GERHARD FRIEDRICH

BETWEEN PSYCHIATRY AND POPULAR FANTASY: TRAUMA, GHOSTS AND REVENANTS IN THE 'NEW GERMAN DOMESTIC NOVEL'

"It doesn't end. Never will it end" (Grass 2002, 216; 2003, 234). It is with this bleak view of recent German history as an 'infinite loop' that Günter Grass concludes and reopens his novella *Crabwalk*, thereby seemingly providing authoritative expression to a leitmotif of the 'new German domestic novel': that of the inability to end, the eternal return of the past. The texts are 'enlivened' by revenants (Grass and Wackwitz), ghostly apparitions (Wackwitz 2003), the 'undead' (Treichel 1998) and by compulsively repeated traumatic experiences (Grass, Timm 2003, Treichel). The present appears overwhelmed, threatened by a usurpatory spectral, at times even vampiric (Treichel), 'undead' past. Yet the majority of critics and the public understood the intention of most of these authors as an attempt to re-engage emotionally, within the private sphere, with the German past through the memory of – real or fictitious – relatives who became victims of the Second World War in various ways, and thus, at least 'partially reconciled' with this past, to be able to shape the present and future of the united Germany. However, it appears that the attempt has left them with the conundrum of the magician's apprentice: they cannot rid themselves of the 'ghosts' that they, literally, called up.

The image of wandering, unredeemed souls is accompanied by old folk fantasies and fantasy stories, combined with the Christian notion of purgatory as an interim realm between life and final destination – redemption or damnation. Common to these figures in the interim realm is their unredeemed nature, resulting from misdeeds suffered and left unavenged or misdeeds that they themselves had committed. Only the ultimate atonement can absolve them and release them to a peaceful death – or to heaven.

The implicit recourse to the topoi and narrative of the inhabitants of an interim realm as a waiting room for redemption indicates, firstly, the authors' intention to 'SAVE', but, secondly, also their difficulty in clearly justifying, historically and morally, this intention to save, as well as the danger presented to the living themselves of becoming victims of the evoked past – through the revenant.

However, the revenant motif does not simply represent the condition of the unredeemed in limbo, awaiting some future justice, but also a modern and scientifically underpinned model of experience, in which individuals fall 'out of time' and tying them, until such time as they are redeemed, to a single terrible moment: the trauma. The traumatic experience leads into the threshold area of death, threat of death, deadly danger, in the face of which the affected individual has no behavioral framework on which to draw. As it is impossible to react meaningfully – and here that means reacting in such a way that life is preserved – the experience cannot be ascribed any meaning, thus it cannot enter into the production of meanings; that is to say, become part of a linguistic and symbolic process. In his report of the total destruction of Hamburg after the extensive bombing, Hans Erich Nossack produced an impressive image for the impossibility of being able to express in words the experience of a scene of death:

> Was uns umgab erinnerte in keiner Weise an das Verlorene. Es hatte nichts damit zu tun. Es war etwas anderes, es war das Fremde, es war das eigentlich *Nicht-Mögliche*.
> Im Norden Finnlands gibt es vor Frost erstarrte Wälder. Wir hatten ein Bild davon in unserer Wohnung hängen. Aber wer *denkt* dabei noch an Wald? Es ist nicht einmal das Gerippe eines Waldes. Gewiß, es ist etwas da, sogar mehr, als wenn es nur Gerippe wäre, aber was bedeuten diese Zeichen und Runen? Vielleicht die *unausdenkbare* Umkehrung des Begriffes Wald? (Nossack 1971, 45-46, emph., G.F.).

> What surrounded us did not remind us in any way of what was lost. It had nothing to do with it. It was something else, it was strangeness itself, it was the essentially *not possible*.
> In northern Finland, there are forests that are frozen solid. We had a picture of one hanging in our apartment. But who still *thinks* of a forest in the face of this? It is not even the skeleton of a forest. Something is there, to be sure, even more than, if it were only a skeleton, but what is the meaning of these signs and runes? Perhaps the *inconceivable* inversion of the concept 'forest'? (Nossack 2004, 37-38).

No 'teachings' can be gained or behavioural modifications made from such experiences in death zones.[1] The I must live as if it had never had this experience; it separates the experience from itself, thus losing its status as subject in relation to its existential experiences – these only belong to the I in the physical sense, they are alien to its consciousness. No doubt this is the source of the metaphorical formula of trauma as "in den Körper eingeschriebene Erfahrung" ["inscribed in the body"] (Assmann 2006, 94). This separation of bodily experience and consciousness results in the

[1] See Wittgenstein (1980, 81): "Der Tod ist kein Ereignis des Lebens.- Den Tod erlebt man nicht".

inability to be able to assign experienced pain or mortal fear to a causal external agency. What remains is sensation. The conscious entity that would have been able to differentiate the sensation from its cause has been shut off. The result of the joining of situation and sensation, of the agent causing pain or mortal fear and the pain or mortal fear itself, is the autonomisation of sensation, or "object-less sensation" (Bohleber 2007, 311) that is characterised by its autonomy on the one hand (i.e. it cannot be located within any space-time coordinates), so it cannot be remembered either – and on the other hand is characterised as timeless present, like a disease that reappears in stages, re-occurring at any time as if it were the first time. In the literary, metaphorical language of the texts examined here, this frequently turns into revenance, into the unredeemed 'ghosts' of traumatised individuals, or means that their trauma appears to them as an alien entity, as a phantom.

Claude Lecouteux provides this summary definition of the 'phenomenon' of the revenant:

> Die Wiedergänger sind störende Gestalten: sie trotzen jeder logischen Erklärung und übertreten die Naturgesetze. So stellen sie das seit Jahrhunderten langsam gereifte und kluge Bild eines zweigeteilten Universums in Frage, wonach die Welt in zwei Teile gespalten ist: Einerseits haben wir das Reich der Lebenden, andererseits das der Verstorbenen. Die Wiedergänger fügen sich nicht in dieses Schema und eröffnen einen dritten Weg, bzw. ein drittes Reich, das Niemandsland zwischen Leben und Tot, zwischen hienieden und „drüben", wo sie sich niederlassen (Lecouteux 1987, 183).

> Revenants are disruptive figures. They defy all logical explanation and violate the laws of nature. Thus they call into question the intelligent image of a dual universe, which has developed slowly over centuries and according to which the world is split into two parts: one the one hand, the realm of the living; on the other hand, that of the dead. Revenants do not fit into this schema, instead opening up a third way or a third realm – the No Man's Land between living and dead, between down here and 'over there', where they abide. [My translation]

Just as the revenant relativises the strict distinction between death and life, the presentation of the trauma as a phenomenon of revenance relativises a rigid distinction between past and present, so that past events continue to have a spectral effect – intangible, uncontrollable – in the present. Just as the old religion brought the line between death and life into 'disorder' because the previously living figure, now a revenant, demands the resolution of unresolved debts from beyond the grave, thereby suggesting, in ghostly form, a continuity of the law beyond the death of the individual – Jacques Derrida calls "justice […] beyond all living present" the "spectral moment" (Derrida 1994, xviii-xix) – so the traumatised individual, now a revenant, creates

disorder in the relationship between past and present. The 'frozen' internal time of the individual trauma becomes, through the fantastical images of the revenant, an interpretation of the relationship between past and present, it is a disaster that preceded this hermetic reproduction, which conveys the demand for retribution for actual or perceived injustice according to the conception of justice that was valid in the past. A specific revenge becomes a timeless postulation, beyond any changes in the legal system or ethical-moral standards.

1. *Crabwalk*

In Günter Grass's novella *Crabwalk* the author orientates himself according to the model of traumatic experiences. This is the case even in the selection of the fictitious I-narrator, Paul, by the figure who appears in the text as the "old man", but who is really the author Grass in disguise. Paul reports, or rather, Grass has Paul report, on why "the old man" has given him of all people the responsibility of the narrator. After the narratorial "omission" of Mr Grass to turn to this subject earlier has been spoken of, he continues: "Ersatzweise habe er mich zwar nicht erfunden, aber nach langer Sucherei auf den Listen der Überlebenden wie eine Fundsache entdeckt. Als Person von eher dürftigem Profil, sei ich dennoch prädestiniert: geboren, während das Schiff sank." ["He hadn't invented me as a surrogate, rather he had discovered me, after a long search, on the list of survivors, like a piece of lost property. Although I had a rather meager profile, I was predestined: born as the ship was sinking"] (Grass 2002, 78; 2003, 80). Playing with the appearance of fictional reality, Grass emphasises that he did not invent his narrator, but rather found him. Knowing, however, that Grass had actually invented him, we can scrutiny the author's motives in inventing him according to the criteria he gives: "Although I had a rather meagre profile, I was predestined: born as the ship was sinking." Despite his only moderate suitability as a narrator – any possible literary quality does not, therefore, count for much – his selection is made exclusively according to the criterion of the extent to which the narrator is directly affected, his individual and existential connection with the historical catastrophe. Paul is not only involved in it, the coincidence of sinking and his birth connects him existentially to the catastrophe and symbolically shows that his life will be lived in its shadow. It is clear that here is shown a lifetime that is a sinking ship.

Grass charges the justification for his choice of narrator with even more meaning. Although Paul is physically, temporally-spatially present at the sinking as a newborn child, he is not called to be a conscious eye witness. So why him of all people and above all what is he supposed to narrate? It is clear that he cannot be considered as a first person eye witness. Somebody or something else must speak through him. Paul can only be a kind of medium through whom is articulated an experience in which he took part physically, certainly, but not consciously. Paul's situation as a newborn in the catastrophe on which he is to report presages through highly focused symbolism the

constellation of the novella, the organising principle of its fictional dimension – that of the traumatic experience[2] – the encapsulation of the trauma and its transferral from one generation to the next, where the future generations, acting as the media or organs for the trauma of previous generations, are alienated from themselves. Later, while enacting his duties as chronicler on behalf of his mother and the "old man", it seems to Paul "als dürfe nur unter Zwang geschrieben werden, als könne nichts ohne Mutter geschehen" ["as if all this could be written only under duress, as if nothing could get down on paper without Mother"] (Grass 2002, 99; 2003, 104).

While Paul in his newborn state allegorically represents the trauma – the fact that newborn children can be assigned unusual roles has been a theme in Grass's work since *The Tin Drum* – it is his mother Tulla, already familiar from Grass's works *Dog Years* and *Cat and Mouse*, who shows herself to be traumatised through the specific ways, as described in the psychiatric system of symptoms, in which she processes the sinking experience. Frequently, when she mentions the catastrophe, she is – literally – haunted by it: she gets her "I'm not home look" or her "I'm not home face". She is no longer there, is absent, disappears into another temporal-spatial dimension, that of the sinking, which is not past, but rather in these moments is her present. This mirrors a significant finding of trauma research whereby the trauma is not remembered – the memory separates present and past – but afflicts the traumatised individual like a disease as a perpetual, timeless present state, disconnected from its actual historical coordinates and its causal nexus. The experience of deadly threat and defencelessness in the traumatic situation cannot be interpreted by the affected subject, as they are unable to react meaningfully to it. In essence, it is the impossibility of attributing subjective meaning, its non-narratibility, that makes the traumatic experience as a decontextualised sensation absolute and timeless. In the little that Tulla expresses verbally about the sinking there are a number of clues to her traumatised state: "Ich kann es nicht beschreiben. Niemand kann das beschreiben" ["I can't describe it. No one can describe it"] (Grass 2002, 102; 2003, 107). Her story is an "Endlosgeschichte" ["neverending story"], (Grass 2002, 133; 2003, 141) the sinking is "ewigwährend" ["eternal"] (Grass 2002, 33; 2003, 33), the ship is "immerfort" ["everlastingly sinking"] (Grass 2002, 146; 2003, 156), and elsewhere "das fortwährend sinkende Schiff" ["the everlastingly sinking ship"] (Grass 2002, 157; 2003, 168). In her Kashubian dialect, she laments "Das heert nie auf" ["It never leaves you"] (Grass 2002, 57; 2003, 57) and the cries of the drowning accompany her constantly: "Son Jeschrai kriegste nich mehr raus aussem Jehör" ["A cry like that – you won't ever get it out of your ear"] (Grass 2002, 146; 2003, 155).

Although Paul must write as if "under duress", he succeeds in being only partially integrated into the maternal trauma by means of a kind of apathetic indifference – here

[2] See also: Fricke 2000, 161-168.

Grass reflects the critically distanced behaviour of the first post-war generation towards their parents – but Paul's son and Tulla's nephew Konrad becomes a fully integrated part of his grandmother's trauma. He becomes that which trauma research has called a "commemorative candle"[3]: the subconscious conditioning of subsequent generations by the traumatised generation so that they consume themselves completely in their function of assuaging, compensating or even avenging past suffering, which is present as trauma, as if it concerned their lives and their present; they help to establish the past as a spectral pseudo-present in which they act as its self-alienated protagonists.[4] The psychotherapist Nicholas Abraham has introduced the concept of the "phantom" into pyschiatric discourse to define transgenerationally transferred trauma: "Das wiederkehrende Phantom ist der Existenzbeweis für etwas, das in einem anderen begraben liegt" ["the revenant phantom is the existential proof for something that lies buried in another"] (Abraham 1991, 696). The trauma is that of another, an individual from a previous generation. Abraham's recourse to a term from the field of the fantastical reflects the high degree of illusory independence, of alienness, with which the mediated trauma takes root in the psyche of the affected individual. This individual becomes a "ventriloquist" (Abraham 1991, 694), who lends the "other" their voice.

Grass models the relationship of grandmother Tulla and grandson Konrad on this. Thus, for Paul, Konrad's description of the sinking seems "auf penetrante Weise bekannt vor" ["had an alarmingly familiar ring"] (Grass 2002, 73; 2003, 75), because "Großmutter spricht aus Konrad" ["I could hear his grandmother speaking through him"] (Grass 2002, 89; 2003, 92). Moreover, the activity of the young Neonazis, full of nostalgia for Gustloff on their websites in cyberspace, is recognisable as an element of this vampiric dynamic; the use of the internet as a medium of virtual reality is clearly intended to emphasise the undead-spectral nature of this present past. "Mit dem wie aus der Gegenwart hallenden Ruf ‚Die *Gustloff* sinkt!' stieß die Homepage meines Sohnes aller Welt ein Window auf" ["With the exclamation, seemingly emanating from the present, "The *Gustloff* is sinking!," my son's home page opened a window to the entire world"] (Grass 2002, 216; 2003, 234). The murder of Wilhelm Gustloff is treated "als wäre der Mord von Davos gestern geschehen" ["As if the murder in Davos

[3] The term was coined - in relation to the children of victims of the Holocaust - by the Israeli psychotherapist Dina Wardi (1997).

[4] "Das Kind wird von den Eltern seelisch an sich gerissen und narßistisch funktionalisiert. Indem die Geschichte eines anderen in es hineinprojeziertz wird oder eindringt, wird das Kind fremdbestimmt und hat in einem Teil seines Selbsts ein Gefühl der Entfremdung. [...] Das Verschwimmen der Grenzen zwischen den Generationen ist auch ein Grund dafür, dass das Zeiterleben dieser Kinder gestört ist, vor allem das Empfinden und die Wahrnehmung eigener Lebenszeit sowie das Identitätsgefühl. Diese Kinder können die Lebensgeschichte der Eltern und ihre Identifizierung mit ihnen nicht durch Abgrenzung und Auseinandersetzung als Basis dafür nutzen, sich eine eigene Geschichte zu schaffen." Bohleber 1998, 262, 273.

had taken place just yesterday"] (Grass 2002, 63; 2003, 64), "wie eine Neuigkeit" ["a breaking story"] or even "erst neuerdings" ["only recently"] (Grass 2002, 64; 2003, 65), "als seien bestimmte Zeitungsartikel gestern noch druckfrisch gewesen" ["as if the newspaper accounts were hot off the press"] (Grass 2002, 63; 2003, 65).

Grass melodramatically and highly artificially intensifies the spectral compulsion – emanating from the trauma and going in circles – to repeat history through the role play of Wilhelm-Konrad and David-Wolfgang in the son's chatroom, which ends with the murder of the pretend Jew Wolfgang by the pretend Gustloff-Konrad. Using phrases such as "Schlagabtausch im Jenseits" ["exchange of blows taking place in the hereafter"] (Grass 2002, 48; 2003, 47) and "geisterhafte(s) Rollenspiel" ["ghostly role-playing"] (Grass 2002, 49; 2003, 49), the narrator emphasises how contemporary actions are determined by the coordinates of a distant past. Different time domains merge and the apparent consequence of the events is merely the reproduction of that which has already happened; it is not determined by objective, external time, but rather by the internal halt of time, the frozen time of the traumatic event.

In allowing the actions of the two figures – as given in the abovementioned characterisations and conditioned as they are by the trauma – to trickle over into the field of the spectral, Grass mystifies the pathological hermetic conditions of the trauma and transforms them into the metaphysical revenant whose precise origins are lost within its fantastical autonomy. The image of the revenant prevents any possibility of potential cure or potentially adequate therapy for the trauma and its cause, and so the trauma is immortalised in the fundamentally inaccessible reality of the phantom. Its pseudo-life, consisting of waiting and warning immortalises its demand for retribution according to the ideas and emotions of the past, which are not accessible to any learning process from history. The Gustloff-revenant must conserve the sense of right and wrong of National Socialism, and its retribution can only be according to the standards of the past 'law'. History repeats itself as a recitation, comically, theatrically, yet the revenant cannot as such be conscious of its role as a comic actor. It must conduct itself in earnest.

Grass undertook meticulous research for his novella and integrated detailed real material into the text – from the technical details of the *Gustloff*, the structure and activities of the National Socialist Strength Through Joy Movement, to reconstructing the biographies of the historical figures of Gustloff, Frankfurter and the Soviet submarine commandant Marinesko, and of course the details of the sinking – yet, although this all comprises a considerable amount of the text, the objective, 'external' history is 'gutted', in accordance with the fictional narrative concept based on the trauma model. In relation to the static condition of the trauma, it possesses no present-time dynamic. It is only present as a cause of disease in history, bringing the latter to a standstill. The trauma model, which tends to be mystified within the revenant motif, dominates the extensive historical material so comprehensively that nothing

substantially new can occur, only the sterile reproduction of past violent irruptions that have fallen out of time.

2. *In My Brother's Shadow*

Uwe Timm's work *In My Brother's Shadow* also concerns a lost brother who fell on the Eastern Front. Here, almost sixty years after the end of the war, Timm writes up the research on his brother Karl Heinz, who voluntarily joined the SS and then fell in 1943. He begins with the only remaining early childhood memory he has of this brother. His is ushered into the kitchen by his parents and told to look around: "Dort, das hat sich mir als Bild genau eingeprägt, über dem Schrank, sind Haare zu sehen, blonde Haare. Dahinter hat sich jemand versteckt – und dann kommt er hervor, der Bruder, und hebt mich hoch" ["I can see hair showing above the top of the cupboard, that image impressed itself on me very distinctly, fair hair. Someone has been hiding behind the cupboard – and then he comes out, my brother and lifts me up into the air"] (Timm 2003, 9; 2005, 1). The same memory appears over a decade earlier in Timm's autobiographical text about his stay in Rome, *Vogel friss die Feige nicht* [Bird, Don't Eat the Fig]. "Träumte von meinem Bruder, der – meine einzige Erinnerung an ihn – sich hinter einem Besenschrank versteckt hält. Er will mich, seinen kleinen Bruder, überraschen. Aber ich sehe seinen Kopf, sein blondes Haar" [I dreamed of my brother, hiding behind a broom cupboard – my only memory of him. He wants to surprise me, his little brother. But I can see his head, his blond hair] (Timm 1989, 17). Evidence of the appearance of this memory in another of Timm's texts, long before his project of more focused research on his brother, should be viewed as proof of its authenticity and its intensity. The brother did not appear in the life remembered by Timm only in texts written after the year 2000, when published memoirs of German war victims became fashionable literature. Nevertheless, this memory is given a much greater significance in the later text than is evident in Timm's earlier work.

It is with this sole early childhood memory of his brother that Timm marks the start of his self-consciousness, his I-identity. His memory of his brother and his I-identity seem indissolubly connected. And a further significant detail in comparison to the earlier text is that his brother approaches him and there is physical contact. "ich werde hochgehoben – ich schwebe" ["being raised in the air – I'm floating"] (Timm 2003, 9; 2005, 1). Here, Timm heightens the perceived proximity of his brother so that it becomes an experience of the dissolution of identity boundaries. The constitution of I-identity and its ecstatic coalescence in that single moment of the sole memory of physical contact with his brother bestows such a great psychodynamic charge on authentic early childhood memory that it, as the opening scene of the text, is the igniting spark that unleashes the psychological energy which then drives Timm's subsequent investigations and reflections, and gives them their experiential and emotionally involved nature. The initial psycho-energetic impetus does not mean,

however, that the writing process can develop freely and without resistance. Quite the opposite. The text develops contrapuntally. In a personal conversation, Timm explained that he structured it according to the principles of the musical fugue. The counterpoints to his remembered experience of being one with his brother are his dreams:

> Ein Traum hat sich mir recht genau eingeprägt. Jemand will in die Wohnung eindringen. Eine Gestalt steht draußen, dunkel, verdreckt, verschlammt. Ich will die Tür zudrücken. Die Gestalt, die kein Gesicht hat versucht sich hereinzuzwängen. Mit aller Kraft stemme ich mich gegen die Tür, dränge diesen gesichtslosen Mann, von dem ich aber bestimmt weiß, dass es der Bruder ist, zurück. Endlich kann ich die Tür ins Schloss drücken und verriegeln. Halte aber zu meinem Entsetzen eine raue, zerfetzte Jacke in den Händen (Timm 2003, 12).

> One of [the dreams] has left a precise impression on me. Someone is trying to break into my home. A figure stands outside, dark, dirty, covered with mud. I want to close the door. The faceless figure is trying to force his way in. I brace myself against the door with all my might, forcing back the man who, faceless as he is, I know for certain is my brother. At last I manage to push the door shut and bolt it. But to my horror I am holding a rough, ragged jacket in my hands (Timm 2005, 4).

The brother, part of the author's I-identity, is pushed away to the outside, a faceless threat. The "rough, ragged jacket", which remains behind as evidence of his brother's existence, indicates his origins in a dangerous, strange counterworld – a dimension that is also called to mind a page previously in the fairytale of Bluebeard and his closed door, behind which awaits a river of blood. However, what causes Timm's resistance, his dissociation from that part of his self which is occupied by his brother, now a grim threat? Initially, Timm seems to call on the model of the traumatic experience and its mode of processing the dissociation or isolation from the existential threat or injury – in this case the loss of the brother – that cannot be controlled by the I. This impression is confirmed by a later description of a flash-back experience, which is connected with his brother's loss and which follows the model of injury through trauma. This will be analysed in more detail below. However, a closer reading shows that while the author is, on the one hand, affected by the trauma of loss, on the other hand, it is ultimately his knowledge of history – not in his dreams, but in reality – that leads him to repel his brother.

At the consciousness level, it is Timm's knowledge of the war crimes committed by the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front and, more generally, his knowledge of the criminal nature of the Nazi regime that brings him to see the effect of the traumatic damage done to his I-identity as a moral decision and brings him to accept the anonymisation of his brother. This apparent identity of deep-seated psychological

damage and moral response is only dissolved and a new engagement with the brother opened up when Timm recognises in him an instance of his dissociated I-identity – without modifying his moral and political judgement. In accepting the intruder as the dissociated part of his self, he occludes the perspective of it as a phantasmagorical, autonomous being, which allows it to become a revenant. Thus, he is in a position to engage with his brother and to subject his brother's moral judgement to renewed critique, as a layer separate to that of his defence against the trauma. When reading his brother's war diary, Timm comes across the following entry: "*Brückenkopf über den Donez. 75 m raucht Iwan Zigaretten, ein Fressen für mein MG*" ["*Bridgehead on the Donez. 75 m away Ivan smoking cigarettes, fodder for my MG*"] (Timm 2003, 19; 2005, 10; italics in original). The author comments: "Das war die Stelle, bei der ich, stieß ich früher darauf [...] nicht weiterlas, sondern das Heft wegschloss. Und erst mit dem Entschluss, über den Bruder, *also auch über mich*, (emph. G.F.) zu schreiben, das Erinnern zuzulassen, war ich befreit, dem dort *Festgeschriebenen* nachzugehen" ["This was the place where, when I came upon it earlier [...] I read no more, but closed the notebook. It was only with my decision to write about my brother, *and thus about myself too*, to unleash memory, that I felt free to look closely at what he had *recorded* there"] (Timm 2003, 19; 2005, 10).

The moral and cultural distance from his brother, which the war diary lays bare, remains at this level, but it becomes open to scrutiny, open to a critical process through which the traumatically separated brother is accepted as part of Timm's own I-identity. The moral shock is dissociated from the trauma and, over and above the gesture of defence, can also be transferred into a critical discourse on cultural ideology and mentalities that draws in the whole family, especially Timm's father. Matteo Galli has commented on this: "Selten wird jedoch auf eine so offene, brutale und insistierende Weise [...] das kommunikative und soziale Gedächtnis der Vätergeneration geschildert" [the communicative and social memory of the parental generation is, however, rarely depicted in such an open, brutal and insistent way] (Galli 2006, 169). The two levels remain closely interlinked throughout the entire text and their interconnection is reflected in the German title, which expresses simultaneous proximity and distance, intimicy and generalisation: *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* (literally: through the example of my brother). In the detailed analysis of his diary, the brother becomes on the one hand a warning example for criticism of the traditions of blind Prussian obedience and the right-wing conservatism of nationalism – conveyed by the Freikorps via the father – which views morality and humanity as the criteria by which to judge the use of violence by others, but then never acknowledges its own violence. The brother appears as representative of a specific type, but he is barely tangible as an individual and his notes do not make it possible to reconstruct the authentic experience of a German soldier on the Eastern Front – that of the sensations felt in his subjective inner existence. Instead, he is an arrangement of well-known stereotypes.

The critical perspective of an individual writing today on the German history of the World War is decisive: Timm's connection to his brother cannot produce any understanding or empathy. Helmut Schmitz has remarked: "Throughout his narrative, Timm thematises the act of memory and the 'Gefahr, glättend zu erzählen' [danger of narrative glossing, M.B.]. His narrative reflects on itself as a self-conscious public act of creating meaning through narration. As an *a posteriori* explanation it documents the essential unavailability of a 'naïve' perspective together with the necessity to narrate" (Schmitz 2007, 215). On the other hand, however, Timm's dreams of his brother do not stop. These are dreams of a repeated and ultimately always failed attempt to engage, of unsuccessful communication. "Der Bruder steht da, das Gesicht schwarz, der Anzug – oder eine Uniform? – hell. [...] Plötzlich wirft er mir eine Birne zu, die ich nicht fangen kann. Mein Schreck, als sie zu Boden fällt. Und dann sagt seine Stimme: Doldenhilfe" ["My brother is standing there, black-faced, his suit – or a uniform? – light-coloured. [...] Suddenly he throws me a pear which I fail to catch. My alarm when it falls to the ground. And then his voice speaks to me... Floweraid, he says"] (Timm 2003, 141; 2005, 128).

According to a written statement by the author, "Floweraid" is a "dream word" of uncertain meaning. Rapprochement cannot take place, but the unfulfillable need for it – made tangible in the paradox of the meaningless word – is strong, because Timm's concern is for nothing less than the integrity of his own personality. A sense of proximity cannot be obtained from painstaking research in documents pertaining to his brother's life – here the brother simply becomes the example of a mentality that Timm criticises. But Timm does share that sense of proximity as the trauma of the loss of his brother by making his dreams accessible to us. At this level, however, the main concern is the suffering caused by the injury done to the integrity of his current I – not the suffering of others in the past. This distinction is the first criterion for identifying the trauma as such. On one occasion, though, Timm's current suffering and the past suffering of his brother come close to converging in his imagination, so that the brother begins to possess the author through his revenance. The location and time of Timm's pain are converged with the location and time of his brother's death, and his mental pain becomes physical. The past intrudes as a seemingly present event into the present. It is not the loss of his brother that causes pain here, but rather that the death of the brother is re-enacted. Precisely this is the hour of the revenant.

> Am Tag meiner Ankunft (in der Ukraine, G.F.), es war zufällig die Zeit, in der der Bruder verwundet worden war, wurde ich morgens im Hotel durch Telefonschrillen geweckt. Ein Traum, ein dunkler, ein im plötzlichen Erwachen nur noch undeutlicher Traum, in dem er auch schattenhaft vorgekommen war. Im Schreckzustand versuchte ich aufzustehen,. Ich konnte nicht. In beiden Beinen war ein unerträglicher Schmerz. (...) In der Kaffeepause ging ich zur Toilette. Ich

> blickte in den Spiegel und sah einen anderen. Das Gesicht bleich, fast weiß, die Augenhöhlen tief verschattet, violett, wie die eines Sterbenden (Timm 2003, 125).
>
> On the day after my arrival, which happened to be the time of year when my brother had been wounded, I was woken in my hotel in the morning by the telephone. I had been dreaming, a dark dream which became even more obscure as I woke with a start, but he had figured in it, in a shadowy way. Alarmed, I tried to stand up. I couldn't. I felt intolerable pain in both legs. [...] In the coffee break I went to the lavatory. Looking in the mirror, I saw someone else. A pale face, almost white, the eye sockets deeply shadowed and violet, like those of a dying man. (Timm 2005, 112-113).

This pain, emanating from the past but experienced now and with the accompanying timelessness that characterises the trauma, here creates the illusion that it is currently taking place in the time and space of the past. And so it is in the apparent reconstruction of the trauma's origin and its context in its past detail (geography and time of year) – or rather, the trauma reconstructs its context – that the revenant comes into being. However, this experience remains episodic and does not become a leitmotif, as it does in the other texts discussed here.

The view that suffering resulting from the trauma is to be relieved through rigorous separation of the present from the past, and absolutely not through its spectral revenancy, is definitive, for it is in the latter form that the trauma is fueled, through the removal of that boundary. A particular characteristic of Timm's book lies in the clear separation between the historical, ideological and culturally critical discourse that is developed around the brother and the family history on the one hand and the therapeutic, analytical discourse that affects Timm himself on the other hand. He strictly separates his spiritual and mental suffering from the problem Germany has with its history. And he separates psychiatry from politics. The fact that his mental suffering is originally linked with German history does not result in combining the healing methods that are brought into consideration. On the one hand, the self-analytical response to the need for reintegration of that part of his I which is traumatically separated and bound to his brother; on the other hand, the decisive, anonymising distancing from his brother as an *example* of a criminal and failed political barbarism and individual mentality. Essentially, Timm is arguing, himself highly disciplined, for the separation of the two disciplines. A great synthesis of them as a fictional engagement with the topic does not materialise. Perhaps this explains why Timm's highly personal book was included in the *Spiegel* bestseller list under the label 'nonfiction'.

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