] Mark David Nevins, "'From the Land Where the Word Balloons Throw Shadows': An Interview with Anke Feuchtenberger," *European Comic Art* 10 (2017): 68.
[187] Feuchtenberger lost a lot of her archival material in a flood, Feuchtenberger in conversation with the author, June 2014.

Feuchtenberger's poster for *Fünf Abende* features a centrally-located sombre female figure facing the viewer with her eyes cast downwards. Presented from the waist up, we view her head-on as she stands, clutching her purse, but appearing to almost recede into the darkness behind her. The atmosphere of the scene is dreamlike, with the bright white surface of her face contrasting sharply with the grey and black shading that makes up the space around her. Furthermore, the architectural forms that surround her contradict themselves, appearing both concave and convex simultaneously. Moreover, although the clothing adorning the figure indicates that the scene takes place outside, the space is marked as interior by the telephone sitting in the foreground. Across the surface of the image are small rectangular markings that mirror the salmon-color of the film title, situated in the upper left. They are scattered not quite uniformly across the picture like elongated confetti moving in a single direction. Their static quality, however, implies that they are in no way part of the imagined space of the scene and instead draw attention to the flatness of the representation, reinforcing the architectural optical illusions by collapsing the picture's surface with the scene's background, flattening the image and recalling the cinematic medium for which this poster was created.

Returning to "Totentanz," the similarity between these two posters is striking. Both feature central figures represented head-on looking out of the picture plane but not directly at the viewer. Once again, the white surface of the faces contrasts sharply with the overall grey and black shading of the figures and space, where the only colors, again highlights in orange, yellow and red, function to flatten the image. While the scene in "Totentanz" is not situated in an architectural space, it is not difficult to imagine the figures' embrace in a representational space, as the background shading implies depth in

the curving of the thick grey inward-moving lines.

Even though a comparison between the posters for Feuchtenberger's *Fünf Abende* poster and Pfüller's "Totentanz" produces significant aesthetic parallels, it is important to note the stylistic differences as well. Pfüller's engagement of color to highlight the face and hands is striking, as is the macabre quality of his figures' sunken and darkly shaded eyes. Without explicit architectural context, which is also absent in his poster for "Bertolt Brecht: Baal" (fig. 1.32), the space in the poster for "Totentanz" is flattened and static, setting it apart from Feuchtenberger's more realistic engagement of the expressionist aesthetic that verges on film noire. That said, comparing Feuchtenberger's film poster from 1988 to two of Feuchtenberger's earliest theater posters from after 1989 reinforces the parallels between her work before the fall of the Wall and Pfüller's poster art and illuminates the shift in her expressionist aesthetics after German unification.

Fig. 1.36: Feuchtenberger, "Komödie der Eitelkeit" *Studiobühne an der FU Berlin*, 1991.
Fig. 1.37: Feuchtenberger, "Das doppelte Friedchen," 1992.

Produced in 1991 and 1992, these posters (fig. 1.36 and 1.37) are excellent examples of Feuchtenberger's earliest artistic endeavors after unification and exhibit features of her visual language that continue in the comics and graphic narrative of *Herzhaft und Lebenslänglich* published by Martin Barber in 1993 and *Mutterkuchen*

published by Jochen Enterprises in 1995. Importantly, however, they look quite different from her pre-1989 film poster.

Once again, Feuchtenberger presents the viewer with a central figure, however, the spaces within which she sets her characters are rendered imaginary by virtue of the decorative frames, detailed patterning of the facial features, décor and fabric, and the unrealistic spaces these figures occupy. Again, these posters exhibit flattening techniques that draw attention to the materiality of the poster, but these techniques hail from early German expressionism, harkening back to the aesthetic of the woodcut print and the angular architecture and claustrophobic spaces of German expressionist cinema. Furthermore, instead of a rounded and sensual representation of the female body like that featured in her poster for *Fünf Abende*, Feuchtenberger's post-unification theater posters adopt an early expressionist style of figuration that exhibits the angular and elongated proportions of early German modernism, most notably in the painting of Egon Schiele. Ultimately, Feuchtenberger's poster art after 1989 exhibits both continuities and breaks with her earlier work, and explicitly mobilizes a different, earlier era of German expressionism.

Few posters remain of the pre-unification artistic production of Feuchtenberger and PGH, but examples of their post-1989 work exist in archives around Germany and Switzerland, illustrating how much of their artistic production diverges from the expressive style of the East German visual arts, while still maintaining connections to it. Looking at the artistic production of Feuchtenberger's colleague, Wagenbreth, elicits similar observations. For example, his cover for the exhibition catalog to post-1989 East German theater posters (fig. 1.38), which acts as a visual representation for the entire genre, relies heavily upon early German expressionist visual

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strategies, recalling aesthetics of the woodcut print as well as the collage-like composition and disfigured bodies of Otto Dix's post-WWI expressionist art, *Pragerstrasse* (1920, fig. 1.40) and *The War Cripples* (1920, fig. 1.41).

Fig. 1.38: Wagenbreth, *Ost-Deutsche Theater-Plakate - 1989-1995* (Wuppertal: Sekretariat für gemeinsame Kulturarbeit in Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1995), cover.
Fig. 1.39: Wagenbreth, "Falle," Theaterhaus Jena, 1993.
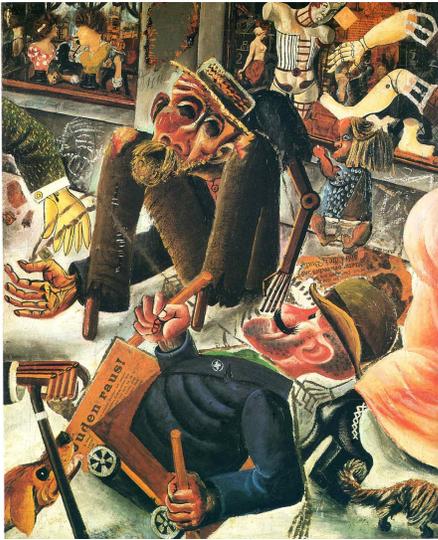

Fig. 1.40: Otto Dix, *Pragerstrasse,* 1920.
Fig. 1.41: Dix, *The War Cripples*, 1920.
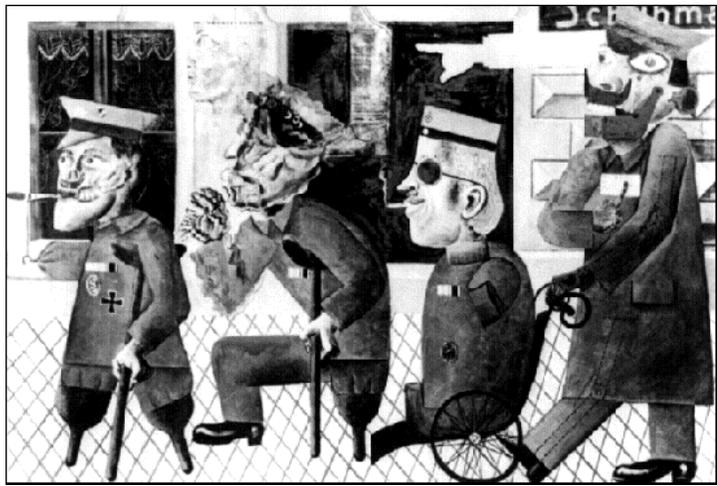
Fig. 1.42 (left): Feuchtenberger, "Dornröslein," 1993.
Fig. 1.43 (center): Feuchtenberger, "Das geheime Tagebuch des Adrian Mole," 1996.
Fig. 1.44 (right): Feuchtenberger, "Komödie der Eitelkeit," 1991.

The aesthetic roots of Feuchtenberger's stylistic innovations are therefore not entirely born

of her East German training and the neo-expressionism specific to the GDR in the 1970s and

1980s. Instead, Feuchtenberger's visual rhetoric is indebted to an earlier form of expressionism

that predated the GDR altogether, located in work of die Brücke collective and artists such as

Frans Masereel, Käthe Kollwitz, Otto Dix, Georg Grosz and Egon Schiele. So how did

Feuchtenberger come to adopt an early German expressionist visual style in her artistic

production after 1989? And what factors led her to privilege the aesthetics of the woodcut print

over other forms of representation?

It has often been acknowledged that Feuchtenberger's turn to comics was inspired by the

American alternative comics anthology *RAW*, which she began reading after 1989, as

Feuchtenberger herself has attested to.[188] Considering that Feuchtenberger's art – and to a similar

extent Wagenbreth's – bares striking resemblances to some of the alternative comics published

in *RAW* magazine in the 1980s and 1990s, it is clear that American alternative comics inspired

Feuchtenberger to adopt more than just the comics form. The obvious aesthetic and narrative

parallels between the sequential art of Feuchtenberger and the comics from Mark Beyer (fig.

1.45 and 1.46) and Marc Caro (fig. 1.47 and 1.48), both published in *RAW* in the 1980s, beg the

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[188] Feuchtenberger in discussion with the author, June 2016; Schneider, *Goethe Institut* "Obscure sensations
and lovable freaks – Henning Wagenbreth," last modified March 2005,
www.goethe.de/kue/lit/prj/com/cck/hew/en283921.htm.

question: how did international trends in comic production inform Feuchtenberger's adoption of early German modernism? The following section of this chapter therefore positions Feuchtenberger's artistic innovations alongside developments in alternative comics internationally, looking to the expressionist visual rhetorics published in *RAW* as an important factor in Feuchtenberger's adoption the aesthetics of the woodcut print.

Fig. 1.45: Mark Beyer, "Dead Things," in *RAW* 1, eds. Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly (New York: Raw Books, 1980), 22-23.
Fig. 1.46: Beyer, "City of Terror," in *RAW* 2, eds. Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly (New York: Raw Books, 1981), 18-19.
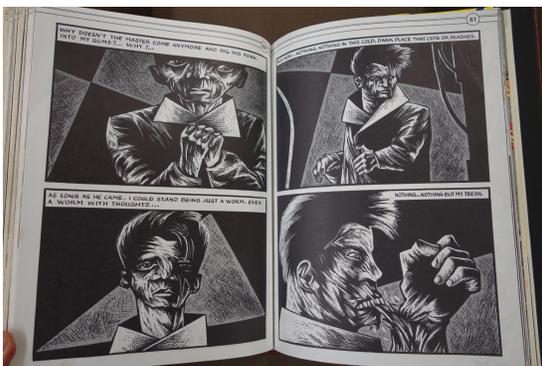

Fig. 1.47: Marc Caro, "Humor Me" in *Raw* 6, eds. Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly (New York: Raw Books & Graphics, 1984), 60-61.
Fig. 1.48: Caro, "Jailbreak Hotel," in *RAW* 8, eds. Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly (New York: Raw Books, 1986), 4-5.

Expressionism in American Alternative Comics: Art Spiegelman and *RAW*

When the Wall fell in 1989, Feuchtenberger moved to West Berlin to continue her artistic endeavors with PGH-Glühende-Zukunft members Henning Wagenbreth, Detlev

Beck and Holger Fickelschere. Like many East Germans at the time, the collective

quickly became inundated with the West German and American cultural material that its

members did not have access to in East Germany. One such document was the American

alternative comics anthology *RAW,* produced by Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly.

While East Germany had a quasi-comics culture (the children's comic book series

Mosaik and *Atze,* for example, both began in 1955), the medium was referred to as

Bildergeschichten and no comics for an adult audience existed. The discovery of *RAW* by

this group of artists was therefore transformative. In addition to introducing avant-garde

American and European comics to the art collective, *RAW* magazine demonstrated the

possibilities of the expressionist visual rhetoric in the comics form.

Since Will Eisner's invention of the graphic novel in 1978, the visual rhetoric of

expressionism has been familiar to the American comics scene.[189] After all, it was the

expressionist woodcut novels of Lynd Ward that inspired Eisner in his production of the

ostensibly first graphic novel, *A Contract with God*, and later Art Spiegelman's *Maus,* the

Pulitzer-Prize winning graphic novel that widened the audience of comics and broke

through the high/low divide of popular culture, attracting scholars of history and literature

to the medium.[190] However, Spiegelman's first experiments in expressionism predate

even Eisner's canonical text when he first produced the experimental four-page comic

"Prisoner on the Hell Planet" in 1973 (fig. 1.49) and "Real Dream" three years later in

1975 (fig. 1.50).

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[189] While the term "graphic novel" is not Eisner's invention, only a few works adopted the label previously, including Richard Corben's *Bloodstar* (1976) and George Metzger's *Beyond Time and Again* (1976). Consequently, Eisner is often credited with the invention of the category and certainly is the source of its popularity. For more information, see Dan Mazur and Alexander Danner's *Comics: a global history, 1968 to the present* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), specifically page 181.

[190] Spiegelman, "The Woodcuts of Lynd Ward," *The Paris Review,* last modified 13 Oct. 2010, www.theparisreview.org/blog/2010/10/13/the-woodcuts-of-lynd-ward.
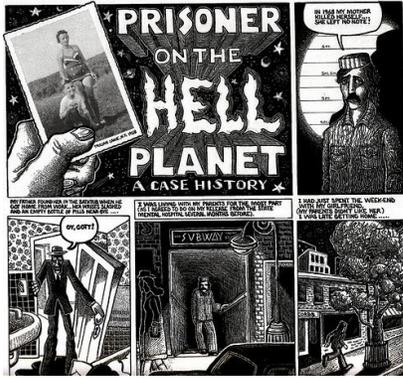
Fig. 1.49: Spiegelman, "Prisoner on the Hell Planet," in *Short Order Comix* 1, ed. Art Spiegelman (Saugerties, N.Y.: Head Press, 1973), 22.
Fig. 1.50: Spiegelman, "Real Dream," in *Arcade* (Berkeley: Print Mint, summer 1975), 28.

While there is no way to talk conclusively about the adoption of specific representational styles during different periods in comics history, artistic choice often conceded to artistic trends, and it is safe to say that there were some clear aesthetic and thematic differences to emerge between the underground comix and alternative comics scenes in the US. Underground comix sought to push back on the restrictions of the Comics Code of the 1950s, which stipulated no sex, no violence and no social relevance, so they emphasized the sexual and debased aspects of human nature through themes of drug use, sex, violence, anti-Vietnam protest, and rock music, often represented through gritty, caricature-like stylization that focused on sexualizing women's bodies.[191]

The comix boom lasted from about 1968-1975, during which time many thousands of comix were produced.[192] No longer comprised of teams of letterers, inkers and artists, underground comix represented a new era of comics production that gave creators almost exclusive control of their works, allowing them to also work at their own

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[191] Robert Petersen, *Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels: a History of Graphic Narratives* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2011), 211; Roger Sabin, *Adult Comics: an Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 171; Sabin, *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 92.
[192] Sabin, *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels,* 94

speed.[193] Epitomized in the comics of Robert Crumb, who was first associated with the

San Francisco comix scene but later became synonymous with the underground comix

movement as a whole, Crumb ultimately defined both the archetypal content of the period

and the visual language of its expression.[194]
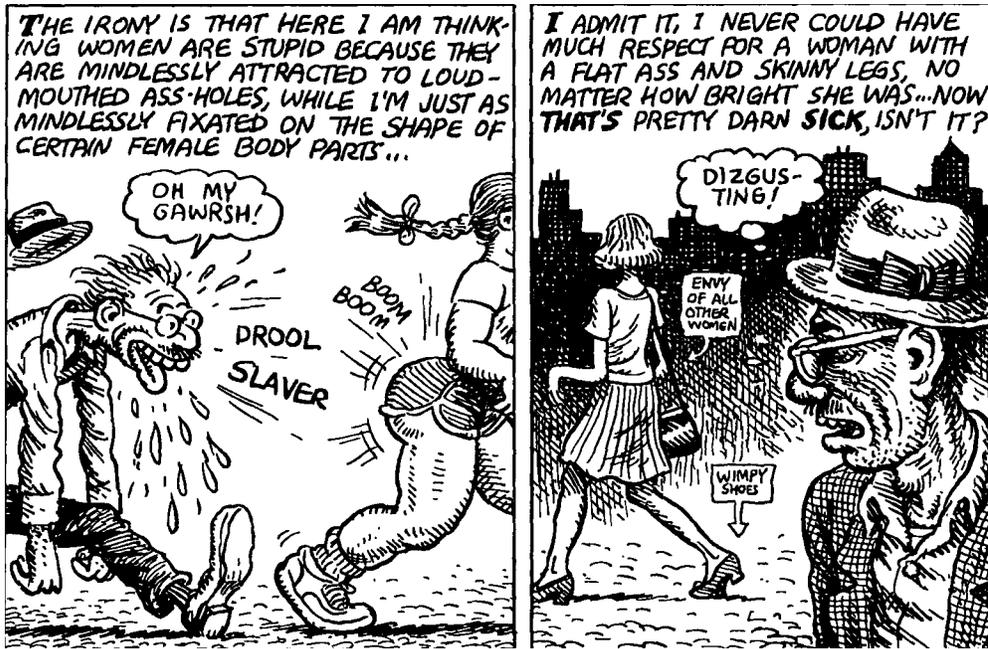
Fig. 1.51: Robert Crumb, *My Troubles with Women* (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 1990), 47.

Crumb's crass and misogynist characterizations of the female body, explicit

reference to bodily functions and thematizing of debased human proclivities and drug use

was initially revolutionary as hippie and comics culture collided. However, during the

mid-1970s, the underground comix scene began to stagnate. Spiegelman recounts its

demise: "What had seemed like a revolution simply deflated into a lifestyle. Underground

comics were stereotyped as dealing only with sex, dope and cheap thrills. They got

stuffed back into the closet, along with bong pipes and love beads, as things started to get

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[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid., 94, 103; Petersen, *Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels*, 211-212.

uglier."[195] What emerged as underground comix began to wane in popularity were generically known as alternative comics. Generally speaking, they were adult-oriented comics, sometimes science fiction, autobiographical or horror, but overall experimental in form and content, seeking political relevance and presenting increasingly sophisticated visual aesthetics.[196]

The lingering influence of the period came in the form of a new kind of avant-garde comic, typified by *RAW* magazine, founded by Art Spiegelman and his wife and later art director for the *New Yorker*, Françoise Mouly.[197] First published with a print run of 4,500 copies, *RAW* introduced a new generation of experimental comic artists working in a wide variety of visual languages.[198] Artistic style within *RAW* varied dramatically, with regular contributions by a number of artists over the first eight issues of volume one, including the scratchy and expressive punk-rock-styled comic *Jimbo* by Gary Panter – "king of the ratty line," the delicate inkwashes of Ben Katchor, the pointalist precision of Drew Friedman, the grotesque and deformed bodies of Mark Beyer, the bold, clear lines of Charles Burns, and the scratchboard illustration of Scott Gills.[199]

While also an homage to Kurzman's *MAD*, with its all-capital three-letter title and similarly cheeky by-lines, *RAW,* a lavishly produced, large format (11x14) anthology, was the first comics publication to aspire *to be* art.[200] Its format comparable to other New York art-scene tabloids at the time in New York, specifically Andy Warhol's *Interview* and *Skyline*, made it clear that Spiegelman and Mouly's intention was to showcase the art

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[195] Spiegelman as quoted by Sabin, *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels,* 118.
[196] Dan Mazur and Alexander Danner, *Comics: a Global History, 1968-present* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), 182
[197] Sabin, *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels,* 127-128.
[198] Steve Duin, "RAW," in *Comics between the Panels*, eds. Steve Duin and Mike Richardson (Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics, 1998), 365.
[199] Petersen, *Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels,* 221.
[200] Ibid.

featured within the magazine.[201] Spiegelman sought new talent directly from his class at the School of Visual Arts in New York, including Mark Newgarden, Drew Friedman and Kaz, many of whom engaged their formal arts training in their production of sequential art more holistically than earlier comics artists, thereby lending the self-referentiality, artistic depth and formal complexity of avant-garde art to the comics production showcased in *RAW*.[202]

The impact of *RAW* and role of Spiegelman and Mouly in developing the alternative comics scene cannot be overstated. As a collection of cartooning talent, no other single comics publication has ever equalled *RAW's* accomplishments.[203] However, as with all important magazines, the impressive legacy of *RAW* was more than the sum of its strong individual pieces.[204] Flipping through *RAW's* pages today, it is clear that the visual language of alternative comics expanded upon the visual rhetorics of the underground comix scene to incorporate new and innovative artistic styles. Underground comix had shown artists that the comics form was not defined by any particular age group, art style or subject matter; however, it was in the alternative comics that the visual language of the medium really proliferated and diversified.[205] *RAW* embraced comics creators whose work was intentionally ugly, non-linear and difficult to read.[206] It sought to present comics *as art,* and was recognized by underground comix icon Crumb as "an art object".[207] With diversity of style and content an essential aspect of the publication, *RAW* introduced national and international artists such as Charles Burns, Jacques Tardi,

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[201] Ibid.; Sabin, *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels,* 178.
[202] Mazur and Danner, *Comics: a Global History,* 184
[203] Jeet Heer, *In Love with Art: Françoise Mouly's Adventures in Comics with Art Spiegelman* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2013), 79.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Sabin, *Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels,* 182
[206] Mazur and Danner *Comics: a Global History, 1968-present,* 184
[207] as quoted by Heer, *In Love with Art,* 72.