

Introduction

The Anthropology of Capital

It is hard to comprehend that scarcely a decade separates the first and second collaborations between Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, so different are the two works in temperament, focus, and physiognomy. Despite its generally cool analytic demeanor, *Public Sphere and Experience* (1972) still bears distinctive traces of the late 1960s, an era that imagined itself on the brink of rupture with the existing capitalist order. Fueled by the antagonistic spirit of the protest movement, *Public Sphere and Experience* reads like a tactical program for engaging with contemporary social institutions and events still unfolding around it. The heart of the book, for example, is a spirited broadside against the media cartel of the day, whose stupefaction of the populace and gross ideological distortions could be corrected, the authors propose, only by reintegrating systematically obscured aspects of lived existence such as labor and family, production and intimacy, into the public sphere. Similarly, the book's basic distinction between two public spheres, one bourgeois and one proletarian, along with its many references to "capitalist interests," paints the kind of emphatic, high-contrast picture necessary for gathering political energies for historical action. Even the book's more historical elements, such as its critique of Communist Party strategy and the council systems of the 1920s, seek to revisit the earlier organizational failures of the Left in order to get "collective liberation" right this time.¹ To be sure, given its inexorably lucid analysis and the methodical exposition of its arguments, *Public Sphere and Experience* hardly resembles the occasional idiom that one finds in a manifesto, but the program that it presents still calls for political commitment, if not direct implementation. For those readers who still had the

events of '68 in recent memory, the book was a line drawn in the sand.

History and Obstinacy, by contrast, is an entirely different proposition. The second book may share the first collaboration's interest in the "microphysics of resistance" (*die Mikrophysik des Widerstands*), specifically, but much has changed in the interim. Gone by 1981 is the prominent role previously granted to the proletarian public sphere and to the proletariat itself as a subject of class resistance.² Along with the revolutionary agent of history, the bourgeoisie has also exited, its monopoly on state power giving way in *History and Obstinacy* to more capillary and diffuse mechanisms of control and authority. Tellingly, the second book is less concerned with the "capitalist" than with the generalized "logic of capital." Gone, too, is the hermeneutics of suspicion that fueled the first collaboration between Negt and Kluge, which had argued that "real history is taking place nonpublicly in the domain of production" and that, in the manner of classical *Ideologiekritik*, sought to correct false consciousness by revealing the truth of these obscured and "arcane" realms.³ Then there is the tone and scope of *History and Obstinacy*, a sprawling congeries of footnotes, excursuses, and illustrations that lacks the polemic élan of its predecessor and reads less like a political program than like an exhaustive reference work.⁴ While its analysis remains entirely grounded in the present—even for this 2014 edition, the authors have revised, expanded, and updated the text extensively—*History and Obstinacy* feels, as one commentator has observed, like a "message in a bottle,"⁵ a hermetic work addressed not to its contemporaries, but to posterity. Digging deep into the thousand-year rhythms of evolution and geology, as well as into the deep psychic structures of myth and the unconscious, *History and Obstinacy* prospects a temporality much different from that of *Public Sphere and Experience*, which still reflected the protest movement's optimism about the possibility of radical historical change. The slow, churning time of *History and Obstinacy* can be felt in the very scale of the project, which, at its original length of 1283 pages (here edited down to 430 pages in consultation with the authors), is almost four times greater than their first collaboration. A tome of this compass, which cannot be mastered in a single reading, lays claim to an entirely different economy of reception than a punctual manifesto. Its ideas must be acquired over time, through repeated

and intermittent forays. If *Public Sphere and Experience* drew a line in the sand, *History and Obstinacy* marks out the plot for a slow and careful archaeological dig into the prehistoric past.

What happened to precipitate such a striking change in the shared vision of Negt and Kluge? First, the 1970s happened. As the exuberance and optimism of the '68 revolts faded in the distance, along with the promise of dramatic social transformation that had motivated them, disappointment set in.⁶ Identity-based interest groups pluralized the revolutionary subject, although this diversity came at the cost of expedient political unity: a Marxist analytic that was at once totalizing and focused was now refracted into diffuse *Suchbewegungen*, prismatic movements that were searching for modes of political participation and cultural representation within a generalized "panorama of disorientation."⁷ In *Learning Processes with a Deadly Outcome* (1973), Kluge summarized the scene with his characteristic bluntness: "Withdrawal of meaning [*Sinnentzug*]. A social situation in which the collective program of human existence deteriorates at a rate faster than the ability to produce new programs of existence."⁸ In response to the likely deferral, if not definitive failure, of the revolutionary project, a melancholic German Left grew increasingly skeptical of the rhetoric of radical rupture, and entrenching itself for the long haul, turned toward distant historical epochs for solace and inspiration. One is reminded of how the *Annales* historian Fernand Braudel came to be interested in the *longues durées* of history: in times of "gloomy captivity," he once explained, when the light of universal history has grown dim, our attention drifts away from the day-to-day events taking place immediately before us and toward deep subterranean pulses of time and vast cycles that exceed the measure of individual endeavor.⁹ During such intervals of "decapitated time," as Denis Hollier has called them,¹⁰ people begin to eye the archaic past and the forgotten resources of deceased generations as possible sources of fuel to restart a depleted engine of progress. At these moments, utopia no longer seems to stand before us as a future to be realized, but, reversing its polarity, to lie behind us as a past to be recovered.

German culture of the 1970s is littered with artifacts from distant antiquity. Peter Weiss's monumental novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance* (1975), for example, tells of a German proletarian family that, after the Nazis have come to power, ensconces itself in a room where the

windows have all been papered over, and, cut off from the outside world, discusses the ideological contents and political serviceability of the gamut of Western civilization's achievements. Weiss's book uncovers a certain resemblance between the 1930s and the 1970s, two Thermidorian decades that in the wake of failed revolutions and with the accumulating threat of state violence began to scour the deep recesses of historical record and generational memory for surviving fragments of revolutionary experience.¹¹ Over this interminably long "age of lead" (*bleierne Zeit*), as the '70s were sometimes called,¹² history became slower and slower until finally stopping altogether in the fall of 1977, when the militarized leftist group The Red Army Faction murdered the industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer, killing along with him any lingering utopian sentiment from '68 or confidence in the possibility of purposeful and conscious political transformation.¹³ In response, the German government brutally reasserted its exclusive monopoly on violence. One of the most important productions of New German Cinema, the omnibus project *Germany in Autumn* (1978), provides a succinct record of the national imaginary at this historical moment, an imaginary dominated by a crepuscular iconography of funereal scenes and collective acts of mourning.

Although just as in the 1930s, the jarring events of this decade and the reality of state violence forced the German Left into the remote past, one should not be too quick to dismiss this turn to the past as nothing more than a symptom of quietism and political capitulation. For this interval of retrospection also contains a second aspect. As Kluge has recently observed in the DVD project *News from Ideological Antiquity*, it is precisely at moments of social dislocation and disturbance, when the present time is out of joint, that we begin fervently to seek "points of reference that lie outside of current events." Indeed, the more remote and immutable these points are, the more accurately they can help to establish our location within an unfolding present. In the same way that the unalterable and imperturbable stars in the sky assist seafarers to navigate shifting waters, faraway points of cultural reference located in distant epochs and contexts provide a source of tactical orientation at moments when history is no longer making sense.¹⁴

Meanwhile, as the Left was navigating this "panorama of disorientation in the 1970s," capitalism was itself mutating, not in its

fundamental logic, of course, but in its quarry. In response to the victories of the postwar decolonization movements, capitalism was evolving from a phase of overtly violent imperialist expansionism into one in which its energies were focused instead on exploiting the inner resources of the living subject. Using sociological and behaviorist approaches for managing “human capital,” neoliberal economics territorialized realms of existence that, although located beyond the formal bounds of the workplace and therefore previously ignored by classical quantitative economists, were now deemed essential for the efficient husbandry of the workforce. This shift in the strategy of capital from exploitation to “imploitation”¹⁵ forced Negt and Kluge to modify a number of the original theses of *Public Sphere and Experience*. For one thing, the book’s fundamental claim that the bourgeois public sphere had systematically excluded “the two most important areas of life: the whole of the industrial apparatus and socialization in the family”¹⁶—the claim that “essential and substantive experiential realms of human existence” such as labor and intimacy “are not organized publicly”¹⁷—was simply no longer tenable, given the success with which mass-cultural formations were able to integrate public relations, labor processes, and private existence into a single seamless circuit. In turn, the book’s corollary proposal to expose occulted spheres of production—a tactic that informed defining works of the late ’60s such as Erika Runge’s *Bottrop Protocols* (1968) and Günther Wallraff’s *13 Unwelcome Reports* (1969) and that can be traced back to Willi Münzenberg’s campaign in the 1920s to publish illegal photographs of factory interiors¹⁸—could no longer be considered a viable solution to the problem of false consciousness. Such previously hidden realms of production were now very much out in the open. In response to the generalized conditions of cultural spectacularization, which reached a tipping point in the 1970s, power interests changed their fundamental strategy from concealment and secrecy to display and exhibition. Negt has recently reflected upon how the political developments of 1970s compelled them to modify their original position:

The things that had appeared to be excluded from the bourgeois public sphere—production, labor and intimacy, specifically—underwent radical changes. As the result of closely orchestrated cooperation between the surveillance state, which smothered the right to political communication, and the capitalist media industry’s partial exploitation

of human needs and interests, the contexts of lived existence in the Federal Republic were expropriated in the 1970s, in particular, through the process of fragmenting and confining that Jürgen Habermas has called the *colonization of the life-world*.¹⁹

The increasing “colonization of the lifeworld” was not unique to Germany. Across the Rhein, French intellectuals confronted a similar situation. In 1978–79, Michel Foucault delivered his famous lectures on the birth of biopolitics, which examined the genealogy of liberogenic economic strategies and, through this historical reconstruction, presented a bleak assessment of the so-called “social state” that had emerged to manage populations of human capital.²⁰ He argued that the founding of the welfare state was motivated not by any altruistic concern for the well-being of the population, but by a need to regulate inherent imbalances in the mechanism of capital (for example, its natural tendency toward violent concentration) and thereby to guarantee the sustainability and longevity of its economic order. Building upon Rosa Luxemburg’s theses on accumulation, Foucault explained that the same expansionist impulses that once defined capitalism in the imperialist era were now being applied to investments made “at the level of man himself.”²¹ Negt and Kluge describe the transition from exploitation to implotation in similar terms: “In the same way that the Western mindset of the early nineteenth century thought that ‘empty’ continents inhabited by indigenous peoples were all that was left on earth to colonize, today, the enormous continents within the subjective landscape of the human appear uncultivated and unpopulated.”²² Approaching the limits of spatial extension and recognizing the finite number of global markets, capitalism began taking up residence in the inner space of man, establishing new sites of concentration in his body and psyche.²³

It is no accident that the theoretical vanguard that, in Foucault’s account, first mapped out the biopolitical turn—the Freiburg School of ordoliberal economics, with its conception of a “socialist market economy”—was based in Germany, of all places. As a largely landlocked nation whose imperial ambitions had always been limited (and historically belated) compared with those of its neighbors to the west, Germany was of necessity one of the first to redirect the expansionist energies inward, toward the populace. This “blockaded nation” was forced to become a social laboratory of

introjected imperialism long before other European nation-states.²⁴ Indeed, as the analysis of German fairy tales in *History and Obstinance* shows, biopolitical violence has haunted the collective imaginary of this Central European territory for centuries: from the tale about “smithing human beings so that they are able to work” (see “The Rejuvenated Little Old Man,” in Chapter 5) to the fabrication of the homunculus in Goethe’s *Faust*, which anticipates current prospects of genetic engineering with uncanny accuracy,²⁵ the German psyche has long been preoccupied with the theoretical and ethical questions raised by human capital. In contrast to the mythological traditions of Mediterranean countries, which depict lines of movement and feats of cunning, the German cultural imaginary, forged under geographical conditions of immobility, has focused instead on the problem of distinguishing the boundary between inside and outside. Whereas the itinerate, seafaring heroes of Greek myth have thus supplied the archetypes for bourgeois subjectivity during capitalism’s heroic, imperialist stage—consider, for example, the brilliant analysis of Odysseus’s adventures in Horkheimer and Adorno’s *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*—the characters in German folk tales and literature constitute the archetypes for subjectivity in capital’s new, postimperialist phase. Given recent transformations in the logic of capital, it could be argued that the collective noetic resources contained in the fairy tales of Germany have in fact superseded the Oedipuses and Odysseuses of ancient myth in currency, becoming indispensable assets for human existence today, when we are faced with countless incursions into and disturbances of the ecology of the human subject. In their analysis of “The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids,” for example, Negt and Kluge emphasize the importance the story places on the ability to differentiate between an intimate who can be trusted and an intruder who must be kept out. The questions raised by this tale are ultimately of an epistemological nature: On what basis can we recognize a threat from without? What belongs properly to the self, and what is foreign? Further: Where is the line that divides subject from object?²⁶ For Negt and Kluge, the complex and artful epistemology of German fairy tales exercises our *Unterscheidungsvermögen*, the faculty of critical distinction, cultivating a sophisticated cognitive framework on a par with today’s highly mediated world in which the distinction between self and other, like that between human and thing, has dissolved into sprawling and

diffuse actor networks. At the historical transition when capital has shifted its locus to targets within the human subject, our capacity to distinguish between inside and outside has become increasingly important, if not vital to our very survival. These tales are the “instruments of thought” for our age.²⁷

Out of the biopolitical laboratory of Central Europe emerges *History and Obstinacy*, a book that its authors describe as an investigation into “the capitalism within us.” Despite receiving little public attention at the time of its appearance, not to speak of substantive critical engagement, it is a book that is increasingly acknowledged to be the nucleus of Negt and Kluge’s three decades of collaboration. It has been justifiably heralded as the missing half of *Capital*, a project that Marx left unfinished at the time of his death.²⁸ Whereas Marx’s opus supplied the foundational analysis of the forces of production in all of their objectivated, material formats, ranging from factory machinery to communication technologies, but left the organic dimension of capitalism largely unexamined, *History and Obstinacy* at last examines the other, human side of political economy: the living forces of production, the anthropology of labor power, the soft tissue of capitalism. It takes seriously Raymond Williams’s insight that “the most important thing a worker ever produces is himself.”²⁹ What happens, Negt and Kluge likewise propose, when we apply the tools of Marx’s analysis not to dead labor, but to its living and breathing counterpart, to the subject? “Can capital say ‘I’?” they ask in Chapter 3, the book’s nerve center. The answer is a breathtaking archaeology of the attributes of Western man as they have developed over the last two thousand years. Like *Public Sphere and Experience*, this book is designed to “open the analytic concepts of political economy downward, toward the real experience of human beings,”³⁰ but *History and Obstinacy* now extends this analysis all the way down to the lowest strata of unconscious thought and cellular life. To do this, it dives below the surface of discrete historical events and the life spans of individuals, descending into the deep temporalities of collective memory and the slow pulses of evolutionary cycles.

History and Obstinacy supplements classic political economy with elements from disciplines not typically admitted into the orthodox Marxist hermeneutic, fields ranging from phenomenology and mythology to evolutionary science and systems theory. In its non-linear construction, historical breadth, and catholic methodology,

History and Obstinacy is comparable only to the philosophical nomadism of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, which had appeared one year before, although without direct impact on Negt and Kluge's work.³¹ Both books renounce the Left's infatuation with heroic dramas of historical rupture, turning instead toward the subversive energies and potentials located in the multidimensional processes of geology, chemistry, and biology. (Both, it could be added, come precariously close to the territory proposed in Friedrich Engels's *Dialectics of Nature*, even if the recourse to scientific positivism in *History and Obstinacy* never decenters the humanist subject or naturalizes the movement of the dialectic quite as radically as Engels did.)³² Foremost among the theoretical instruments used by Negt and Kluge to explore the political economy of labor power is the apparatus of psychoanalysis, which complements Marx's sophisticated analysis of machine capital with a correspondingly nuanced account of the subjective dimensions of capital and its complex intervention into the human psyche. "Like the whole of preceding history in general, the outside world of industry governs our inner world and establishes powerful forces (of motivation, of the capacity for distinction, of feeling), a kind of parallel regime that merges with our classical psychic equipment," notes Kluge.³³

Unlike fixed capital, whose historical development follows a tempo that is mechanical and predictable, human capital for Negt and Kluge is an unstable assemblage of dissimilar and often ill-fitting components, some flexible and some obstinate, some acquired (for example, education and socialization) and some endogenous (for example, genetic disposition and anatomy). Together, all of these elements form a delicate, dynamic, and highly reactive subjective economy. While machine capital does not observe any inherent limits or proportions—it accumulates exponentially, in the manner of a logical algorithm—living labor, by contrast, always follows principles of measure. It possesses a sense of harmonious balance that capital lacks. This is in fact what makes *History and Obstinacy's* proposed analysis of the political economy of human capital such a Gordian task, for unlike the simple linear development of fixed capital, living labor power occupies multiple dimensions (sensory, intellectual, psychic, physiological), many of which are incompatible with one another,³⁴ but all of which are together subordinated to a basic law of self-regulation. Within the metastable system of the

organic subject, each force always summons an equivalent counterforce and is offset by what Negt and Kluge call “balance labor.” The laborer meets every abstract operation with a corresponding feat of concretion, every act of violent coercion with one of intransigent willfulness. In this way, *Homo compensator*, as Kluge sometimes calls this subject,³⁵ establishes the equilibrium that is necessary for survival. Faced with the complexity of this subjective ecology, Negt and Kluge respond by extending the parameters of what constitutes labor far beyond the limited forms of valorized work normally recognized by classical economics: for them, political economy must address not only the mechanisms of production and their quantifiable output of material commodities, but also the qualitative counterstrategies that the working organism is forced to develop as a result of its need for self-regulation and stability. Chapter 3 provides a concise *Denkbild*, or thought image, for this process, a female welder who pauses intermittently at work to sweep her arms back in the “winglike fashion” of a bird: here, the system of mechanized labor provokes a corresponding act of balance labor in the working subject, a Deleuzian becoming bird that counteracts the becoming machine of the Taylorized workplace.³⁶ “In this respect, the balance economy is in fact an economy, albeit under specific conditions.”³⁷

In order to provide a properly dialectical account of the labor process, then, *History and Obstinance* attends to the compensatory activities that are necessary for the reproduction and maintenance of human capital, taking into consideration not just the physical labor of the assembly-line worker, but also, for example, the cognitive labor of the intelligentsia, the affective labor of the circus clown, and the reproductive labor of the parent. For Negt and Kluge, labor processes extend far beyond the walls of the workplace, reaching into distant realms seemingly unconnected to what we normally recognize as work: in their discussion of warfare, for example, they note a morphological resemblance between the movements that an army uses to “process” an enemy and those that are found in factory production; likewise, their analysis of rituals of erotic intimacy suggests that these tender *Feingriffe*, or “precision grips,” share the same ontogenetic origins as the sensitive labor gestures used by the machine operator. (More on this below.)

An Inversion Machine

The anthropological foundations for this natural history of capital is man's status as a "deficient," or "auxotrophic," mutant (*Mangelmutant*), a being that "depends on specific associations with others because it is not metabolically autonomous."³⁸ Here, Negt and Kluge draw from two currents of thought, philosophical anthropology and psychoanalysis, which have both argued that humans, unlike other animals, are born into the world ill equipped and featureless, lacking the concrete material resources necessary to survive out in the world. For this reason, Arnold Gehlen, perhaps the most significant philosophical anthropologist of the twentieth century, defined man as a "deficient" or "defective being" (*Mängelwesen*).³⁹ At once a source of profound disorientation and existential freedom, both a liability and an opportunity, man's fundamental deficiency engenders a cultural imperative in this "vulnerable, needy, exposed being" who makes up for its ontological poverty by devising artificial constructions in language and technology, symbols, and instrumentation.⁴⁰ In this way, human defects are compensated through acts of labor, Gehlen explained.⁴¹ In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud similarly described how the creaturely infant enters into the world as a "helpless suckling," although this lamentable "inch of nature" eventually constructs technological organs as substitutes for the evolutionary equipment that it lacked at birth. Thus, suggested Freud, man is thrown into the world prematurely, without having gestated fully,⁴² but he will build for himself a "house as a substitute for the mother's womb," for example.⁴³ Through such supplementations, the "deficient being" (Gehlen) transforms himself into a "prosthetic god" (Freud).⁴⁴ With reference to Gehlen, Kluge describes this dialectic as follows: "On the one hand, we are deficient beings [*Mängelwesen*]. We are naked, poor, and lacking. Our faults are sometimes also our virtues. . . . On the other hand, we are prepared: we have been armed with constructions that required 4.2 billion years of existence on this blue planet—the planet *on* which we have emerged and *with* which we have emerged, together, in a most improbable way."⁴⁵

If evolutionary development can be described as a process of increasing specialization and differentiation that allows an organism to thrive within its particular environment, then the negative anthropology of the "deficient being" presents us with a certain

paradox, namely, that humans, unlike other animals, have stopped evolving. Based on morphological analysis of our anatomy, for example, Gehlen argued that we resemble nothing so much as fetal monkeys whose growth was stunted at an early developmental phase: our organs undifferentiated, our bodies hairless and exposed, our neural mass lamentably uncoordinated, but for that reason also extremely plastic and adaptable, we are unfinished and open to the world. Gehlen would in fact go so far as to argue, against Freud, that man is born lacking even the hard-wired impulses—the psychic drives—necessary to orient him in the world and for this reason requires fixed social institutions and rituals to give meaning to his life.⁴⁶ Like the physical technologies that endow this open and shifting being with a prosthetic anatomy, culture and tradition must therefore furnish man with life instincts, vital programming that nature had denied him.

Gehlen thus argues that the development of our species reached a conclusion some time in the past, at which point the site of human evolution began to migrate outward, beyond the perimeter of our bodies. Walter Benjamin summarized the paradox well, pointing out that the individual human organism stopped evolving anatomically long ago, but that mankind qua “species being” (*Gattungswesen*) has only recently started to evolve collectively: “Man [*Mensch*] as a species completed its development thousands of years ago; but mankind [*Menschheit*] as a species is just beginning his. In technology, a *physis* is being organized through which mankind’s contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it had in nations and families.”⁴⁷ Evolution no longer takes place within our bodies, but between them, as it were. Our species evolution thus follows a curiously centrifugal course: the more the human perfects itself, the more its being is objectivated in the artifacts of technology and culture. The philosopher Bernard Stiegler recently designated this movement of exteriorization as “epiphylogenesis,” the development of the biological species through external, inorganic means.⁴⁸ In the work of Negt and Kluge, this development recapitulates the familiar circuit of the Hegelian diremption, an ontology of alienation in which the anthropological machine that we call “man” individuates and achieves subjectivity through a two-part process, first by splitting and projecting itself and then by reappropriating those objectivated fragments of self from the world around it.

Since this process is ongoing and constant throughout the life of the individual, extending even into advanced adulthood, Negt and Kluge emphasize the importance of “learning processes” (*Lernprozesse*) as an anthropotechnical injunction: for humans, who lack the innate programming of other animals, sociality and shared existence must be practiced and performed, again and again.⁴⁹ Human life, Giorgio Agamben similarly writes, is “what cannot be defined, yet precisely for this reason, must be ceaselessly articulated and divided.”⁵⁰ We are works in progress forever engaged with our own self-fashioning.

This understanding of the human as a deficient and therefore ontologically groundless creature belongs to a tradition of thought that long precedes Freud and Gehlen. Before the twentieth century, it appeared in Nietzsche’s description of man as the “not yet determined animal” (*das noch nicht festgestellte Tier*) and in Johann Gottfried Herder’s essay *On the Origin of Language* (1772), which defined the human negatively vis-à-vis the determinate abilities and fixed contours of other animals. Indeed, as Negt observes, existential apprehensiveness about the unfathomability and pluripotentiality of man is as old as philosophy itself, discernible already in the words of *Antigone*’s chorus: “Many are the wonders [*δεινὰ*, strange and mysterious, but also terrible and powerful], none / is more wonderful than what is man.”⁵¹ This negative anthropology of the “deficient being” has motivated thought across the political spectrum. Take the case of Gehlen, a social conservative who joined the National Socialist party in 1933: for him, man’s ontological lack generates a need for control, constraint, formalized convention, and authority to provide relief (*Entlastung*) from the existential pressures of indeterminacy. Whereas Freud argued that man’s premature birth and his protracted extrauterine gestation, by contrast, form the basis for “the need to be loved which will accompany the child through the rest of its life”: in this way, the helplessness experienced by the “auxotrophic” human infant constitutes the biological foundation of intimacy and intersubjectivity.⁵² Thus, despite very different political agendas, both Gehlen and Freud recognize that it is man’s basic condition of lack and dependency that perforce makes him a pre-eminently social animal.

Negt traces this notion of the social animal back to Aristotle’s definition of man as *zoon politikon*, a form of life that requires the

polis for its self-realization.⁵³ It is a notion that constitutes the cornerstone of Marx's anthropology, as well: "The human being is in the most literal sense a *zoon politikon*," Marx writes, "not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself [*sich vereinzeln*] only in the midst of society."⁵⁴ This political ontology is evident even in our physical architecture, literally in our bones. "Humans were not designed for balance," Negt and Kluge write. Our upright gait suggests a process of constantly tumbling forward, of walking and falling at the same time. Even a "soldier at attention does not so much maintain his balance as rotate around an imaginary point of equilibrium," and is therefore unstable and prone to stumble.⁵⁵ What is more, as they note in the book's final image on page 441, certain parts of our anatomy such as the hip's weak femoral neck, are designed to fracture with this inevitable fall. But this inescapable fracture is not an evolutionary flaw in our construction. Here, the defect of the isolated person (*Mensch*) turns out to be an asset of the species (*Menschheit*), an opportunity for the *Mängelwesen* to realize its potential within the collective body: since a person immobilized by a broken hip must be cared for lest he or she die, the weak femoral neck of this deficient being serves as a natural mechanism to guarantee interdependency with others, forcing autonomous individuals out of their self-sufficiency and insuring that each remains a "being that presupposes society," as Negt and Kluge put it.⁵⁶ This is the "violence of relationality."

In addition to augmenting the anatomy of man, who acquires a new prosthetic *physis* in the collective, the evolutionary mechanism of exteriorization also transforms the fabric of human consciousness. Like the body, thought, too, leaves its center, migrating out into the world of cultural artifacts that range from alphabetic writing to industrial factories (the "open book of human psychology," Marx called them). According to Gehlen, this displacement of man's cognitive faculties outward generates a "hiatus," or opening, between willed action and its effect. This interval, which takes the form of a dissociation between the needs of the present and the contexts for their gratification, makes the human into "an anticipatory creature," he wrote: "Like Prometheus, man is oriented toward what is removed, what is not present in time and space; in contrast to the animal, he lives for the future and not in the present."⁵⁷ As direct manual engagement with the world is diverted through various arti-

facts, a gap opens between the subject and its environment, a delay that engenders the experience of time itself and that marks us, in Heidegger's words, as fundamentally "historial" beings. Through cognitive acts of protention and retention, the human perforates the immediate sensation of the present with past and future events, giving rise to a complex temporality full of deferred actions, nonsynchronicities, anticipations, and recollections. Kluge likewise writes of the "uncanniness of time" (*die Unheimlichkeit der Zeit*)⁵⁸, since the temporality of being is always experienced as something that is simultaneously both familiar and strange, both ours and alien, both intrinsic and yet also disquietingly inauthentic and external. Commenting on Heidegger's idea of historial being, Stiegler has noted that the "temporality of the human, which marks it off among other living beings, presupposes exteriorization and prostheticity: there is time only because memory is 'artificial,' becoming constituted as already-there *since* its 'having been placed outside of the species.'"⁵⁹

By fashioning a "second nature" in which to live, humans distance themselves from the "first nature" of their organic body, acquiring in the process a bank of memories that are collective, but for this very reason also uncannily foreign. Many different times are coursing within this historial animal, some punctual and primary, others repetitive and cyclical. "Short and long times coexist within the same body and mind," Kluge writes.⁶⁰ This insight is reflected in the formal construction of *History and Obstnacy*, whose montage composition, which interleaves dense theoretical passages and pithy narrative sketches together with diagrams, photographs, and other images, is designed to link up and bring into dialogue the disparate temporalities that otherwise remain disjoined within the subject. Negt and Kluge's method of splicing together fragments of experience and language that are circulating at different cognitive speeds induces a learning process in the reader: "Nothing is more instructive than intermixing different scales of time," Kluge observes.⁶¹

Kluge has noted in an essay on the ecology of consciousness that "the distance between feeling and action"—Gehlen's hiatus—has gradually increased over the course of the development of our species. One illustration from this essay depicts an evolutionary ancestor of ours and suggests that the bridge of nerves connecting this creature's brain to the extremities of its limbs grew longer with evolution toward *Homo sapiens* and that furthermore, our reaction

time as a species slowed down with this development. With the expansion of this interval between brain and hands, between thinking and doing, our involvement in and connection to the world grew more attenuated. We became more absent than present. Here Kluge adduces Herder, the founder of philosophical anthropology, who proposed that “we differ from animals not in the fact that we develop, but in the fact that we do so cautiously and slowly.”⁶² Thus, as our species evolves outward through epiphylogenesis and our collective forms of symbolic mediation grow more intricate and tangled, the delay between consciousness and action grows ever longer. To give one memorable example from *History and Obstinacy*: the American response to the events of 9/11, which was to dispatch an aircraft carrier to New York in defense the city, would have been an appropriate reaction to Pearl Harbor, but was entirely out of place within the new historical scenario of asymmetrical partisan warfare. In other words, the military reacted to the terrorist attack of 2001 with a strategy from 1941. History is slowly dilating. This collective process of gradual deceleration is evident at the level of individual experience, as well, on the ontogenetic register: unlike other creatures, the human infant, again, is not “subordinated to a program” that has been preestablished by nature (instinct), but learns gradually and cautiously, its emerging consciousness taking root, Kluge proposes, in “the gaps of its sluggishness.”⁶³ In acquiring language, for example, the developing child takes leave of the world in its sensory immediacy and learns to engage instead with signs that stand in for absent people and objects. Time becomes complex, involuted, uncanny.

We are, in sum, beings out of synch with the world around us. Despite our status as auxotrophic mutants that, in Negt and Kluge’s words, “presuppose society,” humans are fundamentally alone, cut off from their conspecifics.⁶⁴ Even the libido, the drive that promises to connect us to the primary realm of embodied pleasure and the supposed basis of human relationality, is essentially blind,⁶⁵ easily duped by substitute objects or tricked into circuitous schemes of sublimatory gratification. Despite efforts to connect with the world, the brain, the seat of human consciousness, remains a windowless monad that floats suspended within a hard skull that blocks all direct access to the world outside. In order to penetrate the walls of this ossiferous prison, external sensory data must undergo a complex

process of translation and synthesis.⁶⁶ With reference to Freud, Negt and Kluge consequently define the human as “an inversion machine,” a life form that engineers time through strategies of condensation and displacement, encyphering experience and then rearranging the resulting code. All experience, they write, takes shape through a “series of necessary distortions.”⁶⁷ Like the media historian Bernhard Siegert, who has argued that subjectivity is little more than an effect of relays and lags in transmission,⁶⁸ Negt and Kluge suggest that the “distance between feeling and action” defines us as a species. Indeed, such detours, delays, and retardations, Kluge writes, are “precisely the core of the human and of the living.”⁶⁹ Thus, for all of the emancipatory power that the collaborations of Negt and Kluge have vested in the category of “experience” (*Erfahrung*) as the root of material particularity and as a source of resistance to capitalism’s principle of abstraction, empirical experience, for them, is neither primary nor pure. It is not given, but hard won, assembled through acts of labor. (It is revealing that in German, experiences are actively *made*—“man *macht* Erfahrungen”—while in English, a language that has nursed so many positivist philosophies, experiences are instead passively *had*.) Already, by the second illustration of *History and Obstinacy*, for example, Negt and Kluge have pointed out that “the eye works” (p. 75), that this organ of perception is not an indifferent photographic plate, but a biased and highly specialized muscle that searches the visual array in a procedure more akin to scanning than to contemplating. The eye doesn’t simply “take in,” but synthesizes. Against the epiphanic epistemology that, since Lessing’s *Laokoon*, has granted phenomenological immediacy to the image, Negt and Kluge show here that vision is never in fact punctual. Every sensation takes time. And indeed, the ornamental tracery of the ocular movements in this illustration resembles nothing so much as a complex graffito, an elaborate text that is gradually inscribed over time. Vision, like writing, is sedimented with traces and delays. It is *éspace*, to use Derrida’s phrase.

Here, Negt and Kluge follow the precedent of their Frankfurt School mentor, Adorno, whose aesthetic preference for time- and language-based arts such as music and literature over the visual arts was underwritten by a deep-seated skepticism about the image’s claim to sensory plenitude. Kluge observes that “Adorno’s relationship to film was based on the principle: ‘I enjoy going to the movies;

the only thing that bothers me is the picture on the screen.”⁷⁰ In his own practice as a filmmaker — which, by his own admission, has always remained secondary to his textual production⁷¹ — Kluge has consequently emphasized the interval between the shots over the shots themselves. He likes to remind us that “on average, half of the time spent in a movie theater is darkness.”⁷² Not the image, but its negation, not presence, but absence, is the basic unit out of which his films are assembled. *Ecce homo clausus*: a blind monad sitting in the dark.

Be that as it may, man’s existential absence is not an entirely bad thing. For Negt and Kluge, it is also key to many of the distinctive successes and accomplishments of our species. The gap between mind and sensation is a source of alienation, but our absentmindedness is also the wellspring of the imagination and its salvatory promise. Writing on the imagination, Sartre explained that it is by distancing itself from the empirical exigencies of the present, from Heideggerian *in-der-Welt-sein*, that the mind is able to shatter a monolithic and indifferent world “as totality” and reconfigure it anew according to models that are more hospitable, more human.⁷³ Such an anthropology of the imagination was anticipated already in Marx’s *Grundrisse*, which famously observed that “what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax.”⁷⁴ For Kluge, in turn, the powers of the artistic imagination are predicated on an ability to remove oneself from the world, to close one’s eyes and withdraw into the solipsism of dreams. On the subject of writing, for example, he urges that “you have to leave gaps in prose,”⁷⁵ intervals of absence; he likewise describes film as a medium that “comes into being” not on the screen before our eyes, but “in the spectator’s head.”⁷⁶ He consequently situates the seat of human intelligence in the blockades in and diversions from our traffic with the real. “Why is human thought slow?” Kluge asks one of his regular interlocutors, Dirk Baecker. The latter replies, “thought is slow because that’s its only chance. Thought means stopping short, hesitating, not reacting immediately, inhibiting reflexes, meeting instinct with mistrust, and only then doing something.”⁷⁷ These delays and hesitations reflect what Kluge identifies as the fundamentally “anti-realistic attitude” of human thought and fantasy, a defiant attitude that raises “protest against an unbearable reality,” against *in-der-Welt-sein*.⁷⁸

Negt and Kluge's recurring emblem for human intelligence, borrowed from their teachers Adorno and Horkheimer, is the land snail, a sensitive animal that retracts into its shell when overstimulated or confronted with danger. Isolation and stupidity, not action and intervention, is the properly human response to what Horkheimer called *Wahrheitssadismus*, the sadism of reality.⁷⁹ Following Benjamin, who once remarked to Adorno that philosophical concretion can be achieved only by taking leave of the sensuous world and setting out "through the frozen desert of abstraction" (*durch die Eiswüste der Abstraktion*),⁸⁰ Kluge speculates that the human capacities for distinction and higher symbolic reasoning first emerged in the Pleistocene era, when the globe was covered with ice and the experiences of warmth and of being at home in the world were but a distant genetic memory.⁸¹ As reality turned sadistic and inhospitable, man recoiled and began to think.

Refusing the brutal exigencies of the present, thought shrinks away from the Now and seeks refuge in the intervals established with this delay. Cognition is always behind the times, especially at moments of rapid political upheaval, when history leaps erratically and unpredictably ahead of consciousness: "Thoughts cannot follow revolutionary action," Negt and Kluge write: "They are slow. Gradually they begin to arrive five days after the action."⁸² For this reason, theory — which for them remains necessarily *critical* theory — should never be translated directly into practice, whatever the militants may think. Instead of trying to keep pace with the breakneck speed of reality, we need to slow it down, to arrest and capture it so as to make it comprehensible. For Negt and Kluge, this inhibiting function is one of the defining virtues of poetic constructions, especially in the contemporary age of turbocapitalism.⁸³ "Faced with unendurable experiences, [poetry] creates vessels, labyrinths, spirals that slow down the horror so that we can experience it through the senses without being injured by it, so that the feelers of the snail — our sensitivity — can remain outstretched, even though it goes against human nature to experience horror at all."⁸⁴ In both his prose and his films, Kluge's oeuvre teems with examples of events that have been manipulated temporally in order to render their underlying structure fathomable. Through these manipulations, he aims to produce what he calls *Zeitorte*, sites where, as in the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky,⁸⁵ time condenses and regains an auratic

dimension of permanence and duration (*Dauer*)⁸⁶ so that these moments “give back more time than they cost.”⁸⁷

Obstinate Traits

It is a popular misconception that the last ice age ended ten thousand years ago. The Enclosure Acts of the late eighteenth century, which fulfilled the several-centuries-long campaign to separate the peasants from the shared resources of the commons, inaugurated a new glacial period, the inhospitable “stream of cold” (*Kältestrom*) in which we live today. Thus began the era of high capitalism, an epoch characterized by division, distance, calculation, and icy abstraction in social relations.⁸⁸ Negt and Kluge describe the fundamental mechanism of capital’s expansion as a process of *Trennung*, or “separation,” that takes place simultaneously in two different registers, one economic and the other phenomenological.⁸⁹ On the one hand, there is the division of the laboring subject from the means of production, brought about historically through the forcible separation of the peasant from the land and the physical migration of those subjects into urban areas. If, as Ernst Bloch once wrote, the premodern peasant “still held the means of production in its hands,” in being separated from the land, the laboring subject now loses its hold on these means.⁹⁰ Previously “embedded in a working and living community that occurred naturally,”⁹¹ the laborer now becomes “free and rightless” (*vogelfrei*, in Marx’s language). In other words, the laborer becomes proletarianized. According to Negt and Kluge this foundational act of expropriation (*Enteignung*), which Marx called the moment of “primitive accumulation,” is not just a historical event that can be traced back to the enclosure initiatives and their transformation of the commons into private property. It is an ongoing process by which the logic of capital is interiorized and reproduced, over and over, within the individual subject. (Marx himself suggested as much when he described primitive accumulation as an “encounter” [*ein Gegenübertreten*] or a set of relations [*das Kapitalverhältnis*] that “reproduces itself on a constantly extending scale.”)⁹² Today, the properties that capitalism targets for appropriation are not spatial territories found out there in the world, but the personal assets located within us, properties such as “the capacity for learning, discipline, the capacity for abstraction, punctuality.” In this way, “the violence migrates inward,” notes Negt.⁹³ For Negt

and Kluge, primitive accumulation is less a discrete historical event in the past than a permanent and continuous campaign to expropriate subjective capacities,⁹⁴ or, as others have written, an “endlessly iterated event”⁹⁵ that results in a “basic ontology of alienation.”⁹⁶

This process of dividing and requisitioning the capacities of the laborer can only ever be a partial and limited operation. “‘Expropriation,’ or ‘the permanence of primitive accumulation,’ which is the same thing, [is a process] that relates to separate or several human characteristics, but never to entire people,” explains Negt.⁹⁷ The total subordination of multidimensional life to the linear, mechanical logic of capital is simply unsustainable, since, as experience has shown, such forms of outright depredation quickly result in the death of the worker.⁹⁸ So instead of commandeering the body of the worker in toto, capital pursues a more discerning “microphysics of power.”⁹⁹ “Since Marx, we have known that capital would optimally renounce living labor entirely, if it could still make profit that way,”¹⁰⁰ but since it can’t in fact forego its organic half, capital instead chooses to underwrite and develop certain human abilities “like a hothouse” (*treibhausmäßig*), while allowing other capacities to stagnate and go to seed (*verwildern*). This strategy may allow for the basic reproduction and maintenance of living labor, but in the course of overcultivating a limited set of very specific capacities, capital still deforms the natural ecology of the human body and psyche, making the biological self-regulation of the subject increasingly difficult. Capital’s one-sided investments in living labor power, to repeat, lack any sense of proportion and balance.¹⁰¹ Characteristics that can be readily monetized are singled out and quickly overbuilt, while those with no immediate value are left fallow and drift into the netherworld of the collective unconscious. For every trait that is capitalized, another is shunted aside. As a result, alongside a primary economy of labor traits established through the historical mode of production there emerges within the human subject a secondary, black-market economy, where, isolated from the authority of the ego and capital’s logic of valorization, repressed and derealized traits take on an intransigent life of their own. “Whenever something is repressed, it becomes autonomous and intractable,” Negt and Kluge observe.¹⁰² Capital’s violent expropriation is countered by the subject with obstinacy, *Ent-eignung* with *Eigen-sinn*. Like Marx’s old mole, a favorite image of Negt and Kluge,¹⁰³ marginalized traits

vanish from sight, but, exiled to the hinterlands of the psyche, they do not die. Instead, they mutate and enter into unexpected alliances with other capacities. Once taken out of circulation, these obstinate traits—“more durable than concrete”¹⁰⁴—seethe below the threshold of consciousness, where they grow even stronger and more resistant to subsumption by capital. To use a term central to the thought of Negt and Kluge, these subdominant traits are *unterschätzt*, in two senses: “undervalued” by capital, they have little worth and are held in low regard, but precisely for this reason, they are also “underestimated” as potential sources of revolutionary force.

The word *Eigensinn*—rendered variously into English as “autonomy,”¹⁰⁵ “willfulness,”¹⁰⁶ “self-will,”¹⁰⁷ and, here, “obstinacy”—implies a degree of stubborn obtuseness, an imperviousness to directives from above. Hegel, for example, famously defined *Eigensinn* as “a freedom” that is “enmeshed in servitude.”¹⁰⁸ Kluge, in turn, describes *Eigensinn* as “the guerrilla warfare [*Partisanentum*] of the mind.”¹⁰⁹ Obstinacy is the underside of history: for each entry in the valorized record of human culture—a record that, as Benjamin wrote, is always a documentation of barbarism¹¹⁰—a countervailing act of obstinacy pushes back against the thrust of so-called “progress”; for each luminous vista cleared by instrumental reason, a dense scotoma of stupidity emerges to blight the view; for every human trait that is singled out and capitalized, a resistant trait gathers force underground. “It is not . . . some primal ‘self’ that has *Eigensinn*, but rather a whole range of historically acquired and developed skills, drives, capacities, each of which makes its own ‘stubborn’ demands and has its own distinct ‘meaning,’” writes Fredric Jameson about Negt and Kluge: “Such forces, however, can be residual or emergent; they often fail to be used to capacity; and their unemployment generates specific pathologies, as does their repression, alienation, or diversion.”¹¹¹ Here, the differential method of Negt and Kluge is more dialectical than psychoanalysis is, with its foundational ontology of the drives. For them, emancipating repressed traits in the way in which radical Freudians such as Wilhelm Reich and Otto Gross proposed to liberate the drives will not bring about sustainable social transformation, since, according to Negt and Kluge, the valorization of these declassed traits will cause only further imbalances within the economy of the subject. For them, the solution lies not in the spontaneist “infantile disorders

of the Left” (to recall Lenin’s memorable formulation), but in the careful recalibration of the political economy of labor so that these marginalized characteristics and feelings can enter into an enduring configuration with other traits. What is needed, then, is a new psychological subject. Without the stable framework that such a subject provides, these volatile energies will continue their twilight existence, erupting only fleetingly in the gaps of consciousness and at moments of felicitous stupidity.

Since these unruly traits do not answer to any ego, they lead a life independent of the humanist subject, transecting and joining individual biographies according to their own patterns, cycles, and historical periodicities. And since they are not the property of any one “self,” such traits do not simply disappear with the death of the individual. Rather, like the “obstinate child” who, in the eponymous Grimms’ fairy tale discussed on pages 291–94, refuses to be put to rest and continues stubbornly to thrust forth its arm from the grave where it has been buried, these uncontrollable traits continue their insurgency from the afterlife, defying the authority and will of the society that seeks to repress them. These traits inhabit the temporality of the deep historical cycles that Braudel, in his theorization of the *longue durée*, designated as the time of the “conjuncture”—the time of enduring *habitus* and collective institutions, which is located somewhere between the slow geological pulse of structural history, on the one hand, and the “microhistory” of individual biographies and political events, on the other.¹¹² “So you take it as given that the individual faculties of labor have their own history?” one interviewer asked Negt and Kluge after the publication of *History and Obstinacy*. “Yes, certain faculties of labor have been taken out of circulation,” Kluge responded: “The division between private and public traverses all of history, not just that of capitalism, where this division of course is particularly exacerbated. Because they work in the manner of a mole, faculties of labor that have been taken out of circulation can once again be reactivated even after two or three hundred years.” To this Negt added:

But this mole is also there in plain view. It is of no interest to us whether a trait that can be emancipated exists within an integral system or has been taken out of circulation. Just because a working trait came into existence and was cultivated within a capitalist context or within the laboratories of the Third Reich such as the *Organisation Todt* doesn’t

make it more stable than any other. Just like any other, it can also be reconstellated.¹¹³

The real agents of history, then, are not the Napoleons, the Goethes, or any of the other celebrated figures whose names we associate with revolution and innovation. Nor do Negt and Kluge bestow this distinction on any particular social estate or class identity. For them, the actual subjects of history are instead the enduring capacities themselves, the cache of properties out of which the auxotrophic mutant assembles its identity. Each such trait is a “splendid natural force in its own right,” as Jameson puts it.¹¹⁴ The class known as the bourgeoisie, for example, is not some kind of elementary social substance, but merely a label that identifies one specific arrangement, one particular economy, of more fundamental and enduring traits that began to coalesce historically at a moment toward the end of the Middle Ages. It is a stabilized configuration of aptitudes for things such as work discipline and compound accumulation, combined with a psychological disposition toward deferred gratification and value abstraction. But no steadfast boundary divides the bourgeoisie categorically from the proletariat. Indeed, disenfranchised proletarian traits occasionally erupt within the bourgeois subject, perturbing its regular psychic economy.

For Negt and Kluge, one of the chief differences between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is that the former possesses a stable historical configuration and psychological identity, while the latter does not. Here they touch upon a persistent asymmetry within Marxist theory: whereas the capitalist, a position defined by the economic mode of production, has a political and psychological counterpart in the bourgeois class, the proletariat, also an economic category, has no such equivalent representative in the realm of political ideology.¹¹⁵ Negt and Kluge consequently write not of an integral proletarian subject, but of proletarian traits, in the plural. In this regard, they move beyond an essentialist conception of the proletariat, a social category that traditional Marxist criticism mistakenly tailored to the contours of the humanist individual. They use the word “proletarian” not as a “concept for a substance,”¹¹⁶ but as a placeholder for the sum of the repressed characteristics of man. For there is no proletarian subject, properly speaking. At least not yet. Underwritten by cultural technologies ranging from the *Bildungs-*

roman to single-point perspective, the bourgeois self learned several centuries back to stand at the center of its universe and say “I,” *ego*. But the vital question, posed by Negt and Kluge at the beginning of Chapter 3, is whether *capital* is itself similarly capable of doing so.¹¹⁷ In other words: Can the proletariat become a stable and self-identical subject? Can it lay claim to an ego?

Marx provided no answer this question. He presented a road map for revolutionary transformation, but he did not provide a psychological profile of its agent. “As a singular substantive which implies the representation of a personality responsible for a historical mission,” the word “proletariat” “almost never appears in *Capital*,” notes Étienne Balibar.¹¹⁸ In his own study of *Capital*, Brecht, too, observed that proletarian subjectivity remained for Marx necessarily multiple: “Marx addresses the workers with a new name: as *proletarians* (not as proletariat).”¹¹⁹ Brecht consequently described the revolutionary masses as a protean liquid that is diffuse, undifferentiated, and shapeless. One of his film scripts from 1931, entitled “The Bruise,” characterized them as follows: gathered “in a mute march, transparent and faceless,” the masses “are coming together, they are marching, their ranks are closed, as wide as the streets, they fill everything, like water, they seep through everything, like water, they have no substance.”¹²⁰ This line, which is composed, indicatively, in a single flowing cascade of words, reveals two important features of proletarian traits. On the one hand, these traits are highly mobile and difficult to contain or capture. They move along those vectors that Deleuze and Guattari famously called *lignes de fuite* (a phrase that “covers not only the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance”).¹²¹ For this very reason, their appearances are also, on the other hand, impermanent and fleeting. Whereas the bourgeois ego has erected a grand psychic architecture for its particular assemblage of valorized traits, proletarian traits remain orphaned and homeless. Under capitalist rule, they have, at best, improvised encampments within the individual. “Mute” and “faceless,” as Brecht wrote, their self-will (*Eigensinn*) most often finds only a negative expression, by interrupting the status quo, by deranging the dominant discourse, by triggering parapraxes and other productive failures.¹²² These sudden outbursts provide only a partial glimpse of the vast network of emancipatory traits coursing through the underground of history. Thus, it is not

yet possible to speak of the proletariat's class consciousness as such, since consciousness, that integral mental image of human identity and self-awareness, is a privilege that has been denied to these revolutionary traits. These liquid forces still lack a psychological "vessel" (*Gefäß*) in which to gather and accumulate, as Kluge puts it:

I don't know of a single example of socialist behavior that was sustained for a long period of time. Evidently no vessel has been found for it yet. If the bourgeois subject is not a new characteristic, but the sum of all preceding characteristics placed in a new vessel, then the worker that is expressed in acts of mutually coordinated labor—the spontaneous worker—is himself a character utterly distinct from the bourgeois. The worker lacks the aspect of accumulation: he is more powerfully at home in the moment and in the felicitous venture, which is to say, he is a character type that is thoroughly and powerfully rooted in the economy of pleasure [*Lusthaushalt*]. This is what is new about him.¹²³

Until a durable anthropomorphic container can be found for this new subject, the components of its personality will remain, as Norbert Bolz observed, "strewn about as messianic fragments in the world of commodities."¹²⁴

Following Marx, Negt and Kluge designate this noncohesive and thus strictly "hypothetical" subject¹²⁵ the "collective worker" (*Gesamtarbeiter*), which they define as the "embodiment of all of the productive activities within a society that aim at forming a collective existence."¹²⁶ Despite the fact that the specific actions of this collective worker look plural, disjointed, and even contradictory from the vantage of individual ego psychology, considered from a more global, transsubjective perspective, the actions of this "collective ego"¹²⁷ appear highly systematic and patterned, indeed, "structurally integrated" (*gefügeartig*). Take one episode from *History and Obscurity* that describes a manifestation of the collective worker at the battle of Verdun, when the French and German armies, each bent on destroying the other, burrowed toward one another from opposite sides of a hill in 1916: Negt and Kluge observe that the movements of these armies, although motivated in the minds of the individual soldiers by a desire to annihilate the enemy, actually exhibited the features of a well-organized cooperation. With minimal modification, a mere change in political valence, this coordinated burrowing could have instead resulted in a tunnel connecting the two peoples

to one another. In a second appearance of the collective worker, this time on the Eastern Front during the Second World War, a captured Russian tank driver sitting among German soldiers unintentionally allows his gaze to linger too long on a technical defect in one of the tanks in front of him—a screw that is loose and that would damage the tank if not repaired: following the Russian’s sight line, a German tank driver notices the problem, discerns his enemy’s concern, and has the screw fixed. “This understanding, which runs either below or above the structure of enmity and which is grounded in the experience of production: this would be a proletarian element.”¹²⁸

In both of these episodes, the appearance of the collective worker suspends the distinction between friend and adversary, making possible unexpected and even politically undesirable alliances across enemy lines. For Negt and Kluge, the proletarian element always seeks cooperation. It is, they write, the “subterranean association of all labor capacities.”¹²⁹ The result is an unconscious choreography of solidarity that supersedes the will and interests of the ego, which remains confined within domains of individual identity such as nation-state citizenship, family genealogy, class affiliation, and social standing.

Emotional Life

If the distinction between friend and enemy, per Carl Schmitt, is foundational for the concept of the political as such, then the previous examples show that the collective worker is not a political being.¹³⁰ It doesn’t know party slogans or recognize ideological divisions. For this reason, the search for proletarian traits today is more likely to discover bonds of solidarity and social cohesion in the realm of the human emotions than in that of politics, which ceased to be a practice of collective being (*Gemeinwesen*) back in the eighteenth century.¹³¹ According to Negt and Kluge, proletarian traits in fact share the same ontogenetic origin as feelings: both are grounded in the primary sensation of touch and contact as originally encountered by the young animal clinging to its mother. “This haptic sensorium, the proximity of the mother—this is the first thing that motivates the development of the hand and, with it, of labor. All further characteristics will then be developed out of this motivation.”¹³² The infant’s foundational experience of skin contact and of its qualitative aspects—pliancy, firmness, timing (“seizing”), and so on—will

subsequently be diverted and refined, one portion of this sensation allocated in the body of the adult to the realm of erotic sensitivity and another portion allocated to the repertoire of gestures found in labor. One of Kluge's favorite examples of a work gesture that requires a degree of sensitivity on par with erotic tenderness is the gesture of fastening a screw, which, when correctly fitted, should be neither too tight nor too loose.¹³³ (One could surmise too, that, as our machines for production become outfitted with more touch screens and keyboards [in German: *Tastaturen*, or "touch boards"], the future promises an even greater convergence between the delicate haptics of labor and those of the erotic encounter.) In the words of Isabelle from Godard's *Passion*, "work has the same gestures as love."¹³⁴ But this shared origin has been obscured. Cultural practices such as Western opera, an institution that Kluge has dubbed a "power plant of feelings" (*Kraftwerk der Gefühle*),¹³⁵ specialize in taking the elemental units of human emotion such as the experience of contact and assembling those microfeelings into elaborate and bombastic ideological commodities of such complexity that we are no longer able to recognize the commonalities between the feelings expressed on the stage of the opera house and the activities taking place in the factory.¹³⁶ As a result, "an emotional approach is really no longer possible in a power plant," Kluge notes. "I can't suddenly operate the tools of a cockpit or a power plant in a playful or libidinous or erotic way."¹³⁷

Because the arts of the West, along with their latter-day descendants in the culture industry, have captured and assembled feelings into ready-made ideological clichés, misprision abounds in the realm of human sentiment. These "highly synthetic compounds" of emotion "must be examined for their elemental components," urges Kluge.¹³⁸ Much of his narrative prose and film analyzes these complexes, revealing these emotional artifacts to be composed of elements and impulses that are entirely different from than the ones that we would normally expect to find in them. What purports to be an opera about love, for example, turns out to have been one about war (Verdi's *Aida*, as seen through *The Power of Feelings*). Or a case of kleptomania is revealed to be motivated by a utopian longing for a world without property ("Anita G.," from *Case Histories*). For Negt and Kluge, feelings cannot be observed in their pure state, since, like highly reactive chemical elements, they enter spontaneously into

“coalitions with other feelings,¹³⁹ giving rise to highly complex emotional assemblages with new valences and receptors. The proposal of the authors to analyze the “high-rise constructions”¹⁴⁰ of emotion that have been erected by Western culture and to dismantle them into their constituent blocks therefore encounters the same methodological obstacle that Freud faced in his attempt to distinguish between the libido and the death drive: these “two kinds of instinct seldom—perhaps never—appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying and very different proportions and so become unrecognizable to our judgment,” Freud remarked.¹⁴¹ When bound up in complex, alloyed forms, emotions begin to function in illogical ways, becoming “unrecognizable to our judgment.” In their elemental state, however, they are exceedingly precise and anything but irrational. Being based in the haptic surface of the skin that is our source of direct contact with the world, feeling, or *Gefühl*, is wholly inclined to reality. As Negt and Kluge note, feelings are in fact the origin of the cognitive faculty of distinction (*Unterscheidungsvermögen*) and are essential to making critical judgments about the world, to analyzing the things and people around us, and to establishing foundational contrasts such as attraction-repulsion, association-dissociation, inside-outside. In these individual judgments, “feelings never err,” Kluge notes.¹⁴²

But when these microfeelings are fused together in more complex sentiments such as patriotism or nostalgia, they lose their essential accuracy and begin to misfire. It would seem that Machiavelli’s observation that “men are apt to deceive themselves in general matters, yet they rarely do so in particulars” pertains to emotions as well.¹⁴³ Above all, it is the timing of feelings—their punctuality—that becomes impaired when they are trapped within elaborate compounds. Assimilated to recurring clichés, feelings acquire an aura of destiny and fatefulness and are no longer able to respond realistically to the exigencies of the present. Either they are triggered too far in advance, or they react too belatedly. An episode from Kluge’s famous story collection, “The Air Raid on Halberstadt” (1977), tells of Gerda, a German mother who tries in vain to protect her children from the bombs that rain down from Allied planes in 1944. As the narrator observes, in order to save her children from the bombs, Gerda would had to have agitated against the threat of fascism six years earlier. She didn’t recognize the very real danger

before, but now, when it is too late, she does: “the question of organization is located in 1928, and the requisite consciousness is located in 1944.”¹⁴⁴ Likewise, with reference to the Holocaust, Kluge points out that the appropriate German reaction to the atrocities—one of outrage and protest—did not occur until 1979, long after any such outcry could save the victims: “we in our country are always shocked at the wrong moments and are not shocked at the right ones,” he comments.¹⁴⁵ So much historical misery, so many catastrophic events, have resulted from a failure to exercise the faculty of distinction—to feel—at the appropriate time.

By breaking down emotional complexes into their elemental microfeelings, Negt and Kluge provide an account of psychic experience that is far more nuanced and internally differentiated than the model of subjectivity proposed by traditional ego psychology. Crack open the psyche, and you find a multiplicity of vying voices and impulses, an elaborate dialectical configuration of forces and counterforces arranged with a sense for equilibrium. The internal dynamism of *Homo compensator* is, again, what distinguishes flexible human capital from the monologic of its fixed, mechanical counterpart. Despite the efforts of the rational ego, the psychic authority of capital, these feelings will not be tamed through an act of conscious will. In looking past the ego, past the authority that occupies the pronoun “I,” and attending to the more fundamental emotional states and traits out of which subjective identity is constructed, Negt and Kluge call into session what they call a “general assembly of feelings.” This “grassroots democracy” of affect suspends the vertical system of representation established by the “narcissistic ‘ego,’” which seeks to install itself at the top as the sole deputy of all feelings.¹⁴⁶ Unlike this parliamentary hierarchy, the “general assembly” found in books such as *Chronicle of Feelings* (2000) allows elementary emotions to confront, provoke, challenge and liaise with one another without the mediation of consciousness.

For Negt and Kluge, it is on this deeper stratum of existence that human history is actually written, not on the surface composed of proper names and personal identities. “Real historical developments do not move on the side of the ‘complete person’ and ‘whole proletarian,’ but on the side of their individual qualities.”¹⁴⁷ These qualities are the actual quanta of history; we personages are merely their vehicles. The resulting blow to the notion of individual agency ren-

ders traditional subject-centered tactics of political transformation problematic, of course, but at the same time it also establishes new axes of political solidarity that are not hedged by fixed identitarian coordinates. Like the proletarian trait that crosses enemy lines, feelings pierce the claustal walls of individual biography, transecting and linking these monads together in often unexpected ways. In response to the explosion in the 1970s of kaleidoscopic *Suchbewegungen* whose identity-based activism derailed attempts to organize politically under a single banner or agenda, Negt and Kluge thus recover a platform for coalition within the experience of multiplicity and diversity itself.¹⁴⁸ For them, the self is always plural, or, as Brecht put it, the individual is always “dividual.” Following Freud’s analysis of human development as a “beginning twice over” (ein zweizeitiger Ansatz), which suggests that we are in fact born two times—first as infants, and then again, after an unusually long latency period, at the age of puberty—Negt and Kluge explain that the individual is actually a doublet, if not an entire multitude (see the section “The Second, Third, Fourth, Etc. Social Birth” in Chapter 2). All of the distinctive stages that the growing child passes through, along with all of its particular temporalities and experiential acquisitions,¹⁴⁹ are retained permanently within the psyche, layered incongruously one on top of the other in the manner of Freud’s Eternal City. “It is a luxurious condition that we were created—that we were made by evolution—to lead two lives,” notes Kluge.¹⁵⁰ As a result of this extravagance in our biological design, the individual mind turns out to be far more complex and far richer in assets and resources than the blinkered ego will ever know.

As an art form that over centuries has developed an exceedingly precise and refined language for the analysis of emotion, literature is a cultural technique particularly well equipped to identify and map these feelings in their historical migrations across people.¹⁵¹ Following the models of Kleist’s *Berliner Abendblätter* anecdotes and Brecht’s calendar stories, Kluge states that the goal of his own fiction is to write “stories in which the alchemy of feelings can be displayed as if in a vial.”¹⁵² Because most of these primary feelings, in existing reality, already are bound up in elaborate emotional compounds such as melancholy or aesthetic pleasure, the only way to ascertain their fundamental composition is to increase the sample size, as it were, and deduce their elemental properties based on their interactions

with other feelings under the pressures exerted by distinct historical conditions. Kluge's increasingly massive collections of fiction, some of which contain hundreds of stories, most fewer than five pages in length, provide a breathtaking panorama of these feelings as they cut across individual case histories and are passed down from one generation to the next. Viewed at a cosmic scale as if through a reversed telescope, the individual characters in his stories look more like miniaturized specimens or lab models than like traditional narrative protagonists. Above all, they lack the latter's subjective depth. This distant, clinical coldness and rigorously analytic approach to human psychology has won Kluge little acclaim among fans of the literature of sentiment.¹⁵³ "He is and he remains a heartless writer, and this would be the main reason that people cannot bear him," Hans Magnus Enzensberger once noted.¹⁵⁴

But Kluge's disregard for the psychological depth of his protagonists is a calculated strategy to redirect attention toward the real heroes of these stories, the feelings themselves. "Feelings are the true inhabitants of the lives that people lead," he observes in the introduction to one of his most recent collections.¹⁵⁵ Looking past anthropomorphic units such as "character" and "personality," he instead looks at the subjacent feelings that, at a fundamental level, are what determine the lives of individuals, their subjective experiences and complex motives. In the same way that Brecht's drama depicted a scientific *Gestentafel*, or grand periodic table of human gestures, Kluge works with a diagram of emotions such as they exist outside of the diegetic pressures of the plot system.¹⁵⁶ But reverse engineering the emotional elements from the empirical episodes of lived existence, again, requires an operation of some scale. Here, too, Kluge is like Brecht, whose first attempt at a *Gestentafel*, the play *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, took the form of a massive cycle of scenes far too long to be performed in a single evening. Only when individual incidents are arrayed alongside one another in enormous collections such as the recent *Chronicle of Feelings*, over two thousand pages in compass, do they shed the external appearance of accident and display their obstinate core. Out of a jumble of random parapraxes, personal tragedies, and felicitous events emerges a pattern of regular elements that traverses and unites different life stories, revealing commonalities between unconnected individuals and unanticipated networks of solidarity across political lines.

The reader should not be distracted by the dazzling and distinctive appearance of these individual historical episodes, for below this chaotic surface, there is a “subcutaneous” structure linking them all together: “My books are never single stories, but 12, 14, 16 facets that together make a single story; they *are* the same story.”¹⁵⁷

Endowed with an insuppressible “capacity for metamorphosis,”¹⁵⁸ feelings mutate and transform as they traverse peoples’ lives, assuming disparate forms as they enter into coalitions with other feelings and are subjected to new psychic economies. Little wonder that the poet Ovid holds a prominent position in Kluge’s pantheon, alongside the likes of Marx and Brecht.¹⁵⁹ For Kluge, metamorphosis offers a conceptual model for thinking about time and change outside of the unidirectional teleology of history. This grammar of transformation is akin to the natural laws that govern the phase transitions between two states of matter: just as water can be transformed from a liquid to a solid state and from there into a gas, and then back to a liquid, emotions, too, can assume different states, some more stable and others more volatile (echoes of Engels’s *Dialectics of Nature* again). Like labor faculties, feelings can be frozen and taken out of circulation for centuries and then reactivated, or liquefied, at a much later historical moment.¹⁶⁰ If Kluge’s periodic table establishes the basic inventory of individual human feelings and traits, it is the logic of metamorphosis that defines the combinatory laws according to which these elements interact and fuse outside of history’s causal series of events. The mechanism of this metamorphosis can be described as a process of “transcoding,” Jameson suggests.¹⁶¹ There is no punctual beginning or end to the lives of these obstinate feelings and traits, just an ongoing and virtually endless series of “forms changed into new bodies” (Ovid).¹⁶²

History and Obstinacy updates Ovid’s notion of metamorphosis with theoretical instruments taken from cybernetic and systems theory—in particular, the concepts of self-regulation and autopoiesis. The latter ideas provide a method for tracking recurrent patterns across these elaborate chains of transformation, revealing the continuities within their rolling play of variation. And like that of metamorphosis, the concepts of self-regulation and autopoiesis used by Negt and Kluge “are essentially a matter of correcting German idealism’s mistaken belief that there is only one kind of subject.”¹⁶³ Indeed, there are almost too many subjects in their work. The

chain of metamorphosis does not conclude within the realm conventionally arrogated to the human, or even to organic life, for that matter. A recent formula of Kluge reads: "All things are enchanted people."¹⁶⁴ Like Ovid, who sang of the transformations between rocks, people, vegetation, animals, and celestial constellations, Negt and Kluge draw diverse phenomena ranging from newborn infants to industrial enterprises into a supervening chain of becoming. This red thread is far longer, far more encompassing, than the life span of the individual. For example, Germany's industrial heart, the Ruhr district, appears from this view as a gigantic "biotope" composed of five human generations,¹⁶⁵ while the construction of a naval fleet entails a historical accumulation at least seven generations in measure.¹⁶⁶ In turn, Germany itself is revealed to be a two-thousand-year-old "life form" (*Lebewesen*) made of eighty-seven generations.¹⁶⁷

Negt and Kluge's account of metamorphosis is based on Marx's own understanding of the object world as a great storehouse of dead labor. *Capital* had described work as a process through which dynamic, living forces are captured and given a stable, objective format: "During the labor process, the worker's labor constantly undergoes a transformation, from the form of unrest [*Unruhe*] into that of being [*Sein*], from the form of motion [*Bewegung*] into that of objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeit*]."¹⁶⁸ Industrial enterprises function like gigantic transformers for converting human life, in all its dimensions, into inorganic matter. "Dead labor is no mere arsenal of things," comment Negt and Kluge. "Rather, it is a social relationship, subjectivity that has assumed an objective form, human connections."¹⁶⁹ Here Negt and Kluge blur the distinction between biology and mechanics (a distinction that, according to Stiegler, is foundational for Western philosophy),¹⁷⁰ and insist instead that machines and humans are ultimately consanguineous, their fates intertwined. If machine capital is indeed composed, as Negt and Kluge suggest, of "entire associations of generations" (Chapter 3, note 12, p. 485), every act of labor, every operation performed with a machine, is in turn an act of communicating and collaborating with the dead. Industrial societies such as ours cannot escape the fact that despite our attempts to remove them from our everyday existence, past generations are still with us. Even after their departure, they will not stop desiring, as Bloch once wrote: "transformed . . . the dead return, their acts want to be realized once again with us."¹⁷¹ We moderns are

in fact far deeper in the thrall of dead generations than the so-called “primitive” cultures that we deride for their spiritism and animism. This is so because of two cultural features central to industrial modernity. First, our mode of production is increasingly based on the compound accumulation of machine capital bequeathed to us by previous generations: following the economist Jean Fourastié, Negt and Kluge observe that “more and more dead labor is utilized in the place of living labor.”¹⁷² And second, through the elaborate administrative frameworks and institutional superorganisms that function independently of their individual human operators, modern bureaucracies ensure that plans and strategies established at a point in the past will be realized in the future, even long after the plan’s original authors have passed away, thereby securing the will of the dead over that of the living.¹⁷³ Considering the stockpiling of dead labor in industrial enterprises and the creation of decentralized bureaucratic structures that guarantee the fulfillment of past (that is, dead) directives, our presentist fantasy of autonomy and self-determination looks less and less convincing. On the contrary, at this point the industrial West looks more like a giant necropolis. But unlike Marx, who summarized this predicament in the famous observation that the “tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living,”¹⁷⁴ Negt and Kluge do not regard the influence of the dead to be purely negative, as a paralyzing burden. Instead, they emphasize the dialectical potential of past generations, which they see as an encumbrance that immobilizes the present, but also, in a Benjaminian mode, as a resource whose reanimation under transformed conditions could also contribute to the liberation of the living.

The work of Negt and Kluge is rife with instances of the dead returning to life. Perhaps the most memorable example is the talking knee of a certain Lance Corporal Wieland killed at Stalingrad, which comes back in *The Patriot* in order to set the record straight: “I have to clear up a fundamental misunderstanding, namely, that we dead were somehow dead. We are full of protest and energy,” the knee insists, after which it proceeds to recite an obscure text in Latin.¹⁷⁵ The vast crypts of accumulated dead labor that surround the living are in fact full of untold “treasures,”¹⁷⁶ Kluge notes, if only these encrypted resources could, like the mysterious Latin text, be deciphered and comprehended. “Again and again we have to exhume

the dead, for our future can only come out of them,” explained the playwright Heiner Müller, a close interlocutor of Kluge. “Necrophilia is a love for the future. We have to accept the presence of the dead as partners or obstacles in dialogue. The future can come into being only through dialogue with the dead.”¹⁷⁷

The Lazarus feat of resurrecting the subjects imprisoned in the world of inorganic things requires a profound understanding of history and its diverse temporal currents, which range from deep cycles of biological evolution to the more turbulent time of technical invention. “Resurrecting the dead presupposes a profound knowledge of history.”¹⁷⁸ This history does not proceed in a straight line. In a series of knight moves, obstinate characteristics and traits instead leap unpredictably across peoples and generations, back and forth between living and objectivated forms of labor, significantly complicating our attempts to track the course of their movements. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that as a result of constant metamorphosis and recombination, these traits seldom assume the same outward appearance with each instantiation. Take the episode from *The Patriot*, again, which leaves the audience to ponder what exactly it is that links a German lance corporal killed at Stalingrad in 1943 to a knee babbling in Latin in 1979. The connection in this case certainly cannot be based on any manifest external likeness—a relationship of resemblance—since the knee does not look like Wieland any more than Ariadne, in Ovid’s account, looks like the constellation of stars that she becomes.¹⁷⁹ Nor can the connection between the two be that of part to whole—a relationship of synecdoche—since, as the knee explains, every last piece of Wieland’s anatomy, including adjacent parts such as the calf and the thigh, was obliterated at Stalingrad. Indeed, the knee claims to have survived only because it did not in fact belong to the material body of the corporal, but was just connective tissue—not a substance, but a “mere in-between” (*ein bloßes Dazwischen*).¹⁸⁰

How exactly are we supposed to track—and what do we even call—this “subjectivity that mysteriously continues to have an effect”¹⁸¹? Identifying the elusive constant of these metamorphoses is no mean feat. Freud faced the same theoretical problem in his phasal account of the developing libido as did Marx in his description of the historical evolution of the forces of production. As Balibar has observed, these two projects each encountered an identical pair

of questions: “What form does the development take and what is its subject, what is it that develops?”¹⁸² For Freud, the development of human sexuality takes the form of a continuous process in which the libido—the “subject” of sexuality, as it were—moves about the infant’s body restlessly, establishing erotogenic zones in specific sites and achieving gratification in activities that from the perspective of the valorized genital pleasures of the adult body “are *least obviously* of a ‘sexual’ character” (thumb sucking, for example).¹⁸³ Likewise, for Marx, the development of the forces of production necessarily entails activating certain labor capacities that are least obviously of a properly industrial character (artisanal practices, for example): industrial manufacture “is not only a continuation of handicrafts from the point of view of the nature of its productive forces, it also presupposes the persistence of handicrafts in certain branches of production and even causes handicrafts to develop alongside itself.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, rather than concluding with the triumphal emergence of the mature and fully vested subject (of sexual pleasure or production), these examples suggest a nonteleological process of constant metamorphosis and reconfiguration, an open-ended development that recalls the structure of creative evolution once described by Henri Bergson.¹⁸⁵

So what is the invariant across this string of transformations? As Balibar suggests, the ongoing process of metamorphosis calls into question the very integrity of the subject, which cannot be anchored either at the beginning or the end of the evolution: “In Freudian (and Marxist) pseudo-development, we do not even find the minimum [foundation of history]—we are dealing with the radical absence of any pre-existing unity, i.e. any germ or origin.” Just as the development of the libido does not conclude with the genitalization of the adult body,¹⁸⁶ the development of the mode of production does not conclude with the victory of industrial mechanization over premodern handicraft. The factually consecutive evolution of the subject is offset by the permanent retention of all developmental phases through which the subject has passed: modes of artisanal labor flourish within—indeed, are produced by—industrial manufacture, just as the adult body continues to experience sexual pleasure in libidinal zones established during pregenital phases of development.

So, too, Negt and Kluge argue that even the earliest developmental acquisitions are never fully displaced by the ones that suc-

ceed them. These primitive experiences are not eliminated, but are instead frozen, suspended in a state of latent potentiality from which they can be reactivated under the right circumstances. Negt and Kluge discern these potentialities everywhere: consider the striking return of “the peasant in me” and forms of archaic work in their analysis of the most advanced forms of intellectual labor; or the prominence they give to “extremely valuable materials from the evolutionary archive”¹⁸⁷ such as the lost tree shrew (the *arche* of all mammalian life (Chapter 7, pp. 369–73); or the oldest form of nonmalignant HIV, which holds the key to disarming the disease today;¹⁸⁸ or the recrudescence, in Kluge’s “stone-age television,” of eclectic nickelodeon gimmicks taken from the early era of silent cinema.¹⁸⁹ From peasant craft to industrial machine, from thumb sucking to genitality, from Lance Corporal to Latin-speaking knee: each of these displacements represents not a linear historical development of successive forms, but a manifestation of one particular capacity of the respective system in response to the concrete pressures of lived history.

The Underground of History

Like Bloch, who envisaged world history as “a house which has more staircases than rooms,”¹⁹⁰ Negt and Kluge see time as a dynamic process that is full of transitions and passages, but that offers few sites of rest or stasis, not to speak even of discrete and clearly demarcated phases. Their understanding of history not as a linear course of supersession, but as an ongoing and even occasionally reversible process of metamorphosis has important consequences for the concept and practice of revolution. With reference to Thomas More’s *Utopia*, Negt has pointed out that the word NO WHERE (from the Greek, *ou-topos*) can be made to spell NOW HERE through a simple displacement of the word’s letters.¹⁹¹ Much like these letters, all of the component elements of socialist society are already at hand, although they would need to be reconfigured to awaken them from their state of latency. Even in 1946, in the immediate shadow of Auschwitz, at a historical moment far darker than our own, Bloch could still claim that utopia was not a distant and chimerical fantasy, but entirely concrete and, indeed, even immanent in current conditions of existence: “Since Marx, we have overcome the abstract character of utopias. Improvement of the world takes place as labor in and with the mate-

rial dialectic of a developing history that is consciously produced.”¹⁹²

But because we have not learned to socialize the forces released through new discoveries in the sciences, history continues to be produced only unconsciously. Shunted aside, many of the most progressive resources of the human psyche have likewise been rendered incomprehensible and dismissed as irrational. But they haven’t disappeared. It just requires a feat of imagination to realize their productive capacities. For this reason, Kluge writes of a “utopia which, contrary to the Greek meaning of *ou-topos* = no place, is in existence everywhere and especially in the unsophisticated imagination.”¹⁹³ As an example of a human trait with both baleful and utopian potentials, take reliability, a psychological characteristic cultivated in modern bureaucratic regimes: this particular combination of dependability, technical precision, blind credulity, and submission to authority is a trait that made the industrial genocide of Auschwitz possible, but as Negt and Kluge point out in an anecdote from Chapter 5, it is also the characteristic that at a very different moment in time, in a different historical conjuncture, thwarts the American bombing of Cambodia when a “reliable” pilot reports to Congress a technical irregularity in his flight path and assigned bombing pattern.

As another example of a trait with a similarly dual aspect, we could cite the elitism found in aristocratic society in the early twentieth century: on the one hand, this outdated form of social distinction was antagonistic to the democratic, mass-cultural developments of the era; on the other, the same elitism also established within the aristocracy nests of unyielding resistance to the demagoguery of National Socialism and its pseudopopulist ideology.¹⁹⁴ Like reliability, then, elitism is a deeply ambiguous quality. But even the most nefarious human trait, when felicitously reconstellated under the right historical conditions, can reveal a latent utopian potential. Evil is nothing other than “good that has been transposed in time,” observes Kluge.¹⁹⁵ “Through an improbable turn, the same facts could also be organized differently; if it were possible to translate individual wishes back into a context (into the collective body of wishes), they could be arranged into a successful life, not into catastrophe.”¹⁹⁶

With reference to Foucault, Kluge chooses to call the emancipatory reorganization of traits as a heterotopian project, rather than a utopian one. The latter term, Foucault observed, refers to sites “with no real place . . . that have a general relation of direct or inverted

analogy with the real space of Society,” while the former has a concrete “location in reality”: heterotopias are “real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like countersites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”¹⁹⁷ Which is to say that heterotopias are not phantasmatic in the manner of utopias. They are “available, but not tangible.”¹⁹⁸ What is so perplexing is that these countersites aren’t even necessarily obscured from view, but are, on the contrary, quite out in the open: “this kind of counterpublic sphere would take place in the midst of the public sphere,” Kluge notes.¹⁹⁹ These progressive elements are not hidden, then, but are instead unidentifiable or unintelligible, falling either below or beyond the hegemonic horizon of meaning. “We are dealing today with forms of counterpublic sphere that are so embedded in the official public sphere that they are often no longer even recognizable.”²⁰⁰ Because they are out of phase with the socially dominant reality, these sites are mostly encountered elliptically, as effects without explicable causes. The conscious mind experiences them as an incoherent heap of particularities, not as systematic knowledge and certainly not as an organized context for living. This analysis, again, represents a strategic development beyond the claims of *Public Sphere and Experience*, the previous collaboration that still associated ideology with secrecy and tactics of deception, and that consequently called for the integration of obscured realms of everyday existence such as family and work into the collective purview of the public sphere. In contrast, *History and Obstinacy* calls not for revelation, but for reconfiguration, for a shift in perspective that would demonstrate the motivated connections between seemingly unrelated particularities and incidents. “We are seeking an economy of combined trivials” (*eine Ökonomie der kombinierten Nebensachen*), writes Kluge.²⁰¹ Although little effort would be required to induce this simple shift in perspective and realize a utopian state that is in fact already here, this shift turns out to be virtually impossible, precisely because of its very obviousness. Confronted with the increasing spectacularization of postwar consumer society, Adorno and his colleagues at the Frankfurt School likewise observed, all too presciently, that

ideology is no longer a veil, but the menacing face of the world. It is transitioning into terror, not just by force of being interlaced with propaganda, but in accordance with its own appearance. However, because ideology and reality have moved so close to one another—because, for lack of any other convincing ideology, reality has become its own ideology—only a minimal effort would be necessary for the mind to cast off an illusion that is at once omnipotent and insignificant. But that effort seems to be what is the most difficult of all.²⁰²

When deception has given way to terror and the shrouding of power to its adulatory display, politics takes on a very different meaning than the one it had in the classical bourgeois public sphere. Accordingly, the later work of Negt and Kluge no longer identifies the political with arcane power nexuses or Bismarckian *Realpolitik*, but instead describes it as an art of configuration, balance, and proportion. For them, the goal of leftist politics today, in turn, is not to invent new revolutionary traits within the subject or fashion utopia from whole cloth, but to organize already existing, if still neglected and underestimated human capacities in a way that activates their dormant emancipatory potentials.

Their third and final major collaboration, *Politics as a Relation of Measure*, develops this principle into full-blown ecological paradigm of the political. This book's point of departure is Hegel's thesis that the true essence (*Wesen*) of any phenomenon is revealed only when it enters into a felicitous historical configuration or proportional "relation of measure" with other phenomena:²⁰³ "Only when conditions are such that phenomena assume a certain constellation—when they discard their previous mode of existence to encounter other existences—only then do the relations that they carry within them begin to condense and transform into a unique structure that constitutes an *essential context*. This inner structure is identical with measure. Phenomena arrive at their essence only through relations of measure."²⁰⁴ Responding in part to the dissolution of the high-contrast ideological binarisms of the Cold War, the third collaboration between Negt and Kluge, published in 1992, proposes here a far more nuanced and sensitive framework for the analysis of geopolitical configurations, one that does not divide the world into axes of good and evil or categorical oppositions between capitalist and socialist. Indeed, the identical human trait can be found in both revolutionary and reactionary constellations.

This is an approach that has been justifiably characterized as “a kind of secular political alchemy.”²⁰⁵ Just as water (H₂O) and carbon dioxide (CO₂) reveal different potentials of the oxygen molecule that they share, individuals come to exhibit certain of “man’s essential powers” (*die menschlichen Wesenskräfte*) within particular social configurations. Only when the right configuration has been found will these latent capacities of the individual be released. Until then, they remain in a dormant state. For this reason, Negt and Kluge explain that objective reality is located not at the level of immediately evident empirical properties, but at the level of the relations connecting these isolated phenomena: “the issue is not how to describe so-called “reality” accurately, in the way that we directly perceive it; instead what matters is that the proportions be correct.”²⁰⁶ Like Lance Corporal Wieland’s knee, the “mere in-between” that outlived the calf and thigh on either side, or like Ariadne, who lives on as a celestial pattern created by the relationship between individual stars, the connections and constellations themselves are more essential, philosophically speaking, than the physical substance in which they manifest themselves historically, and they endure far longer than the transient and incidental facts out of which they are composed.

More recently, this dialectical understanding of essence as an expression of relations, rather than of substances, has shifted the thought of Negt and Kluge toward territory identified today with the philosophy of emergent properties.²⁰⁷ Although to be sure, this was in fact a feature of their thought all along, evident, for example, in their appropriation of Marx’s analysis of the collective worker. Indeed, an application of Hegel’s law of “relations of measure” to sociopolitical phenomena can be found throughout Marx’s work. Take the important chapter titled “Co-operation” in *Capital*, which described the appearance of a novel social macroentity that is irreducible to its individual members (the basic definition of an emergent social phenomenon): “a dozen persons working together will, in their collective working-day of 144 hours, produce far more than twelve isolated men each working 12 hours, or than one man who works twelve days in succession.” “Not only do we have here an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of co-operation, but the creation of a new productive power, which is an intrinsically collective one.” Marx used an English phrase to desig-

nate the mysterious surplus that arises within a society of combined *zoa politica*: “animal spirits.”²⁰⁸ According to Negt and Kluge, when elements, whether material or psychological, are emplaced within a “condition of condensation,” they reach a “new degree of intensity,” giving rise to a complex system that possesses objective qualities and energies not manifest in any of its individual components.²⁰⁹ Like the social process of cooperation, the physical process of condensation involves a slow and gradual accumulation, or “transition” (*Übergang*), that eventually leads to a tipping point (*Umsturz*), in which one system is transmuted, quasi-alchemically, into a different one.²¹⁰ At each distinct level of synthesis, the system exhibits different structural principles that correspond not only to its particular organizational state (for example, liquid versus gas, artisanal versus industrial production), but also to its relative magnitude: thus, just as smaller physical bodies are subject to the intermolecular force of van der Waals adhesion, while larger physical bodies instead observe the law of gravity, the forms of ideation that are contained within the individual mind and that are expressed in conscious thought differ fundamentally from those that are found in collective activity and that are instead expressed unconsciously, in statistical curves. Kluge calls this latter social condensation a “fusional group” (*fusionierende Gruppe*):

The “fusional group” is an element of every revolution. People join together. Even without their knowledge, they are forming a novel condition that is distinct from their lives thus far, a condition in which their characteristics merge together without their intending to do so—below the threshold of the force of will, as an effect of the unrest that has seized the city, on account of the ability to intuit and of the force of action. Human reinforcements from the countryside. They integrate themselves. The “new revolutionary man” (at first an unstable element) does not consist of individuals, of the previous people themselves, but arises between them, out of the gaps that divide people from one another in everyday life.²¹¹

Needless to say, personal motives play little to no role in this understanding of the political. Nor do ethical criteria of behavior, for that matter. In one episode from a recent story collection, for example, Kluge writes of one particular fusional group that formed at a demonstration in Kiev one day in 1905 and that contained

individuals from diverse social backgrounds, including a lawyer and, notably, a pickpocket. All of these characters were subsumed into the contagious mass of bodies that day, the narrator reports. We are also told that the pickpocket, despite the potential profits to be gained in the fervent and distracted crowd, forgot his trade, stole nothing, and was left to hunger by the time evening came. “On that day, he possessed nothing but his enthusiasm.”²¹² For the duration of the fusional group’s existence, the pickpocket was transformed, despite his own interests, from a selfish thief into a passionate revolutionary element. A previously dormant characteristic—a capacity for cooperation and mutualism—had been released, if only fleetingly. This episode suggests that politics, as the science of collective existence (*Gemeinwesen*), is beyond psychological or ethical criteria and is instead a matter of assembly and proportion. Ultimately, the right fusional configuration will decide whether human history produces acts of mass violence, the hell of Social Darwinism, and the tragedy of the commons²¹³ or whether this group of egotistical monads can instead be joined together to create an integrated collective existence. Quoting Kant’s “Perpetual Peace” essay, Negt, like Kluge, sounds an optimistic note: “The problem of setting up a state can be solved even by a nation of devils, as long as they have reason.”²¹⁴

Given their emergentist understanding of history, it is not surprising that Negt and Kluge never romanticize political revolution as a punctual break with the past. Years such as 1789 or 1917 may possess great symbolic power, but, for them, there is little to be learned from singling these dates out from all the others. For no revolution can be consummated in a year. Politics is instead “a slow and powerful drilling through hard boards,” to cite a phrase of Max Weber’s that has returned in Kluge’s recent work.²¹⁵ As a tactical response to the harsh lessons of the 1970s, when, in the wake of the failed insurrection of 1968, German activists turned to “strategies of hibernation” (*Überwinterungsstrategien*), *History and Obstacity* privileges measured political tenacity over manic demands for revolutionary convulsion.

The ethos of “slow and powerful drilling” is conjured in an episode central to the book: Rosa Luxemburg’s haunting ventriloquism of the revolution on the eve of her own death in 1919, when she wrote the words “I was, I am, I will be.”²¹⁶ As she conjugates the

copular verb “to be” through its different tenses, Luxemburg evokes the multiple temporalities of the revolution and its capacity to suture together distinctive historical materials, underscoring with this grammatical recitation the fact that the revolution is not a singular event, but a process that is repeated across time, in each instance taking on a different form with historically variable features.²¹⁷ However, this temporal conjugation of the revolution is ultimately a distortion of its essential qualities. For “revolution does not function like a language,” Negt and Kluge note:²¹⁸ whereas the grammar of spoken language is based on sequential concatenation, the revolution’s “dialectical relations are nonlinear” and thus fundamentally “ungrammatical.”²¹⁹ The pressure chamber of lived history causes the fine filigree of logical relations to buckle and collapse (*zerbeulen*), rendering these dialectical relations and emancipatory constellations of traits unrecognizable.²²⁰ The logical structure of the revolution is refracted into past, present and future — “was,” “is,” and “will be.” Only at those extremely rare conjunctures when the competing gravitational forces of human history cancel one another out — the moment of suspension that Negt and Kluge identify in Chapter 7 as the “abaric point” — is the “pulverizing effect” (*Zermalmungseffekt*) of time interrupted long enough for this abstract dialectic to become temporarily legible.²²¹ One such moment, Negt and Kluge propose, was the period in Germany immediately after the end of the Second World War, the so-called “Stunde Null,” in which the reality principle of history was held in abeyance, if only for a short time. During brief intervals of freedom such as this, when the syntagmatic rules of lived experience are temporarily neutralized, it becomes possible to glimpse revolutionary relations in their pure, paradigmatic state, outside of time. Within this zone of historical indifference, lived experience becomes a logical object of philosophy, and the subterranean connection between all of the outwardly dissimilar historical iterations of the revolution becomes visible, if only for a moment. Like water at a temperature of 212° Fahrenheit, history hovers at this point on the threshold between states as a reversible, isometric field that can be read either forward or backward. “At the interface between gravitational fields, at the abaric point (which is always only theoretical), gravitational forces have no effect, only ‘freedom.’ For a moment, the attributes of the sphere and the funnel are identical. Above and below reverse their polarity.”²²²

Luxemburg's words "I was, I am, I will be" thus suggest, on the one hand, that the revolution is inevitable, since revolutionary capacities cannot be eradicated by force. Proletarian traits will never fail to "return [*wiederkehren*] if they are violently repressed."²²³ But on the other hand, her words simultaneously suggest that revolutionizing, as a practice, is an interminable process that will never culminate in a singular event or dramatic peripeteia. It will instead be played through again and again, each time with different results. *Wiederkehren*, after all, means both "to return" and "to repeat," as in Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence (*die ewige Wiederkehr*). In Commentary 4, Kluge refers to Aleksandr Bogdanov and Aron Zalkind, two Proletkul't theorists who calculated that socializing the objectivated forces of production (that is, machinery and technology) would require only seven years, whereas socializing the human subject—forging a stable psychological vessel for the marginalized proletarian traits—would take at least ten times as long.²²⁴ Even this estimate is far too optimistic, according to Kluge: "It took eight hundred years to develop capitalism to the French Revolution; and it will take quite a lot of years to prepare experience and organize a period that could make a more socialist society. It will probably take more time, more activity, and more interest than was needed to invent this capitalist society."²²⁵ Regime change and technical revolutions are relatively swift affairs, but human revolutions have an exceptional *Zeitbedarf*, he writes: they "need time."²²⁶ And without the psychosocial reconfiguration of the subject and its essential powers, no political revolution can succeed in the long run. Marx himself had mocked as "political superstition" the conceit of overthrowing the government in a grand coup, as if seizing the state's command centers, symbolic assets, and means of production would be the culminating stroke of the revolution:²²⁷ to be sure, it would be a start, he argues, but the concrete mores and habits of the population, not the state apparatus, are what actually holds a society together.²²⁸ For similar reasons, Negt observes, "it is not just a matter of overthrowing [*Umsturz*] the state, but of something like a transformation and of self-transformation as a feature of living people."²²⁹ Bastilles and Winter Palaces can be stormed in a day, but redesigning the affections and pleasures of a population, their intractable habits and everyday comportment, demands an intervention that is nothing less than evolutionary in scope.²³⁰ There is no

Umsturz without *Übergang*, no tipping point without transition, no revolution without emergence.

This reminder that revolution cannot take the form of a radical historical caesura is especially timely in our post-Cold War moment, when the Left, tempted by the rhetoric of eventhood and the neo-Stalinist promise of a Great Break, is increasingly captivated by forms of political messianism as the only remaining hope of deliverance from a global capitalist system that now expands unchecked. But a total break with the past will not provide the necessary solution. As Negt and Kluge caution, radical thought's implicit opposition between two structures of time, one of "rest" and "duration" and the other of "a dramatic, abrupt, sensational, and fleeting movement" is itself a theoretical legacy of the classical bourgeois age.²³¹ More than anything else, the go-for-broke strategy of political messianism is a symptom of a generalized loss of "trust in a historical process that can be directly shaped by the consciousness of people."²³² Rather than exacerbate the differences between the "time of waiting" (*Wartezeit*) and that of the "quantum leap" (*Quantensprung*),²³³ conscious political transformation would therefore dictate that these two temporalities instead be integrated. The past, in other words, must be reorganized, rather than renounced. "We are separated from yesterday not by an abyss, but by a changed situation" reads the epigraph for Kluge's film *Yesterday's Girl*. Unlike the romantic generation of '68, Negt and Kluge, as obstinate '58ers, maintain that in times of revolutionary transition, the elements of existence and experience are exactly the same as those found in nonrevolutionary times, only they have now been arranged in a way that causes them to coruscate and demonstrate new qualities. Even the precarious abaric points of history, such as the years in Germany immediately after 1945, are not necessarily more susceptible to human intervention and influence than any other moment in time. For Negt and Kluge, these intervals of crisis (from the Greek word meaning "discrimination" or "judgment") are in fact more valuable as thought objects, as opportunities for cognition, than they are as narrative peripeteia in the revolutionary drama of human history.²³⁴

Kluge compares the historical record of man's essential powers to a typewritten sheet of paper that has been overwritten four thousand times by a continuous text with neither spacing, punctuation, nor vowels.²³⁵ *History and Obstnacy* exfoliates this dense laminate

that has been passed down to us, layer by layer, in the hopes of locating emancipatory characteristics that can be actualized in our own time. For contrary to their appearance of technical novelty, the problems faced by the present generation are seldom, if ever, genuinely new. In order to explore these paradigmatic connections, Negt and Kluge bring together disparate historical expressions of human traits, aligning them in a way that reveals the resemblances between these seemingly incommensurable moments in time. So, for example, the political powder keg in Serbia of 1914 returns in the Kosovo conflict of 1991;²³⁶ the experience of huddling in shelters during the Allied carpet bombings of 1945 recalls that of being buried alive in ancient Egypt, as depicted in Verdi's *Aida*;²³⁷ and the cemeteries' refusal to accept the bodies of the Red Army Faction terrorists in 1977 echoes Creon's denial of Antigone's claim to bury her rebel brother.²³⁸

As random as such juxtapositions may seem, Negt and Kluge insist that these likenesses are not merely pseudomorphic. For them, the fact that these episodes have been repeated again and again in our history is a symptom of a collective failure to learn from them the first time around. Instead of brushing distant episodes aside with the gesture of historicism, we must instead revisit them if progress is to be made and the endless cycle of repetition broken. Only by "working through the problems of the past that were left behind" can the tautological loop of myth be transformed into conscious human history.²³⁹ "The phantom existence of the past, which crisscrosses the present's plans for the future, can be suspended only through socially conscious, collective labor that will put an end to the deadly repetition compulsion and stem the return of the repressed. Transforming the cultural legacy into contemporary social forms, however, requires a process of engaging with history publicly, a process that cultivates learning impulses only under specific conditions."²⁴⁰

Recently, for example, Negt and Kluge have each returned to the distant era of the Thirty Years' War as an important "provocation to learn" (*Lernprovokation*) for us today. In their account, the diffuse, total European war that preceded the emergence of the modern nation-state four centuries ago anticipates the current geopolitical crisis in which the territorial sovereignty of the nation, together with its exclusive monopoly on violence, are being undermined by

supranational organizations and corporations that do not observe the political or economic borders of individual states. What lessons about justice and the right to violence were confronted in the decentralized conflicts of the seventeenth century, but still remain to be worked through today?²⁴¹ Do the theologically tinged knowledge structures of the seventeenth century, so many assets of which were disavowed under the Enlightenment's project of secular modernization, in fact provide us with solutions to some of the problems that we are facing now?²⁴² With the proliferation of forms of asymmetrical, postnational warfare and with the uptick of politically motivated religious fundamentalisms worldwide, we may need the resources, intelligence, and ingenuity of pre-Enlightenment thought more than ever before. Like Bloch, who sought to recover the protosocialist elements within the chiliastic dreams of medieval theology,²⁴³ or Agamben, who has recently investigated prefigurations of modern political economy and strategies of governmentality in early Christian doctrine,²⁴⁴ Negt and Kluge hope to learn from the strategies of revolutionary consciousness (and unconsciousness) that existed long before the philosophical formalization of the Marxist dialectic in the nineteenth century, and that might ultimately prove indispensable for progressive politics today.

The remote past may hold the answers to many of the questions now facing us, but these solutions are not readily available. Accessing them requires what Kluge calls "counterhistory" (*Gegengeschichte*) or, in the famous phrase of Benjamin's seventh thesis on the philosophy of history, brushing history against the grain. In his writings on the *longue durée*, Braudel likewise enjoined historians to "react against the advantages of their professions, and study not only progress, the prevailing movement, but also its opposite, that harvest of contrary experiences which fought hard before they went down."²⁴⁵ *History and Obstinacy* is the yield of that harvest. On the one hand, the inventory of experiences and capacities that this book provides seems utterly factual and objective, delivered in the rationalist idiom of a reference work, but at the same time, this counterhistory also appears fundamentally unrealistic, if not outright bizarre and fantastical. Kluge explains that these scenarios appear so utterly improbable because they have been systematically marginalized by the dominant ideological narrative of our culture, a hegemonic fiction that he dubs the "novel of reality."²⁴⁶ Even such a hardened realist

as V. I. Lenin defended the merits of revolutionary imagination and counterhistory when he insisted, against the crushing force of fate, that “there is always a way out.”²⁴⁷ And finding this way out requires thinking unrealistically, imagining that “the same story can take a different direction.” Running against the entrenched patterns of “realistic” thought, the heterotopist wins positions from which the irregularities and unmotivated incidents of history begin to appear as necessary and interconnected.²⁴⁸ The heterotopist establishes an “economy of combined trivials” that challenges the dominant economy of reality. Although purely hypothetical, these positions are in fact of inestimable tactical value, as the shrewd military theorist Carl von Clausewitz proposed when he observed that the battles that never actually took place are just as important as the ones that did.²⁴⁹ “What you notice as realism . . . is not necessarily or certainly real,” Kluge in turn explains. “The potential and the historical roots and the detours of possibilities also belong to it. The realistic result, the actual result, is only an abstraction that has murdered all the possibilities for the moment. But these possibilities will recur.”²⁵⁰ The imaginary will inevitably one day return as reality.²⁵¹

Recovering these murdered possibilities requires a bent for counterfactual thinking. It is a talent that Kluge has in abundance. Over decades of writing and filmmaking, his rehabilitation of the lost futures that were smothered by a hegemonic reality principle has yielded a body of work that is difficult to situate generically, poised as it is on the boundary between documentary and fiction. “One never knows whether what Kluge reports as fact is indeed fact,” Jürgen Habermas notes. “But the way he reports events makes it clear that it could have happened like that.”²⁵² Subjunctive and indicative are on par in Kluge’s work. Just as his thought experiments in prose regularly place historical figures in invented scenarios to consider how they would have responded (and what we can learn from this response), many of Kluge’s films, conversely, place invented characters in real-life, documentary situations in which the fictional protagonist interviews well-known political figures or joins in actual historical events such as street protests and public performances. By undermining the boundary between reality and fiction in this way, Kluge demonstrates that the hegemonic conception of reality is neither objective nor unassailable. Our blind faith in facts and the immutability of reality is just a secular equivalent

of the religious fetish, Negt and Kluge explain. Against currents of modern positivism that seek to conceal the manufacture of reality, they therefore emphasize its madeness and its susceptibility to revision.²⁵³

Negt and Kluge's counterhistory of Europe coalesces around those moments when the dominant frameworks for human experience became brittle and collapsed, rendering a shared reality momentarily vulnerable to imaginative reconceptualization. Take, as a dramatic example, the precipitous ideological deflation of the Berlin Wall over one night in November 1989: during the time of the Cold War, this structure had appeared permanent and eternal, but with the sudden annulment of its political foundations, the Wall was transformed within hours from a seemingly timeless pseudo-objectivity into what Hegel called a *realitätsloses Gebilde*, a construct with no symbolic authority or even basis in reality.²⁵⁴ Even the most concrete of realities can be liquefied, revoked in an instant. The work of Negt and Kluge is rife with such instances of rapid ideological decommissioning that reveal the fragility of our conception of reality and of the sociopolitical institutions that sustain it. These episodes of collective derealization are both traumatic and liberating, experiences of loss, crisis, and potentiality all at once: thus, the firebombing of Kluge's birth town Halberstadt in 1945 caused an entire community to disappear from one day to the next, but in so doing, also exposed the permanence of the thousand-year Reich as pure fantasy. Likewise, the activities of the Red Army Faction in the 1970s shattered the utopian ideals of the German Left, but the desperate state violence that the terrorists provoked also revealed the fundamental insecurity of the Federal Republic and the tenuousness of its claim to democratic legitimacy. At moments such as 1945, 1977, and 1989, the monolithic account of reality becomes permeable to counterhistories. And by imagining alternative courses at these critical historical junctures, it becomes possible "to disarm the fifth act," as Kluge puts it, and dispel the aura of destiny and fatefulness that enshrouds our conception of reality.²⁵⁵

In our present era of uneven development, when the pluralization of history globally has scumbled the contrast between progress and regress, the untimeliness of Negt and Kluge appears timelier than ever. Revolutionary activity today entails as its corollary the kind of radical historiography practiced by Negt and Kluge, which draws

connections between distant and noncontiguous episodes in time. As Joseph Vogl notes in conversation with Kluge, the figure of the revolutionary can be recognized by his unique ability to “dissolve and stitch together different times. He assembles history. He is a vessel for temporal states.”²⁵⁶ And so where, at the current post-Cold War moment in which the “possibility of a European revolution seems to have disappeared,”²⁵⁷ can these orphaned emancipatory traits, these nests of obstinacy, still be found today? Given history’s incessant thimblerrigging of human traits from one site to another, these revolutionary resources are never located where we think we’ll find them. For Negt and Kluge, they crop up in the unlikelyst of places and at the least probable historical moments: in Detroit techno, in the labor habits of the premodern peasantry, and in the crude thinking (*plumpes Denken*) of Leibniz’s unrealistic proposal for a network of windmills in the Harz region.²⁵⁸

Take, as a concluding example, the migration of the European Enlightenment’s revolutionary project to the Caribbean, where, under new social conditions, the bourgeois ideal of freedom and promise of equality acquired a second life in the political revolt of black slaves. Like Heiner Müller’s play *The Mission*,²⁵⁹ which was written in 1979 while Negt and Kluge were at work on *History and Obstinacy*, Kluge’s recent story “Revolutionary Experiment on the Margins of France” follows the itinerary of these radical impulses after their emancipatory contents had been evacuated in France, first by Thermidor and then by Napoleon’s coup. As the stories of Müller and Kluge both suggest, these ideals lived on long after they were abandoned by their original European authors, igniting anti-imperialist struggles for self-determination in faraway parts of the world. After a period of agitating unsuccessfully in the colony of Louisiana, during which time the French Revolution was degenerating into terror and dictatorship, Kluge’s revolutionaries finally arrive in Haiti, where at last “the citizens of humanity saw before them exactly the raw material that they needed.”²⁶⁰ It was in fact the revolutionaries in Haiti, not those in France, who alone were able to “surpass the confines of the present constellations of power in perceiving the concrete meaning of freedom.”²⁶¹ As history would have it, the most enlightened and progressive ideals of the European bourgeoisie—a class that was itself ultimately incapable of realizing these abstract concepts in practice—found their radical actualization on a distant

island thousands of miles away, reborn as a slave revolt.

Delays and displacements such as these remind us that history, according to Negt and Kluge, is “not a criterion of substance, but rather a search criterion.”²⁶² Since time subjects all phenomena to a sea change that renders them unrecognizable, we are forced constantly to revise the rubrics under which we organize historical knowledge. If we want to learn about the most progressive ideals of European culture, for example, perhaps we should open the file cabinet of history to *H*, for “Haiti,” rather than *F*, for “France.” The Enlightenment’s promise of radical freedom never disappeared. Like other proletarian traits, it was simply mislabeled and archived under a different heading. And one day, if we get the search criterion right, the global margins may return to us the European revolutionary ideals that were betrayed upon its own soil and that have been waiting patiently abroad for their repatriation.

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

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1. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 247. Consider, especially, the transition from commentary 10, “Learning from Defeats?” to commentary 11, “The Temporal Structure of the Experience of Historical Struggles.”

2. After *Public Sphere and Experience*, Negt and Kluge seem to have “abandoned the epithet *proletarian*, or even *oppositional*, in favor of an emphatic notion of *Öffentlichkeit*, defined by such principles as *open*-ness (the etymological root of *öffentlich*), freedom of access, multiplicity of relations, communicative interaction and self-reflection.” Miriam Hansen, “Reinventing the Nickelodeon: Notes on Kluge and Early Cinema,” *October* 46 (Autumn 1988), p. 184.

3. “This is why all the substations of [the bourgeois] public sphere are organized as arcane realms. The keyword ‘confidential’ prevents the transfer of social experience from one domain into another.” *Public Sphere and Experience*, p. 16

4. “If *Public Sphere and Experience* still presented a more or less coherent theory—with narrative (anecdotal, parabolic) passages permeating both text and footnotes—*Geschichte und Eigensinn*, despite its comprehensive claim to theorize the historical, technical, and libidinal aspects of human labor power, to a certain extent demonstrates the limits of theory.” Miriam Hansen, “Alexander Kluge: Crossings between Film, Literature, Critical Theory,” in Sigrid Bauschinger, et al. (eds.), *Film und Literatur: Literarische Texte und der neue deutsche Film* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1984), p. 176. One review of *History and Obstnacy* opened with a

line that captured this methodological sprawl even more bluntly: “It is no longer possible to consider Critical Theory a unified project.” Andrew Bowie, “Review of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*,” *Ideas and Production* 1 (1983), p. 183.

5. Rainer Stollmann writes that “there may be a swarm of fans, but most of the volumes sold were left to starve on bookshelves only half-read. Thus, despite its commercial success, *History and Obstinacy* is also a message in a bottle—and one that still hasn’t arrived.” Stollman, “Vernunft ist ein Gefühl für Zusammenhang,” in Christian Schulte and Rainer Stollmann (eds.), *Der Maulwurf kennt kein System: Beiträge zur gemeinsamen Philosophie von Oskar Negt und Alexander Kluge* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2005), p. 235.

6. It should be pointed out that neither Kluge nor Negt belong to the generation whose political consciousness was formed by the experiences of 1968. Born respectively in 1932 and 1934, they, like Jürgen Habermas, are members of the older generation of “’58ers.” While this generation was considered less rebellious and more pragmatic than the younger, more radical ’68ers, this pragmatism also made them less vulnerable to the disappointment that followed after 1968 and the attendant shift to conservatism. See Oskar Negt, *Achtundsechzig: Politische Intellektuelle und die Macht* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2001).

7. Michael Rutschky, *Erfahrungshunger: Ein Essay über die siebziger Jahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982).

8. Alexander Kluge, *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 5.

9. Fernand Braudel, “History and the Social Sciences: *The Longue Durée*,” in *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 47. The “gloomy captivity” to which Braudel refers here are the years from 1940 to 1945.

10. Denis Hollier, “Desperanto,” in *Absent Without Leave: French Literature under the Threat of War*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 175–94.

11. “The world revolution had become very remote,” Weiss’s protagonist writes: “it would no longer be a unique act, it would now be a long-lasting process of class struggles, crowded with victories and defeats.” Peter Weiss, *Aesthetics of Resistances*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 101.

12. Taken from Hölderlin’s poem “Der Gang aufs Land,” the phrase “years of lead” was used by director Margarethe von Trotta to describe the 1970s. “Lead” refers both to the heaviness of the age and to the bullets of the Red Army Faction.

13. Michael Rutschky describes the 1970s as a decade of “hermeneutic preda-

tion” (*hermeneutischer Raubbau*), an era that extracted every potentially meaningful aspect of existence from the life of the individual. According to Rutschky, the militarized extremism and wildcat tactics of the “negative heroes” of the Red Army Faction—designed to fracture and destabilize society, rather than to build coalitions and new contexts for living—were a logically consistent, albeit desperate response to this generalized loss of meaning. Rutschky, “Stücke zu einer Theorie des hermeneutischen Raubbaus,” in *Erfahrungshunger*, pp. 138–64.

14. Alexander Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike* (2008), liner notes, p. 7. He observes in an interview with Thomas Combrink that stars are valuable for orientation because they are remote and cannot be influenced. Alexander Kluge, *Glückliche Umstände, leihweise: Das Lesebuch*, ed. Thomas Combrink (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), pp. 331–52.

15. About the consumers of capitalism’s industrial culture, Bertolt Brecht writes: “Since the object of exploitation is put inside them, they are, so to speak, victims of ‘imploitation [Einbeutung].” Brecht, “Der Dreigroschenprozess. Ein soziologisches Experiment,” in *Werke: Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, ed. Werner Hecht, 30 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988–), vol. 21, p. 476; Brecht, “The Threepenny Lawsuit,” in *Brecht on Film and Radio*, ed. and trans. Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2000), p. 170.

16. Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*, p. xlvi.

17. Kluge notes that when they began the collaboration that would eventually yield *Public Sphere and Experience*, “we quickly became aware that the essential and substantial realms of human experience are actually not organized publicly. Take intimacy, first of all. Where my family is, how I grew up as a child, what I love, what I hate. All of that is actually not organized publicly, but intimately. That is where it gets decided whether I have cause to be autonomous and self-confident or whether I carry around with me experiences of lack. The second realm, almost as large, is that of labor. It, too, is organized in private. Each person is isolated from the next. If you want to go into a factory, you are stopped at the gate.” Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, “Öffentlichkeit als wertvolles Gut und die Idee der Gegenöffentlichkeit,” in *Maßverhältnisse des Politischen: Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung an der Schwelle zum 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Peter Burmeister (Loccum: Rehbürg-Loccum Evangelische Akademie, 2003), p. 41.

18. An important campaign in Willi Münzenberg’s efforts to develop a proletarian counterpublic sphere in the 1920s and 1930s was his appeal to workers to photograph the factory interiors where they worked—sites of labor that, because of industrial espionage laws, could not be represented publicly. Münzenberg’s call to document the industrial workplace became a cornerstone of the worker photography movement in Weimar Germany and led to the founding of its primary organ,

Der Arbeiter-Fotograf, in 1926. In *Public Sphere and Experience*, which revives many aspects of Münzenberg's project, Negt and Kluge explain that under the rule of bourgeois society, labor and production were not just unrepresentable legally, but also literally incommunicable: the proletarian context of experience "is rendered 'incomprehensible' in terms of social communication: ultimately, it becomes a private experience." Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*, p. 18.

19. Oskar Negt, *Der politische Mensch: Demokratie als Lebensform* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010), p. 292. This process had in fact already taken place in Germany's recent, albeit repressed, historical past: a glance at the "total mobilization" of the National Socialists provided a perfect example of a regime that had incorporated the realms of production and family into its public sphere all too successfully—although hardly with the salutary effects that Negt and Kluge predicted. "In *Public Sphere and Experience*, the concept of a public sphere of production is applied narrowly to the realm of the media. While we were writing *History and Obstinacy*, we realized that this was actually much too limited a concept and that a public sphere of production ultimately encompasses all structures of a society that have been made public. For example, during the Third Reich, the public sphere experienced something like a boost in production and began, in all of its aspects, to incorporate things that had been excluded as 'private' from the classical bourgeois public sphere, taking not only from war production but also the structure of the family.... The Third Reich's public sphere of production incorporates everything that the bourgeois public sphere had shut out. Family is practically a public institution in the Third Reich, a public mission: Crosses of Honor, for example, are awarded to mothers for a certain number of children. Sovereign authorities penetrate the private sphere at the most practical levels. The operations manager has a position in the social hierarchy, and everything that, from the perspective of emancipation, we had conceived as a proletarian public sphere, is integrated into the Third Reich's public sphere of production." Oskar Negt, "Der Maulwurf kennt kein System: Oskar Negt im Gespräch mit Rainer Stollmann und Christian Schulte," in *Der Maulwurf kennt kein System*, p. 26.

20. Until the emergence of neoliberalism, bourgeois economics had been a quantitative science that was largely focused on calculating the laws and periodicities of fixed machine capital. Foucault writes that neoliberalism, by contrast, began to take into account the "qualitative modulations" of human capital, that is, living labor power that has not "been cut off from its human reality, from all its qualitative variables." Unlike classical economics, then, the neoliberals shared with Marx an interest in the neglected anthropology of labor, although their analysis of the qualitative and behavioral features of flexible (human) capital came to conclusions that were quite different, if not fundamentally opposed, to those

of Marx. “And it is precisely because classical economics was not able to take on this analysis of labor in its concrete specification and qualitative modulations, it is because it left this blank page, gap or vacuum in its theory, that a whole philosophy, anthropology, and politics, of which Marx is precisely the representative, rushed in.” Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures as the Collège de France 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 221.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

22. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse des Politischen*, in *Der unterschätzte Mensch*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 2001), vol. 1, p. 800.

23. This analysis is in fact already anticipated in lines from the last chapter of *Public Sphere and Experience*: “In terms of arms buildup, war, and competition, National Socialism follows classical imperialism. . . . At the same time, that which in classical bourgeois society falls outside the framework of the public sphere—the horizon of experience and the consciousness of the masses, which originated under repressive conditions—is drawn into a process of mobilization” (pp. 166–67). Further: “The present scope of capitalist countries’ foreign spheres of influence appears, compared with classical imperialism and the imperialism of the 1930s, to be fundamentally restricted. It is true that the so-called underdeveloped territories become, as before, objects of exploitation. . . . But the capitalist countries are no longer faced with the alternatives, in the traditional sense, either to start wars against one another or collapse. New alternatives are provided through a higher level of organization of capital in supranational economic blocs such as the EEC, capital absorption, inflationary tendencies, and redistribution between the economic, political, national, and supranational sphere of complexes of contradictions that contain the potential for crisis. Imperialism is directing its energies inward. In the urban areas above all, it turns even human beings and their contexts of living into an intensified object of imperialist expansion and of the higher concentration of valorization” (p. 170).

24. In this particular regard, the course of Germany’s modernization more closely resembles that of its neighbors to the east than that of European countries. Negt and Kluge observe, for example, that the “introversion of labor capacities” distinguishes Germany from “every other European country *besides* Russia.” *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, in *Der unterschätzte Mensch*, vol. 2, p. 632; italics added. Indeed, many scholars have similarly noted that Russia’s development followed a course of so-called “internal colonization” in which Russia was at once “both the subject and the object of colonization.” Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), p. 2. See also Alvin W. Gouldner, “Stalinism: A Study of Internal Colonialism,” *Telos* 34 (1978), pp.

5–48. It is perhaps not surprising to observe, as the biopolitical corollary to this project of internal colonization, an explosion of interest in the anthropotechnical project of creating *Homo sovieticus*—a “higher sociobiological type”—in Russia after 1917. On the “New Soviet Man,” see Lev Trotskii, “Iskusstvo revoliutsii i sotsialisticheskoe iskusstvo,” in *Literatura i revoliutsiia* (1923; Moscow: Politizdat, 1991), pp. 177–97.

25. “A human is being made,” proclaims the doctor’s assistant. Negt gives a close reading of this line (“Es wird ein Mensch gemacht”) in *Die Faust-Karriere: Vom verzweifelten Intellektuellen zum gescheiterten Unternehmer* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), pp. 182–200. On the construction of the canal and the doctor’s transformation into a capitalist entrepreneur in *Faust II*, Negt writes: “This questioning [of the sovereignty of nature in the time of Goethe] extends to the concept of the human, as well, as in the case of the homunculus that is produced, but also to the external relationship to nature, to the domination of the wild forces of nature, of vulcanism and of neptunism. However, this cannot be achieved with the broadside of force, as Hegel said, but only indirectly, through channels and systems of tubes. In order to be able to defeat forces of nature that are beyond the human, it is necessary to mobilize the forces of nature that are themselves human” (pp. 211–12).

26. Negt writes that the German imaginary, in both its myth and its literature, has always been preoccupied with the distinction between inside and outside. It seems that other national imaginaries do not exhibit the same obsession with this boundary. “The loss of control over the relations between inner and outer, between the inner world of the house and of the family, on the one hand, and society, political institutions, and the state, on the other: has this been especially pronounced in German history down to the present day? I do not know, but it is astonishing how many stories, plays, tragedies, and novels have taken this imbalance between inner and outer as their subject matter. The territories and kingdoms that engage with the inner world of the subject—with the noumenon, the intelligible, the space of pure purpose and freedom—have had an immense scope in German literature.” Negt, *Die Faust-Karriere*, pp. 48–49. Further: “The world of German fairy tales is full of themes that circle around the broken connection between inner and outer, between revolution and obstinacy. Again and again, people have pointed out that we live in a country that occasionally lapses into a phase of political depression whenever those who have power in this world use excessive force to retaliate against the obstinacy of the populace and the public audacity of its claim to political participation” (*ibid.*, p. 157).

On this point, it is intriguing to note Rutschky’s claim that the ideological disorientation of the 1970s was caused by a disturbance in the mental “schematic dividing the internal and external worlds.” Rutschky, *Erfahrungshunger*, p. 48. In

his analysis of the 1970s, Rutschky also rephrases this distinction between internal and external as the difference between warmth and cold (pp. 41–43), two categories that have been central to Negt’s own theorization. On warmth and cold, see Negt’s introduction to *Kältestrom* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1994), pp. 3–20.

27. As Jean-Pierre Vernant observed, myth is a vital resource for humanity: its language “represents a way of arranging reality, a kind of classification and setting in order of the world, a preliminary logical arrangement, in sum an instrument of thought.” Vernant, “The Reason of Myth,” in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1990), p. 255. In a similar vein, the playwright Heiner Müller describes myth as “coagulated collective experiences” (geronnene kollektive Erfahrungen), a phrase that echoes Marx’s famous definition of capital as “coagulated collective labor” (geronnene kollektive Arbeit). See Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht: Eine Autobiographie*, in *Werke*, ed. Frank Hörnigk, 13 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998–2001), vol. 9, p. 321. On myth as a form of collective noetic labor, see Hans Blumenberg’s important book, *Work on Myth*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985). Not incidentally, Blumenberg’s account of the anthropological sources of mythical thinking in this book builds on the work of the philosopher Arnold Gehlen, who defined the human organism as a *Mängelwesen*, “deficient being,” that needs elements that can distance and buffer it from the shocks of experience in the immediate present. As we will see below, Gehlen’s understanding of humans as deficient beings is central also to the anthropology of Negt and Kluge. For Gehlen and Blumenberg, myth provides *Entlastung*, “relief,” for a being that would otherwise be paralyzed and crushed by the exigencies of reality (*Weltzwang*). By giving anthropomorphic form to the “chaos of the unnamed” and thereby particularizing our existential dread, myth ruptures the “absolutism of reality,” Blumenberg explains. “The organic system resulting from the mechanism of evolution becomes ‘man’ by evading the pressure of that mechanism by setting against it something like a phantom body. This is the sphere of his culture, his institutions—and also his myth.” Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, p. 165.

28. Fredric Jameson, “On Negt and Kluge,” *October* 46 (Autumn 1988), pp. 151–77.

29. Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 35.

30. Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*, p. xlviii.

31. Despite the resemblances between *A Thousand Plateaus* and *History and Obstinacy*, Deleuze and Guattari’s book had no direct influence on Negt and Kluge’s collaboration. *A Thousand Plateaus* appeared one year before, and there scarcely would have been time to write a book of 1283 pages in such a short period of time.

Interviews with Negt and Kluge in 1980 indicate that work on *History and Obstnacy* already had started long before the appearance of Deleuze of Guattari's book.

32. On the resemblances between *History and Obstnacy* and Engels's *Dialectics of Nature*, see Rudolf Burger's review of Negt and Kluge, "Die Mikrophysik des Widerstands," *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, no. 48 (1982), pp. 110–24, esp. pp. 118–20. For a Deleuze-inspired materialist history that is comparable to—although significantly less dialectical than—Negt and Kluge's *History and Obstnacy*, see Manuel de Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Zone Books, 1997).

33. Kluge, *Nachrichten von der ideologischen Antike*, liner notes, p. 6.

34. "The methodological difficulty of developing a *political economy of the labor force* is as follows: since capital reduces the labor force to an abstract expenditure, we are dealing with an object of knowledge that is more or less uniform; there is only *one* political economy of capital, only *one* law of motion observed by the capitalist mode of production. But the political economy of the labor force behaves in an entirely different way: this is not a matter of simply describing capacities or of objective laws of motion that have been split off from the subject, but instead involves *two* aspects, namely, the subjective and the objective at the same time; for this reason, *every* subject-object relationship that is caused by the exteriorization and separation [*Äußerung und Entäußerung*] of a social labor force entails its own specific law of motion. Just as there is one political economy for the body, there is also one for intelligence, one for the psychic apparatus, and one for the senses." Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 772.

35. "Actually what we need is *Homo compensator*, not *Homo sapiens*. *Homo sapiens* develops a particularly one-sided kind of rational conduct, of emotional omnipotency in the way that it applies its intelligence. We need an equilibrator [*Gleichgewichtler*] who balances between man's different characteristics with a delicate sense of feeling, with the *sole of his foot* that is at home *in his ear*." These last two organs are important, respectively, to the proprioceptive and vestibular systems, two sources that provide us with sensory feedback about the balance, movement, and orientation of the body. Kluge, in Rainer Stollmann, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis: Gespräche über Geschichten mit Alexander Kluge* (Berlin: Kadmos: 2005), p. 46.

36. See p. 134 in the present volume. Elsewhere, Negt describes the various balance labors of this welder as follows: "she is not working precisely at those moments when the Taylorist would say that she is working. She solders her small parts as an extended arm of dead labor, as an appendage of a mechanized operation. At that moment, she does almost nothing. Unless she is thinking something to herself or listening to music in order to endure it. When the capitalist purchases the labor force of this woman, his job is already over. In his mind, he already sees

the completed work. For the woman, the labor with herself is just beginning. She is a life form that must first integrate itself into the operation. To do that, she has to transform herself, to accomplish an act of balance. This is not simple. She could also refuse. She has to carry out an entire sequence of labors to bring herself to go into a factory that does not conform to her nature.” Oskar Negt, in “Die Geschichte der lebendigen Arbeitskraft: Diskussion mit Oskar Negt und Alexander Kluge,” *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 13.48 (1983), p. 88.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

38. See Chapter 1, p. 94, in the present volume.

39. Although the conservative thinker Gehlen was publicly denounced by the Left, he is occasionally referred to in the work of Negt and Kluge. Negt discusses him in *Der politische Mensch*, pp. 373–74 and invokes him again in *Die Faust-Karriere*, where he compares the Gehlen’s anthropology of the “deficient being” to Freud’s definition of man as a “prosthetic god.” With reference to Goethe’s *Faust*, Negt writes that “the main character is not Faust, but Mephisto, the one who points out that the deficient being called man, with his anthropologically meager equipment, demands as part of his very nature a social project of organ substitution, organ extension, and organ supplementation. Thus the anthropologist Arnold Gehlen pointed to a way out through an expansion of man’s powers using substitute organs that conform to the ‘prosthetic god’s’ form of life; however, these helpful supplementary organs can be produced only through social labor and by enriching individual capacities to form reality” (p. 194). One discovers aspects of the philosophical anthropology of Gehlen in many contemporary Leftist projects, from Étienne Balibar’s revival of philosophical anthropology as a model for defining citizenship in a postnationalist era to Bernard Stiegler’s synthesis of Heideggerian phenomenology with the paleoanthropology of André Leroi-Gourhan.

40. Arnold Gehlen, *Der Mensch: Seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, 7 vols. (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), vol. 3, p. 14; available in English as *Man: His Nature and Place in the World*, trans. Clare McMillan and Karl Pillemer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 12.

41. In correspondence with Wolfgang Harich, a member of the Lukács circle, Gehlen observed in the early 1950s that the notion of action (*Handlung*) that he had developed in his analysis of the “deficient being” played the same role as labor in Marxist theory. Indeed, close examination reveals more theoretical correspondences between Gehlen and Marxist thought than have previously been acknowledged. Reinhard Pitsch, “Institution und Subjektivität: Die Tragik Gehlens und der Marxisten,” *Sezession* 4 (January 2004), p. 44.

42. Gehlen discusses our underdeveloped organs and juvenile characteristics

in detail in the first chapters of *Man*. On extrauterine gestation and neoteny in human development, see the work of the Swiss zoologist Adolf Portmann, especially his *Biologische Fragment zu einer Lehre vom Menschen* (Basel: Schwabe, 1944), which influenced Gehlen's own research immensely. In this text, Portmann writes that "after one year, man has achieved a level of development which a true mammal must effect at birth. For man's situation to correspond to that of true mammals, pregnancy would have to continue a year longer than it actually does; it would have to last approximately 21 months." Gehlen comments: "The newborn is thus a type of 'physiological,' or normalized, premature infant, a 'secondary nestling.'" Gehlen, *Man*, p. 36.

43. Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Anna Freud et al., 19 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1964–1968), vol. 14, p. 49; *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–1974), vol. 21, p. 91.

44. At one point, Negt and Kluge considered titling their collected writings, with reference to Freud's formulation, *Man as a Prosthetic God*. Negt, "Der Maulwurf kennt kein System," p. 11.

45. Kluge, in Kluge and Negt, "Öffentlichkeit als wertvolles Gut und die Idee der Gegenöffentlichkeit," p. 42.

46. Gehlen later conceded that his original account in *Man* had underestimated the power of drives and instincts in humans.

47. Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 487, translation modified.

48. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins, 3 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998–2011).

49. Negt observes that "*democracy is the only politically conceived social order that has to be learned, over and over, every day, into old age*. For Aristotle, who defines man as a *zoon politikon* (a political life form), this sounds like a sort of anthropological constant, but in truth, this doesn't designate the final product of a natural development, but a direction and a result of a process of education and of learning. The definition of man as a *zoon politikon* has as its *goal a life form* rooted in the free self-determination of citizens who are capable of autonomy. Only gods and animals can live *outside of the polis*, thus, without politics." Negt, *Der politische Mensch*, p. 13.

50. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 13.

51. Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *Sophocles I*, ed. and trans. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), ll. 368–69. Negt discusses these two lines

in *Die Faust-Karriere*, p. 39. The stasimon of the chorus continues by moving through the manifold expressions of man's pluripotentiality: he crosses water, transforms the earth, tames animals and influences their genetics, cultivates speech and thought, and builds cities and other shelters to defy the elements. "He has a way against everything [παντοπόρος: all-inventive], / and he faces nothing that is to come / without contrivance," (ll. 393–96). In his reading of *Antigone*, Jacques Lacan points out the striking conjunction of two contrasting words in this last phrase, without any interpunctuation — παντοπόρος ("all-inventive") and ἄπορος (the opposite of the previous word, meaning one who has "no resources or defenses against something," or as Lacan rephrases it, "one that is 'screwed'"). Lacan thus summarizes the status of the deficient being as follows: "He advances toward nothing that is likely to happen, he advances and he is παντοπόρος, 'artful,' but he is ἄπορος, always 'screwed.'" Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), pp. 274–75.

52. In his 1926 essay "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety," Freud noted that the "intrauterine existence of the human seems to be short in comparison with that of most animals, and it is sent into the world in a less finished state. As a result the influence of the real external world upon it is intensified and an early differentiation between the ego and the id is promoted. Moreover, the dangers of the external world have a greater importance for it, so that the value of the object which can alone protect it against them and take the place of its former intrauterine life is enormously enhanced. The biological factor, then, establishes the earliest situations of danger and creates the need to be loved which will accompany the child through the rest of its life." Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 14, p. 200; *The Standard Edition*, vol. 20, pp. 154–55.

53. Returning to Aristotle's definition of man as *zoon politikon* ("the being naturally living by and for the city"), Étienne Balibar similarly observes that "the human subject is able concretely to meet the essence of its 'humanity' only within a *civic*, or *political*, horizon in the broad sense of the term." Balibar, "Subjection and Subjectivation," in *Supposing the Subject*, ed. Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1994), p. 8.

54. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nikolaus (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 84.

55. See p. 94 in the present volume.

56. This line appears only in the second edition. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993), vol. 1, p. 17. In this way, it could be said that the broken bone of the individual fortifies the backbone of the species. To offer a related example: in

response to the recent discovery of the skull of a male *Homo erectus* who had lived for years without teeth, paleoanthropologists have concluded that this individual could have survived only with the help of companions who prepared food for him. As a result, this skull has come to represent for some the earliest evidence of human compassion and community. John Nobile Wilford, "Some See Roots of Compassion in a Toothless Fossil Skull," *New York Times*, April 6, 2005.

57. Gehlen, *Man*, p. 25

58. This is the subtitle of Kluge's fourth book *Neue Geschichten: Hefte 1–18: "Unheimlichkeit der Zeit"* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977).

59. Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, vol. 1, p. 172.

60. Alexander Kluge, *Tür an Tür mit einem anderen Leben: 350 neue Geschichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), p. 9.

61. Alexander Kluge, *Die Lücke, die der Teufel lässt: Im Umfeld des neuen Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003) p. 319.

62. Alexander Kluge, "Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie und das Schicksal unserer Öffentlichkeit," in *Industrialisierung des Bewußtseins: Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit den "neuen" Medien*, ed. Klaus von Bismarck, Günter Gaus, Alexander Kluge, and Ferdinand Sieger (Munich: Piper, 1985), p. 75. Negt likewise emphasizes the close connection between slow learning and political obstinacy: "I am someone who learns slowly, and since I have managed to extract this knowledge only through great effort, it makes sense that I am not inclined to give it up quickly." Negt, "Vorwort," in *Unbotmäßige Zeitgenossen: Annäherungen und Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994).

63. Kluge, "Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie," p. 82.

64. Thus, for example, the impossibility, or at least extreme improbability, of reciprocity in love: "Feelings take time to develop. It therefore seems unlikely that love at first sight is mutual. An emotion erupts that has been building up for a long time, enriched by fantasy, by stories one has heard; yes, love at first sight, but only for one; the other feels magically attracted to the prey that is just lying there. He acts like one in love. Thus, in appearance at least: love at first sight. Yet, one of them is investing the whole weight of his or her life, whereas the other, happy-go-lucky, merely seized an opportunity." Alexander Kluge, "On Opera, Film, and Feelings," ed. Miriam Hansen, *New German Critique* 49 (Winter 1990), pp. 95–96.

65. "Since the libido is blind, it doesn't even notice when it starts to do something else than what it was originally doing." Kluge, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis*, p. 87.

66. Kluge points out in "Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie" that there are divisions to be overcome even within the architecture of the brain itself—synapses, gaps, and cameralisms in the neural pathways that impede the frictionless

circulation of data (p. 78). As a result, sensation and intellection always involve a process of translation—"and *that* is a theoretical moment" notes Dirk Baecker in "Wozu Theorie?: Dirk Baecker und Rainer Stollmann über Kritische und Systemtheorie," in *Der Maulwurf kennt kein System*, p. 69.

67. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 990.

68. Bernhard Siegert, *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System*, trans. Kevin Repp (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

69. Kluge, "Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie," p. 79.

70. Klaus Eder and Alexander Kluge, *Ulmer Dramaturgien: Reibungsverluste* (Munich: Hanser, 1980), p. 48. On the priority of writing over vision in Kluge's work, see also Hansen, "Alexander Kluge: Crossings between Film, Literature, Critical Theory."

71. "Even at the times when I was making films, books have always been for me the actual form of enclosure [*Gehäuse*]." Alexander Kluge, "Die Chronik der Gefühle: Lesung mit Kommentaren," in *Maßverhältnisse des Politischen: Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung an der Schwelle des 21. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hans-Peter Burmeister, p. 79.

72. Kluge explains: "Cinematic projection is based on an illumination of $\frac{1}{48}$ th of a second, which is followed by a phase of darkness that lasts $\frac{1}{48}$ th of a second, the so-called 'transport phase.'" "Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie," p. 105.

73. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Consciousness and Imagination," in *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, trans. Jonathan Webber (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 179–87.

74. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Review, 1976), p. 284.

75. Alexander Kluge, in conversation with David Roberts, "Alexander Kluge and German History: 'The Air Raid on Halberstadt on 8.4.1945,'" in Tara Forrest (ed.), *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 145.

76. Alexander Kluge, *Die Patriotin* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1979), p. 294.

77. Dirk Baecker and Alexander Kluge, *Vom Nutzen ungelöster Probleme* (Berlin: Merve, 2003), p. 12. Similarly, Joseph Vogl remarks in conversation with Kluge that "freedom consists less in acting spontaneously than in interrupting the chains of action, the functional courses, and the automatisms once they have already been triggered. Uncoupling." Alexander Kluge and Joseph Vogl, *Soll und Haben: Fernsehgespräche* (Berlin: Diaphanes, 2009), p. 8.

78. Alexander Kluge, "On Film and the Public Sphere," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *New German Critique* 24–25 (Autumn 1981–Winter 1982), p. 209

79. On scarring, sensory withdrawal, and the genesis of stupidity, see Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002) and Birgit Erdle, "Thinking in Times of Danger: Adorno on Stupidity," *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 88.3, pp. 260–70.

80. Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1997), vol. 6, p. 9.

81. Kluge traces the human capacity for ideation and mental representation—the "cinema of the mind," as he calls it—to the Pleistocene era: "Since the Ice Age approximately (or earlier), streams of images, of so-called associations, have moved through the human mind, prompted to some extent by an anti-realistic attitude, by the protest against an unbearable reality. . . . This is the more-than-ten-thousand-year-old-cinema to which the invention of the film strip, projector and screen have only provided a technological response." Kluge, "On Film and the Public Sphere," p. 209.

82. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 888.

83. See Elmar Altvater, Frigga Haug, and Oskar Negt (eds.), *Turbo-Kapitalismus: Gesellschaft im Übergang ins 21. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: VSA, 1997).

84. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 962. Similarly: "The impossibility of technologically processing data in real time is the possibility of art. Literature, as an art of human beings, is a gift of interception, which operates on the basis of feedback loops between human senses and the postal materiality of data processing known as the alphabet. . . . Literature is implied in the postponement of sending as the possibility for interception by the senses." Siegert, *Relays*, p. 12.

85. "In his book *Sculpting in Time* (the Russian title [*Zapechatlennoe vremia*] means "captured" or "preserved time," time that has been transported in time), Andrei Tarkovsky speaks of film as a 'matrix' of real time. Henceforth, time that has been viewed and captured could 'be preserved in metal tins' for a long (theologically, even an eternally long) time." Kluge, "Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie," p. 106.

86. Kluge calls for us to reconsider the potentially progressive aspects of auratic experience. Benjamin "claims that theater is still on the side of the classical arts, while film exceeds this classical framework. It has no aura, he claims. Here Benjamin's assessment is an exaggeration. . . . At the opposite pole of duration and singularity—those are what produce aura—are ephemerality and iterability. Benjamin does not understand them as negative concepts. They are just irreconcilable with duration and singularity." Kluge, "Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie," pp. 72–73. "I require time for everything. It part of the work of art to produce time out of itself. This has been confused with aura, with the veneration that we show to them—meaning that we are supposed to destroy this as a myth, or declare it

for dead" (p. 107).

87. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

88. See Negt, *Kältestrom*. Also see Joseph Vogl, *Kalkül und Leidenschaft: Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen* (Munich: Sequenzia, 2002).

89. "In Marx," Fredric Jameson observes, *Trennung* means "above all, the historical 'separation' of the producer from the means of production (as well as from the produced object and from production itself as my own activity). This is for Marx, of course, the central structural feature of the historical catastrophe at the very origin of capitalism, namely, so-called 'primitive accumulation.' There is, therefore, already in Marx a mediation between a form of production and a historical event. Negt and Kluge will now project this event—primitive accumulation—along with its structural concept—*Trennung*, division and separation—into a more general historical and philosophical one, which designates all the catastrophes of history, most crucially at its beginning and in the destruction of traditional agricultural and communal societies." Jameson, "On Negt and Kluge," p. 160.

90. Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, in *Werkausgabe*, 16 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), vol. 4, p. 106; Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 99.

91. As a primitive archetype of nonalienated production, Negt and Kluge evoke a scene of natural labor in which the working body is connected organically to the land. Thus, Negt avers that a "farmer in the Middle Ages realized the properties of his labor by interacting with the field or with animals, by observing the weather; these were of course all very important labor properties, on which the success of the harvest depended. This farmer had to develop aptitudes and properties that were decisive for the success of his process of production. The properties of this labor were embedded in a working and living community that occurred naturally; they did not exist apart from this context and did not need to find an object through which to be realized. But with the process of primitive accumulation, with the division between earth and polity, the status of labor properties in the historical context of objects changed fundamentally.... Labor as a category of reality, *Arbeit sans phrase*, labor as mere labor capacity—that is a modern category." Negt and Kluge, "Die Geschichte der lebendigen Arbeitskraft," p. 93.

92. Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, p. 874.

93. "All of these new characteristics that make up industrialized man and that have defined a civilization for several hundred years are characteristics that have their roots in the old conditions that precede expropriation; preserved from the expropriation, they then become the answers to expropriation." Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Suchbegriffe*, in *Der unterschätzte Mensch*, vol. 1, pp. 286–87.

94. On primitive accumulation as a strategy of continuous expropriation, see

also David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

95. Tony Brown, "The Time of Globalization: Rethinking Primitive Accumulation," *Rethinking Marxism* 21.4 (October 2009), p. 571.

96. Jim Glassman, "Primitive Accumulation, Accumulation by Dispossession, Accumulation by 'Extra-Economic' Means," *Progress in Human Geography* 30.5 (2006), p. 615.

97. Negt, "Der Maulwurf kennt kein System," p. 13.

98. In chapter 10 of *Capital*, "On the Working Day," Marx recalls the case of Mary Anne Walkley, a millner who was worked to death in 1863. The account of her demise vividly illustrates the consequences of allowing capital to dominate the pattern of work rhythms without providing time for the reproduction of labor power, for the organic maintenance of life. Without the compensatory flight of becoming bird, the becoming machine of Taylorized labor is unsustainable.

99. Negt and Kluge take this phrase from Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995).

100. Negt, *Der politische Mensch*, p. 259. Kluge similarly notes that the essential powers of human capital unfold within a temporality that is notably slower than the abstract time of machine capital. He remarks in an interview: "With Oskar Negt, I often labored on the question of whether there exists a political economy of labor, as capital's polar opposite. For labor can express itself much better than capital; it is not abstract at all. At the same time, human qualities—man's essential powers, as Marx calls them—develop so slowly that we must observe them with much greater diligence than the very rapid and sweeping processes of capital we are witnessing now, for instance." Gertrud Koch, "Undercurrents of Capital: An Interview with Alexander Kluge," *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 84.4 (2010), p. 361. Especially now, in the age of turbocapitalism, the organic rhythms of living labor are increasingly in direct conflict with the mechanical algorithms of capital.

101. On bioderegulation, see Teresa Brennan, *Exhausting Modernity: Grounds for a New Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2000) and Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2013). For a discussion of the temporal deformations introduced by fixed capital, see "The Time of Capital: Three Industrial Novels," in Devin Fore, *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), pp. 75–132.

102. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, p. 335.

103. In 1852, Marx used the trope of the old mole to describe the process of revolutionary advancement—slow and subterranean, but thereby also systematic and ineluctable: "the revolution is thorough. It is still on its journey through purgatory. It goes about its business methodically. By December 2, 1851, it had

completed one half of its preparatory work; it is now completing the other half. . . . And when it has completed this, the second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exultantly exclaim: 'Well burrowed, old mole!'" Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trans. Ben Fowkes, in *Political Writings, Vol. 2: Surveys from Exile* (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 236–37, translation modified. Marx's invocation of the old mole refers to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, whose protagonist addresses the revenant ghost of his father as an "old mole" that refuses to be put to rest.

The mole has subsequently come to represent the chthonic forces of history, base materialist impulses that eschew the light of day and defy the directives of consciousness. Thus Georges Bataille explained in 1929 that "'Old Mole,' Marx's resounding expression for the complete satisfaction of the revolutionary outburst of the masses, must be understood in relation to the notion of a geological uprising as expressed in the *Communist Manifesto*. Marx's point of departure has nothing to do with the heavens, preferred station of the imperialist eagle as of Christian or revolutionary utopias. He begins in the bowels of the earth, as in the materialist bowels of proletarians." Bataille, "The 'Old Mole' and the Prefix *Sur* in the Words *Surhomme* [Superman] and *Surrealist*," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. and trans. Allan Stockl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 35.

Kluge likewise lauds the unsung intelligence of the bowels in the story "Unintentional Stroke of Luck. Episode From the Age of Asymmetrical Warfare," which tells of an American fighter pilot in the Middle East who had "fixed the sights of his plane on an object he took to be a bunker," but that was in fact "a farm on which a wedding celebration happened to be taking place." Preparing to discharge his payload, he suddenly experienced a "convulsive evacuation" of his bowels that caused him to knock the aiming mechanism so that the missiles fired into "the swampy fields, where they harmed no one." Alexander Kluge, *The Devil's Blind Spot: Tales from the New Century*, trans. Michael Chalmers and Michael Hulse (New York: New Directions, 2004), p. 38. In an interview Kluge comments about this story: "If intestinal colic prevents the bomber pilot from propagating death in Iraq then his intestines were smarter than his head. And that the intestines do this dates back to a previous time. If the intestines' ability to anticipate is greater than the head's foresight—which is also artificially deadened again and again through education—then the intestines were the prophet. It concerns a reason that is underneath reason. That is the core issue." Kluge, *Glückliche Umstände, leihweise*, pp. 337–38.

104. "In *History and Obstinacy* we are always looking for the aspect that has been covered up, for what is burrowing around under the surface, which is why

our favorite animal is the mole that works *sous terre*, as Hegel says. That is precisely where, within man, the concealed, buried, and distorted characteristics are located—protest energies, which we try to straighten out in our writings; but this is also where certain needs are located in the form of concrete.” Negt, “Der Maulwurf kennt kein System,” p. 12.

105. Miriam Hansen, “The Stubborn Discourse: History and Story-Telling in the Films of Alexander Kluge,” in *Persistence of Vision 2* (Fall 1985), pp. 19–29.

106. Andrew Bowie, “Geschichte und Eigensinn,” *Telos* 66 (Winter 1985–1986), pp. 183–90.

107. Jameson, “On Negt and Kluge.”

108. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), in *Werke*, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), vol. 3, p. 155; Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 119. On Eigensinn in Hegel, see Judith Butler, “Stubborn Attachment, Bodily Subjection: Rereading Hegel on the Unhappy Consciousness,” in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 31–62. Like that of Negt and Kluge, Butler’s reading emphasizes the connection between splitting (or *Trennung*) and obstinacy: “One might read Hegel’s references to *Eigensinnigkeit* or stubbornness as illustrating the process of splitting and defense in the formation of neurosis. That Hegel refers to this ‘unhappiness’ as a kind of stubborn attachment suggests that, as in neurosis, the ethical regulation of bodily impulse becomes the focus and aim of impulse itself. In both cases, we are given to understand an attachment in subjection which is formative of the reflexive structure of subjection itself” (pp. 57–58). Significantly, too, she concludes that this scheme literally mobilizes desire, that is, detaches it from the subject and sets it into motion, much in the way that Kluge understands emotions to be itinerate states that cut across individual subjects: “If part of what regulatory regimes do is to constrain the formation and attachments of desire, then it seems that from the start a certain detachability of impulse is presumed, a certain incommensurability between the capacity for a bodily attachment, on the one hand, and the site where it is confined, on the other. Foucault appears to presume precisely this detachability of desire in claiming that incitements and reversals are to some degree unforeseeable, that they have the capacity, central to the notion of resistance, to exceed the regulatory aims for which they were produced” (p. 60).

109. Kluge, in Stollmann, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis*, p. 51.

110. Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938–1940*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 392.

111. Jameson, “On Negt and Kluge,” p. 159.

112. Braudel describes three temporal strata prospected by the historian—the geographical, the sociocultural and the individual—as follows: “The first is an inquiry into a history that is almost changeless, the history of man in relation to his surroundings. It is a history which unfolds slowly and is slow to alter, often repeating itself and working itself out in cycles that are endlessly renewed. . . . Over and above this unflinching history, there is a history of gentle rhythms, of groups and groupings, which one might readily have called social history if the term had not been diverted from its full meaning. . . . Lastly comes the third part, concerned with traditional history, history, so to speak, on the scale not so much of man in general as of men in particular. It is that history which François Simiand calls ‘l’histoire événementielle,’ the history of events: a surface disturbance, the waves stirred up by the powerful movement of tides. A history of short, sharp, nervous vibrations.” Braudel, *On History*, p. 3.

113. Negt and Kluge, “Die Geschichte der lebendigen Arbeitskraft,” p. 91.

114. Jameson, “On Negt and Kluge,” p. 159.

115. “In short, the working class was presented as struggling ‘economically,’ whereas ‘politics’ was the concern of the bourgeoisie, inasmuch as the latter, through the State, was distinguished from mere capitalists, the owners of the means of production.” As a result “Marx could never stabilize his theoretical discourse with respect to the concept of ‘politics.’” Étienne Balibar, “The Notion of Class Politics in Marx,” trans. Dominique Parent-Ruccio and Frank R. Annunziato, *Rethinking Marxism* 1.2 (Summer 1988), pp. 22 and 24–25.

116. “We have always understood this concept ‘proletarian’ in the sense of repressed and expropriated characteristics, and never in the narrow context of a class theory. We do not use ‘the proletariat’ as a concept for a material substance, but instead use the provisions of characteristics [*Eigenschaftsbestimmungen*] and their concepts. In this regard, for us, ‘expropriation’—or the ‘permanence of primitive accumulation,’ which is the same thing—is brought to bear on separate or several human characteristics, not on an entire person. . . . In this regard, every moment of repression and expropriation is linked to a form of protest energy, and that is what we call ‘proletarian.’” Negt, “Der Maulwurf kennt kein System,” p. 13.

117. In “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” Georg Lukács characterizes the proletariat as “the identical subject-object of the social and historical processes of evolution.” The proletariat is defined here as an object that has achieved subjectivity and consciousness—or, as Negt and Kluge write, capital that has learned to say “I.” See Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 149.

118. Balibar, “The Notion of Class Politics in Marx,” pp. 19 and 18.

119. Bertolt Brecht, “[Marx an die Proletarier],” in *Werke*, vol. 22, p. 48.

120. Bertolt Brecht, "Die Beule," in *Werke*, vol. 19, p. 319; "The Bruise," in *Brecht on Film and Radio*, pp. 142–43.

121. Brian Massumi, "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgments," in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. xvi.

122. Writing about *History and Obstinacy*, Thomas Elsaesser proposes "to see this vast tome that chronicles 2,000 years of Germanic history in the context of the paradigm of parapraxis, of what in the world of work and human labor constantly misfires, goes awry and misses its intended goal or target." Elsaesser, "New German Cinema and History: The Case of Alexander Kluge," in Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Göktürk (eds.), *The German Cinema Book* (London: BFI, 2002), p. 186.

123. Kluge, in Stollmann, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis*, p. 93.

124. Norbert Bolz, "Eigensinn: Zur politisch-theologischen Poetik Hans Magnus Enzensbergers und Alexander Kluge," in Jochen Hörisch and Hubert Winkels (eds.), *Das schnelle Altern der neuesten Literatur: Essays zu deutschsprachigen Texten zwischen 1968–1984* (Düsseldorf: Claasen, 1985), p. 57.

125. Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*, p. 8.

126. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 766.

127. *Ibid.*, p. 784.

128. Negt and Kluge, *Suchbegriffe*, p. 306.

129. Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*, liner notes, p. 36.

130. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

131. When Negt and Kluge write of the political, they have in mind the practice of the politics prior to the eighteenth century, when French philosophers came to define politics more restrictively as a theory of the state. When Negt and Kluge use the word "politics," they are usually referring to this earlier, more encompassing definition, namely, politics as a general science and practice of collective being (*Gemeinwesen*). Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 725. Kluge writes that the political is nothing other than "a particular intensity of everyday feelings." See the speech he delivered on being given the Fontane Prize for Literature, "Das Politische als Intensitätsgrad alltäglicher Gefühle," *Freibeuter* 1 (1979), pp. 56–62; translated by Andrew Bowie as "The Political as Intensity of Everyday Feelings," *Cultural Critique* 4 (Fall 1986), pp. 119–28.

132. Alexander Kluge, "Das Marxsche Wertgesetz ist in der Natur verankert: Ein Gespräch zwischen Rainer Stollmann und Alexander Kluge," in *Der Maulwurf kennt kein System*, p. 47.

133. Alexander Kluge and Florian Hopf, “Gefühle können Berge versetzen . . .,” Interview von Florian Hopf mit Alexander Kluge zu dem Film: DIE MACHT DER GEFÜHLE,” in Alexander Kluge, *Die Macht der Gefühle* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1984), p. 180; translation by Robert Savage as “Feelings Can Move Mountains . . .”: An Interview with Alexander Kluge on the Film The Power of Feelings,” in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, p. 240.

134. For a brilliant reading of the work-love gestuary in Godard’s *Passion*, see Leo Bersani, “The Will to Know,” in *Is the Rectum a Grave?: And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 154–67. For Bersani, Godard’s *Passion* illustrates the haptic bond that connects the mother to the young infant, a bond that the psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas called an “aesthetic of handling.” This kind of “being-with” enables “the baby’s adequate processing of his existence prior to his ability to process it through thought” (p. 162).

135. In his 1983 film *The Power of Emotions*, Kluge compares the cultural institution of opera to the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, in which the capitalized, mass-fabricated emotions and feelings of our society are put on phantasmagoric display in the manner of commodities.

136. Kluge notes that he is most drawn to consider emotions that do not even appear as such: “I am very interested in the feelings that are not immediately recognized as feelings, that are integrated into institutions and that first manifest themselves only in an emergency, at the moments when we forget ourselves—only at the moment of deployment, so to speak. A mother rescues her child who is lying in front of a tractor: she pushes it out of the way and dies herself. That is a short reflex arc, one that cannot actually be achieved through calculation, that is feeling. But this feeling has nothing to do with sentiment, with the feeling that we know from theater. It has more to do with the feeling in my fingertips that I use to secure a gasket at the right moment. It is actually a matter of labor.” His interviewer adds: “to feel [Fühlen], the concept of feeling [Gefühl] comes from ‘to touch’ [tasten].” To which Kluge responds: “The sense of touch. It is very important to confront this with the highly cultured feelings in the opera, which have been processed many times over and which then lead to such confusions that an Egyptian general must, at any cost, take a female slave from Ethiopia onto the royal throne—and both die as a result.” Alexander Kluge, “Kritik als verdeckte Ermittlung,” in *Verdeckte Ermittlung: Ein Gespräch mit Christian Schulte und Rainer Stollmann* (Berlin: Merve, 2001), p. 43.

137. Kluge, in Kluge and Hopf, “Feelings Can Move Mountains . . .,” p. 244.

138. Kluge, “Das Marxsche Wertgesetz ist in der Natur verankert,” p. 49.

139. Kluge, “Kritik als verdeckte Ermittlung,” p. 44.

140. Kluge, in Kluge and Hopf, “Feelings Can Move Mountains . . .,” p. 244.

141. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 78.

142. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 756.

143. Negt quotes Machiavelli in *Der politische Mensch*, p. 516.

144. Kluge, "The Political as Intensity of Everyday Feelings," p. 128. Negt highlights a line from Christa Wolf's book *Kassandra*: "It is possible to know when war begins, but when does the prelude to war begin [*der Vorkrieg*]?" He comments that "the subject matter of the counterpublic sphere is to identify what Christa Wolf meant by a prelude to war, to make it nameable in everyday conflicts—for example in struggles for employment—to decode the prelude to war in the real lifeworld of people." Negt, in *Suchbegriffe*, p. 277. See also Negt, *Der politische Mensch*, p. 21.

145. Kluge, "The Political as Intensity of Everyday Feelings," p. 127.

146. Kluge, "On Opera, Film, and Feelings," p. 106.

147. Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*, p. 296. One of Kluge's regular collaborators, Rainer Stollmann, observes that the rallying cry for Negt and Kluge's work is no longer "Workers of the world, unite!" but rather "Experiences of the world, unite!" Stollmann, "Zusammenhang, Motiv, Krieg: Ein Holzschnitt zu Negt/Kluges Theoriearbeit," *Text + Kritik* 85–86 (1985), p. 82.

148. In Kluge's early films, counterhegemonic practices and feelings seem to be accumulated primarily in women, whose nonvalorized forms of unpaid labor represented for Kluge a repository of oppositional strategies, models for concrete resistance to capitalism's mechanism of abstract subsumption. Thomas Elsaesser correspondingly notes that "female Eigensinn" "stands for the ethical act of refusal par excellence" in Kluge's work from the 1970s. Elsaesser, "The Stubborn Persistence of Alexander Kluge," in *Alexander Kluge: Raw Materials for the Imagination*, p. 26. But by the 1980s, Kluge no longer foregrounded female obstinacy in his films. *The Patriot* (1979) was the last such film. This shift in part responded to the censure of feminist scholars who interpreted his association between women and nonrationalized labor to be an identification of women with irrationalism tout court. Miriam Hansen summarizes the controversy thus: "Why Kluge prefers to project this associational anarchy onto the minds of female characters and often makes them the agents of what by 'adult' standards might be called irrational behavior, is a thorny question. Apart from the general problem of a 'woman's film' produced by a male director (though not, as the traditional 'woman's film,' for a predominantly female audience), it involves Kluge's analysis of specifically female modes of production as vital to patriarchal society, yet never completely assimilable to the standards of industrial capitalism." Miriam Hansen, "Cooperative Auteur Cinema and Oppositional Public Sphere," *New German Critique*, no. 24–25 (Autumn 1981–Winter 1982), p. 51. At the same, Kluge's waning emphasis

on female obstinacy, specifically, also responded to the inroads made by capitalism in the 1970s, when, as we have already seen, capitalism began aggressively to annex reproductive forms of labor that were traditionally performed by women in the private sphere of the family. During these years, it became clear that the claim that proletarian and counterhegemonic strategies of resistance were better preserved in women was no longer a tenable claim.

149. "Short and long times coexist within the same body and mind." Kluge, *Tür an Tür mit einem anderen Leben*, p. 9.

150. Kluge and Vogl, *Soll und Haben*, p. 9.

151. Kluge states his variant of the Sapir-Whorf thesis as follows: "If Greenlanders have 200...expressions for different sorts of snow, because snow is important for them. And ancient Greek likewise has quite a number—an entire chain—of words for the color yellow, which appeared important in antiquity. If the word happiness can be expressed in Greek using numerous words like 'kairos,' 'eudaimon,' 'makarios,' and so on; which describe many different variations because happiness is something that is important to man and that cannot be designated using a single word. — Then we would likewise have to have more than one expression for the word 'love' in our language. But if we diversify too broadly here, we quickly arrive at indecent expressions that can't be circulated in public. Which means that our expressions are impoverished regarding the most important intimate experiences that we possess. And when someone says I love you to someone else—just what that is supposed to mean, well, an entire volume of commentary would be forthcoming. And this differentiation is exactly what we lack here. While we have handbooks for the stocks of ammunition or arsenals of bombs that can be unloaded in Afghanistan. With directions, differentiation, and so forth. What can be done with all of that, with the incendiary bombs especially. Investigated with absolute precision. And this was different at the beginning of bourgeois society. *The Princess of Cleves* is a novel that describes with precision—that deals with—how to equip oneself for the abysses of love, against betrayal in relationships. And then creates a mass of faculties for distinction at the exact place where one has to decide whether or not to dare trust oneself in the most important question: With whom do I bond or not?" Kluge, in Kluge and Negt, "Öffentlichkeit als wertvolles Gut und die Idee der Gegenöffentlichkeit," p. 48.

152. Kluge, "Kritik als verdeckte Ermittlung," p. 48.

153. "It is as if modernization speaks itself as a machinery of discourses in whose grids individual subjectivities are simultaneously constituted and imprisoned, even stunted and mutilated." Andreas Huyssen, "Alexander Kluge: An Analytic Storyteller in the Course of Time," in *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 149. The analytic coldness

of Kluge's approach to his synthetic characters may turn out to be ideologically more progressive than sentimental humanist critiques of capitalist alienation. Consider Brecht's own experience with the bourgeois censors, who objected not to the revolutionary pathos in his film *Kuhle Wampe*, but rather to its utterly neutral portrayal of the proletariat and its glacial indifference to the psychological motives of the working-class characters: "I reproach your depiction for not seeming sufficiently *human*," the censor informed Brecht. "You have not depicted a person but, well, to put it frankly, a type. Your unemployed worker is not a real individual, not a person made of flesh and blood, and distinct from every other person, with his own particular worries, particular joys and finally his own particular fate." Brecht was impressed: "The censor proved to be an intelligent man," he noted in response. Brecht, "Kleiner Beitrag zum Thema Realismus," in *Werke*, vol. 21, pp. 549 and 548; Brecht, "Short Contribution on the Theme of Realism," in *Brecht on Film and Radio*, pp. 208 and 207.

154. "In America, they say about someone who is so consistently matter-of-fact that he is as cool as a cucumber." Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Ein herzloser Schriftsteller," *Der Spiegel*, January 2, 1978, p. 81.

155. Alexander Kluge, *Chronik der Gefühle* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), p. 7.

156. Kluge underscores the importance of these paradigmatic connections, which are nonlinear and nonnarrative, when he notes that some of his films have to be watched multiple times. About *The Power of Emotions*, for example, he observes: "One problem of the film is that it would have to be viewed several times, so that the individual images and their inner connections are retained in memory." Kluge, *Die Macht der Gefühle*, p. 195.

157. Kluge, "Justierung des Jahrhunderts. 'Das Vergangene ist nicht tot, es ist nicht einmal vergangen,'" in *Verdeckte Ermittlung*, p. 16.

158. Kluge, "Kritik als verdeckte Ermittlung," p. 43.

159. "Ovid is the god of Montaigne, of Heiner Müller, and of me as well." Kluge, quoted in Wolfram Ette, "Aggregat Leben: Ovid und Alexander Kluge," *Komparatistik: Jahrbuch der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, 2008–2009, p. 155.

160. Negt and Kluge liken the qualitative shifts between states of feeling to the phase transitions between solid, liquid, gaseous and plasmic states. But they simultaneously qualify this metaphor by pointing out that these four states are intended as a heuristic model, not an accurate description of reality, since there are in fact an infinite number of such aggregate states. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 720. They thereby draw a line, again, between their own collaboration and Engels's *Dialectic of Nature*, which used a similar language of phase transitions

to describe social relations.

161. The process of transcoding “is analogous to the problem of translation in the realm of natural languages, which all project at least minimally distinct cognates of the meaning a translated sentence is supposed to share with its original. What is philosophical about translation is, then, not the effort to reproduce a foreign utterance as the same, but rather the deeper experience it affords of the radical differences between natural languages.” Jameson, “On Negt and Kluge,” p. 157.

162. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Charles Martin (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. 12.

163. Baecker, “Wozu Theorie?” p. 76.

164. See Kluge’s interview with the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk in *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*, “Alle Dinge sind verzauberte Menschen.”

165. Kluge, in Baecker and Kluge, *Vom Nutzen ungelöster Probleme*, pp. 39–40

166. Kluge, “Kritik als verdeckte Ermittlung,” p. 44.

167. For Kluge, “Germany cannot easily be defined in spatial terms,” observes Anton Kaes. “In Search of Germany: Alexander Kluge’s *The Patriot*,” in *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 133.

168. Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, p. 296.

169. Negt and Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, pp. 98–99.

170. Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, vol. 1.

171. Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Müntzer als Theologe der Revolution*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, 16 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), vol. 2, p. 9.

172. Negt and Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, pp. 692–93. Negt and Kluge cite the predictions of Fourastié that at some point in the near future, the number of those who are employed in industrial facilities will contract to the numbers of factory workers around 1800, at which point dead labor will assume definitive command. The law of posthumous influence applies not just to machine capital, of course, but also to the technical media and recording devices that have exploded in the modern era, as Friedrich Kittler observed: “The realm of the dead is as extensive as the storage and transmission capabilities of a given culture.” Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 13.

173. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 849.

174. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, p. 146.

175. Kluge, *Die Patriotin*, p. 58.

176. Kluge, in Stollmann, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis*, p. 34.

177. Heiner Müller, *Gespräche 2*, in *Werke*, vol. 11, p. 614. See the interviews

between Müller and Kluge in Alexander Kluge, Heiner Müller, and Max Messer, *Ich schulde der Welt einen Toten* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1995) and Alexander Kluge and Heiner Müller, *Ich bin ein Landvermesser* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1996).

178. Kluge, *Die Patriotin*, p. 45.

179. Perhaps the most fitting theoretical model for metamorphoses such as these can be found in the act of translation, understood in Benjamin's sense as a process of conversion that is not based on fidelity or outward likeness. For Benjamin, the best translation is not the one that most accurately *imitates* the original text, but the one that most perfectly *succeeds* it. As Paul de Man observes about Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator," the latter defines translation not as an act of resembling, but one of following, a process of *folgen* not of *gleichen*: "what is already present in this difference [between original and translation] is that we have *folgen*, not *gleichen*, not to match. We have a metonymic, a successive pattern, in which things follow, rather than a metaphorical unifying pattern in which things become one by resemblance. They do not match each other, they follow each other." De Man, "Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,'" in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 90. Against the notion that the translator should aspire to produce an accurate imitation or likeness of the original, Benjamin himself notes that "to grasp the genuine relationship between an original and a translation requires an investigation analogous in its intention to the argument by which a critique of cognition would have to prove the impossibility of a theory of imitation. In the latter, it is a question of showing that in cognition there could be no objectivity, not even a claim to it, if this were to consist in imitations of the real; in the former, one can demonstrate that no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife—which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living—the original undergoes a change." Like the metamorphic thinking that underlies Negt and Kluge's analysis of human traits and labor capacities, the process of translation reminds us that "life [is] not limited to organic corporeality," as Benjamin notes, but embraces inorganic phenomena, as well. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings, Volume 1*, pp. 256 and 254. Direct echoes of Benjamin's theory of translation can be heard in Kluge's claim that "something that has been merely recorded in words becomes 'fluid,' that is, becomes an idea, when it is translated back and forth in different languages. As in the game of 'operator,' an experience or a thought will begin to glow like a prism if it is systematically translated from French into Russian, from there into Latin, from there into English, from there into German, and then into Chinese." Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*, liner notes, p. 32.

180. Kluge, *Die Patriotin*, p. 171.

181. Kluge, in Negt and Kluge, "Öffentlichkeit als wertvolles Gut," p. 54.

182. Étienne Balibar, "The Elements of the Structure and Their History," in Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2009), p. 274.

183. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

184. Balibar, "Elements for a Theory of Transition," in *Reading Capital*, pp. 343–44. "The new system of the productive forces . . . is neither an absolute end nor an absolute origins, but a reorganization of the entire system, of the relation of the real appropriation of nature, of the 'productive forces.'" Balibar, "The Elements of the Structure and Their History," p. 272.

185. Heide Schlüppmann connects Kluge's understanding of the flow of the cinematic image to the work of Bergson in "'What Is Different Is Good': Women and Femininity in the Films of Alexander Kluge," trans. Jamie Owen Daniel, *October* 46 (Autumn 1988), p. 139.

186. As support, Balibar here cites Georges Canguilhem, who noted about the theory of evolution that "originally such a development was understood as applying to a unique and qualified individual. No doubt, around the middle of the [nineteenth] century, it became hard to tell what was the *subject* of this development (*what* developed). This invariant behind the embryological transformations could not be assimilated to surface and volume (as in an unfolding), nor to the adult structure (as in a maturation)." Balibar, "The Elements of the Structure and Their History," pp. 275 and 274.

Along similar lines, Leo Bersani points out that Freud's hypothesis about the successiveness of the phases of infantile sexuality was a late addition, proposed only with the 1915 revision to *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, originally written in 1905. The narrative about normative development toward the "proper" genital organization is superfluous to Freud's theory, which functions typologically even without the later linear teleology. As Bersani observes, "the reality of those phases as distinct historical organizations is therefore somewhat problematic." Indeed, Freud writes "as if infantile sexuality were sexuality itself, as if he had forgotten its presumably preparatory, subordinate role in leading to the 'principal act' of human sexuality." Thus, "alongside the teleological argument of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, a wholly different argument runs its course—insistently yet also almost invisibly. This second argument nearly dissolves the specificity by which Freud could expect his subject to be recognized." Bersani, "Sexuality and Esthetics," in *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 32, 33, 39.

Kluge is in turn skeptical of the socially normative organization of sexual-

ity: “Those are highly synthetic compounds that need to be examined for their elemental components; there is nothing at all ordinary in them. Even genitality: it is true that as men we have a certain member, and that women differ here, but it makes no sense then to come to conclusions about fixed characteristics on this basis. The elemental components have to be taken apart. In principle everything is androgynous, that is what is true. The male and female phenotypes, along with all of their roles and cultural components, first come into being out of this androgynous state.” Kluge, “Das Marxsche Wertgesetz ist in der Natur verankert,” p. 49.

187. Kluge, in Stollmann, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis*, p. 34.

188. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, pp. 677–78.

189. Helmut Thoma, quoted in Christian Schulte and Winfried Siebers, “Vorwort,” in Christian Schulte and Winfried Siebers (eds.), *Kluges Fernsehen: Alexander Kluges Kulturmagazine* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), p. 8. Kluge’s interest in older technical formats also reflects a desire to access the hidden resources and potentials bottled up in these outmoded artifacts: “We might use the Debrie camera of 1923 and teach our computers the rules that were once fed into this Debrie camera by cameramen who died long ago. We thus retrieve a piece of dead labor from cinema history and program it into the show.” Kluge, in Astrid Deubermankowsky and Giaco Schiesser, “In der Echtzeit der Gefühle: Gespräch mit Alexander Kluge,” in Christian Schulte (ed.), *Die Schrift an der Wand* (Osnabrück: Rasch, 2000), p. 363. “In short: the provocation issued by the new media—the ecological danger for structures of consciousness—demands nothing less than a return to the beginnings of the entire public sphere: we have to reactivate, revitalize this partial chapter, beginning in 1802 (or earlier). This time it must really be put in motion. As far as the moving pictures of film are concerned, the journey can only ‘go back to Lumière and Méliès,’ thus, back once again to its beginnings. In each one of these beginnings, we find male and female cousins of the actual development, which can be translated in the most interesting ways into inventions for the new media.” Kluge, “Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie,” p. 64.

190. Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, p. 124; *Heritage of Our Times*, p. 114. Bloch takes this phrase from Ludwig Börne.

191. Oskar Negt, *Arbeit und Menschliche Würde* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2001), p. 432.

192. Ernst Bloch, *Freiheit und Ordnung: Abriß der Sozialutopien* (New York: Aurora Verlag, 1946), p. 155.

193. Kluge, “On Film and the Public Sphere,” p. 210.

194. See Alexander Kluge, “[Was bedeutet ‘Rechts vom Nationalsozialismus],” in *Das Bohren harter Bretter: 133 politische Geschichten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2011), p. 320.

195. Kluge attributes this sentence to Montaigne. Kluge, "Was hält freiwillige Taten Zusammen?" in *Verdeckte Ermittlung*, p. 60.
196. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 850.
197. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986), p. 24. Kluge discusses Foucault's concept of heterotopia in the speech given on the occasion of receiving the Büchner Prize in 2003: Alexander Kluge, "Rede zum Büchner-Preis-2003," available at <http://www.kluge-alexander.de/zur-person/reden/2003-buechner-preis.html>. Elsewhere, he explains: "I would use heterotopia to identify not something that is utopian, but a way that the characteristics that we possess could be grouped differently — on a different planet or in a different society, by shifting them around or by jostling humanity. It is completely untrue that there is no place for this. It just looks utopian in our places, given the fraudulence of the entire system and the lack of experimentation and experience." Kluge, in Stollmann, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis*, p. 130.
198. Stollmann and Schulte, *Verdeckte Ermittlung*, p. 65.
199. Kluge, in *Suchbegriffe*, p. 278.
200. Negt, in *ibid.*, p. 276.
201. Alexander Kluge, "Thesen 1–4," in Kluge, *In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod: Texte zu Kino, Film, Politik*, ed. Christian Schulte (Berlin: Vorwerk, 1999), p. 155.
202. Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, et al., *Soziologische Exkurse: Nach Vorträgen und Diskussionen* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1956) p. 179. Negt comments in *Der politische Mensch*, p. 450.
203. In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel observed that the "Idea of essence, namely, to be self-identical in the immediacy of its determined being, is already immanent in measure." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), p. 329.
204. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 696.
205. Wolfgang Bock, "Exemplarische Reflexionen einer Dekade: *Maßverhältnisse des Politischen*," in *Der Maulwurf kennt kein System*, p. 111.
206. Kluge notes this in an interview given while he was working on *History and Obstnacy*: "Was hat die Geschichtslehrerin Gabi Teichert mit Walter Benjamin am Hut?: Ein Gespräch mit Alexander Kluge," *Anachronistischen Heften* 1 (1980), p. 64.
207. Kluge refers to emergence theory explicitly in the appendix to *Das Bohren harter Bretter*, where he defines *Emergenz* as an "attribute of a behavioral pattern that comes into being through the interplay of many smaller behavioral patterns, which, joining together, burst at a collective point into a parallel reality" (p. 312). On Kluge and systems theory, see his conversations with the sociologist Dirk

Baecker, *Vom Nutzen ungelöster Probleme*, as well as Baecker, “Wozu Theorie?”

208. Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, pp. 443–44.

209. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, pp. 696–702.

210. *Ibid.*, pp. 696–97.

211. Kluge, *Das Bohren harter Bretter*, p. 138.

212. *Ibid.*

213. The “tragedy of the commons” is the famous phrase used by the ecologist Garrett Hardin to describe the exhaustion of society’s shared resources as a result of the egocentric behavior of its individual members. “Individuals locked into the logic of the commons are free only to bring on universal ruin,” Hardin writes. “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science* 162 (December 13, 1968), p. 1248.

214. Negt, *Der politische Mensch*, p. 11. Kluge makes a comparable reference to the “invisible hand” as a theory of a self-regulating collective: obstinacy “will always invent something that the [capitalist] corporation did not commission and that triggers the peculiar dialectic that Adam Smith described in *The Wealth of Nations*—that the intentions of a thousand egoistic devils will nonetheless work subterraneously to produce a collective existence.” Kluge, in Stollmann, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis*, p. 51.

215. This line is from Weber’s 1919 lecture “Politics as a Vocation,” in *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), p. 93. With reference to Weber, Kluge titled a recent collection of stories about politics *Das Bohren harter Bretter* (Drilling through hard boards).

216. See Chapter 5, “The Historical Terrain Where Labor Capacities Emerge,” pp. 215–21, in the present volume.

217. Here, Luxemburg’s words echo Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. Negt, “Der Maulwurf kennt kein System,” p. 38.

218. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 887.

219. See the Appendix, s.v. “Damaged Dialectic,” in the present volume. Discussing Freud’s endorsement of “ungrammatical” free association, Kluge observes that “grammar, for instance, is one of mankind’s most interesting illusions. It’s a sort of repression of an experience, like logic, or like rationalism. You have to understand that I’m never against grammar, rationality, or logic; it’s just that they’re only abstractions. In any concrete situation, these abstractions must be reduced to the concrete situation.” Kluge, in Jan Dawson, “Interview with Alexander Kluge,” *Film Comment* (November–December 1974), p. 55.

220. Negt and Kluge describe the challenge of philosophizing in the present tense as follows: “Philosophy as an integral system can refer only to a reality that has already been concluded. It takes its coherence from observation, that is, retrospectively. This is not so for the process of philosophizing, especially for the

philosopher who is rooted as a particle in every individual human characteristic, for example, in the fingertips, in the feet, and so on. This philosopher is in contact with reality through the detail, is always a contemporary, is always present, but he is dependent on the felicitous moment in which he *has himself*—otherwise, he cannot grasp and intervene. This philosopher has the concentration of a gambler.” Negt and Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, p. 84.

221. Kluge, in Stollmann, *Entstehung des Schönheitssinns*, p. 22.

222. Negt and Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, p. 790.

223. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 887.

224. Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*, liner notes, pp. 52–53.

225. Kluge, in Dawson, “Interview with Alexander Kluge,” p. 56.

226. See the stories collected under the rubric “Der Zeitbedarf von Revolutionen,” in *Tür an Tür mit einem anderen Leben*, pp. 341–408.

227. “The structure of the fundamental economic elements of society remains untouched by the storms which blow up in the cloudy regions of politics.” Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, p. 479.

228. Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *The Holy Family, or, Critique of Critical Critique*, trans. Richard Dixon (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956).

229. Negt, “Der Maulwurf kennt kein System,” p. 38.

230. Roman Jakobson famously bemoaned the inertia and resistance of *byt* (everyday life) as “the stabilizing force of an immutable present, overlaid, as this present is, by a stagnating slime, which stifles life in its tight, hard mold.” Jakobson, “On a Generation that Squandered Its Poets,” in *My Futurist Years*, ed. Bengt Jangfeldt, trans. Stephen Rudy (New York: Marsilio, 1992), p. 214.

231. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, pp. 702–17.

232. Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*, liner notes, p. 4. On crisis and trust, see Kluge’s recent DVD, *Früchte des Vertrauens* (2009).

233. Negt, *Der politische Mensch*, p. 26.

234. Negt and Kluge write that moments like the immediate postwar period in Germany are significant “not for the potential for the action that they contain, but for the potential for knowledge contained therein. . . . These years are an abaric point, that is, a moment in which contradictory forces cancel each other out, precisely because it was not possible to intervene in society. . . . Within a planetary space, it has hardly any effect on the essential spheres of action, [but] for thought, it is ideally situated.” Negt and Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, p. 1122.

235. “One could imagine books that were printed so that the words were written together without punctuation or spacing. Moreover, all vowels were removed and needed to be reconstructed out of the context through association. Above all,

the words would be written on top of one another so that one typewritten page would seem to be overtyped differently four thousand times. Such overwriting corresponds exactly to the labor of historical relations, to the labor of generations and their linguistic conventions. There is also the fact that each of these elements—and this part does not apply to letters—is found in a state of dynamic movement: it turns out that each element is not just written on top of other ones, but also as something that has been overwritten, is itself in a state of dynamic change. All texts are therefore transforming themselves quietly [*unter der Hand*].” Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 862.

236. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 701.

237. See Kluge, “On Opera, Film, and Feelings.”

238. *Germany in Autumn*, dir. by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Edgar Reitz, Völker Schlöndorff et al. (1978).

239. Negt, “Der Maulwurf kennt kein System,” p. 39.

240. Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 967.

241. On the Thirty Years’ War as a *Lernprovokation*, see Negt, *Der politische Mensch*, pp. 118–35. According to Negt, the Peace of Westphalia, which was drawn up at the end of the war, represents nothing less than “the documentation of an enormous learning process” (p. 118).

242. Kluge writes that “after 1991, following the disintegration of the Russian imperium, as we looked forward to the year 2000, I had the feeling that the new century would take the bitter experience of the 20th century and turn it into something hopeful. But are we now seeing instead a relapse into the era of the Thirty Years’ War? No one reading my stories is likely to imagine that I believe in scenarios of doom. ‘There are no expiration dates.’ It’s more worthwhile to examine the allegedly pre-modern, to find out what in it releases human power and what the power of the Devil.” Alexander Kluge, *The Devil’s Blind Spot*, p. vii.

243. Bloch writes the following about the doctrine of three kingdoms found in early communist Christianity: “Strange as these categories may sound to the modern revolutionary . . . we equally must not allow ourselves to be thereby deterred from noticing and honoring the hunger for happiness and freedom, the images of freedom on the part of people deprived of their rights, in these dreams. Socialism has a fantastically splendid tradition; if at such early stages, as goes without saying, it lacks any kind of economic view, it certainly does not lack one of its other essential features: humaneness and the Advent view connected with it.” Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, p. 135; *Heritage of Our Times*, p. 124. About the “objectivity and inevitability” of the revolution within the medieval dream of the thousand-year kingdom, Bloch writes that “it was not chiliasm which prevented the economic consciousness, and the concrete control of reality at that time.” Rather, “no economic con-

sciousness existed at the time purely for economic reasons, and if chiasm had not existed, no revolutionary consciousness would have existed either, and therefore no revolution whatsoever.” Bloch, *Erbschaft*, p. 145; *Heritage*, p. 131.

244. Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

245. Braudel also notes that “the very first thing the historian sees is the troop of events which have come out on top in the struggle of life. But these events place themselves once again, order themselves within the framework of a variety of contradictory possibilities, among which life finally made its choice. For one possibility which was fulfilled, there were tens, hundreds, thousands, which disappeared, and there are even some which, numberless, never even appear to us at all, too lowly and hidden to impose themselves directly on history.” Fernand Braudel, “Toward a Historical Economics,” in *On History*, p. 84.

246. In the value abstraction of the “novel of reality,” “there prevails . . . a primacy of economy, which drives experience and reality away from the thread of the action.” Negt and Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience*, p. 274. See also Miriam Hansen, “Alexander Kluge, Cinema and the Public Sphere: The Construction Site of Counter-History,” *Discourse* 6 (Fall 1983), p. 64.

247. Kluge, in Stollmann, *Die Entstehung des Schönheitssinns aus dem Eis*, p. 109. On the “Communist disbelief in destiny,” see Kluge, *Verdeckte Ermittlung*, p. 57.

248. Kluge, “Rede zum Büchner-Preis-2003.” On reality and historical fiction, see also Alexander Kluge, “The Sharpest Ideology: That Reality Appeals to its Realistic Character,” trans. David Roberts, *On the Beach* 3–4 (Summer 1984), pp. 23–24.

249. “When Clausewitz says that all the potential battles—those that do not take place—are just as important as those that do, he has understood a certain dialectic: he acts like a realist.” Kluge, “On Film and the Public Sphere,” p. 45.

250. Kluge, in Dawson, “Interview with Alexander Kluge,” p. 54.

251. It should not be surprising, then, that Negt and Kluge give little credence to the distinction between real and imaginary pasts, “true” memories and “false” ones. Citing the work of the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, Kluge explains that recollection is a matter not of accurate and objective recall of the past, but of arranging experience in a way that renders it intelligible. “Memory is not the translation of something unconscious or the conception of something that has been temporarily hidden; instead, becoming conscious of something always a reorganization, a reconstruction.” Kluge, “Die Macht der Bewußtseinsindustrie,” p. 101.

252. Jürgen Habermas, “The Useful Mole Who Ruins the Beautiful Lawn: The

Lessing Prize for Alexander Kluge,” in *The Liberating Power of Symbols: Philosophical Essays*, trans. Peter Dews (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2001), p. 121.

253. “Demystification, breaking reality down into its components: that is the program of enlightenment. Today it is *reality* that has taken priority over religion in this matter.” Negt and Kluge, *Maßverhältnisse*, p. 694. Bruno Latour has recently called into question the distinction between fact and fiction, observing that science has never actually been able to maintain the distinction between fabrication and reality in its practice. Latour, “On the Cult of the Factish Gods,” in *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods*, trans. Catherine Porter and Heather MacLean (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1–65.

254. Negt, *Der politische Mensch*, pp. 57–65.

255. Caryl Flinn, “Undoing Act 5: History, Bodies and Operatic Remains: Kluge’s *The Power of Emotion*,” in *The New German Cinema: Music, History, and the Matter of Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 138–69. Kluge characterizes the impression of fatefulness: “It begins with love and ends with divorce / It begins in 1933 and ends in ruins / The great operas begin with a promise of elevated feeling, and in Act V we count the dead.” And yet, he notes, it is “still doubtful whether there really is such a thing as fate. Maybe there are only a hundred thousand different causes, which we call fate after the event.” Kluge, *Die Macht der Gefühle*, p. 56 and preface, n.p.

256. Christian Schulte, “Alle Dinge sind verzauberte Menschen: Über Alexander Kluges *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*,” in *Die Frage des Zusammenhangs: Alexander Kluge im Kontext*, ed. Christian Schulte (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2012), p. 275.

257. Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*, liner notes, p. 4.

258. On Leibniz and *plumpes Denken*, see Kluge, *Glückliche Umstände, leihweise*, p. 345.

259. Heiner Müller, “The Mission: Memory of a Revolution,” in *Theatremachine*, ed. and trans. Marc von Henning (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 59–84.

260. Kluge, “Revolutionärer Versuch an den Rändern Frankreichs,” in *Tür an Tür mit einem anderen Leben*, p. 346.

261. Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” in *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), pp. 74–75.

262. See the Appendix, s.v. “History.”

NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION

1. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, vol. 2, *Der unterschätzte Mensch: Gemeinsame Philosophie in zwei Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 2001), p. 1,283.