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Feminist German Studies, Volume 34, 2018, pp. 101-124 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/fgs.2018.0006*

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This reading of Wolf's story "Unter den Linden" (1974) considers how the unnamed female protagonist uses the public cityscape of East Berlin's Unter den Linden to recover her personal history and sense of self. In her conscious surrender to the ambivalence inherent in the open spaces of the boulevard, the woman shuttles between the personal and the communal, the emotional and the cognitive, the past and the present. Through a dream evoking memories and imagined encounters reflected in and inspired by the urban sites she inhabits, the narrator engages in an ongoing process of (re)discovery and exploration that ultimately leads her back to herself.

"No one, least of all the author, can seek freedom beyond the coordinates of space and time, beyond history and without it. The geographical location in which an author lives, and which, at the same time, is an historical location, binds him."[1] This spatial and temporal tethering of the self, as stated by Christa Wolf in her essay "Lesen und Schreiben" (1973; On reading and writing), is reflected in the experiences of her protagonist/narrator in the story "Unter den Linden" (written in 1969, published in 1974 in an anthology with the same title).[2] For the unnamed female first-person narrator and protagonist, these coordinates prescribe the woman's solitary search for self as she recounts a dream of strolling along the boulevard synonymous with Berlin: "I have always liked walking along Unter den Linden. And most of all, as you well know, alone" ("UdL" 69). This purposeful stroll, which elicits the experiences that comprise the entire narrative, is emancipatory in its choice of location; rather than inhabiting a domestic or otherwise marginalized city space, the narrator instead positions herself on one of the most storied streets in Germany—East or West. Among landmarks and monuments dedicated to men and their achievements, the protagonist revels in a version of what Edward Soja, in his research on Los Angeles and Amsterdam, coined "Thirdspace," a

Feminist German Studies, vol. 34, 2018.

space in which real and imagined, present and past, commingle and collide. It is here that not only do binaries cease, but time and space seem to overlap and repeat; as the woman and the sites she visits move through time, she and they simultaneously evolve while fundamentally remaining the same. With what I argue is a reference to Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1891; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* 2003), the narrator captures this movement by evoking the vision of man's tightrope stretched across the abyss, and thereby, the seemingly never-ending progress toward enlightenment (part 4 of the prologue; 43–44).

Although the narrator never states outright that the purpose of her dream-walk is to rediscover her sense of self, it is implied throughout the work as the reader is led from site to site where memories and imagined episodes are explored. Not until the end of the story is it revealed that this movement down the boulevard has brought the narrator back to herself, embodied by a figure whose happiness she does not immediately recognize. This analysis begins with a review of previous scholarship on "Unter den Linden," most of which (the exception is Curtis Swope's recently published book) does not concern itself with the function of space and place in the work. I then turn to research on how other women writers in the German Democratic Republic utilized spatial constructs to express their political and gendered realities. The final section is a close reading of the text, which explores how the narrator relies on the clearly defined physical structure of Unter den Linden and the ambivalence of her movement along it—including coincidence and chance meetings—to provide her with what she needs.

Contextualizing "Unter den Linden"

Despite the fact that Wolf (1929–2011) is considered one of German literature's most significant figures of the twentieth century, "Unter den Linden" has received relatively little critical attention. Due to her complicated stance encompassing concurrent loyalty to and critique of the German Democratic Republic (a notion that was revisited in the 1990s when it was revealed that Wolf had been both the object of Stasi surveillance and herself acted as an informant), her oeuvre has most often been viewed through a political lens.[3] It comes as no surprise, then, that "Unter den Linden," originally published as the first in a collection of three stories bearing its title, was initially appropriated by some East German critics who chose to view it as evidence of a new stage of development in socialism,

one acknowledging that "[t]he full development of the individual is a need in capitalist as well as in socialist society, but in the latter it is a challenge that can be, and therefore ought to be met" (Abicht 167). Because this challenge is arguably met in Wolf's text, but without an explicitly socialist message, the intricate story of the protagonist's development is deserving of other readings. A handful of analyses of the text published in the last forty years include Hans-Georg Werner's investigation of the collection's literary influences (E. T. A. Hoffmann, Ingeborg Bachmann, Franz Kafka, and others), Brigitte L. Bradley's exploration of happiness—both desired and undesired—in the text, and Philip Manger's treatment of the story as a search for lives unlived.

An article by Myra Love examining the feminist perspective established in *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968; *The Quest for Christa T.*, 1971) and another by Robert Sayre and Michael Löwy linking Wolf's unique approach to Romanticism can also be aligned with the reading presented here. Unlike Wolf's novel *Kassandra* (1983; *Cassandra*, 1984), whose anti-authoritarian narrative style and critique of feminism in East Germany are outlined by Linda Schelbitzki Pickle and Muriel Cormican, "Unter den Linden" has been widely overlooked in a feminist context. Wolf's narrative does indeed call to mind works by Hoffmann and Kafka in that it questions the nature of happiness and the unknown possibilities of the roads not taken. Yet it does so from the distinct perspective of a recalled dream in which a woman moves through a specific urban space in the present while recalling memories from her past and imagining people and things she hopes to encounter there in the future.[4] As Renate Rechtien argues convincingly in her article "Places of Longing and Belonging," one significant role played by the cityscape in Wolf's novel *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963; *Divided Heaven,* 1976), which was written around the same time as "Unter den Linden," is that of sensate catalyst; the city, in that case believed to be Halle, provides the space of both "longing and belonging"—"Rita's utopian longing for *Heimat* in universal socialism" and finding a way to fully belong in it (127).[5] The choice of Berlin as the kinetic and complex setting of "Unter den Linden" is unsurprising for an introspective character in search of herself, because, as Rechtien notes, "[t]he city as a place in literature is generally representative of change, movement, flux and instability" (126). In "Unter den Linden," Berlin takes on an even greater role as "[u]rban space is made complicit in a subjective view of the circular yet progressive effects of the artwork on the self" (Swope 208).

Gendered Spaces in the City

The fact that Wolf situates her story on the street in the historical heart of Berlin is perhaps unexpected in light of the city settings chosen by other female German authors. As Beth Muellner writes in her piece "Marginalized Spaces, Marginalized Inhabitants": "While Berlin still appears predominately in the narratives of many German women writers discussed in this volume, the more obvious tourist destinations of the city do not take center stage" (169). Rather than exploring Berlin's marginalized spaces, Wolf's protagonist revisits its most prominent locations, primarily sites imbued with masculine forms and imagery. Furthermore, Wolf keeps her protagonist, for the most part, outside and on the boulevard rather than in "the unfamiliar and alienating interior spaces" so often occupied by characters crafted by other German women writers (169). Rather than inhabiting the domestic sphere historically relegated to women, or the interior of an office or factory in which GDR women were expected to work collectively to create a better future for the whole, Wolf's protagonist spends the majority of the narrative walking through open public spaces alone, reflecting on her individual circumstances.

The advantages of moving through the dynamic, outdoor city space are evident for the *flâneuse* from the very first words of the story, in which the protagonist establishes the boulevard as a liminal space where she is able to discover unexpected intersections of memories and present-day reality within her dream. As Catherine Smale writes, "Like the central character of Hoffmann's tale ["Das öde Haus"], whose strolls down Unter den Linden lend him a very different view from the one enjoyed by visitors to the city, so too is Wolf's protagonist engaged in a kind of *flânerie* which offers her a new, dynamic, and highly subjective experience of the urban landscape" (39). The resultant narrative, while characteristic of Wolf's aesthetic, is not appreciated by some critics, who, according to Katharina von Ankum, view Wolf's writing as deliberately inaccessible and unnecessarily complicated rather than an attempt to create a more authentic representation of the narrator's reality.[6] I argue that this layered aesthetic directly reflects the varied textures and experiences of the city space. Monica Germanà notes that cities, by their very nature, engender such complexity: "Incorporating the architectural layers of past and present times, the metropolitan space is ambivalent in its defiance of linear chronology. Janus-faced, looking simultaneously to the past and the future, the city rejects categorical approaches to its topographical syntax"

(214). This ambivalence is witnessed in the narrator's early reflection that Unter den Linden represents for her in fact two streets:

> This street and the one appearing in my dreams have nothing in common. The one is abused by newspaper pictures and tourists' photographs in my absence; the other stands at my disposal, undamaged, even over long periods of time. I admit the two can be confused, if looked at superficially. I even make that mistake myself. Then I heedlessly cross my street without recognizing it. ("UdL" 69–70)

While on the street, the narrator experiences several aspects of the urban space simultaneously: the actual geographical boulevard that one still walks today, the boulevard as remembered by the protagonist, and the boulevard as represented in her dreams. This multiperspectival approach, which allows the street to become a space where binaries cease, reflects both her complex past and complications of the present.

Wolf's exploration of this liminal space differs in some respects when compared to works by other GDR women writers such as Monika Maron. In her article on Maron's *Stille Zeile Sechs* (1991; *Silent Close No. 6*, 1993), Caroline Frank asserts, for example, that the protagonist's "emotional mental state depends drastically on where she is" (195). The narrator strolling Unter den Linden is keenly in tune with her immediate surroundings as well; however, unlike Maron's Rosalind, Wolf's protagonist does not withdraw to safe, interior spaces. She sets out on the boulevard confidently, and rather than feeling "exposed to a strange, threatening power, those which clearly reflect the patriarchal power of the ruling system," the protagonist walking Unter den Linden feels empowered to think and emote in ways that are true to herself (Frank 195). By straightforwardly stating that a newfound happiness has made her trustworthy, and her words therefore believable—assertions that she will later overturn—Wolf's narrator declares that she is no longer "chained to the facts" and can speak the truth ("UdL" 69). Yet, inasmuch as the woman's narrative reveals her own brand of personal truth, it perhaps more importantly provides a "liberation from factual reality, from the bland way of perceiving the world without the influence of the imagination, [. . .] it offers her a new means of articulating the truth of human existence" (Smale 39).

In other ways, this innovative articulation of dreamed reality results in a woman's narrative perspective that is echoed in the works by Maron. With Wolf's story told nearly entirely in the first person, the reader

experiences the city as the female protagonist perceives it, and at the end of the journey, when she finally sees herself on the street, it is still the first-person female voice that expresses an out-of-body, overlapping experience in which she simultaneously inhabits her present form and spies a past/future happier version of herself. Wolf's protagonist subverts the masculine by maintaining "feminine" spatial perception throughout, as evinced in the narrator's references to sensory impressions of the locations she visits. Maron's "narrating *I* captures spatial details and transports moods through the description of perception [. . .]. Her feminine connoted dedication to impressions is additionally intensified by the fact that she perceives space with multiple senses: she sees it, hears it, smells and feels it" (Frank 204). So, too, does Wolf's protagonist. "Unter den Linden" begins with a description of the street featuring hot summer weather and urban sensory overload: "And that's just how I walked in the dry, pleasantly sharp June heat, through the smell of dust and gas, through the noise of cars and through the white light reflected by the stones. Suddenly there appeared that bright, cheerful attentiveness which I had missed so bitterly for such a long time. The day was very beautiful" (70–71). The narrator surprisingly finds beauty in the unpleasant assault on the senses, perhaps because it ignites an acute awareness of her surroundings, activating a clarity that allows her to truly see and viscerally experience the city space around her.

Berlin's Unfortunate East-West Axis

The protagonist thus navigates the very real sites of Berlin while dream-imagining her own experiences there, and does so with an acute sense of her surroundings. In narrating the walk, she tethers her dreamed/imagined/remembered observations to locations existing in reality, a connection some scholars consider a necessary component in the reclamation of identity.[7] However, for Wolf, a woman writing in the German Democratic Republic in 1969, it is significant that she locates this story on Unter den Linden, Berlin's unfortunate "East-West axis" ("UdL" 69).[8] For, as the protagonist encounters the Humboldt University, State Opera Unter den Linden, Berlin State Library, and other sites along the way, less than a decade after the construction of the Berlin Wall, her identity as an (East) German woman is reiterated and reinforced, but in subtle and unexpected ways. Rather than choosing the Karl-Marx-Allee (built 1952–60 and first called Stalinallee), a grand boulevard lined with

monumental architecture and meant to be "the first step in the 'socialist' reconstruction of Berlin" (Ladd 186), the protagonist chooses Unter den Linden: home to monuments marked by both Prussian and Nazi pasts, and sites undeniably belonging to pre-GDR history (Ladd 181–86). At the time Wolf was writing, this part of the city maintained the capitalist, patriarchal structures that had not been integrated into the socialist narrative.[9] Yet it is in this public, palimpsestic, urban space that the protagonist seeks herself. That she fails to explicitly mention the Berlin Wall or the fact that her journey ends before the Brandenburg Gate by necessity (because East Berlin ends there, too) is perhaps indicative of the protagonist's perception of her own freedom of movement.

Unlike Susanne Lenné Jones's analysis of Irina Liebmann's *Stille Mitte von Berlin* (2001; Quiet center of Berlin), which found that "exploring the confined space of the GDR allows the author to expose feelings of entrapment, inferiority, and powerlessness on one side, as well as a western definition of the East as passive, feminine, static, and de-politicized non-space," Wolf's narrator expresses instead, for the most part, freedom of movement (212). Jones further argues: "Inhabitants of the socialist part of Germany felt physically imprisoned, trapped in the limited space they were permitted to inhabit and travel. In addition to an altered understanding of normalcy, this feeling of physical entrapment is engrained in the psyche as well, erasing the mental spaces for hope and the imagination of a fulfilling life in the East" (216–17). By contrast, Wolf's protagonist appears free and, indeed, neglects to mention borders, walls, or feelings of confinement. Liebmann's photographic essay explores three periods of Berlin's history, only one of which—the 1980s—approximates the period of "Unter den Linden," but the author is only fourteen years Wolf's junior and, like her, experienced the division of Berlin firsthand. Whether it was Wolf's own privileged position as a premier author of the GDR and party supporter or the emancipated personal message she wished to convey with this text, her narrator seems neither suppressed nor persecuted by her environment. Quite the contrary: the city street provides a space in which she can convey her personal truth.

Although Liebmann gives a more critical view of life in the GDR than Wolf, one point of commonality is the generally fraught relationship between space and time in the German Democratic Republic. As Jones argues in her analysis of Liebmann's work, the GDR provided ideal conditions for the realization of liminality, for "East Berliners, bereft of the right to move geographically [. . .] and unable to imagine advancement

toward a future, could only remain stagnant or move backwards in time. This notion harkens back to Soja's concept of Thirdspace, in which the real and imagined merge" (218). Wolf's protagonist experiences such merging when she ventures onto the boulevard in 1960s Berlin, simultaneously entering a space in which the historical past is omnipresent and her imagination conjures up meetings with characters such as a deceased friend and a fairy-tale goldfish. As Jones explains, "In this way, the past not only becomes a mental space that embodies what went before, but it can also morph into an alternative, imaginative present" (218). Whereas Wolf's character narrates the sites she visits and Liebmann "presents her photographs of these palimpsests from the past as material, though mediated, proof," both cases show that "[a]lthough the past is a bygone and physically unattainable reality, the space exhibiting markers from this past is undeniably [. . .] still present in all its materiality" (218).

It is noteworthy that neither the past nor present city experienced by the protagonist in "Unter den Linden" is portrayed as particularly political, capitalist, or socialist in nature. Despite a peppering of references to things such as the Russian language, the Soviet Embassy, her Moscow watch, the Free German Youth, Marx-Engels Square, and "the hungry maws of the West Berlin swindlers and speculators" ("UdL" 91), Wolf's narrator names neither the GDR nor the Berlin Wall. As she nears the Brandenburg Gate, the protagonist does not acknowledge that her path cannot continue westward because she has reached the border; her meander simply shifts, leading back east toward Alexanderplatz. She remains equally apolitical while calling attention to representations of the shared cultural history of an undivided Germany (library, university, opera house), and even as the protagonist remembers/envisions herself and two friends in "a landscape of ruins" distributing election brochures (89) she mentions nothing of Allied bombings, World War II, or postwar political divides, omissions that seem surprising from an author who grew up under fascism and long held the hope that the GDR could become a socialist utopia.[10]

Taken with the layering of history and the absence of politics, the time/space orientation of the story is particularly compelling because it essentially functions in a kind of time spiral: the narrative circles around to end as it begins, with two simple sentences naming the street, her repeated activity there, and the past enjoyment she experienced—preferably on her own: "I have always liked walking along Unter den Linden. And most of all, as you well know, alone" (69, 118). As the narrator walks, progressing

along the boulevard, she seems to seek herself in the present, be reminded of who she was in the past, and thereby gain her sense of self moving into the future. Neither overtly political nor ideological in nature, the development the protagonist seeks appears to be purely personal, and entirely linked to her identity and actions as a friend and lover. The mental image of the narrative movement is, then, one that spirals along the straight-as-string Unter den Linden, moving forward but circling back to touch on past events, allowing for productive deviations and meanderings, coincidences and chance meetings.

Communal and Personal Memory in the City

The notion of spiraling corresponds particularly well with Berlin and its grandest boulevard, Unter den Linden, which leads from the Palace Bridge west to the Brandenburg Gate, and is home to the Humboldt University, Crown Prince's Palace, Old Arsenal, New Guardhouse, State Opera Unter den Linden, and Berlin State Library.[11] As Aleida Assmann observes: "The city's architecture can be described as coagulated and stratified, and with that, a three-dimensional palimpsest as a result of repeated transformations, settlements, sedimentations. [. . .] The formula of the 'synchrony of the unsynchronized' paradigmatically applies to the varied layers of urban structures."[12] A city is thus composed of and defined by these layers, and if the architecture itself does not change, the ideology and functionality of these buildings shift with time and political parties—be they National Socialist or Social Democrat. The contexts in which our narrator encounters these sites, and the memories they evoke, are direct results of not only the physical structures but also their political and personal historical connotations, all of which are in a state of constant evolution.

As Curtis Swope writes in *Building Socialism: Architecture and Urbanism in East German Literature, 1955–1973* (2018), Wolf's narrator transforms the ever-evolving Berlin "not by avoiding the most visited sites, but instead by using an intricate narrative structure and highly associative language to render the street of the story's title afresh: converting its planned grandeur into a seemingly spontaneous expression of dream-like discontinuity and converting its baroque axiality into a medieval meander" (202). Part of this meandering—or spiraling or walking the tightrope formed by Unter den Linden—is driven by what Swope calls its "simultaneous monumentality and fragility," which "offer possibilities for imagining different subjectivities and exploring how the

institutions [. . .] relate to the identities of the narrator and her alter ego" (204). As such, Wolf's protagonist appears to seek public sites that offer countless opportunities for personal and anonymous interactions, resulting in highly individualized and sociohistorically generalized reflections. From the outset, the narrator attempts to establish herself as an individual by explicitly stating that she has always enjoyed strolling this boulevard alone; yet this solitary act subsequently becomes communal in her reflected engagement with the city.[13] For, as Kathleen Komar notes, "One does not simply raise the finished and reified moments from the unconscious storehouse of experiences to the conscious level, but rather reanimates the moment with the additional perspective that later years and new selves provide" (55). This reanimation occurs again and again as each remembered or dreamed interaction contributes to the protagonist's (re)construction of self, ultimately resulting in an identity that she finally recognizes as her own.[14] Komar's assertion that "[t]he communalization of memory allows at least for a complexity and diversity that resists the neat patterning of a single mind and that avoids turning the self into a finished object" seems applicable here when one considers how each site and dreamed memory contributes to the sense of identity the narrator regains at the end of the story (46).[15] As she makes her way down the boulevard, the act of remembering and reflecting on the people and sites she encounters keeps her in a liminal space where the in-between is not only a possibility, but a reality.

Structured Meandering: Spiraling toward Happiness

As the story begins, the narrator shares that she had been deliberately avoiding Unter den Linden "for a long time" but that it had recently appeared to her in a dream ("UdL" 69). Since then, she is able to take control of her space by confronting it and revealing to the reader—and the second-person "you" (*du*) the narrator addresses—the universal truth that we all long to achieve a sense of belonging: "For we esteem nothing more highly than the pleasure of being known" (69). This statement serves as a declaration of the protagonist's agenda for the remainder of the narrative; what is unclear at this point is that she most wants to know herself again, and it is through the communalization of memory, as seen through the temporal and spatial prism of the boulevard, that she endeavors to reach that goal.

Wolf's character begins the westerly walk toward the Brandenburg

Gate when she gets off a bus in front of the State Opera, which, it is important to note, was not her intended destination. It is revealed on the second page of the story that the protagonist had not initially set out to visit the boulevard; she was summoned to appear before the authorities—the reader later learns that she may have had inappropriate relations with someone at the university—and had intended to explore another area of the city, but "Unter den Linden reasserts its primacy: a bus driver drops her off not at the new district she intends to visit, but at the Staatsoper, a location where an unspecified 'they' wanted her to be dropped off" (Swope 203). Intentionality is foiled by what appears to be fate; rather than seeing the new part of town, she instead ends up in familiar territory. Each of the familiar locations contributes to the reframing of her identity, something that would have been impossible in the personally uncharted territory of new Berlin.

The protagonist first stops at the New Guardhouse, an imposing monument to Prussian militarism that was briefly used to commemorate those fallen in World War I, partially destroyed in World War II, rebuilt in 1960 by the GDR, and "dedicated to 'Victims of Fascism and Militarism'" (Richie 285). Emblematic of how Berlin's turbulent modern history can be encompassed in a single edifice, the New Guardhouse simultaneously reflects imperial Prussia, democratic Weimar Republic, fascist Third Reich, and socialist GDR. In the narrator's present day, it is not the façade itself but the ceremonial and highly choreographed changing of the guard that draws her attention; the formidable, masculine lines of the building are repeated and reinforced through the narrator's description of the mechanical movements and soldierly precision she observes there:

> I wanted to impress upon my memory the commands with which they yank, snap, snap, as if on taut strings, the two main characters out of the stationary rifle platoon. I did not want to miss out on a single one of those admirable parade steps, which, precisely tracing a line invisible to us uninitiated, must end up exactly in front of the tips of the sentry's boots—should he be standing where the regulations have placed him. ("UdL" 71)

This picture of ordered, military perfection quickly devolves into nothing short of a catastrophe when one of the young men discovers that "[t]he spot where his predecessor was meant to receive him (between the second and third pillar) was empty" (71). Before the New Guardhouse, a structure dedicated time and again to memorialization and militarism, the narra-

tor seems to recognize her own personal pathology of loss and emptiness when one guard suddenly and unexpectedly realizes that his partner is out of step and not where he should be. The narrator observes: "With clear conscience he stood sentry at impeccable attention in the wrong place, with no hope of relief, while his successor, lacking the necessary partner, was executing in an embittered manner all the complicated maneuvers which finally brought him to the spot all too long deserted by the brother officer" (71). While it is not mentioned specifically, considering the narrator's repeated emphasis on failed romantic relationships, this mishap with the changing of the guard could well allude to the woman's own missing partner and her embittered response to his failure to be where he should have been.

The narrator's walk of (re)discovery continues as the crowd that had gathered to watch the changing of the guard disperses and she notices a young couple stopping to admire the statue of Alexander von Humboldt that stands outside the Humboldt University.[16] The orange buttons they wear on their chests exclaiming "All I need is love" draw the protagonist's attention; however, she does not reflect on the likely (Western) background and political views of these young people.[17] Instead, their carefree hopefulness appears to call to mind something from the past that she is concerned with rectifying: an extramarital affair. Here, the narrator introduces to the reader two formerly married friends, Peter and Marianne, whose split consumes much of her thoughts as she journeys down Unter den Linden. In her early references to "the girl," the protagonist reveals that Peter's relationship with "the beautiful blonde woman" haunts her present thoughts and compels her to (re)visit further sites that remind her of his betrayal ("UdL" 12). Via these public locations, it is soon revealed that Peter, Marianne, and the narrator had been friends for a long time, and the protagonist seems nearly as hurt by Peter's betrayal as his ex-wife had been. The narrator explains that their friendship, and to some extent, their entire youth, was bound by a loyalty he had apparently forgotten: "[Peter] [h]ad succeeded at something which was beyond us: forgetting those unspoken oaths which were the most serious things in all the seriousness of those years and which now served to hold our youth together" (74). Despite, or because of, the deep hurt caused by this betrayal, it initially seems the narrator is retracing the locations and events surrounding the affair in order to find sympathy—or a kind of understanding—for Peter and what he did; however, at the end of the story the reader learns that the narrator seeks to confess her empathy for

the girl, for she, too, was once the other woman in an extramarital affair. With so much attention devoted to questions of honesty and betrayal, Peter's transgression may have contributed to the protagonist's loss of self, thus setting her on this unexpected path of rediscovery.

Before the narrator's personal indiscretion is revealed, she deliberately describes her physical surroundings and links them to her psychological state by remarking that she had always had the feeling that Unter den Linden itself was on a downward grade that "leads to unknown depths" ("UdL" 77). With this observation, she is naturally led downward through the iron gate, into the inner courtyard of the Berlin State Library, where she continues to rediscover what is missing from her life. Drawn to the blue-green tiled fountain in the center of the library's courtyard, the narrator steps into it, wanting nothing more than to lie on the bottom of the basin. This baptismal experience brings the realization that her life has been lived, to some extent, only superficially: "Now I understood that up to then I had lacked heaviness, a specific weight. If you are too light, you simply do not sink [. . .]. I was satisfied finally to have got to the bottom of it" (78). In the shadow of this temple to erudition, considered one of the world's greatest libraries,[18] the protagonist recognizes that she has undergone a fundamental change: "The truth is that I came voluntarily out of the fountain and was immediately dry and sober, as if by way of intense radiation" (78). Her private, dreamed rebirth in this very public space and the simultaneity of being on display in the center of the courtyard but hidden under the water represent the narrator's dichotomous journey down the boulevard: she comes to terms with inner conflicts by connecting to the public city spaces around her. In this instance, the newfound gravitas discovered on the basin floor transforms the protagonist, and she emerges from the fountain reborn and able to enter the library, something she had previously felt forbidden to do: "I was never to enter here again, the invisible writing on the door had said, until this day. I should not expose myself. A more powerful magic had lifted the ban. I was exposed like the rest, what did you think?" (78).

After leaving the library, the narrator appears to acquire more confidence with every step. Having gathered the strength to recount how her friendship with Peter was fractured by his marital betrayal, the protagonist first recalls running into him one evening in the old Lindencafé at the corner of Charlottenstraße and Unter den Linden, then mentions a chance meeting at "the new espresso bar, when it was still new" in the Lindencorso—the high-end shops on the corner of Friedrichstraße and

Unter den Linden ("UdL" 84). By referencing these specific locales in connection with conversations she and Peter had before the affair damaged their friendship, the narrator lends credence to such café encounters by deliberately mapping them, but she also calls attention to the transitory nature of the interactions that take place in these spaces; one can plan to meet at a café, but paths also cross there by happenstance. In another episode, in which she recalls meeting her lover in a café supposedly by chance—acting as if it is a coincidence but knowing he can be found there every Thursday between lectures—the narrator bemoans the loss of coincidence as if it were the loss of innocence itself: "[C]oincidence had let me down after that beautiful initial coup. I was forced to resort to calculation, cunning, nerve-racking inquiries, degrading telephone calls which led me at a certain hour to a certain place: here" (85).

The physical urban space provides myriad opportunities for coincidental, chance encounters, but it is also defined by its linear structure and rules of movement within it. As an example of this, the protagonist states that after Peter and Marianne were divorced, the personal interactions of all three became as anonymous and regulated as rush hour in the city: "And so we can live alongside one another on the basis of that which we do not do. (According to traffic regulations: 'Caution and mutual consideration . . .')" ("UdL" 87). With this, the narrator recognizes that the city offers a comfortable, controlled anonymity that is underpinned by a structure allowing for navigating unwanted situations with limited social contact. In this case, as will be seen again later in the text, the imposed order of traffic lights provides a regulating structure for emotional interactions, too.

Despite the narrator's appreciation for Berlin's strong architectural lines and carefully planned traffic patterns, the opportunities they create for her subversive dreamscapes are the true gifts provided by Unter den Linden. It is here that she is able to blatantly reveal herself as an unreliable narrator by ironically informing the reader: "So that you can believe me, I am now blurring the transitions between the credible and the incredible, just for you" ("UdL" 78–79). Truly blurring the line between plausible and implausible, the protagonist next recalls an encounter with the Golden Fish, a fairy-tale figure she connects to happiness.[19] Unsurprisingly, the fish finds the narrator on Unter den Linden, the street where people, we are told, find what they need to survive: "But the day will come. Only then will I learn which of the earthly goods being distributed here on this street is meant for me and whether I will be ready to receive it. For this is the street—did you really not know, Fish!—where the great, fair exchange

continuously takes place until everybody has received what they deserve" (87). With the explicit wording of "fair exchange," the narrator calls into question the commodification of everything, including happiness. Even in the GDR, where this equitable exchange took on a very different meaning than in the West, the protagonist makes clear that this boulevard, above all, is a commercial center and invites the Golden Fish to come along "to the shiny new shop windows, in front of which stand people counting their money in their minds" (87). At the bookstore, the fish regrets that it is unable to read Russian and, although the narrator translates some titles, it eventually becomes bored and swims away.

As the Golden Fish disappears, it takes with it—only momentarily—the protagonist's personal concerns as the narrative shifts to a more generalized sociopolitical concern for consumerism. In the bookstore window, she sees the reflection of the new Lindenhotel and hears voices behind her (notably one in English with a Saxon accent and the other a native English speaker) discussing that it will soon become grander than the American Hilton. For a moment, the hotel's reflection transforms into an image of postwar ruins: a half-empty lot overgrown with weeds, the wind whistling through it, a path running diagonally through the middle, upon which three familiar figures are walking ("UdL" 35). The vision engages a transmutable city space that evokes the present structure, aspirations for its future, and the pile of rubble that existed here after the war, but before there were two German states. The unavoidable conflation of public and personal history in this space becomes evident as the narrator remarks that the three figures she sees on the path are Peter, Marianne, and herself, distributing election flyers. In the midst of informing the reader both of her political activism and the origins of her friendship with Peter and Marianne, the narrator quickly telescopes back to present day in order to remark that at the time the friends were bonding through political engagement, Peter's future blonde lover was only eight years old. The thoughts in the narrator's interior monologue are naturally rooted in greater sociohistorical concerns which inevitably branch out into personal events, that may or may not appear to be directly connected. Here, the passage deftly connects personal and public trajectories to one specific city space: a friendship was born on the pile of ruins created by Allied bombing, and after a period of time, the friendship has died and the new, grander-than-the-American-Hilton Lindenhotel now occupies the space.

This emotional memory is suddenly interrupted in the dream by a male authority figure as the narrator begins to cross the street against the

signal: "Since when does one cross the street at a red light in Central Europe, madam? The madam is myself, and a traffic warden now gives me a special lesson which reaches its high point with the observation that it is of no interest whether the intersection is empty or not. Red is red, and that is a matter of principle. Meanwhile, the light has turned red again" ("UdL" 91). The traffic cop's reaction to her infraction affects the narrative in two ways: it reminds the protagonist of a similar event many years ago that landed her, Peter, and Marianne in jail for a week—linking them for what she thought would be a lifetime—and forces her, for the first time in the narrative, to think about movement and its restriction. Now, she is conscious that the flow of her walk, and the turns the dream takes must be controlled by a "dream censor," something or someone moving her through these encounters just as traffic signals move vehicles and pedestrians through the city. In this case, the censor exerts his control over "madam" (*die Dame*) by belittling and reminding the protagonist that rules are made to be followed.

Yet rules and conventions are soon forgotten in the liminal space of the boulevard, where the dreamed present is challenged by ghosts from the past. Up to this point, the narrator has been addressing an unnamed familiar person (*du*), perhaps meant to be Peter's younger lover, or even the narrator herself twenty years earlier. Now the term of address is utilized in an exchange with a new character, Max, an old friend who is deceased but manages to find the protagonist in her dream and ask her to follow him ("UdL" 49). They sit on two chairs "in the central promenade" of the boulevard, and Max remarks that she is "losing [her] grip" (100).[20] Seated on the pedestrian walk between the lanes of Unter den Linden, the narrator in her dream state is able to speak with a dead friend who reflects her condition back to her, all in the midst of this literal and figurative in-between space. After the brief interaction with Max, she continues to make her way through the tourists toward the Brandenburg Gate, another of Berlin's well-known liminal spaces. Commissioned as a symbol of peace by Friedrich Wilhelm II and designed by Carl Gotthard Langhans in the 1790s, the gate served as the backdrop for parades of strength by Napoleon and Hitler, was the site of the Berlin Uprising in 1953, and represented a divided Germany for nearly thirty years (Kellerhoff). At the time Wolf wrote her story, the landmark stood beyond the end of Unter den Linden, in the restricted area between East Berlin and the Wall (Todesstreifen), before the border to the Federal Republic of Germany. In her dream, the protagonist does not mention the Wall but rather recalls "the cheerful

tourist guide who led us up to the low wall a short ways before the Brandenburg Gate" (106). It is here that the narrator's journey halts its westward trajectory and returns east—without a deliberate admission that she is not permitted to breach the border—where it will ultimately end close to Alexanderplatz, the showpiece square in the heart of the capital of the GDR that was modernized in the socialist style in the 1960s.

Berlin's architectural monuments guide the protagonist's journey, trigger her memories, and serve as a backdrop for her musings and dreamed interactions. The encounter with Max on the central promenade reminds her of his funeral and the fact that his death required her to call a former lover and mutual friend to inform him of the sad news. This then brings to mind their affair—and the possibility that a discreet bellboy at the Lindenhotel might be able to make a statement about seeing her and her lover there together. Although it remains unexplained, the affair must have been somehow untoward (much as Peter's relationship with the young blonde) because the narrator has subsequently been summoned to testify. The injustice of the situation surrounding the affair overcomes her, and as she turns from the Brandenburg Gate, she explains: "I reach the Soviet Embassy at a run. I pant; I am beside myself. There must be an authority in this goddamned street to whom one can complain. No, says someone beside me. You better not count on that" ("UdL" 107). Searching in vain, the protagonist is unable to find anyone willing to hear her grievances about the inequities of life.

With this talk of injustice, the narrator is reminded of a walk she and her lover once took on Unter den Linden. During the walk he confessed to infidelity, leaving them to continue silently to the Red City Hall and the public square Alexanderplatz, where they took refuge from the pouring rain in the entrance of a department store. It is in this public doorway—found again on the literal liminal space of a threshold—that the narrator challenged her lover:

> You never walked the rope.
>
> What rope?
>
> The tightrope above the abyss. You always waited for the bridge.
>
> I always tried to help build the bridge. ("UdL" 112)

While the protagonist delivers the expected personal accusations coming on the heels of a breakup, she may well be evoking Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* by accusing her lover of never taking the risk of venturing

onto the tightrope spanning the abyss. Rather than moving across the tightrope—or down the boulevard—representing humankind's progress toward (self)-fulfillment, the lover waited instead for the journey to be made for him, waited for others to build his bridge. With the conclusion of this remembered interaction, the protagonist appears free of this last emotional impediment and ready to move on, unencumbered by a man unwilling or unable to engage in the process of moving forward.

Now at the end of her walk, the narrator addresses Unter den Linden, acknowledging that it provided her with precisely what she needed: the space and inspiration necessary for her dreamed memories and imagination to explore past experiences and present possibilities, and the structure required to see that her explorations led toward an acceptable resolution:

> I went out into the street in my bitter shame. I ridiculed it. Straight as an arrow, I sneered. Street to the heart of the matter . . . Street of coincidence, I swore at it. Newspaper street. It lay at my feet, clean and neat. One stone next to the other, good work. What had I expected of it? Some distraction between two stories? A new dress? A trivial dialogue in a café? And it had given me just that. ("UdL" 117)

Among superfluous consumer goods on display in shop windows, intimate conversations in small cafés, and throngs of tourists flocking to landmarks, the narrator realizes that she had possessed what was required to find herself all along; she simply needed to (re)discover it reflected in the sites along Unter den Linden.

The final confirmation of her elusive self-fulfillment appears in a crowd on the busy boulevard as the narrator glimpses a woman who seems completely happy and fulfilled. The narrator begins to sob, waking from the dream with a remarkable realization: "I could not figure out why I was so cheerful. With real greed I kept summoning up that woman in front of my inner eye, her face, her gait, her figure. All of a sudden I saw: It was I. It had been myself, none other than myself whom I had met" ("UdL" 118). The conscious admission that it was the boulevard that led her back to her happier self overwhelms the protagonist nearly as much as the insight that her seemingly aimless wandering had served an indispensable function: "Now everything was cleared in a flash. I had been meant to find myself—that was the point of the summons" (118). Thus, summoned to navigate the rigidly defined city space, albeit under the eye of a dream censor, the narrator is empowered to invoke her desired outcome through

memory and imagination. This highly personal reacquisition of the self occurs within the communal spaces of the public boulevard, a place where individual subjectivity comes to overshadow political activism. Here, the narrative circles back to where it began, and the protagonist returns to the place that led her back to herself: "I have always liked walking along Unter den Linden. And most of all, as you well know, alone" (118).

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Notes

1. "Niemand, am wenigsten der Schriftsteller, kann Freiheit suchen jenseits der Koordinaten von Raum und Zeit, jenseits der Geschichte und ohne sie. Der geographische Ort, an dem ein Autor lebt und der zugleich ein geschichtlicher Ort ist, bindet ihn" (Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben" 215). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

2. The title of the English translation by Schwarzbauer and Takvorian in the 1993 anthology (Wolf, *What Remains and Other Stories*) is also "Unter den Linden." In the following, I am citing the story in this translation with the abbreviation "UdL."

3. Following Wolf's death in 2011, the German press highlighted both the celebrated author's literary career and her complicated position as "an enormously significant figure, regarded until 1990 as someone who carefully and delicately expanded the boundaries of what could be said in East Germany" (D.S.L.).

4. Squier writes: "The city has a special significance in the works of women writers because—as women—they have a unique relationship to the urban environment, whether it is considered as an actual place, as a symbol of culture, or as the nexus of concepts and values determining woman's place in history and society [. . .]. [W]hat emerges in examining women writers' vision of the city is that whether city experience is pleasurable or painful depends, in large part, on whether it allows them access to creativity and autonomy" (4).

5. Rechtien uses this phrasing in her article exploring Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Sommerstück* (1989; Summer play), but it aptly describes the state of the narrator in "Unter den Linden" as well.

6. Von Ankum's defense of Wolf's narrative style in "Unter den Linden" reads, in part: "Wolf experimentiert erneut mit einer subjektivierten Erzählperspektive; sie kommentiert, reflektiert und vermischt drei Traumepisoden, die einen

Selbstfindungsprozeß der Protagonistin versinnbildlichen sollen. Besonders bei der Interpretation dieser Erzählung zeigt sich, daß viele Kritiker, trotz des demonstrierten Bemühens um Offenheit gegenüber der neuen Art, Wirklichkeit literarisch darzustellen, nicht unerhebliche Schwierigkeiten bei der Bewertung von Christa Wolf's unkonventioneller Erzählweise haben" (154–55).

7. "David Morley and Kevin Robins have suggested that the cultures today are hybrid and fluid rather than unitary or bounded, but they have also underlined the significance of real places where memory and identity are concerned, since without reference to specific and real locations, identity in their view cannot exist" (Rechtien 121).

8. The full passage reads: "It has never bothered me that the street is famous, not during my waking hours and most certainly not in my dreams. I am aware that it has suffered this misfortune on account of its location: East-West axis" ("UdL" 69). From the outset, the narrator mentions the regrettable liminal position of the boulevard dividing the two German states, an observation that seems to belie an empathy for things caught in between.

9. For more on patriarchal city spaces, exemplified by industrial centers in the United Kingdom from the 1960s to the early 1990s, see Massey.

10. Wolf's literary commitment to the ideals of the socialist state has been explored in much of the literature on her oeuvre, most recently in Klocke and Hosek's *Christa Wolf: A Companion*.

11. Richie vividly chronicles the origins and development of the city in *Faust's Metropolis*.

12. "Die Architektur der Stadt lässt sich als geronnene und geschichtete Geschichte beschreiben und somit als ein dreidimensionaler Palimpsest aufgrund wiederholter Umformungen, Überschreibungen, Sedimentierungen. [. . .] Die Formel von der 'Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen' gilt paradigmatisch für die unterschiedlichen Schichten urbaner Bausubstanz" (Assmann 76).

13. Wolf's identity as the preeminent author of the GDR calls us to consider the possibility of a deliberate utopian communal approach of (re)constructing memory via public spaces. Komar posits that in Wolf's texts, "[m]emory thus becomes communal and not private; what was once the exclusive domain of the self in isolation becomes inter-subjective" (42). While Komar's article focuses on the construction of gendered identity in Wolf's works *Kassandra* (1983), *Kindheitsmuster* (1976; *Patterns of Childhood*, 1984), and *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968), her theory can be extrapolated to the construction of identity in "Unter den Linden" as well. Komar examines a "doubling of memory—that is, the depiction of memory of both the self and an other" in which the narrator establishes memory as reflected in another female subject (42). Inasmuch as an individual is able to codify notions of self and identity by finding herself reflected in another human being, the city must also be considered a viable candidate for memory other. For if "memory is an act of uniting with another," this action can certainly be reasoned to occur in the act of uniting with a place that evokes memories of oneself and the images of what one is capable of becoming (45).

14. Urban spaces utilized as points of reflection for the communalization of memory function on personal and historical levels that inform one another in "Unter den Linden." Whereas *Der geteilte Himmel*, published two years after the construction of the Berlin Wall, centers on the physical, political, and emotional divide particular to that time and place, it is difficult to find such temporal specificity in "Unter den Linden." Because, as Komar states, "Christa Wolf always carefully locates her narratives in a particular historical moment," I would argue that rather than indicating a specific time period (beyond postwar), Wolf here instead employs historically specific spatial markers to track her trajectory down the boulevard (see "UdL" 44).

15. Ghezzo has established that for women, the city is often the most fitting place to conduct such a search for self: "As Elisabeth Wilson has argued, the 'chronotope' of the modern city—space as fluidity and indeterminacy, time as perpetual flux—appears to offer women a suitable, embracing enclave where the feminine finds a new definition, free from the constraints of a restricting past. The city can grant freedom, social mobility, economic independence; it can offer unexpected pleasures and encounters, detours and deviations. The journey to, and through, the city is, then, a psycho-geographical journey to the mother (*mater*-polis), an epistemological quest that inevitably enacts a transfiguration—or rebirth—of the body" (217–18).

16. Housed in what was Prince Henry's Palace and established by Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm III as Prussia's premier university, the institution's proud history and illustrious founding are echoed in the name Humboldt University, which was chosen by the Soviets in 1945. For more see Richie 74 and 93.

17. While Wolf does not directly reference the Beatles or hippies, she does describe the young couple as androgynous, male and female indistinguishable from behind in their jeans, flowered shirts, blue sweaters tied around their waists, and "unkempt hair of equal length" ("UdL" 72).

18. Designed by architect Ernst von Ihne at the behest of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the structure was intended to beautify the urban space as the kind of monumental architecture befitting a capital city. Groundbreaking began in 1903 and it was dedicated (Königliche Bibliothek) in 1914, at which time it was the largest library building in the world. Although its characteristic dome and nearly 40 percent of the building were severely damaged during bombing in 1945, the library was back in use in October 1946, and reconstruction continued until 1955. The great dome was never rebuilt, and in 1977 the GDR began its demolition ("Geschichte des Gebäudes").

19. For treatments of fairy-tale elements and connections to German romanticism in "Unter den Linden," see Hardy; Köhler; and Peucker.

20. "You are losing your grip," reads Schwarzbauer and Takvorian's translation ("UdL" 100); however, I believe that Max's words "Du läßt dich gehen" (Wolf, *Unter den Linden* 50) should be translated as "You're letting yourself go" for this analysis. The difference between losing one's grip and letting oneself go seems one worth noting here; the narrator has let herself go and is in the process of reclaiming herself.

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