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FOREIGN CULTURES  
THE POLITICS OF  
BELONGING



Edited by  
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American Institute for  
Contemporary German Studies  
The Johns Hopkins University

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German Cultures  
Foreign Cultures:  
The Politics of Belonging

edited by  
Jeffrey Peck  
Georgetown University

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# FOREWORD

This volume, focusing on the cultural situation of Jews and Turks in contemporary Germany, responds to the debates about the delicate relationship between minority cultures and national identity which have assumed a new significance since the fall of the Berlin Wall. While Germans and non-Germans are reconsidering the definition of nation in the German context and politicians and legal experts occupy center stage in the discussion of citizenship laws, the discourse on minorities only sporadically includes information about the cultural dimension that is not filtered through the majority culture. In this collection of essays, five experts highlight the situation of Jews and Turks in the Federal Republic through studies of their different cultural predicaments which draw on personal and group memories as well as on writers and literary texts. The following essays do not intend to compare the Jewish and Turkish experiences in Germany, although they reflect both groups as minorities vis-à-vis the same majority culture. They rather attempt to verify and qualify the specifics of both groups in a world in which living in a borderland between cultures is increasingly becoming a universal experience.

This volume is as much about learning as it is about unlearning. The learning concerns new manifestations of culture and literature on the margins between different nationalities, ethnic and religious identities; the unlearning pertains to the traditional concepts of homogenous national cultures which, as in the case of the English or French or German cultures, seem to have crystallized from the mysterious twists and turns of European history. While the borderland between cultures has always been perceived as an area of surprising insights and painful deprivations, at the end of the twentieth century the vigor of the concept of national cultures has been on the wane, transforming itself under the impact of global communication and migration.

It behooves a center for study of contemporary Germany to reflect these developments as a crucial ingredient of German culture in the 1990s. During the Cold War, "Germany" evoked a peculiar bundle of associations in the minds of Americans, complete with the trappings of the East-West conflict, the ugly Berlin Wall, and the questions of whether communists were able to divide the culture. The political unification in 1990 has led to the realization that it is exactly the insistence on wholeness and unified existence that puts a shadow on the concept of a post-Wall nation in the center of Europe. German culture as a centuries-old notion that reemerged after World War II to undergird the perception of **one** Germany had been challenged throughout the twentieth century, in particular when the Nazis colonized it for their nationalist expansion. In the increasingly

visible and articulate presence of millions of immigrants, refugees and guest workers in Germany, this notion, tainted in the exclusion and persecution first of Jewish Germans, then of Jews all over Europe, cannot designate the culture practices and identities anymore if it is only conceived as a tool of identity politics.

Against the thoughtless routine of measuring “Germanness” in cultural terms, one should point to the fact that the concept of German culture was not always seen as a mere stand-in for political unity but rather as a flexible net to bind together heterogenous areas, tribes, classes, and dialects. The history of this concept between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries betrays considerable openness toward political, even ethnic diversity. Looking at the current denationalization of cultural practices in Europe in conjunction with the public debate about exclusion and inclusion of foreigners in Germany, this history should be included as a frame of reference while new criteria for multicultural forms of living together within German borders are emerging.

These criteria are clearly conditioned by the past as well as by ethnic, linguistic and social phenomena. In the case of the Jews who have chosen to live in Germany, they require, as Jeffrey Peck points out in the following essay, a particularly thorough historical revision of the foreigner on the part of the Germans, a revision which makes the sanctity of otherness part of a new code of national communication. In the case of the Turks, this code does not draw on the consequences of the Holocaust but rather on the need to visibly replace terms of cultural expression and biological descentance with definitions of citizenship.

This does not erase “culture”—as vaguely defined as it is in the current discourse—from the determination of identity among minorities; on the contrary, it reinforces its presence—the filling and substantiating of the concept—as a crucial bridge to the majority culture. The divider as a bridge: this is why writers of the “other” background are necessary. They can be catalysts of psychological understanding and articulation of the otherness for the broader public. It is in this vein that this volume pursues the discussion about a new conceptualization of German culture. It aims at sorting out the psychological problems of life in the borderland between cultures, reflected in the experience of Jews, Germans and Turks (which includes a comparison with the experience of a Mexican writer in the United States.) It also aims at defining the incentives and drawbacks for aesthetic creativeness in this borderland which ranges from finding cultural self-assurance to a communal expression of remembrance that resonates in the larger society.

This volume originates in an initiative by Jeffrey Peck who, as Professor of German at Georgetown University and Volkswagen Fellow at the Institute in 1996/97, organized a workshop on the status of Jews and Turks in post-unification Germany. The workshop “German Cultures, Foreign Cultures: The Politics of Belonging” at AICGS on December 6, 1996, stimulated a critical assessment of

the situation of Jews and Turks in present-day Germany. Based on a larger research project on the politics of belonging in the shadow of the Holocaust, Peck discusses in his essay the conditions under which both groups live in Germany, concluding with a warning against an easy comparison. The situation of Jews is illuminated in the following three essays. Jack Zipes, Professor of German at Minnesota and invited as an outside contributor, juxtaposes the current “Shoah Business” with an analysis of Jewish writers at the margins of German literature, the scholar Victor Klemperer and the poet Rose Ausländer. Karen Remmler, Professor of German at Mount Holyoke College, follows up on several attempts of Germans to commemorate the Holocaust, beginning with a general discussion of German war memorials and the planning for the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin and concluding with a look at the commemorative dialogue connected with Christo’s wrapping of the *Reichstag*. Michal Bodemann, Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto, engages most concretely in the life of two generations of a Jewish family whose ascent and misfortune in postwar West Germany he analyzes as a reflection of their social isolation. His definition of their “sojourner mentality” can serve as a clue to a broader segment of immigrants who consciously maintain but a tentative residence in the country of the Holocaust. Nonetheless, Bodemann sees a tendency in the second generation to settle down in the foreign land.

The notion of the “sojourner mentality” resonates in the concluding essay by Azade Seyhan, Professor of German at Bryn Mawr College, who analyzes the creative implications of exclusion and marginality through the examples of a well-known Turkish writer in Germany, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, and a Mexican writer in the United States, Gloria Anzaldúa. Seyhan redirects the focus from the established perception, with which Germans view the Turkish immigrants, to the aesthetic articulation of a borderland identity, demonstrating the impressive potential for a dialogue across the margins of cultures. Integrating the foreign into a majority cultural identity seems to be a far-off goal, and yet, the mediation through literary forms of resistance and dialogue offers hope for progress in this endeavor.

This volume, as part of the Harry & Helen Gray Humanities Program Series, contributes a new dimension to the discussion of contemporary German culture. We thank Jeffrey Peck for organizing the workshop and the contributors for an unusual array of essays.

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# *A U T H O R S*

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“Ich schaue jedem ins Gesicht,” sagt sie,  
“und denke, ob der auch ein Mörder sein könnte.”  
A Turkish resident of Berlin after Solingen.<sup>1</sup>

[“I look everyone in the face,” she says,  
“and wonder if he could also be a murderer.”]

## TURKS AND JEWS: COMPARING MINORITIES IN GERMANY AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Jeffrey Peck

### I.

The quote above from a Turkish resident of Berlin could well be the words of a Jew walking the streets of Berlin anytime in the postwar period. For the latter, the epigram would be a reminder of virulent anti-Semitism and persecution during the Third Reich embodied today in Germans over a certain age. For the former, it marked a contemporary passage from the hate of Jews to the hate of Turks exhibited for many in the attacks now identified with cities like Hoyerswerda and Rostock in the East, Mölln and Solingen in the West. Indeed, Ignatz Bubis, the leader of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, claimed in 1992 that “there is no great difference between xenophobia and anti-semitism.”<sup>2</sup> We must, however, keep in mind that such grand comparisons are understandably not as nuanced as is necessary for an historically-grounded and socially-founded explanation of both similarities and differences between the two. Xenophobia, literally the hate or dislike of something or someone different or strange, and anti-Semitism, hostility towards Semites (read Jews), are neither always synonymous nor fully explanatory since the issue of racism must also be included in the formula.

There is no question that the German past, specifically the Third Reich and the specifically racist policies of Nazism which led to the Holocaust, hangs over any discussion of so-called foreigners in Germany. A *Spiegel* journalist in fact notes, “Je positiver jemand über das NS-Regime denkt, desto negativer denkt er über Juden und Türken.”<sup>3</sup> [The more positively one thinks about the Nazi regime, the more negatively, s/he thinks about Jews and Turks.] Bubis reminds us, as the journalist above, that Jews, the target of anti-Semitism, and Turks, who bear the brunt of xenophobia, are linked in people’s minds, if not at least in real historical terms. Granted that Jews and Turks have an intertwined history in the Ottoman Empire and are consequently tied superficially, at least in

western eyes, as “Orientals,” their similarity in Germany is based largely on their numbers and status—the two largest groups targeted by prejudice and hostility, the former in the 1930s and 1940s, and the latter in the 1980s and early 1990s.

A more compelling, albeit more slippery *tertium comparationis*, however, is their status as “foreigners” in Germany. While there is the danger of eliding all those who are not “German” (referring to the opposition established in the title of this collection) under the broad category of “foreign,” it is the German translation of this term which both enhances and complicates such a discussion. Briefly stated, the English term translates from the cognate into the noun *Ausländer* and more directly into the adjective *fremd*. A *Spiegel* survey analysis presents the problem very bluntly:

Hierzulande...wirkt sich gegenüber den Juden die Grundeinstellung der meisten Deutschen aus; Fremde sind ihnen dann am sympatischsten, wenn sie ihnen fernbleiben. Vor allem aus diesem Grund sind “Juden in Israel” (mit +1.0 Punkten) populärer als “Juden in Deutschland”, “Türken in der Türkei populärer als “Türken in Deutschland” (+1.4 gegenüber +0.2 Punkten). Daß es in dieser Hinsicht keinen Unterschied zwischen Juden und Türken gibt, macht deutlich: Die hiesigen Juden sind für die meisten Bundesbürger nicht Landsleute, sondern Fremde. Sind jemandem die Türken unsympathisch, so gilt dies in der Regel auch für die Juden.”<sup>4</sup>

[In this country the basic attitude of most Germans towards the Jews is that strangers [*Fremde*] are most appealing to them when they are far away. Above all for this reason “Jews in Israel” (with 1+ points) are more popular than “Jews in Germany,” “Turks in Turkey” more popular than “Turks in Germany” (+1.4 versus +0.2 points). That in this respect there is no difference between Jews and Turks makes clear that the Jews [in Germany] are not fellow countrymen, but rather strangers [*Fremde*]. If someone does not like Turks, they probably will also not like Jews]

The “foreigner,” both Jew and Turk, is both alien and strange, especially when s/he is farther rather than closer. Such “strangeness” is appealing when it is distant, mysteriously transformed into the touristic and even exotic, which ironically often makes the Germans enthusiastic visitors in far-flung foreign, yet appealing destinations, such as Turkey and Israel. Usually designating a citizen of another nation who now does in fact indeed live closer, *Ausländer* is

not only then a misnomer, but also less ontological than the word *fremd*, which connotes an estranged sense of being whether one comes from *Inland* or *Ausland*. Such “strangeness” can be, as the article points out, the reaction of the Germans, as well as the “foreigners’” feelings about themselves. Jews who have a long history as being Germans, may still feel as strange in their own country as those from abroad. Especially today, with the influx of Soviet Jews under the privileged status as *Kontingentflüchtling* and the “naturalization” of Turks as Germans, neither of these two major minority groups are “native” to Germany or “naturally” Germans. Consequently, Jews and Turks often remain “foreigners” or “strangers” in Germany no matter what their citizenship or legal status. They are more *fremd* than *ausländisch*, more alienated than misplaced. They simply feel that they do not belong.

The notion of belonging is foundationally about trust and raises fundamental questions about community (*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*), identity, family, and the impact of spatial as well as existential displacement on stable filiations cemented nationally, ethnically, culturally, and religiously. Anthropologists E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen in the introduction to their collection *Mistrusting Refugees* quote their colleague Marjorie Muecke who states that “the experience of the political refugee is profoundly cultural because it compels refugees as individuals and as collective victims/survivors of massive chaos to resolve what Max Weber [1915] identified as the problem of meaning, the need to affirm ‘the ultimate explicableness of experience’.”<sup>5</sup> While Jews and Turks in Germany do not exactly fall under the category of “refugee,” it is indeed striking that they too experience their “strangeness” or alienation as a cultural problem of making meaning [*Sinndeutung*] from their real experience living in Germany. Either literally or figuratively, spatially or temporally, they too must “make sense” out of the confusion in their lives caused by actual displacement, country to country, as with first generation Turks or Russian Jews, or by symbolic dislocation, past to present. For the Jews, the Holocaust fading into the past means memory must be preserved to find new sites for expression. For Turks the move to Germany for the first generation and their children and grandchildren’s lives away from “home” means constant attention to defining oneself in an often hostile environment. Therefore, tensions and conflicts of individuals seeking to establish and erase boundaries in order to find their place in the German landscape often create opposition and aggression as demonstrated in the attacks. Trying to find or construct meaning out of chaos obviously unsettles their fellow countrymen and women. Those who criticize or condemn these acts of violence are also often reacting from their own struggle to understand what seems to be senseless aggression. To accomplish this task, many invoke historical comparisons which give them a

reference point for their anger. Consequently, the outrage expressed by (Jewish) Americans in particular seemed exaggerated and out of proportion in relation to the acts themselves.

For example, American Jews in particular and the American press in general reacted swiftly and forcefully to the attacks which clearly reminded them of the 1930s and 1940s. Some people used the word “atrocities,” to describe Solingen, a term usually reserved for the magnitude and horror of the Holocaust. The conservative *Washington Times* in a reaction to Rostock invokes *Kristallnacht*, the so-called Night of Broken Glass, initiating systematic persecution of Jews in 1938.<sup>6</sup> And after the deaths in Mölln, a *Washington Post* writer, Eugene Meyer, states, “The government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl has responded—belatedly, some say—to the rise in violence. But the Holocaust haunts descendants of the Nazi victims and troubles many Germans as well as the friends and relatives of Turkish ‘guest workers’ who live there.”<sup>7</sup> Surveying German, Jewish and Turkish opinion, Meyer’s article, while reflecting the ambivalence of many, still seems very fearful of the rising spectre of Nazism. A number of local rabbis quoted in the piece express their anxieties in the language familiar to an American audience which identifies Germany exclusively with the Nazis and the Holocaust. One rabbi, reminiscent of Daniel Goldhagen’s thesis of “eliminationist anti-semitism”<sup>8</sup> inherent in the German population, declares, “The violence, ugliness, hatred of the foreigner and all the things we see emerging again really raise some terribly, terribly painful questions about the character of the [German] people.” Another rabbi speaks more dramatically, “It’s horrendous...These are shades of the Holocaust of Germany’s past.”<sup>9</sup> And A.M. Rosenthal of *The New York Times*, warns with more fear and paranoia, “And the attacks on foreigners, particularly those of dark skin, are not just sudden bursts of violence. They are as much a part of Nazi strategy as were the first attacks on the Jews.”<sup>10</sup> And finally a truly reactionary response by a respected law professor at Harvard, Alan Dershowitz, “why does the civilized world seem so shocked at the resurgence of nazism in Germany?” He concludes, “Nazism will recur in Germany every time there is a crisis, unless the German leaders begin to speak the painful truth to their people...”<sup>11</sup> Looking back now five years, one might be more sanguine in reacting to these events that have not proven to be as dangerous as some of these commentators once feared. However, it becomes obvious how significant comparisons were for establishing an emotional vocabulary for “coming to terms” [*Bewältigung der Vergangenheit*] not with the past, but with the shocking events on German soil. While a Jewish American audience is particularly susceptible to such generalizations, it is more helpful to understand their reaction as an inability to

adapt to changing conceptions of what it means to be German. Goldhagen's book has unfortunately contributed to such stereotypes.

At that volatile time other comparisons from Europeans were made as well, which reflects, however, a more critically-minded attempt at avoiding stereotypes. The September 10, 1992 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported that one of Italy's leading journalists, Arrigo Levi, in an article about xenophobia in the *Corriere della Sera* entitled "Wir alle sind Deutsche." [We are all Germans] warns his fellow Italians about xenophobia and the dangers of stigmatizing all Germans as Nazis. Levi complains that the Italians are too easy on themselves, "die Formel zu wiederholen, die Deutschen seien eben die Deutschen, da sehe man den Rückfall in die finstere Vergangenheit des Nationalsozialismus"<sup>12</sup> [by repeating the formula, that the Germans are just the Germans, and therefore one sees the return to the dark past of National Socialism]. Are the neo-Nazis and skinheads like the Nazis and the asylum seekers and foreigners like the Jews? For the Italian-Jew, Levi, the explanation of today's xenophobia by yesterday's anti-Semitism apparently blinds his countrymen to their own fear of immigrants, in this case towards the Albanians who were sent back by the thousands. Here Levi compares the Italians to the Germans; he draws his fellow Italians attention to the dangers of using the Germans as a metaphor for xenophobia, of using Nazism as the standard against which all evil is measured. While Nazi vocabulary was constantly and consistently deployed in reports in Germany and especially the United States about attacks on foreigners, the meanings of these comparisons are rarely questioned. Are these comparisons linked to constructing a German identity and German's self-understanding today in relation to the Nazi past? The images, discourses, and rhetoric that is exploited to instill such emotional links are largely left unexamined. I would ask: What are these links? How are they constructed? And most importantly, what function and meaning do they have for us today, especially in an intellectual milieu which challenges static notions of identity.

## II.

Reports about the attacks on asylum seekers in Rostock in 1992 emphasized the miserable social and economic conditions in which many East Germans in this once active sea-port lived. Led by skinheads and neo-Nazis, the frustrated and angry citizens—even more actively and in greater numbers than in Hoyerswerda (1991)—took out their resentment on the new scapegoats: Romanian gypsies, Vietnamese, Angolans. Many more citizens stood by and cheered as the temporary homes of these immigrants were set on fire, while they

were attacked, and even murdered as in the case in 1990 of the Angolan guest worker Amadeu Antonio, whose murderer was given a light sentence. Accusations against such leniency are hurled at the courts, the government, and the police.

The left protested with anti-racism demonstrations and the correspondent from the respected *Washington Post* emphasized how many of these protesters “sport[ed] pink or purple hair and nose rings,” (A35) “many of the demonstrators were black-hooded anarchists known as *Autonomen* who angrily heckled the Lichtenhagen residents as racist.” These demonstrators “marched ...waving communist flags and chanting anti-Facist slogans such as East or West. Down with the Nazi plague.”<sup>13</sup> The right wing attacks are led by self-styled neo-Nazis wearing hobnail boots and sporting Nazi insignias yelling “*Sieg Heil*” and “*Deutschland nur den Deutschen.*” In this news report and from conversations I had with colleagues in Germany, those protesting the violence against foreigners were being hindered (or at least not encouraged) from counteracting these attacks, or as in this news report the protesters were rendered unbelievable because of their appearance and behavior. Beginning with Hoyerwerda and intensifying later, references are made on both sides to Nazism, its racial ideologies, and its tactics. Words are loosely invoked, such as *Kristallnacht*, *Pogrome*, and *Judenverfolgung*. Nazism with its competing political vocabulary of anti-Fascism had become an all-encompassing metaphor. On the one hand, right wing neo-Nazis can stir up their followers with a well-timed “*Sieg Heil*,” and on the other, left wing anti-Fascists can decry the “new Nazi plague.” The continued success in America of films on Nazis, especially a Jewish one as in the popular film *Europa, Europa*, makes it no surprise that the subject of Nazism continues to resonate: from the seriousness of attacks on foreigners (and Jewish monuments) to the entertainment values of the movie industry and American media that capitalize on what Susan Sontag years ago called “fascinating fascism.”

Before the attacks on foreigners and asylum seekers began, it had become common parlance to make comparisons between the most visible group of foreigners, the Turks, and the Jews, the former being the largest disdained minority whose name in fact has become generic for foreign. Before the dramatic changes in Europe that opened up the borders and spawned the masses of immigrants from the South and East into western Europe, xenophobia was less violently expressed, but nonetheless felt, by the thousands of guest workers residing permanently in West Germany. In East Germany, foreign workers were “officially” protected by international socialist people’s solidarity that kept them isolated in living quarters reserved exclusively for them. In short, the

GDR population had little contact with the Angolans, Mozambiquans or Cubans living in their country.

The Turk became the symbol for all that was foreign and different in Germany: dark-skinned and dark-haired Muslims who often dressed strangely and refused to change their habits to accommodate their hosts. Leslie Adelson notes, “the *Spiegel* cover article that responded to the devastating news from Solingen characterizes German Turks as *Ikonen des Fremden* [icons of strangeness].<sup>14</sup> Adelson also cites Faruk Sen, Director of the Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Essen, who in the same article declares, “daß die Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Deutschland eine Türkenfeindlichkeit ist, weil sich die Agressionen in erster Linie gegen Andersaussehende richten.”<sup>15</sup> [hostility against foreigners in Germany is hostility against Turks, because aggression is above all directed at those who look different]. The anthropologist Ruth Mandel deepened the discussion when she studied a major symbol of this *Andersaussehen* [looking different]—the Turkish headscarf as an insignia for the Turk’s difference, in her words, “where [on the left and on the right] we see the often conflicting meanings embedded in a single object as it becomes valorized in different spatial and temporal contexts.”<sup>16</sup> However, for the mostly secularized German Jews in Hitler’s Germany—few wearing caftans and sidelocks—the yellow Jewish star was needed, as the historian John Efron pointed out, to set them off from the German population, to mark them as a recognizable group, because they were precisely not different enough.<sup>17</sup> Jewish males were, of course, susceptible since the absent foreskin—and this was precisely the central motif of *Europa, Europa*—made the penis a literal signifier for Jewishness. Turks, also circumcised like the Jews, are Caucasian but continue to be distinguished because they look different than the “Aryan” German population, who ostensibly are blond and blue-eyed. Both stereotypes are false since as any visitor to Germany or Israel knows, many Germans are dark-haired and many Jews are blue-eyed.

The visibility of the foreign is constructed by language and symbolic representation of the foreign in both words (discourses) and images, as I illustrated earlier. I mean here that German aggression towards Turks and Jews is not literally action taken only toward “real Turks” and “real Jews” but constructed, or at least mediated through the representations and imaginings about these minority peoples in the minds of the nation’s citizens. It is well-established that anti-Semitism develops even where very few or even no Jews exist. But the knowledge or memory of a Jewish presence must be there to sow the seeds of this form of xenophobia. Today’s Poland is a good example.

I do not want to imply that the reality of foreigners is merely discursive, since that would be to deny the materiality, the literal flesh that has been burned

and blood that has been shed as a consequence of attacks. However, attitudes toward Turks and Jews, as separate and as linked groups is dependent more than many in Germany are willing to admit on how people look, the ways they are represented, whether it be color, dress or gesture. These facets of habitus are often identified with traditions that do not fit the norms of what it conventionally means to be German, that is white and Christian, even though such characteristics do not fit the reality of the German population. The Germans are apparently as susceptible as American (Jews) to remaining fixed on a static notion of identity. That the Jews are a different religion and Turks are usually Muslim is so obvious as a marker of difference that not much more needs to be said. More important is perhaps the symbolic presence of such strangers in a *Heimat*, a notion of homeland, that is overdetermined with nationalistic ethno-racial overtones and rendered exclusive by a dominant majority.<sup>18</sup> The *Spiegel* journalist above noted, “Fremde sind ihnen [Germans] am sympathischsten, wenn sie ihnen fern bleiben.”<sup>19</sup> [Germans like strangers best when they are far away.] Distance may be spatial but it is also socially-class based which leads to emotional divisions bracketing foreigners as fruit salesman and cleaning women with whom many Germans have limited social contact on their own soil. *Blut und Boden* ideology reemerges here in nefarious though less obvious and programmatic ways. A notion of German *Heimat* reinvigorated with neo-conservative national good feelings conflates categories of belonging, as a social, psychological or cultural issue with legal and political dimensions represented in the focus on citizenship.

The confusion of these two modes of affiliation leads to false assumptions and misperceptions about foreigners in Germany. Many Jews are now citizens of Germany, because of German origins, new citizenship after the war (former DPs), immigration, and more Turks are applying for citizenship. However, both groups are ambivalent about making a home in Germany, even after five years of relative peace, at least the kind that does not make headlines anymore. These groups also continue to unsettle static notions of space and place. Just as “culture” itself, according to Daniel and Knudsen, is not “essential,” or “fixed,” but “a creative activity of symbol making and symbol sharing,...fundamentally dialogic,”<sup>20</sup> the relationship of Jews and Turks to their fellow Germans is also always in motion, always reconstituting new forms and meanings that to their German fellow citizens may seem to undermine the status quo of a permanent identity. Jews insist on remembering the Holocaust and Turks insist on maintaining their customs. The former continues to call attention to a past tragedy and a present responsibility some would like to put behind them. The latter foregrounds their blatant otherness simply by the way they look. In both cases, these groups are ciphers of difference and dislocation: they mark the

relationship of history (the past and the present), ethnicity (Germans and *Ausländer*), religion (Christian and non-Christian), and place (here and there). As one study termed such a configuration where time and space coincide, *The Past is a Foreign Country*.<sup>21</sup> Thus Jews and Turks are constant reminders of history and present day responsibility that are intertwined and constantly shifting. Their mere presence redefines what it means to be German. Generated from such mutual interactions, new identities that contradict stereotypes continue to reform and assert themselves.

Many Jews and Turks identify themselves as a collective for other than religious reasons. Jews are not only non-Christian, but the distinction between ethnicity and religion is ambiguous and casts doubts on their ability to be really German, in other words, to have a coherent identity. Here is another version of that tenuous permanence, exemplified by the Gypsies as well. The Turks ambivalence of making Germany a real home may seem contradictory, precisely because the group most rejected appears to be disdained for rejecting the very status that would make it belong. This contradiction also exists for the Jews who are seen to have allegiance elsewhere: interpreted conservatively as a fundamental solidarity to Israel or world Jewry, or more liberally as their identification with a notion of world citizenship [*Weltbürgertum*] carried on from their emancipation in the Enlightenment. Jews, even German Jews, are suspect because they represent these dual allegiances quite literally. And for Turks who have lived in Germany for two or three generations, their desire to belong is also questioned since many want to have a dual identity that would allow them to be simultaneously Turkish and German. The notion of multiple identities occupying the same subject position remains ironically “foreign,” as one Turkish German feared, using the Jews as his reference point, “Kann ich noch in die Türkei zurück, oder bin ich ein Mensch, wie die Juden früher, ohne Heimat?”<sup>22</sup> [Can I still return to Turkey, or am I a person, like the Jews before me, without a homeland?]

The elision of Turk and Jew is only possible, in fact, by setting up false dichotomies that continue to further separate Germans from all other *Ausländer*, who were carefully differentiated from *Aussiedler* and *Übersiedler* by German blood laws, and then further categorized by economic and political status such as *Gastarbeiter*, *Asylant* and *Flüchtling*. The word *Ausländer* elides people from over twenty countries into a dark faceless mass and is so broad and undifferentiated as to include an American tourist, a Tamil asylum seeker, or an African diplomat. After Hoyerswerda, protesters marched down German streets disassociating themselves from their German identity and by identifying instead with the victims, proclaiming “Ich bin Ausländer” [I am a foreigner] or “Liebe Ausländer, bitte lasst uns mit diesen Deutschen nicht alleine.” [Dear

foreigners, don't leave us alone with these Germans] During one Berlin demonstration against xenophobia, Rita Süßmuth called upon Germans "den Tag der deutschen Einheit zu einer eindrucksvollen Demonstration gegen Ausländerhaß, gegen Rassismus und gegen den perfiden Ungeist des Antisemitismus zu machen."<sup>23</sup> [to make the day of German unity into a symbolic demonstration against xenophobia, racism, and the perfidious spirit of antisemitism] Again the Jew is invoked through an analogy to the foreigner, immigrant, asylum seeker and while the comparison does indeed appear to work, it also reflects the tendency in Germany to operate in *Denkblockaden*<sup>24</sup> [thought blocks]. Kowalsky means the inclination in Germany to reify and absolutize categories, to set up false binary oppositions such as German and *Ausländer*. Kowalsky notes in his book, in fact, how the current situation can no longer be explained by comparisons to the Third Reich and programs of anti-Fascism. He declares, "Viele Strategien antworten auf Fragen von gestern und bewegen sich im Grunde immer noch im Rahmen eines Antifaschismus der dreissiger Jahre."<sup>25</sup> [Many strategies respond to questions of the past and still operate in the context of the anti-Fascism of the Thirties].

Anti-Fascism was largely discredited by its overuse in the GDR, the reification of the term came to overshadow and ultimately collapse important distinctions for understanding the Nazi period and the postwar years. The limited recognition of the Jews' place in the Holocaust is one serious example. Kowalsky is correct in criticizing the West German left who he sees operating with old myths and a too *idealtypisch* approach. By denying their national identity as Germans and making a too simplistic elision between nationalism and fascism, these people can only seek out more authentic exotic cultures to admire and celebrate, thus the attraction of foreign restaurants, cultural festivals, and travels to Third World countries. They, in fact, often overemphasize xenophobia to the exclusion of anti-Semitism because of their ambivalence towards Israel.

On the extreme right and even among respectable conservatives there is a different but also problematic response. Overidentifying with being German and a notion of a homogeneous and homogenized unified German *Kulturnation*, these people can continue to call Germany *kein Einwanderungsland* although approximately fifteen percent of the workforce are migrants. More importantly, it can focus the population's attention on xenophobia rather than racism with the implication that only changes in the law will solve the problem of foreigners in Germany. By announcing themselves as foreigners, the leftists wind up victimizing and patronizing those they want to help. Further, by focusing on the foreigners, even leftists avoid dealing with racism spawning the violence coming from the Germans. By adhering to an unrealistic image of what

essentially is a white, Christian Germany, conservatives divert attention to the foreigners and the laws that will manage them, rather than to more deep-seated racism in the population. One psychologist, Birgit Rommelsbacher, noted that “in spite of the many attacks and in spite of Hoyerswerda, racism is rarely straightforwardly addressed. Instead, the President of the Federal Republic speaks of the ‘crisis of human understanding,’ social psychologists of the ‘natural fear of the foreign’ and ‘normal reactions to stress.’”<sup>26</sup> She claims for Germans the notion of racism is itself taboo and therefore ignored, just as the problems of dealing with the Nazi past. However, reference to the Holocaust may be freely made because it has become an acceptable topic in German public discourse. In fact, German-Jewish author Rafael Seligmann keeps reminding his fellow Germans that they are better at commemorating *tote Juden* [dead Jews] than taking care of their living ones.<sup>27</sup> Politicians conscientiously atone for their sins by invoking the horrors of the Nazi regime, but then can go on to do little about attacks on foreigners.

*Wiedergutmachung* has indeed for some been achieved, however, without adequate attention to the racism that allowed the Holocaust to happen, as well as the racism propelling much of the foreigner debate and the attacks on the foreigners themselves. For both sides of the political spectrum, the linkage of xenophobia to Nazism, a specific historical manifestation of Fascism, rather than to fascist ideologies and practices in general overhistoricizes the debate and frees today’s Germans from taking responsibility for their own actions. Clearly other European nations and America are racist, yet these comparisons are defensive postures when they are used to excuse what goes on in Germany. The historical tradition of Germany’s treatment of “foreigners” cannot be ignored and the specificity of the German situation which created a tradition unsympathetic to foreign elements needs to be made explicit: its citizens relationship to the foreign (normative and prescriptive social attitudes), the German difficulty to think of themselves in positive terms (rejecting any forms of national identification or pride), the lack of experience with foreigners (a limited colonial tradition) and the inheritance of Germany’s systematic elimination of foreign or different peoples (Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, Jehovah’s Witnesses, gays). But to acknowledge historical traditions and specificity does not mean to imply the comparisons I question in this paper.

For the former German Democratic Republic, where much of the early violence against foreigners took place, the equation of xenophobia with the fascist Third Reich, only supports those who now would like to characterize the former GDR as a fascist state, as the inheritor of Nazism rather than its alternative. It is clear that the GDR’s program of anti-Fascism and obligatory people’s solidarity failed, as the historian Konrad Jarausch points out, because

for GDR historians it “fixated upon the Nazi menace in the past, and failed to criticize the threat of Erich Honecker’s police state in the present”<sup>28</sup> and “did not engage the racial dimension of anti-Semitism and insufficiently inoculated youths against xenophobia”.<sup>29</sup> However, today the economic and social inequities of the reunification process in fact sustain these citizens’ hostility towards the foreigners in their midst, in addition to their own resentment as having been constituted as an Other by the West Germans. The sociologist Nora Rätzl points out,

In the course of extended immigration, East Germans seem to have lost their Germanness and become the Other. Now they are not seen as embodying the typical characteristics of the true industrious German, but as possessing a number of negative attributes....All of these negative characteristics, however, have to do not with their being “German by blood” but with their being socialized in the communist system.<sup>30</sup>

Frustrated at having been rejected by their German brothers and sisters, especially after the warm welcome they were given when the Wall came down, East German citizens may well be longing to belong, to be taken back into the German fold. The presence of *Übersiedler*, foreigners and asylum seekers who are being financially supported by the government with financial subsidies and housing is a slap in the face for these Germans. Their *Sieg Heils* and chants of *Deutschland nur den Deutschen* represented the desires of demoralized youths with no hope and no future to be reintegrated into a secure social fabric. They also set their sights falsely on a utopian ideal of the German nation and a German people expressed in Nazism that will fulfill their misdirected dreams.

Since German unification, the memory of the Third Reich has loomed large again. World Jewry repeatedly warned the leaders of the short-lived East German republic and then the new Germany that after forty-five years fears were reemerging about a militarily and economically dominant unified Germany in the center of Europe. Germany’s European neighbors also initially were reserved about this new German might in their midst. Anxieties were quieted until the resurgence of right-wing attacks on foreigners. Again the specter of Nazism seemed to be rearing its ugly head, especially for Americans who are quick to see Nazis around every corner. While the horrors of the Third Reich need to be remembered, it is an injustice to the victims of both historical periods to be compared to each other. The Jews’ tragedy was not only their persecution and elimination because they were different, religiously, ethnically, and according to the Nazis racially, but also the fact that in Germany

their common ties through citizenship and nationhood meant nothing. In 1938, Germany's democratic tradition had only lasted half as long as it did in 1992, and the country had not yet experienced the war that would bring its total defeat.

The comparisons for today's foreigners are even more unfair. Unlike the Jews they are largely poor, uneducated, disenfranchised by their own country and without the protection of civil rights. They have come from economically disadvantaged countries and nations ravaged by war, some as legitimate political refugees threatened by death, torture, or imprisonment, and others as economic refugees, seeking a better future. To many they were merely taking advantage of Germany's liberal asylum law (until it was changed), itself inspired by the Nazi past and its treatment of Jews and other minorities. However, above all they are not "white," and have less chance of being integrated into society than other minorities, because of the literal marking of their bodies as foreign. These potential new Germans, based not on legal citizenship but on acceptance and belonging, are not given a chance to develop a more complicated multiple identity. It must be possible to be a Turkish-Tamil- or Angolan German. Even an uneasy symbiosis like the infamous German-Jewish is not possible for many of the refugees some of whom now legally live in Germany. But as has been proven repeatedly, German citizenship does not guarantee first class treatment. The anthropologist Andrea Klimt showed in her fieldwork with Portuguese guestworkers as early as 1989 that

None of the migrants I knew, regardless of class, generation, or degree of "integration," considered the prospect of "becoming German" to be desirable, realistic, or even imaginable. They, along with most Germans, understand that, "being German" does not rest on such mutable characteristics as legal status, political loyalty, or acquired knowledge. Germanness is not perceived to be an open and permeable category, and Portuguese migrants feel that neither the color of their passports nor the degree of their cultural and linguistic fluency will ensure respect or acceptance.<sup>31</sup>

On a recent *Spiegel* title page, a more frighteningly contemporary commentary pictured quite literally exclusionary categories and stereotypes that are obviously continuing to be reinscribed in public consciousness. The top of the page the words "*Ausländer und Deutsche*" [Foreigners and Germans] are paired with the bright yellow letters "*Gefährlich fremd*" [dangerously different] juxtaposed with incendiary stereotypes of what appears to be a Turkish woman (who looks black) leading a demonstration, Turkish girls studying in headscarves, and four Turkish boys holding weapons. The subtitle reads, "Das

Scheitern der multikulturellen Gesellschaft.” [The failure of a multicultural society].<sup>32</sup>

If foreigners and asylum seekers in Germany today are to receive the humane treatment they deserve as Second or Third World immigrants into one of the richest lands in the world, then the so-called “foreigner problem” in Germany must be seen as much imbedded in racism as a economic and social dilemma. Germany hesitates to officially acknowledge that it is a “land of immigration” because once the “problem” is officially “removed” by legal and subsequent social recognition that might develop under more auspicious conditions of immigration, the racism underlying the problem will be all the more evident. It will not have necessarily disappeared with “integration” into German life and it will show that the focus on foreigners and xenophobia diverted attention from racism. Both the left and the right are blinded by their inability to construct a new and more heterogeneous identity, one that acknowledges the benefits of immigration and the racial prejudices that have to be overcome. Neither foreigners, Germans, or Jews can be categorized under monolithic or universal categories; differentiation and specificity rather than uniformity and abstraction will contribute to a more nuanced and historically sensitive analysis. The comparison to Jews and the Nazi period may be a logical link. It may as well be a kind of objective correlative for fears that have no analogue except in Nazism. But such historical moves should at least be recognized as a questionable displacement of emotions from the object of hostility today to a past horror that continues to be mystified and exploited. 1989-92 was not 1933-45. Reunification was no more a completely new beginning than 1945 was a “*Stunde Null*.” When comparisons are taken out of context, they threaten to overshadow the injustices of both historical periods. I merely want us to be wary of facile comparisons that become shorthand for complex historical events.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Cited from *Der Spiegel* 47.23 (1993): 16.
- <sup>2</sup> In a lecture given at the Paul-Loebe-Haus, as quoted in Jeffrey M. Peck, “The ‘Ins’ and ‘Outs’ of the New Germany: Jews, Foreigners, Asylum Seekers,” in *Reemerging Jewish Culture in Germany. Life and Literature since 1989*, eds. Sander L. Gilman and Karen Remmler (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 130.
- <sup>3</sup> Cited from *Der Spiegel* 46.4 (1992): 44.
- <sup>4</sup> *Der Spiegel* 46.4 (1992): 41.
- <sup>5</sup> E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen, “Introduction,” *Mistrusting Refugees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 2.
- <sup>6</sup> *Washington Times*, 4 September, 1992: F1. It is interesting that after making these kinds of comparisons, the article goes on to relativize and even appear to excuse aggressive xenophobia in Germany.
- <sup>7</sup> *Washington Post* 14 Dec. 1992: D1.
- <sup>8</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996).
- <sup>9</sup> See *Washington Post* 14 Dec. 1992: D4.
- <sup>10</sup> A. M. Rosenthal, “Our German Crisis,” *New York Times* 24 Nov. 1992: A15.
- <sup>11</sup> Alan Dershowitz, “Nazism in Germany is no Surprise,” [Jewish Telegraphic Agency], n.d.
- <sup>12</sup> Arrigo Levi, “Wir alle sind Deutsche.” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 9 Sept. 1992: 3.
- <sup>13</sup> Marc Fisher, “13,000 Germans Demonstrate Against Right-Wing Violence,” *Washington Post* 30 Aug. 1992: A29.
- <sup>14</sup> Leslie Adelson, “Opposing Oppositions: Turkish-German Questions in Contemporary German Studies,” *German Studies Review* 17. 2 (1994): 305.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Ruth Mandel, Turkish Headscarves and the ‘Foreigner Problem’.Constructing Difference Through Emblems of Identity,” *New German Critique*, 46 (1989): 31.
- <sup>17</sup> Noted in a discussion with Efron.
- <sup>18</sup> For more on the relationship of “foreigners” to notions of home [*Heimat*], see Jeffrey M. Peck, “Refugees as Foreigners. The Problem of Becoming German and Finding Home,” in *Mistrusting Refugees*.
- <sup>19</sup> *Der Spiegel* 46.4 (1992): 41.
- <sup>20</sup> Daniel and Knudsen, 2.
- <sup>21</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University

Press, 1985).

<sup>22</sup>. *Der Spiegel* 47.23 (1993):21.

<sup>23</sup>. Cited from *Die Tageszeitung* 30 Sept. 1992: 1. For more on the relationship of xenophobia and antisemitism in German protest marches and demonstrations, see *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 31 Aug. 1992: 3; *Neues Deutschland* 28 Aug. 1992: 1; *Washington Times* 9 Nov. 1992: A 1; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 30 Sept. 1992: 2; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 29 Oct. 1992: 33; *Das Parlament* 12. 47- 48 (1992): 1.

<sup>24</sup>. Wolfgang Kowalsky, *Rechtsaussen... und die verfehlten Strategien der deutschen Linken* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1992).

<sup>25</sup>. Kowalsky, 10.

<sup>26</sup>. Birgit Rommelsbacher, "Rassismus Ost und West schaukeln sich hoch," *Die Tageszeitung* 11 Feb. 1992: 11.

<sup>27</sup>. See Rafael Seligmann, "Die Juden leben," *Der Spiegel* 46.47 (1992): 75.

<sup>28</sup>. Konrad Jarausch, "The Failure of East German Antifascism: Some Ironies of History as Politics," *German Studies Review* 14. 1 (1991): 86.

<sup>29</sup>. *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>30</sup>. Nora Räthzel, "Germany. One Race, One Nation?" *Race & Class* 32. 3 (1991): 45.

<sup>31</sup>. Andrea Klimt, "Returning 'Home': Portuguese Migrant Notions of Temporariness, Permanence, and Commitment," *New German Critique* 46 (1989): 70.

<sup>32</sup>. *Der Spiegel*, 16 (1997).

## DISPARATE JEWISH VOICES AND THE DIALECTIC OF THE “SHOAH BUSINESS” IN GERMANY: VICTOR KLEMPERER AND ROSE AUSLÄNDER, OUR CONTEMPORARIES

Jack Zipes

Not only has there been a fascination with all things Jewish that has manifested itself in myriad ways in Germany during the last fifteen years, there has also been what many critics sarcastically call a “Shoah business” that threatens to diminish the significance of the Holocaust (Shoah) as a historical event and experience. Both cultural developments—the fascination and the business—make it difficult if not impossible for anyone to grasp what it means to be Jewish in contemporary Germany and how difficult it is for Germans and Jews alike to deal with the repercussions of the Shoah. Both developments are connected in subtle if not perverse ways so that it seems that only a spectacular events like the telecast of the American television series *Holocaust*, the production of Steven Spielberg’s film *Schindler’s List*, and the publication of Daniel Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* are repeatedly necessary to draw the lines of a framework in which the Shoah, Jewish identity, and German guilt can be essentially and appropriately discussed and debated.

In contrast, I want to suggest that there have been numerous disparate Jewish voices in the past fifteen years that are more revealing about contemporary Jewish identity in Germany under the shadow of the Shoah than the fetishized events of the Shoah business. At the same time, I maintain that the Shoah business itself has in part generated these disparate voices that constitute a homeland in the middle of homelessness, characteristic of Jewish identity in contemporary Germany. To illustrate what I mean by a homeland in the middle of homelessness, I want to begin with some remarks about the dialectic of the Shoah business and then turn to two dead Jewish writers, Victor Klemperer and Rose Ausländer, to illustrate how voices of the past are still very much with us, offset the fetishization of the Shoah, and help us gain a sense of what it means to be Jewish in Germany today—and perhaps in other nations as well.

A good example of the Shoah Business is the recent controversy over building a Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. In her revealing essay, “The Politics of Memory,” Jane Kramer has demonstrated exactly how, in 1987, Lea Rosh, a former television talk-show hostess and now a director of North German Television, developed and sold the idea by herself to build a memorial in Berlin to victims of the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup> “She collected a list of famous names—among them Willy Brandt, Günter Grass and Christa Wolf—and launched a celebrity version of what Germans call a “citizens’ initiative.” In a few years’ time, she had a twelve-million dollar budget for her memorial. She had a promise from

Kohl of 140 million dollars' worth of Berlin real estate on which to build it—five acres of what was once a no-man's land near the Brandenburg Gate, between the Pariser Platz and the Leipziger Platz, and is now the middle of town. Bonn was involved, the Berlin *Senat* was involved. Despite (or maybe because of) Lea Rosh's own celebrity, and her relentless promotion, there was so much controversy surrounding her Holocaust-Memorial project that it turned into a ghoulish public entertainment. By liberation year, five hundred and twenty-eight artists and architects were competing for the chance to build the memorial—"the soul of Germany," Hanns Zischler, the Berlin actor and writer, said, dryly, after he saw their models—and everyone in Berlin was fighting about what the definition of a Holocaust victim should be."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, it is somewhat exaggerated to say, as Kramer makes clear, that "everyone" was and is involved in the discussion about building the memorial. Rosh, who pretends to be Jewish, courted Jewish celebrities, and with the help of a German trend to put the Holocaust behind Germans, to finalize it as dead history, she ignored the sentiments of most German Jews, especially those in Berlin, and caused so much controversy that the Holocaust Memorial project turned into "ghoulish public entertainment." Once again, Kramer describes the situation neatly: "Only about eight hundred people who would properly be called 'Berlin Jews' are left now. There are nearly as many Israelis in Berlin, and certainly as many East European Jews, who are either camp survivors or the children and grandchildren of survivors—of Jews who came to Berlin as displaced persons and, out of fascination or determination or fatigue or simply hopelessness, never moved. The great majority of the ten thousand Jews who make up the official Jewish community of Berlin today are recent Russian immigrants, and it is doubtful that many of them are interested in paying for Lea Rosh's Holocaust Memorial or, for that matter, have even bothered to walk into the back yard of the community center, on Fasanenstrasse, where the Jews of Berlin have built a Holocaust memorial—a small bronze wall, like a Wailing Wall, with the names of the death camps spread across it. Every year, on the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, the community faithful come to the wall to mourn."<sup>3</sup>

Whether Rosh is successful in achieving her goals—the situation is still not completely resolved—is not significant here. It is the process that is important,<sup>4</sup> for it is typical of the manner in which the Shoah has become commodified and fetishized, part of a vast global business predicated on attracting viewers and readers to have sympathy with if not to identify with Hitler's victims. Such business plays upon the sentiments of viewers or readers as witnesses of a past that is practically impossible to depict but necessary not to forget. Herein lies its fascination: an event that is impossible to conceive because it is almost

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impossible to conceive that it happened, but because it happened in so many different atrocious ways and cannot be totally explained, it is enthralling, as are the Jews who are associated with it. Today, the imagined event, the Shoah, almost inevitably becomes transformed into a commodity, and it is difficult to discern whether a memorial, book, film, play, or music based on the Shoah is authentic or sincere in its intentions or seeks to capitalize on the notoriety of the event. The problem of determining what belongs to popular fascination and the Shoah business does not concern just Germans and German Jews. How does one indeed view and judge the value of the television film *The Holocaust*, Claude Lanzmann's *The Shoah*, or Spielberg's *Schindler's List*? How does one evaluate the numerous historical and political studies of the Holocaust from Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of European Jews* (1961) and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) to Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996)? What criteria should be used to criticize cultural products and creations related to the Shoah? Saul Friedlander, long ago in his book *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, pointed to the danger that faced the memory of the Shoah: "Attention has gradually shifted away from the reevocation of Nazism as such, from the horror and the pain—even if muted by time and transformed into subdued grief and endless meditation—to voluptuous anguish and ravishing images, images one would like to see going on forever. It may result in a masterpiece, but a masterpiece that, one may feel, is tuned to the wrong key; in the midst of meditation rises a suspicion of complacency. Some kind of limit has been overstepped and uneasiness appears: It is a sign of the new discourse....the new discourse about Nazism is almost always a mixture of the three following levels of discourse: the language of images and the fascination it creates; strange statements—implicit in the works, explicit in interviews with the authors and directors—about history, modern civilization, the Nazis, the Jews, etc.; and an extremely sophisticated superstructure referring to metaphysics, theories of myth, the function of art and literature today, and so on."<sup>5</sup>

From the beginning, however, the discourse about Nazism and the Shoah had its dialectic. In fact, the Shoah business emerged out of non-commercial, scholarly and serious endeavors of the 1950s and 1960s to explore the roots of Nazism and the Holocaust. In turn—and perhaps the mass spectacle of the 1961 Eichmann Trial fostered this development with the controversy over Hannah Arendt's book—the fetishization of the Shoah began and later crystallized in the 1978 American television film *Holocaust*. Though it is difficult to trace the reactions to this fetishization precisely, it has produced its own antithetical discourse in the 1980s and 1990s that counters the apparent exploitative tendencies of the business that trivializes and distorts the meaning of the Shoah.

What I am suggesting is that the business inadvertently—and perhaps purposely—produces works that compel readers or viewers to explore the multiple meanings of the Holocaust more seriously and intimately than we realize. Miriam Hansen hints at this in her insightful essay about *Schindler's List*: “Much has been written about the changing fabric of memory in postmodern media society, in particular the emergence of new cultural practices (new types of exhibits, the museum boom) that allow the beholders to **experience** the past—any past, not necessarily their own—with greater intensity and sensuous immediacy (compare the Washington Holocaust Museum). We need to understand the place of *Schindler's List* in the culture of memory and memorializing; and the film in turn may help us understand that culture.”<sup>6</sup>

In Germany, such films as *Holocaust* on TV, *Europa, Europa*, and *Schindler's List* have all had an explosive effect and have burst open the borders of high and low art and the distinction between the sacred and the banal. In addition, the Bitburg Debate, the Fassbinder affair, and controversies around Jewish memorials have opened up the possibilities for multiple discourses and disparate voices that had been somewhat constrained during the 1950s and 1960s. If there has been a commercialization of the tendency to memorialize the Shoah through plaques, museums, plays, publications, and other spectacles that many critics find repugnant, it can also help us understand German culture and the role Jews play in that culture and how they seek to define themselves.

For instance, many sorts of publications have formed a new Shoah discourse, part of a philo-semitic tendency, which emerged after 1945, and part of a critical endeavor on the part of Jews to identify themselves. Here I want to focus on two texts, Victor Klemperer's *Curriculum Vitae* (1989) and Rose Ausländer's *The Forbidden Tree* (1995), products and counter-products of the Shoah business, that lead to a greater understanding of Jewish identity in contemporary Germany and its relationship to the Shoah because they problematize the entire question of identity and enable disparate voices to be heard without providing definitive answers. My focus will be on the disparate and unique features of these works. Klemperer, a German Jew and scholar of French literature, died in 1960. Ausländer, a Bukowina Jew and poet, died in 1988. I have chosen their works because they are not typical of the Shoah business and yet may not have even been published if it were not for the rise of the Shoah business. I have chosen their works because they question what it means to be a German Jew and Bukowina Jew and because they form a strategy for me to work against the current fetishization of the Shoah. Though posthumous, the books by Klemperer and Ausländer speak to the contemporary

situation in Germany and will continue to speak to generations, thanks in part to the dialectic of the Shoah business.

Victor Klemperer was until recently primarily known for his book *LTI* (*Lingua Tertii Imperii*, 1947), a remarkable study of how the Nazis brought about a transformation of the German language by developing terms, expressions, idioms, and names that spread their ideological messages and how this language took root in daily life from 1933 to 1945. Ever since 1989, however, Klemperer has become more famous, so to speak, for three posthumous works: *Curriculum Vitae* (1989), an autobiography written between 1939-1942, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten* (1995), his diary written from 1933-1945, upon which *LTI* was based, and *Und so ist alles schwankend* (1996), his diary written from June to December 1945. These books form a composite picture of a man torn apart, not only by the four transformations of Germany from the authoritarian Wilhelminian monarchy to the democratic Weimar Republic, from the Weimar Republic to the fascist Third Reich, and then from the Third Reich to the communist German Democratic Republic, but also by the internal strife within his reform Jewish family that sought to set itself up as a model German bourgeois family. In fact, these books are totally different from *LTI* in that they reveal Klemperer's struggle to overcome external and internal conflicts and to represent all that is good in German culture as opposed to the Germans themselves bent on destroying German humanistic *Bildung*. The true German, for Klemperer, is the Jew. And how a Jew becomes the true German is told brilliantly in *Curriculum Vitae*, which reads like a German *Bildungsroman*. But first, before discussing the disparate nature of *Curriculum Vitae*, some brief background material about Klemperer.

Born on October 9, 1881, in the small city of Landsberg/Warthe, Victor Klemperer was the ninth child of the Rabbi Wilhelm Klemperer and his wife Henriette. Three years after his birth the family moved to Bromberg, another small city, until 1890, when Wilhelm was appointed the second preacher at the *Reformgemeinde* in Berlin. Given the poor financial circumstances of the family until the arrival in Berlin, Victor was always at a disadvantage because his three eldest brothers, Georg, Felix and Bernhard were more privileged. In fact, Georg, who was sixteen years older than Victor and who became the virtual head of the family due to his status as a famous doctor, endeavored to supervise Victor's upbringing and career throughout a good part of Klemperer's life. By the time Victor began attending the Französisches Gymnasium in Berlin, all three older brothers, Georg, Felix, another doctor, and Bernhard, a lawyer, had converted to Protestantism and assumed a cultivated

German bourgeois life style, despite the fact that their father was a rabbi at the *Reformgemeinde*, something that they did not like to reveal in public.

During this period the father, with Georg's guidance, arranged marriages for the four daughters, Grete, Hedwig, Wally, and Marta, according to the financial prospects of the future husbands. In the meantime, Victor, considered somewhat of a black sheep in the family, left the French Gymnasium in 1896 to attend the Friedrichs-Werderschen Gymnasium in preparation for a business career. From 1897-1899 he worked as an apprentice in a clothing firm, Löwenstein and Hecht, but he soon tired of the business routine and decided to return to the gymnasium so he could move on to the university. After completing his *Abitur* at a gymnasium in Landsberg, his former hometown, in 1902, Klemperer was obliged to report to the military, and in order to guarantee that he would become an officer in the reserves, his brothers convinced him to convert to Protestantism because they believed, as he did, that they were Germans and wanted to be Germans and nothing else and that Christianity and Germanness were one and the same. Klemperer was, however, rejected by the army due to poor health, and so his path was free to continue his studies. Somewhat of a dilettante, he studied German and French at universities in Munich, Geneva, Paris, and Berlin until 1905. Indecisive about his future and dependent on his father and brothers for financial support, Klemperer felt continually humiliated by his siblings and sought ways to free himself of their control. He decided to abandon his studies in 1905 and make his career as a freelance writer and journalist. Not only did this decision infuriate his family, but also his decision in 1906 to marry Eva Schlemmer, a musician and a Christian, and to marry her with a declaration that he was Jewish, annulling the conversion of 1903. Eva Schlemmer was considered a bad influence not because she was Christian but because she came from a poor family. Moreover, she belonged to a circle of friends that Klemperer's family considered Bohemian.

Despite quarrels, the family continued to give Klemperer financial aid, and, to the family's surprise, he was also somewhat successful as a writer. From 1905 to 1912, he published poems, novellas, and numerous literary articles in Berlin newspapers and lectured on literature in Jewish clubs in northern Germany. Still, the pressure from his family to have a **real** career and security was so strong that Klemperer returned to the University of Munich in 1912 to study German and French literature. Right before he registered for courses, he made the decision to reconvert to Protestantism because he knew that, as a Jew, he would never be able to obtain a professorship and because he shared his brothers' desire to be German at all costs. Now, dedicated to his studies, he received his doctorate in 1913, writing a dissertation on Friedrich Spielhagen. Then he began work on his *Habilitation* under the renowned scholar of romance

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languages, Karl Vossler, and completed a study of Montesquieu while teaching two years in Italy at the University of Naples during 1914 and 1915.

When the First World War erupted, it was clear where Klemperer's sympathies lay. Like his three brothers, all ardent supporters of German nationalism, he volunteered his services to do propaganda work in Naples. When Italy joined the war against Austria and Germany, however, he returned to Munich and enlisted in the army. He saw action on the western front and then worked in the censor office in Lithuania and Leipzig until 1918. Though disenchanted with the war and critical of the regime, Klemperer did not sympathize with the radical movements in 1918 and 1919. Rather, he was more concerned about finding his place in life, that is, resuming his career as a professor. Since he had converted to Protestantism, he was able to teach at a German university and obtained a position at the Technische Hochschule in Dresden. From 1920 to 1935, Klemperer taught French literature and published important scholarly studies such as *Moderne Französische Prosa* (1923), *Die französische Literatur von Napoleon bis zur Gegenwart* in four volumes (1925-1931), *Romanische Sonderart* (1926), *Idealistische Literaturgeschichte* (1929), and *Pierre Corneille* (1933). Discharged by the Nazis in 1935, Klemperer could not at first believe that the Germans would accept the Nazis and tolerate the manner in which Jews were being stigmatized. He and his wife decided that, as Germans, their place was in Germany, and they even built a home in the village of Dölzen on the outskirts of Dresden and bought a car while Klemperer worked on various French projects in the university library. Gradually, however, as the Nazis increased their persecution of the Jews and Klemperer lost his library privileges, they realized that it was senseless to believe in Germany as the fatherland, and in 1938, when it was too late, the Klemperers tried to leave. Barred from the university, Klemperer now began to write his autobiography, and from 1939 to 1942 he was able to complete two volumes about his life up to the year 1918. When the Klemperers were forced to move into different "Jewish" homes in the Dresden area, it became too dangerous to work on the autobiography, but Klemperer kept daily notes that were smuggled by his wife every day to a her close friend Dr. Annemarie Kröger, who kept them hidden in a trunk. In February 1945, the day before the bombing of Dresden, Klemperer was informed that he would be deported to a concentration camp. However, the mass bombing attack on Dresden that leveled the city in one night enabled him and his wife to escape the Nazis and flee to Bavaria. In June of 1945 they returned to Dresden, and Klemperer played an important role in bringing about the re-establishment of the *Hochschule* in Dresden. Fearful at times that he would represent or misrepresent Jews as the powerful or revengeful Jew, Klemperer became embroiled in local politics, and

though he saw that the East Germans were developing an LQI (Lingua Quarti Imperii), he joined the Communist Party in December of 1945 because he realized that nothing could be gained unless one worked with the Party, and that communists appeared to be doing more against former Nazis than any other political group. From 1946 until his death in 1960, Klemperer taught at universities in Greifswald, Halle and Berlin. His wife, who had stood by him through thick and thin, died in 1951. During the latter part of his life, Klemperer continued to publish studies of French literature and was honored with an appointment to the *Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften* in 1953. Born a German subject into a family loyal to the Wilhemine monarchy, a conservative in his politics, a soldier totally devoted to Germany in World War I, an opponent of Nazism, he died a German citizen and communist in the German Democratic Republic, the last survivor of the eight children in the Klemperer family.

Of all Klemperer's posthumous works, *Curriculum Vitae* is, in my opinion, the most significant, not only because it is the most artful, but also because it contains disparate voices that enable us more readily to grasp Klemperer's dilemma as a Jew who wanted desperately to hold onto his German identity. The autobiography is based on diaries that he had begun at the age of sixteen. The diary notes served to prompt his memory and were shaped into a first-person narrative from January 1939 until February 1942. All the diaries of the period up to 1918 were destroyed after he completed the autobiography that he read at times to his wife and close friends. At one point in the autobiography there is a section written in the second person to his wife that is a declaration of love and devotion to her. The excruciating circumstances under which he wrote *Curriculum Vitae* are described in the first volume of his diary, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten*, which, when read with the autobiography, reveals the despair and frustration he was experiencing in stark contrast to the years of his *Bildung* as a model cultivated German.

*Curriculum Vitae* is about *Bildung* in the double sense of the German word—education and formation. For Klemperer, during this period, the problem was how to form his life as an act of true German *Bildung* when its form had practically been destroyed. “Nun begann ich in alten Tagebüchern zu blättern und die aufgetauchten Bilder zu kontrollieren und zu vollständigen. Im Lesen fand ich manches breit ausgeführt, was mir jetzt belanglos schien, anderes, dem ich jetzt große Wichtigkeit beimaß, mit nur einer Zeile abgetan oder bloß zwischen den Zeilen angedeutet; ich stieß auf schiefe oder doch nur zeitbedingt richtige Urteile; ich mußte an weit auseinanderliegenden Stellen suchen, was jetzt eine eng zusammengehörige, untrennbare Einheit für mich bildete. Das Verlangen regte sich, aus dem Wust der Tagebücher eine Vita zu formen.” (“I now began to leaf through the old diaries and to proof and complete

the images that emerged. While reading I found many things described in great detail that now seemed insignificant to me. Other things to which I now attributed great importance I had finished off with only one sentence or drew implications between the lines. I came across wrong judgments or judgments that were only correct at that time. I had to look for places that were far apart in order to come up with something that would build a tightly knit, inseparable unity for me. I felt a desire to form a vita out of the heap of my diaries.” (I, 7)

Klemperer wrote with the sense that Hitler had taken away his life with lies, and his act of forming his autobiography in 1939-42 was an act of reclaiming his life and establishing his identity or homeland in the middle of homelessness as a German marked as a Jew. Ironically, he remarked: “Ich habe dem Führer mehr zu verdanken als nur die unfreiwillige Muße: Indem er mir mein Deutschtum fortlog, hat er mich erst ein tiefstes und kontinuierlich wirkendes Grundelement meines Lebens mit aller Schärfe erkennen lassen und mir gezeigt, daß es in diesem Leben neben Privatem und durchschnittlich Alltäglichem auch Dinge von allgemeiner und typischer Bedeutung gibt.” (“I owe more to the Führer than just the involuntary leisure time granted to me. In so far as he lied away my Germanness, he made me recognize for the first time a most profound and continually effective basic element of my life with great clarity, and he showed me that there were also things of general and typical importance in this life aside from private and daily things.”)(I, 10)

The question is: what are those things of general and typical significance? There are many possible answers. For instance, Klemperer was a remarkable stylist and a keen observer of daily life, and his descriptions of gymnasium life in Berlin and Landsberg, the relations among his family, the Jewish authors whom he met on his trip to Austria as a journalist, the conditions at the University of Naples, where he was the first lecturer of German language and literature, and his experiences as a soldier on the western front and in Lithuania are filled with unique insights and candid comments. And certainly they are “general and typical” and highly significant for the student of social history. What interests me most is how Klemperer was “general and typical” of many assimilated Jews of that period, and how he formed his autobiography out of the disturbing tension threatening his self-conceived identity from 1939 to 1942 that became more aggravated as conditions for him and his wife in Dresden worsened. This tension was based on his realization that he was no longer what he thought he wanted to be, a German, and yet he sought to reconstruct how he became a typical German in the period from 1881 to 1918, as proof that he represented the true German. In this sense the autobiography is truly a type of German *Bildungsroman*, for it follows the *Wihelm Meister* pattern of the young bourgeois, who breaks away from the family by seeking to become a writer,

goes through his turbulent wander years, and then returns to the fold by becoming a professor with *Habilitation*. Not only does he show to his family that he can become responsible, but he also displays his patriotism to the outside world and dutifully serves his country as soldier.

But this seamless formation of the autobiography as *Bildungsroman* is constantly challenged by voices that belie the *Bildung*. The first-person voice of authenticity and authority sets the frame for the entire story, and to guarantee authenticity, this voice allows others to emerge: the questioning voice that raises doubts about the authority of the first-person narrative; the interrupting voice that stops the flow of the narrative and compels the reader and Klemperer himself to remember where he is in Nazi Germany as he is forming his life's history; interrupting voices from outside that Klemperer himself introduces in the form of dialogues; the husband's voice commemorating his wife's role in his life history. Here are a few examples of how they function.

The voice of authority and authenticity that governs the narrative from beginning to end is the one which constantly informs us why and how Klemperer is more German than Jew and how this occurred. Here Klemperer maintains that social and family history mark his role: "Vor der Stoeckerzeit hat es in Deutschland eine lange Periode gegeben, in der der Antisemitismus vielfach ein sehr geringer war. Es herrschte im allgemeinen eine ungleich stärkere Spannung etwa zwischen Fabrikanten und Arbeitern oder Bayern und Preußen als zwischen Juden und Christen. Und trat ein Jude zum Christentum über und betonte dadurch seinen Willen, nichts als Deutscher sein und innerhalb Deutschlands keine Sonderexistenz führen zu wollen, so stieß er für seine Person kaum noch auf Hindernisse, und sein Sohn fand bestimmt keine Hindernisse mehr....Er [Klemperer's father] fühlte sich ganz als Deutscher, als Reichsdeutscher. Er hatte politische Interessen und war von den Ergebnissen des sechszwanziger und des siebenziger Krieges tief befriedigt. Er war liberal im Sinne des damals meistgelesenen Romanschriftstellers Friedrich Spielhagen, das heißt, indem er sich zum fortschrittlichen Bürgertum dem, wie man damals sagte, Junkertum gegenüber bekannte, ohne sich über die harten, allzu materialistischen Probleme des Sozialpolitischen und Nationalökonomischen den Kopf zu zerbrechen....Daß es eine Spannung zwischen seinem Deutschtum und seinem Judentum, seiner Pflicht als Rabbiner, geben könnte, darauf ist Vater, mindestens in Landsberg, sicherlich niemals verfallen." ("Before the time of Stoecker [lead of anti-Semitic movement at the end of the 19th century] there was a long period in Germany in which anti-Semitism had been much less rabid. In general there had been much stronger tensions between factory owners and workers or between Bavarians and Prussians as

those between Jews and Christians. And if a Jew converted to Christianity and emphasized his will not to lead a special existence as German and within Germany, he hardly encountered any obstacles, and his son definitely did not find any more obstacles....He [Klemper's father] felt himself entirely as German, as a loyal German citizen of the empire. He had political interests and was very satisfied with the results of the wars of 1869 and 1870. He was liberal in the sense of the best-selling author of that time, Friedrich Spielhagen. This meant that he aligned himself with the progressive middle class that declared itself against what was called the Junkertum at that time. Of course he did not worry much about the material problems tied to socio-political and national-economic conditions....Certainly it never occurred to my father, as long as he lived in Landsberg, that there could be a tension between his Germanness and his Jewishness, his duty as rabbi.” (I, 17-18)

This tension is overcome by all four of Wilhelm Klemperer's sons, who were baptized, well before the outbreak of World War I. They are all secure in their *Deutschtum* by this time, as the voice of authority and authenticity time and again reports. This is made clear when Klemperer undergoes a **second** conversion and baptism in 1912. Using an indirect voice, he explains how he went to a minister in Berlin to clear the air about his intentions: “Ich sagte ihm, es sei mir genauso unmöglich, an das christliche Dogma zu glauben wie an den Jahve des Alten Testaments. Doch empfände ich das Christentum als ein wesentliches Element der deutschen Kultur, in die ich hineingeboren, der ich durch meine Bildung, meine Ehe, mein gesamtes Denken und Fühlen unlöslich verbunden sei. Dies sei das Motiv meines beabsichtigten Übertritts, der ja keinen Wechsel sittlicher Prinzipien in sich schließe. In meinen Studien hätte ich mich naturgemäß sehr viel mit dem Christentum beschäftigt und hätte vor allem bei Lessing gefunden, was mir gleicherweise für das Christentum und das Deutschtum entscheidend sei und vollkommen zusage.” (“I told him that it was just as impossible to believe in the Christian dogma as it was to believe in God of the Old Testament. However, I felt Christianity to be an essential element of the German culture into which I was born and with which I was inseparably tied though my education, my marriage, my entire thinking and feeling. This was the reason why I intended to convert nor did I see it involving a change in my moral principles. In my studies I had naturally occupied myself a great deal with Christianity and had found above all in reading Lessing everything which was decisive for me both for Christianity and Germanness and entirely appealed to me.”) (II, 16)

The voice of authority and authenticity functions to establish Klemperer's legitimate claim to Germanness. It is not a rationalizing or apologetic voice, but

rather one that clarifies why many Jews could think they were German first and foremost without feeling guilty about abandoning their Jewishness. Klemperer rarely shows guilt or shame. But there are misgivings, and they are expressed by the interrupting voices. For instance, when his father held a sermon in the synagogue and pronounced the Jewish religion as the purest in the world, his mother warned her husband that he might be creating enemies in the congregation that wanted to believe that Judaism and Christianity were the same. Klemperer, then in his teens, was impressed by the sermon but stunned by his father's contradiction, and Klemperer, the writer of 1940, interrupts his recollection and wishes that he had thought more about Judaism, conversion, and betrayal. Later, when he attends the gymnasium in Landsberg, he writes: "In der Oberprima bekam ich es zum erstenmal mit der Judenfrage, deren Vorhandensein ich vorher nur wenig gespürt hatte, ernsthaft zu tun. Von da an hat sie mich nie losgelassen. (Ich prüfe mich, ob ich dies nicht bloß unter dem Druck der Gegenwart schreibe, ob ich nicht in Wahrheit auf sehr langen Wegstrecken meines Lebens von dem Judenproblem gänzlich unberührt geblieben bin.) Nein. Die Wahrheit ist, daß ich von ihm nicht berührt sein wollte, daß ich mir vorschrieb: 'Es existiert nicht für dich.'" ("It was in high school that I had to deal seriously with the Jewish question for the first time. Up until that time I had not been very aware of its existence. From then on it never let go of me. (I am checking whether I am not writing this merely under the pressure of the present, whether I, in truth, remained completely untouched from the Jewish problem

during long phases of my life.) No. The truth is that I did not want to be touched by it, that I stipulated to myself: 'it does not exist for you.')

(I, 246) Throughout the autobiography, the Jewish question, which for Klemperer was whether he was pure German or Jewish, keeps returning in different forms to shake the identity that he composes in the authoritative and authentic voice of the autobiography.

In 1910, when he took a trip to Vienna to interview various editors and writers, he was taken aback by the way Jewish topics arose in the conversations and how many writers, whom he considered purely German, insisted that they were primarily Jewish. In a remarkable conversation with Richard Beer-Hofmann about Judaism, Beer-Hofmann surprises him by his passionate declaration of Jewishness. Here Beer-Hofmann's voice rings through Klemperer's narrative indirectly and directly to challenge Klemperer's own self-concept: "Er [Beer-Hofmann] sei Jude und gar nichts anderes, das Bemühen mancher Juden, im Deutschtum aufzugehen, könne er nicht begreifen, und das Allerunbegreiflichste sei ihm, wie ein Künstler so etwas versuchen sollte, denn ein Künstler müsse 'sich wohl fühlen im eigenen

Haus'.—'Aber Ihr Haus innerhalb der Dichtung ist doch die deutsche Sprache', hielt ich ihm entgegen. Er lehnte diesen Einwand und alle andern als unwesentlich ab, er behauptete, sein ganzes Sein ausschließlich dem Judentum zu verdanken. Natürlich gab es keine Einigung zwischen uns, und ich ging einigermaßen fassungslos fort." ("He [Beer-Hofmann] was a Jew and nothing else. He could not understand the efforts of many Jews to dissolve themselves in Germanness. The most incomprehensible thing for him was how an artist could try something like

that because an artist must 'feel good in his own house.'—'But your house within poetry is nevertheless the German language,' I retorted. He dismissed this objection and all others as insignificant. He asserted that he owed his entire being to Judaism. Naturally we could not come to an agreement, and I left somewhat stunned.") (I, 529)

The function of the interrupting voices varies according to the recollected memory, but essentially these voices always remind the reader and Klemperer himself that he is no longer the German he thought he was. This is most evident when he interrupts the flow of the narrative to say that he has lost his notes and papers when he studied at the Sorbonne and that he would have to search for them. Then he asks why. "Wozu auch die Mühe? Wo doch jede Stunde eine neue und sehr wohl die endgültige Katastrophe bringen kann. Jetzt gar, im August, während der Niederschrift dieses Kapitels, leben wir unter ständiger Kriegsdrohung, und die Meinung, der Krieg dürfte mit einer 'Erledigung der ganzen Judenfrage in einer einzigen Nacht' beginnen, ist mündlich und gedruckt weitverbreitet. Aber gerade um dies alles zu vergessen, schreibe ich ja an meinem Curriculum...." ("Why all the effort? When any hour a new and most likely final catastrophe can occur. Right now, in August, as I write down this chapter, we are living under constant threat of war, and the opinion that the war could begin with a 'settlement of the entire Jewish question in only one night' has been spread widely by word of mouth and by print. This is exactly why I am writing my Curriculum, to forget all about this.") (I, 324)

Taken together—including the section dedicated to his wife—the voices that form the *Curriculum Vitae* are not an affirmation of German nationalism, German identity, or Jewish identity. Rather they open up questions of nationalism and identity, and perhaps this is why the book has had a significant impact in contemporary Germany when such questions have become more acute than ever in the postwar period, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall and German unification. In an article written for *The New York Times Magazine* and primarily dedicated to the reception of Klemperer's diaries in Germany, Amos Elon reports: "For those who deplored the lack of national pride among Germans in the postwar period, the moving diaries of a terrorized,

disenfranchised Jew who continued to be proud of his *Deutschtum* struck a welcome chord. The film maker Hans-Jürgen Syberberg welcomed it as a document vindicating his yearnings for the irrational 'creative power' of *Heimat* and *Volk*. Martin Walser, one of Germany's best-known novelists (formerly a Communist sympathizer, now a neo-conservative) found in Klemperer's life and *Weltanschauung* convenient means to propagate his own dream."<sup>7</sup>

Yet, implicitly in the diaries and in *Curriculum Vitae*, Klemperer also raises the question as to whether the Jews or a certain group of Jews in Germany were more German than Germans or sought to represent themselves as such up to and beyond 1933. He could never really come to terms with German anti-Semitism, and this is the noble heroic side of his *Curriculum Vitae*: his refusal to accept stigmatization and his desire to advance the cause of universal humanism through German culture and as a teacher of French culture. His great posthumous achievement has been to make his voice and other voices contemporaneous and to question what it means to be either German or Jew.

Perhaps the same could be said about Rose Ausländer, although her reception in Germany has not been as sensational as that of Klemperer. Certainly *The Forbidden Tree*, the book that I want to discuss, will not be read by many Germans because it was published in English. But her voice has become better known and stronger in Germany during the last ten years due to the publication of her complete poems in sixteen volumes by the Fischer Verlag. Moreover, the fact that she was more or less compelled to write poems in English endows her work in retrospect with great significance. For Ausländer, to be Jewish at the time of her writing these poems, was to lose her voice and homeland and to produce out of homelessness a new sense of identity and home.

Born on May 11, 1901 as Rosalie Beatrice Scherzer in Czernowitz/Bukowina, which was then part of Austria, she attended schools in Czernowitz and Vienna, and after receiving her diploma in 1919, she studied philosophy and literature at the University of Czernowitz. Then, in 1921, she emigrated to the United States with Ignaz Ausländer, whom she married in 1923. During this time she began publishing poetry in English and worked at various jobs in Minneapolis and New York. In 1926 she became a United States citizen. By 1931, after her divorce from Ignaz Ausländer, she decided to return to Czernowitz and lost her American citizenship. From 1931 until 1941, Ausländer had various jobs as a teacher, journalist, translator, and worker in a chemical factory in Bucharest while writing poetry in German. Her first book, *Der Regenbogen*, appeared in 1939. When the Nazis occupied Czernowitz, she was forced to live and work in the city ghetto and was constantly on the brink

of starvation and death. When the city was freed by the Russians, she worked for a time in the municipal library and then emigrated to the United States and lived in New York. Unable to write poems in German any more, she wrote numerous poems in English from 1948 to 1956, collected for the first time in *The Forbidden Tree*. From 1953 to 1961, Ausländer was the foreign correspondent for the shipping company Freedman & Slater, but when her health broke down, she decided to return to Europe. At first her plans were to settle in Vienna with her brother, but she eventually established a home for herself in Düsseldorf in 1965, when her book, *Blinder Sommer*, appeared, her first collection of poems in German since 1939. In 1972, she moved into the old age home of the Jewish community, named appropriately the Nelly-Sachs-Haus. Until her death in 1988, Ausländer published numerous volumes of poetry and received many honors as one of Germany's foremost poets.

Certainly *The Forbidden Tree* does not contain Ausländer's best poems. On the other hand, the 199 poems written in English, 21 of which were published in American journals and magazines, are surprisingly well-crafted with unusual metaphors that are highly revealing about a crucial period in her life when she was trying to find some kind of voice to write about her horrifying experiences in the Czernowitz ghetto and in a language different from that of the German murderers. Although strongly attached to the German mother language of Bukowina, there is strong evidence to suggest that Ausländer needed distance from Europe and the German language to confront her traumatic experiences in a different language before she could ever write poems in German again. Even here, in English, she seems to try to avoid direct confrontation with the Holocaust to confront the Holocaust. As Leslie Morris remarks in her afterword to *The Forbidden Tree*, "But one constantly senses immediately how the poet in her new homeland and especially in New York went around with open eyes and an open heart, even when she had to lead a difficult life as an office worker. Interestingly, Rose Ausländer speaks very seldom about the war or the Holocaust in these poems, and yet, one sees and feels that her war experiences accompany her."<sup>8</sup>

There are only three poems, "The Forbidden Tree," "The Prisoner," and "Yom Kippur," which touch directly upon the Shoah, and "The Forbidden Tree" is important to quote in its entirety because it captures the mood, tone, and style of most of the poems:

A sturdy tree  
 I grew  
 from border to border—  
 The forbidden tree

in the Eden of the mighty.

Yet they ate my fruits.  
Unwillingly  
they ate  
the pariah fruits  
they drank  
the juice of wisdom  
cursing it.

Though knives  
of hitlered eyes  
shredded my fruits  
though gas  
of hitlered breath  
burned my bark --  
I survived  
a sturdy tree  
with broken branches  
bleeding fruits  
but vigorous roots  
growing from border to border. (64)]

Most of Ausländer's poems are deceptive because they are written in strict metrical form with rhyme that suggest a cheerful and optimistic voice and composure as the first stanza does. But the voice of the second stanza turns suddenly into a voice of doom that recalls the original sin leading to the Shoah. In the third stanza she specifically refers to the experience of the Shoah with the stark images of "hitlered eyes" that shred and "hitlered breath" that burns. Like a sturdy tree, however, the poet/Ausländer survives to spread her roots again. As the tree of wisdom, she is restored in the garden of Eden, a hopeful sign indicating that not only will she rejuvenate herself but that wisdom will not die.

The image of the garden emerges in many poems as a key utopian metaphor for Ausländer. Not only is it the ideal state or condition that she wants to recapture, it is the necessary starting point for rejuvenation. In "Frustration," she asserts that "gardens of forbidden fruits and leaves/have been locked in memory of thieves" (65). As in "The Forbidden Tree," something has been stolen, and here it is not just Ausländer herself lamenting, but a group of people who have lost the promise of their lives:

Torches tumbled from our hands. Their flame  
Was extinguished. We are not the same

That we were, nor are our empty hands,  
Stretching out for far, forbidden lands.(65)

In this regard, Ausländer's poems of exile written in English are not just representative of her own fate but also of thousands of Jewish exiles, and as an aggregate, they speak of the pariah existence, the outcast people desperate for a glimmer of hope. In "How Soon?" she writes,

In a world behind good chances  
lies the life I yearn for—yet  
Cannot live and cannot get  
owing to the circumstances. (85)

In "In and out of Death," she remarks

I go in and out of my death  
through the portal of anguish  
to tragic landscapes of life. (90)

Reading through the poems that keep shifting in voice and mood and that evoke images of New York city blended with haunting scenes from her past, one senses that Ausländer is waiting for something extraordinary to happen:

A miracle, a Kingdom for a  
miracle!  
I would even welcome  
a minor miracle:  
a Greek smile  
on a movie face—a movie-face  
not a smile arranged in Hollywood style  
but inspiration manifest in a smile.

One hour may change the world  
(It happened many times before)  
Backward forward inward  
or toward  
Marianne's minute humor

or Wallace's metaphysical magic  
Who knows? (105)

During her stay in New York, Ausländer became close to the remarkable poet Marianne Moore and was also influenced by Wallace Stevens and E. E. Cummings. While not imitating their styles, she learned a great deal about English alliteration, assonance, metrical forms, run on-lines, and punctuation and how to mine everyday objects and scenes for metaphysical thought. But most of all, I believe, she discovered that she could use a foreign language to voice the immense despair and loneliness that she experienced in exile and that she could express her concerns freely. There is a sense of liberation in many poems, that Ausländer was liberated to vent her feelings, to purge them, to purify herself so she could move on and return to Europe and speak again in German.

Let me go back  
where the word took shape  
made shape  
made me want to go back  
to my pure hour  
I loved an apple thief --  
rain was a crystal breath.  
Sun: unity of colors  
the garden a home  
allowing man to be  
immortal.  
I want to go back  
where I was  
before the word was shaped  
before the word shaped a garden  
the garden a trap.

O rose aroma of an ample August! (134)

Since the moods and voices of her poems from 1948 to 1956 fluctuate so much, it is impossible to trace a common thread throughout them, and it is this impossibility to discuss their univocal quality, to homogenize them in any way, so to speak, that makes them so fascinating and compelling. The poems are filled with jarring images of frustration, longing, despair, mourning, alienation

mixed with exhilaration, joy, hope, and a grim determination to plant the seeds for a new life.

Unlike Klemperer's autobiography, in which he endeavored to reconstruct himself as a true German, Ausländer's autobiographical poems do not presuppose identity of any kind.

A center without, a center within.  
 Between them we move,  
 between them we spin,  
 with little to prove,  
 all and nothing to win. (135)

In one of her more metaphysical poems, she announces that

We are caught in the collision  
 of past and future,  
 in the cataclysm  
 of cultures. We are caught  
 in whirling wheels of speed  
 and motion in an empty space. (197)

Despite the chaos and degeneration, she concludes:

O we can prove to ourselves and to  
 the future generation that the mind's  
 creative impulse conquers fear  
 and desolation, that decline  
 is but a phrase: the potentiality  
 to rise again. Let us proceed  
 the spiral line through it runs zigzag! (198)

In fact, Ausländer's life followed quite a zigzag line, and she refused to form it into some kind of *Bildungsprozeß* that affirms a fixed identity. Unlike Klemperer, who stayed in Germany after World War II, she left Europe and wrote poems to explore the possibilities left to a Shoah survivor to redefine herself. The publication of her posthumous poems in English enable us to see how strikingly different from Klemperer she reacted to the Shoah as a Jewish writer. For her the question of national identity or the *Judenfrage* as defined by the Nazis led to the deformation of her character, and therefore, she resisted the German language and resisted in English anything that would categorize and

stigmatize her as a person. Nevertheless, both she and Klemperer have something in common as Jewish writers, especially as our contemporaries, and especially since their posthumous works have been published during a period when the fascination for things Jewish and the Shoah business set the framework for their reception. Their voices contrast with one another, and the voices within their works are so unsettling that they undermine stereotypical notions of Judaism and Germanness. Taken together they also represent what the contemporary Austrian Jewish poet Robert Schindel has called “Jewishness as memory and resistance.” In a talk delivered in Ljubljana on November 17, 1984 and published 1995 in Germany, thus taking part in the new Shoah discourse, he sought to describe the manifold aspects of Jewishness as a resistance to barbarism.

“Ist nicht das Judentum als Widerstand

1. Die Erinnerung an die Traditionen, die da **auch** und **vor allem** sind: Humanismus, Toleranz, Emanzipation, soziales Engagement und dieses Perhorreszieren zwischen Mensch als Staatsbürger und Mensch als Privatperson etc.?

2. Der Zusammenschluß mit den Beleidigten, Verjagten, Vernichteten, und damit die schöpferische Wiederanerkennung der eigenen Wurzeln?”<sup>9</sup>

Schindel himself has long sought to work through what it means to live in Austria as a child born during the Shoah, and his poems, novel, and essays probe the shifting elements that constitute his identity. Though he does not comment specifically on either Klemperer or *Ausländer*, his essay begins with a quote from Paul Celan, whom *Ausländer* knew personally, and whose poems might have been familiar to Klemperer. I point to this connection because Schindel closes his essay on “Widerstand und Judentum” by remarking about a third category that he believes is significant for understanding European Jewishness: “Heimat zu produzieren inmitten der Heimatlosigkeit selbst. Hier geht es um den Unterschied, der darin besteht, ob ich eine Heimat vorfinde, in die sie hineingeboren werde, oder ob ich eine Heimat nach und nach erst produzieren muß, in die vorgefundene Umwelt hinein, denn diese Umwelt hat uns Juden stets gelehrt, daß sie unsere Heimat nicht sein mag.” (“To produce home in the middle of homelessness itself. Here the question concerns the difference that consists in whether I find a home into which I was born or whether I must first gradually produce a home into the preexisting surroundings, for these surroundings have constantly taught us Jews that they may not be our home.”)<sup>10</sup>

Schindel does not elaborate this category of “home in the middle of homelessness,” but it is clear that he is addressing the incomplete messianic aspect of Jewishness as well as the actual diasporic conditions that compel Jewish writers to form and reform questions of identity in response to a

homeland that made them feel *unheimlich*, that is, uneasy. It is the *unheimlich* aspect in their endeavors to vocalize what ideal German culture is or what the ideal garden as home is that gives us a sense of what it may still be like to be Jewish in contemporary Germany. Certainly, as Jewish writers, Klemperer and Ausländer wrote to produce a homeland in the middle of homelessness, and it is here that they speak to us as our contemporaries, reminding us that their memories of Shoah are still with us, that Jewishness is a process and is not marketable as a commodity for its fascination.

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## Notes

1. "The Politics of Memory," 48-65.
2. "The Politics of Memory," 49.
3. "The Politics of Memory," 53.
4. See Baumann, et al, *Der Wettbewerb*. This is a collection of essays by leading cultural critics about the propriety of building a memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, and most insist that the process of discussing the form, contents, and realization of such a memorial is more important than the actual memorial itself.
5. *Reflections of Nazism*, 21.
6. "Schindler's List", 310-11.
7. Elon, "The Jew Who Fought to stay German," 55.
8. Morris, "Nachwort," 222.
9. Schindel, *Gott schützt uns vor den guten Menschen*, 32.
10. *Ibid.*, 33-34.

## MEMORIAL SPACES AND JEWISH IDENTITIES IN POST-WALL BERLIN<sup>1</sup>

Karen Remmler

Fifty years after the end of the Second World War a series of events, exhibits, and public discussions took place in Berlin to commemorate the victims of the Shoah. The commemorative events included the dedication of the partially rebuilt New Synagogue in the Oranienburger Street, the debate about the design of the planned memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe and the growing fascination for and interest in Jewish history and culture in the so-called *Scheunenviertel* near the center of Berlin. In addition, the new Jewish Museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind, was briefly opened to the public in its raw form for an exhibit on the plights of the Jews in war-torn former Yugoslavia. The museum, which is attached by an underground passageway to the Berlin City Museum in the Linden Street, will house not only artifacts of past Berlin Jewish culture and history, but also host exhibits of “living” Jewish culture. Interestingly, the events commemorating the end of the war also included discussions and exhibits that focused on the immediate postwar experiences of the non-Jewish German population. These included roundtables with eyewitnesses and historians about the consequences of the war and the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their active or passive accomplices upon civilians, soldiers as well as upon victims of the Shoah. I would argue that this turn to publicly acknowledging “German” pain is not new per se, but that its juxtaposition with the obsession with “things Jewish” in the public sphere is, in part, linked to the difficulty in Germany of commemorating Jewish victims of the Shoah; a difficulty that has been accentuated by the reshaping of both German and Jewish identities in post-Wall Berlin, identities that are not dichotomous nor static, but which express how inextricably bound members of the second and third generation of victims, perpetrators, bystanders and witnesses are by the legacy of the Shoah and by the forms in which it is remembered.

Although Germans have been seeking to mourn their own since the end of the Second World War, the unification of the two states and their distinct, though equally troubling mourning cultures and attitudes towards remembering the victims of that war and the Shoah, has precipitated a shift in the mourning culture, particularly in the former GDR. The attention to Jewish culture and history, thought commendable, is itself a displacement of a confrontation with German-German history. This is particularly relevant in the case of the GDR, a nation that aligned itself with the “victors of history” after the Second World War and subsequently suppressed the trauma of the war upon civilians and their

culpability in the atrocities of the war and the Shoah. The silencing of personal trauma that took place through the monumentalized versions of the past in the national public sphere of the GDR behind the claim to anti-Fascism is no longer tabu, even as it is displaced by a growing interest in things Jewish in the former east. Whereas the communist victims were at the center of commemorative activities in the east, now numerous local historians (often with the limited resources of short-term job aid programs) have initiated oral history projects that address Jewish life—for the most part before 1933. Instead of taking a closer look at the implications of separate but similar histories in the former west and east Germany, the majority of oral history projects, funded by city government and non-profit institutions, concentrate on Jewish history and culture in localized areas. This phenomenon coincides with a desire among some Germans to properly bury their own, that is to publicly mourn those German soldiers and civilians who died in the Second World War. This desire is exemplified in the attempts of the German Organization for the Care of Military Graves and private initiatives for the “proper burial” of Wehrmacht soldiers who were killed in the Second World War in Germany, Poland, the former Soviet Union and the Balkan states.<sup>2</sup> These initiatives support the exhuming of the remains of the fallen soldiers from the ground of battlefields, identifying them, and giving them a proper burial. What appears to be a marginal activity, upon closer look, represents a desire for creating a final resting place not only for the remains of fallen German soldiers, but also for the memory of the historical context in which the soldiers went to war. This phenomenon is directly related to German unification and to the rise in a national sentiment that seeks to bring closure to the remembering of the war even as it goes through the motions of commemoration in annual rituals. That is, the honoring of the German war dead has become *Salon-Fähig*, an acceptable endeavor in the name of the new German nation.

Though not a mainstream activity, this task bears symbolic meaning, as a delayed public expression of grief. What has shifted since the mid-eighties in these attempts to exhume remains of soldiers and identify them by name, is the desire by some public figures in Germany to create shared commemorative spaces; that is, to construct metaphorical and real sites with others who were killed in the Second World War and in the Shoah. This is best illustrated by the controversy surrounding the dedication of the *Neue Wache*, the memorial to the victims of the Second World War. While the enlarged replica of Käthe Kolwitz’s pieta conjures up images of motherhood and, therefore, as Sigrid Weigel has pointed out, feminizes the memory process, thus depleting the remembrance of the Third Reich of its patriarchal signification, it also raises questions about the ethical dilemma of shared commemorative sites in Berlin.<sup>3</sup>

Even as memorial installations, plaques, and monuments abound to commemorate the killing of the Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Third Reich, the creation of such monuments reveals itself, I argue, as a compensatory act for some Germans that deflects energy away from dialogue and confrontation with living Jews. The attention paid to Jewish culture in German society can be seen as a displacement of the desire of many Germans to mourn their own loss. This loss includes both the loss of innocence and of the right to properly bury their own dead. Although I would argue that the mourning has been taking place in the private sphere since the end of the war, publicly Germans have felt pressure to mourn the victims of the Shoah and have been going through the motions of commemorating, not their own, but their victims for years.

Recently, however, even as the number of commemorative ceremonies has increased and the number of memorial plaques and sites has mushroomed, there is evidence of a shift in the public mourning culture of Germany towards attending to their own dead, that is, acknowledging the trauma of the war upon civilians and soldiers by giving them a symbolic “proper burial.” A similar “proper burial” for the victims of the Shoah is, for known reasons, impossible. And the controversy about the building of the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, known in the media as the “Holocaust Memorial” is an example of how the desire among non-Jewish Germans to bury their own becomes displaced into a public German monument to the Jews. In fact, the debate about the memorial crystallizes the historical and contemporary relationship between Germans and Jews and their self-understanding as perpetrators and victims. The memorial is to be located between the Brandenburger Gate and Leipziger Square on the site of the former “ministerial gardens” and the more recent “death zone” that ran along side the eastern side of the Berlin wall. The idea for a “German” memorial to commemorate the Jewish victims of the Shoah, originated with Lea Rosh, the television personality who is the director of the Northern German Television Station. Her idea has been heavily criticized by Jewish and non-Jewish Germans alike for reasons that I would like to consider. The actual competition for the design of the memorial, which was sponsored by Germany’s ministry for domestic affairs and the Berlin Senate, and the public debate about the composition, intention, scale, and financial ramifications of the 500-plus entries, raised a number of crucial questions about the practice of memorialization in contemporary Berlin, questions that continue to be raised in light of the subsequent decision of the federal German government not to implement the winning design.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the winning design, a massive 20,000 square meter stone slab upon which the names of the victims were to be engraved one by one, evoked serious reservations about the adequacy of any

monument to memorialize human atrocity. Can the classical medium of a monument serve as an adequate means to commemorate the millions of dead Jews, for whom often nothing remains, not even their names or ashes? How can the destruction not only of their memories, but also of those who would pass on the memories be reconstituted in stone? And if this were thinkable, would German politicians, German judges and German artists have the ability and moral standards to initiate, create and maintain a site of commemoration?<sup>5</sup>

When we look beyond the polemics and emotional character of these questions we are nevertheless left with the core ethical and aesthetic problem to which they allude: How can a German memorial stand in the name of the survivors, who themselves remain as the sole keepers of the names of the murdered Jews and of their dead in postwar Germany?<sup>6</sup> And if this is possible, wouldn't such a memorial in the heart of the old and new capital of Germany become a kind of symbolic final tombstone that would provide a monumental conclusion to the discussion about the causes and consequences of German guilt for the persecution and murder of European Jews?<sup>7</sup> Would such a memorial not run the danger of being misunderstood as moral compensation and representation for a "cleansed" conscience of the German nation?

Consequently, the attempts to create a symbolic mass grave are wrought with ethical and emotional dilemmas. The winning design by Christine Jakob-Marks, Hella Rolfes, Hans Scheib and Reinhard Stangle is meant to represent a resting place upon which the names of the six million murdered Jews would be engraved. Ironically, the jury's evaluation of the design emphasizes that the model 1) "retrieves the victims from anonymity" and 2) mediates the feeling of helplessness in a fascinating way and is therefore the correct form for the theme: it mediates the six million in their entirety and yet individually. The names are to be added one by one."<sup>8</sup> But does the buying of Jewish names by non-Jewish Germans reconstitute the subjectivity, much less the memory of the murdered Jews?

Engraving names of the dead on monuments is fashionable at the moment, as the repeated reference to the success of the Vietnam War Memorial indicates. The notion that names take the place of the dead can not, however, be separated from the context in which the names are dedicated. The inscription of names at Yad Vashem has a symbolic meaning that cannot be emulated in Berlin; the relationship of the named to those who would have their names inscribed produces an irreconcilable dilemma. The inscription of names on monuments and memorials has a long tradition in the German context, a context that would be erased if the inscription of names were extracted from the specific national and cultural history that they evoke. Naming the dead has a long tradition in German military history and in the national mourning culture evoked by the

myth of the fallen soldier that George Mosse has documented in his book about the different practices of commemorating the war dead in Germany in the two world wars and in the postwar period.<sup>9</sup> The inscribing of individual names of soldiers on war monuments became standard practice after the First World War, a practice that was transformed in the Third Reich into collectivized, monumentalized versions of commemoration.<sup>10</sup> After the war, the Allies forbade the Germans to build war memorials until 1952. From then on, the monuments to the fallen soldiers concentrated on generalizing the experience of war and playing down references to heroism (Mosse, 213). “The Germans themselves in the western zones of occupation suggested that new war memorials should no longer contain inscriptions honoring national martyrs, but a simple dedication to ‘our dead’” (212). In the GDR, the monuments erected after the Second World War emphasized the victims of fascism and militarism, rather than the “heroics” of war. One could argue that re-inscribing the names of fallen Jewish soldiers on First World War war memorials, from which they were removed by the Nazis in 1935, might be an appropriate gesture on the part of the German public sphere to acknowledge the memory of German Jews who fought for the “fatherland” they saw as their own. The notion of non-Jewish Germans buying the names of European Jews murdered by their ancestors perhaps, does not, however, represent a “proper” burial, but rather an affront to the dead.

Whereas it may be possible for Germans to enact a “proper burial” for German soldiers, who were killed in the Second World War, by naming their remains, it is unthinkable for murdered Jews to be given a proper burial by non-Jewish Germans. This is illustrated in a passage in Esther Dischereit’s narrative *Joëmis Tisch: eine jüdische Geschichte (Joëmis Tisch, a Jewish Story)*.<sup>11</sup> Dischereit is a German Jewish writer who was born in 1952 in Germany. The crass difference between the contemporaneous and concurrent desire for a proper burial of fallen German soldiers and for a proper commemoration of the Jewish victims of the Shoah is illuminated in the following scene. A Jewish figure in the narrative, Ruth, comments sarcastically on the tactlessness of a German friend, Martha Elisabeth Steder, who asks her to find the soldier’s grave of her husband in France, where he died a “hero’s death” as a member of the Wehrmacht:

Ruth travels in this direction for Martha Elisabeth. South of Valence... It must have been here—25 to 20 kilometers left of the road...south of the factory site. Ruth tries to remember [what she read in the letter announcing the death of Martha Elisabeth’s husband]. “While driving along this road your husband was shot from the right so that he fell into

the steering wheel...”. . . Ruth drives alone the entire area, gets out, Do you see a dignified soldier’s grave? There is none to be seen, she will tell that to Frau Steder. She did her best. (108-109)

Ruth comments with bitterness that it would be unthinkable for her to ask Martha Elisabeth (Frau Steder) to find the mass grave of her father and brother:

Imagine if she would ask Frau Steder to go with her to her father’s, brother’s mass grave to look around.... Perhaps, the earth a fragment of a tooth or jaw, something by which most can be recognized....(109)

Ruth is asked to participate in the grief of the German woman over the loss of her husband. It would be awkward, indeed rude for Ruth to demand the same of the German woman. The ritualized funeral of the soldier, which takes place after Ruth reports that no grave exists in France contrasts sharply with the impossibility of a proper burial much less a place in the “German” memory for the murdered Jews.

Ruth’s father did not fall in battle. He was burned and then turned to ashes. The brother does not have a proper soldier’s grave ... he climbed over corpses, naked, since clothing can be removed from the living more efficiently than from the dead. When the bullet finally hit him, his body slammed onto the other bodies. His hands groped in the flesh that had turned cold (108).

In contrast to the resurrection of the imaginary body of the German soldier through the delayed proper burial, the disappearance of the Jewish body remains final. The finality of the disappearance reflects the continuation of the loss in the present. Even in Ruth’s remembrance it is the maimed bodies of her father and brother and their absence that remain, not the memory of their life. It seems that Esther Dischereit wants to tell us that there can be no return (resurrection) of the exterminated Jewish life.

But that is exactly what members of the German politic and culture are attempting to do, often with the sanction of the official Jewish communities. Not only the reconstruction and re-opening of synagogues and communities are being financially supported. There are also countless television and newspaper reports about the decimated Jewish communities that are beginning to grow due to the emigration of mostly Russian Jews from the former Soviet Union. There are Jewish cafes and kosher stores, cultural events sponsored by the Jewish Adult Education School, the Center Judaicum and walking tours offered by

alternative and mainstream history working groups through the Spandauer Vorstadt, the *Scheunenviertel* and the Berlin Jewish cemeteries.

Nevertheless, the Jewish life, that had so uniquely influenced Berlin from the turn of the century to 1933, can not be retrieved nor reconstructed and many of those involved in the above projects are aware of this. The desire to save a demolished culture from oblivion, speaks to the impossibility of an “authentic reconstruction.” Even if it were possible to recreate the Jewish life as it existed in the 1920s, is it even desirable to claim authenticity? Doesn’t the very idea of reconstruction become unconscionable, since a fabricated past, like the one familiar to us at Disney World, would reduce past Jewish life to folklore and rob its methodically planned destruction a second time of its tragic dimension through Klezmer music and nostalgic *Shtetl* anecdotes? To replace the loss of life and of an entire culture with nostalgia or exoticized versions of that life only leads to a second death.

That brings us back to the initial question of how to represent the absence of Jewish life in Berlin, yet not diminish the presence of Jewish life and the awareness of its fundamental difference from the Jewish life that was destroyed by the Nazis and their collaborators. Is there a “correct” or even adequate means of empathetic commemoration? Commemoration implies the existence of a companion in the mourning process—it is a social and communal act, even when carried out in solitude. But the severe historical difference between the victims who are to be mourned and those who propose to create a means to mourn them prevent a communal experience. And it is more complicated than that. Among the mourners who are German are Jews and others, whose heritage and historical experience puts them in a different existential location than the second- or third-generation Germans, who are expected to visit the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, when and if it is built—a place not only of mourning, but also of learning and contemplation.

This is no new dilemma in the memorial landscape of Berlin today. One alternative to more classical forms of memorialization (which often monumentalize the subject being mourned) was dedicated in 1993 in a Berlin neighborhood, known as the Bavarian district (*Bayrisches Viertel*). The artists Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock created the memorial in order to draw attention to the process that led to the exclusion and death of millions of Jews in the Third Reich. Whereas the planned memorial for the murdered Jews represented a questionable monumentalization of remembrance by “petrifying” the subjective memories of millions of victims, the memorial project in the Bavarian district, where a high percentage of assimilated German Jews had

lived up until 1933, allows one to see the effects of the social, political, economic, and cultural consequences of German fascism in the present.

The form of the memorial does not construct commemoration as an empty ritual at a specified location that is performed for official purposes. Instead it demonstrates the methodical exclusion of German Jews not as a single event but as an everyday experience that was dispersed over a wide range of locations. The memorial, that is actually not a memorial in the traditional sense, attempts to establish a dialogue between different temporal spheres. The memorial shows how the present and the everyday can become a part of the commemorative process. The effect of the memorial may be purely pedagogical, but it reminds us that the exclusion of Jews was itself a process, that was carried out by German people, not just laws. The practice of exclusion made Germans into non-citizens, into ostracized and demeaned people, and it occupied both public and private spheres. People, who had been living side by side, who had shopped in the same stores, and who had greeted one another on the street began to experience the same location as essentially different horizons of experience.

The memorial consists of signs upon which excerpts from the Nuremberg racial laws are printed. On the other side of each sign is a simple picture of an object that could be associated with the content of the law. For example, a sign bears the words “Jewish veterinarians are forbidden from practicing” 3.4.36 “General Occupational Prohibition” 17.1.39. On the other side of the sign one sees a German shepherd. The signs hang on eighty different lamp posts throughout the district. Instead of representing remembrance by means of monumental memorials at one designated historical location, these signs recall both the local, everyday and wide-reaching social and legal consequences of the Third Reich. The process of historical experience is related to the present instead of being projected into a distant past

The question that raises itself in light of this example, is if such an alternative would be appropriate at those locations at which the Nazi ideology was most horribly implemented and at which the mass murder of European Jews and other victims of National Socialism became possible through industrialized forms of killing technology. What may be an acceptable means of didactic explanation in a city district appears to fail at those places where the terror of mass murder is part of the “normalcy” of Nazi policy.

This question posed itself to me during a commemorative ceremony on the anniversary of the liberation of the women’s concentration camp Ravensbrück in April 1995. During this “ceremony” former prisoners walked through a part of the camp that had been closed to the public because it was being used as a base for the Soviet troops that had been stationed in the former GDR. I saw the

old, half-dilapidated barracks and office buildings, whose windows were shattered and whose outside walls were full of peeling paint. Would the reconstruction of these buildings really remind us of the terror of the past, even if plaques placed on each building would inform us of their former use? I thought of a line from Ruth Klüger about Dachau from her 1992 autobiographical work *weiter leben*:

Here everything was clean and orderly and you needed more fantasy than most people have in order to imagine what took place there forty years ago. Stones, wood, barracks, *Appellplatz*. The wood smells fresh and hearty, a fresh breeze blows through the empty *Appellplatz* and the barracks are almost inviting. What does it remind you of, perhaps it appears to be more a vacation camp than tortured life. And secretly, some visitors may think that they had it worse than the prisoners in the orderly German camps. The least, that belongs there, would be the sweat of human bodies, the smell and the aura of fear, the tense aggression, the reduced life.<sup>12</sup>

Now it is clear, that no memorial could fulfill Ruth Klüger's demand and even the best documentary films that describe this terror can only approach the real terror of the everyday in the camps. "To grasp the image of memory as it appears to us in the moment of danger" appears to be a hopeless attempt.<sup>13</sup> The real terror of the past; the gassed, dismembered, decayed, and burned bodies, the *Seuchenbarracke*, the gas chambers and the laboratories in which medical experiments took place, is not within the realm of experience for *die Nachgeborenen*, who are dependent on books, films and art, that is clean, purified materials for their information. The only sensation that can occur at these places is a "coming close to" (*Annäherung*), not identification and not reconciliation with the victims. We are dependent on the auratic charge of these places and on their uniqueness, a uniqueness that transcends all reason and rationality.

The difficult task of this memory process has been described by no other author so intensively and meticulously as by Jorge Semprun, himself a survivor of a concentration camp, Buchenwald. Semprun's recent book, *L'écriture ou la vie* (*Literature or Life*) was also one of the most superb literary contributions to the year of memory, 1995.<sup>14</sup> At the end of the book, Semprun describes his return to the former concentration camp 47 years after its liberation in 1945.

I didn't know, however, what had been done with the camp itself, with the monotonous rows of huts and concrete barracks. So I was completely surprised.

They'd kept the barbed-wire, the observation towers set at regular intervals along this perimeter. The watchtower over the entrance gate was still there, just as I'd remembered it. As well as the crematory, the washhouse, and the store for prisoners' belongings. Everything else had been leveled, but as at an archaeological excavation site, the positions and foundations of each wooden or concrete hut were indicated by rectangles of fine gray gravel, edged with stone, with a marker at one corner bearing the number that had once identified the vanished building.

The effect was unbelievably powerful. The empty space thus created, surrounded by barbed wire, dominated by the crematory chimney, swept by the wind of the Ettersberg, was a place of overwhelming remembrance. (295-6.)

The empty space or open place that Semprun describes is transformed in his text into a location of "insightful remembering" (*Eingedenken*), that makes it possible for the reader to project his or her own associations of the terror of the camps onto the gray surfaces out of stone and shale. Semprun's book shows us that no symbolic memorial and no didactic sign can replace or alleviate the difficult gaze into one's own self or can distort the unbearable question, how one would have lived and acted in the world of the concentration camp. Semprun's text does not relieve the reader of the responsibility to grasp the past as a part of one's own present. The text assumes, however, that the sense of responsibility and the ability to differentiate between the suffering of others and one's own history has not yet been obliterated through the indifference of a historical image that portrays fascism as an exception, an "accident of history."

Naturally there are other alternatives to the empty space that Semprun describes that remain in memory through their simple and effective formation. One of these places is the memorial in the Steglitz district of Berlin, a memorial that was strongly rejected by CDU politicians and upon whose simple mirrored walls the names of the deported Jews of Steglitz and the dates of their deportation are engraved. As one reads the names, one sees one's own face reflected in the mirrored surface of the wall. But here too, some of the names of the murdered Jews are missing, a fact that the engraved introduction to the names mentions. The names are missing because some of the names on the deportation lists were illegible. The writing of the SS bureaucrats who wrote

down the names was indecipherable to those who came after. The bearers of the illegible names are once again removed, made absent, forgotten, since the script of the bureaucratic accomplices in murder—*Schreibtischmörder*—are indecipherable to the generation of Germans born after the Third Reich. It remains questionable, the thought that the naming of the names of the victims, could fill the voids from which Semprun speaks.

In closing, I want to relate an experience that exemplifies the dilemma of commemoration and the difficult task to speak across the void that has fallen upon the second and third-generation Jews and Germans, despite the recognition that the terms “Jews” and “Germans” are themselves not discrete entities.

During the year of commemoration, 1995, while walking down the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin, along which Prussia, the German *Kaiserreich* and the Nazi regime had had their governmental offices, I came to Voss Street, where, a little over fifty years ago the battle for the *Reichskanzlei* had raged. At the end of this street, in the former area of the so-called “ministerial gardens” and the death strip of the Berlin Wall, there stands a small pile of dirt that is covered in dandelions and grass. Most of the city guides do not mention this location, but it opens up a panorama upon the site where the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe is supposed to be built. I stood on the small dirt hill above the debris of Hitler’s bunker and looked out over the desert-like, deserted site towards the Brandenburg Gate and to Christo’s and Jean Claude’s wrapped *Reichstag*. The silver material draped over the *Reichstag* shone in the afternoon sun and had transformed the old smoke-blackened building into a lively, light and soft object. The empty surface of the wrapped *Reichstag* made collective communication possible given the projective character of the emptiness. This collective communication among strangers from all over the world, of all walks of life and background made the dialogue possible that had been missing during the commemorative events of 1995. But soon the *Reichstag* was unwrapped and the inscribed words *Dem deutschen Volk* “to the German people” were again visible. The question remains whether this dialogue, that took place on the wide-open space in front of the wrapped *Reichstag*, could take place among the descendants of the Shoah legacy, despite all the memories and the unbridgeable historical experience of the children and grandchildren of the victims and perpetrators. After the winning design for the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe was rejected by the German Federal Government in July 1995, time remains to think once again about the project and possibility of commemoration in Germany. Perhaps this is the best way to commemorate the dead—to face the dilemma of commemoration across time and across historical divisions that remain the legacy of the Shoah for those who come after.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge the insightful comments on previous drafts of this paper by Holger Teschke and the helpful feedback by colleagues and students who heard different versions of this essay over the past year.

<sup>2</sup> For an in-depth description of this phenomenon see Timothy Ryback, "Stalingrad: Letters from the Dead," *New Yorker*, 58-71 and "Gottessegnen schauen" *Spiegel* (1995:20), 142, 145. The latter describes the work of Erwin Kowalke and his wife, who have single-handedly exhumed not only the skeletal remains of Wehrmacht soldiers, but also those who fought in the Soviet army.

<sup>3</sup> See Weigel, "Der Ort der Frauen im Gedächtnis des Holocaust: Symbolisierungen, Zeugenschaft und kollektive Identität," *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* (Fall 1995). My quotations are taken from a manuscript that Sigrid Weigel graciously made available to me.

<sup>4</sup> Recently, members of the jury, politicians, artists and members of the Jewish communities in Berlin once again engaged in discussions about the function and form of the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe at a colloquium dedicated to this topic in Berlin. According to Peter Radunski, Berlin's Senator of Culture, the construction of the "Holocaust Memorial" as it is known colloquially, will begin on January 27, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Henryk Broder's criticism of the competition, "Deutschmeister des Trauerns," *Spiegel* (1995:16): 222-4. Broder considers most of the designs for the memorial to be exemplary of the Germans' preoccupation with themselves: "Similarly, it appears to hold true for the larger collective that is suddenly afraid of itself and seeks a way out of a border-line situation. The preoccupation with the incomprehensible and the unfathomable does not lead to an increase in insight but rather to a decrease in bad conscience, since 'obviously' one is trying so hard to approach the incomprehensible and unfathomable." In her article "Der Ort der Frauen im Gedächtnis des Holocaust: Symbolisierung, Zeugungskraft und kollektive Identität" Weigel comments on how the designs correspond to a "self-thematization of the Germans about the obsessive appropriation of the victims into a model of a national tragedy." The English translation of these quotations and others in this essay are my own (KR).

<sup>6</sup> Weigel attributes the permanent separation between the victims and the bearers of the "perpetrator responsibility" to the incommensurability that emerges in the experience of death: "Given that the death experiences are already not capable of being communicated since the dead cannot bear witness to it, except through their remains, even the remains were made unrecognizable in the camps, after the individuality of the deaths had already been demolished in the process of killing."

<sup>7</sup> This sentiment and others similar to it are raised by Jane Kramer in her book *The Politics of Memory. Looking for Germany in the New Germany*. (New York: Random House, 1996.) As in previous work on the subject of Holocaust memorials and memory, James Young has written about the importance of considering the debate about the planned memorial as an integral part of the commemorative process. See Young,

“Gegen das Denkmal, für Erinnerung” in *Der Wettbewerb für das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas:” Eine Streitschrift*. Eds. Leonie Bauman et al. (Berlin: Verlag der Kunst, 1995), 174-8.

<sup>8</sup>. This quote is taken from the jury’s evaluation of the design, printed in the documentation of the competition. See *Künstlicher Wettbewerb. Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Kurzdokumentation*. Ed. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, (Berlin, 1995), 54.

<sup>9</sup>. See George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>10</sup>. The tradition of inscribing individual names on public monuments grew out of an existing practice in the 19th century to list the names and rank of soldiers who had fallen in war in cemeteries and in churches. For a thorough overview of the evolution of the form and meaning of war memorials in Germany, see Meinhold Lurz, *Kriegsdenkmäler in Deutschland*. Vol. 1-6, (Heidelberg: Esprint Verlag, 1985).

<sup>11</sup>. Dischereit, *Joëmis Tisch: Eine jüdische Geschichte*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988).

<sup>12</sup>. Ruth Klüger, *weiter leben. Eine Jugend*. (München: dtv, 1994), 77.

<sup>13</sup>. Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” in *Walter Benjamin. Gesammelte Schriften*. I-2. eds. Rudolf Tiedemann, Hermann Schweppenhäuser, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 695.

<sup>14</sup>. Semprun, *Literature or Life*. trans. Linda Coverdale, (New York: Viking, 1997), 295-6.



**BETWEEN FÜRTH AND TELAVIV: SOJOURNER MENTALITY  
AND FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS OF FORMER JEWISH  
DISPLACED PERSONS IN GERMANY**

Y. Michal Bodemann

It might be argued that what came to constitute the West German Jewish community before the Russian Jewish influx since the 1980s was also one of the very first groups of ethnically distinct immigrants to settle in Germany from Eastern Europe after 1945. These Jews show some characteristics that make them markedly different from Jewish immigrants in other contexts, and markedly different also from other immigrant groups to Germany.

Among these characteristics are, first, an extreme rags-to-riches mobility from utter poverty in the postwar displaced persons camps to substantial, even great personal wealth of many of these individuals today; second, a notable proclivity of a segment of this community, past or present, to work in socially disapproved economic spheres, especially prostitution, gambling, and real estate; third, an inordinate reluctance to get involved with the surrounding German society and culture which is unusual for individuals in high income brackets, and particularly atypical for Jews in general; and likewise, fourthly, lacking involvement in Jewish communal affairs, combined with an extraordinarily affective orientation towards Israel.

It is my contention that these characteristics can be successfully explained if we view this group as **sojourners**, as a particular type of strangers with a peculiar mentality. This is understood best if we take a look at Simmel's celebrated essay on the stranger. Georg Simmel spoke of the stranger as a "unity of two determinations": that of **wandering**, being detached from space, and that of being fixed in a particular space: Simmel's stranger, in this often quoted definition, "comes today and stays tomorrow ...who although he has not moved on also has not fully overcome the detachment of coming and going" (1971:143). Simmel's stranger therefore represents the unity of nearness and distance, he is an "element of the group"—even more, he is its constitutive element just as the poor for example or as "sundry 'inner enemies'" are elements of the group; the stranger is in the group and yet is constituted by exclusion and opposition.

In this essay, however, Simmel begins by bracketing the case of the stranger as wanderer or temporary sojourner, the type of stranger who comes today and **leaves** tomorrow; or, as I will try to show, a type of stranger who comes today and **intends** to leave tomorrow. The sojourner, then, shares some features with the stranger as discussed by Simmel and he is different in other respects: he has not only not overcome the "detachment of coming and going," but his

membership in the group as such is questionable, and he is not its constitutive element. I would argue that the sojourner phenomenon suggests that Simmel has constructed the conception of the stranger deceptively simply; it would need to be substantially reworked and differentiated, a project which however is not being attempted here.

Discussions of the sojourner can be found even in the older sociological literature. Sombart's image of the Jews, for example, contains, implicitly, a notion of the sojourner; unlike Simmel, Sombart did not see the Jews as being rooted in any diaspora society, and rather considered them as strangers who come today and leave tomorrow. In this context, Sombart relates an episode in which the Jews appear without sensibility for their surrounding environment. One day, he notes, a Jewish student came to him in Breslau from Eastern Siberia, for the sole purpose of studying the works of Karl Marx with him.

It took him three weeks for this long journey, and already on the day following his arrival, he visited me and asked me for one of Marx's writings. A few days later, he returned, spoke to me about what he had read, returned the book and took a new one. This went on for a few months. Then he returned to his eastern Siberian village. He had not taken notice of his environment, not met anyone, did not take walks at all, hardly knew where he had been staying. He passed through the world of Breslau without seeing it, just as he had gone through his previous world, and how in future years he will go through the world without having any sense of it, only with Marx in his head. A typical case? I do think so. (317/246)

The phenomenon of the sojourner, as distinct from that of Simmel's stranger or Park's marginal man, was first discussed in an essay by Paul C. P. Siu (1952), a student of Robert Park who was well familiar with Simmel's original essay. Siu who had studied Chinese laundrymen in Chicago, argues that the essential characteristic of the sojourner is that "he clings to the culture of his own ethnic group"—he does not become bicultural as Park's marginal man—and "[p]sychologically he is unwilling to organise himself as a permanent resident in the country of his sojourn."(1952:34) The sojourner, according to Siu, is ethnocentric, he tends to be isolated, cannot be assimilated, his goal is "to do a job and to do it in the shortest possible time"(35). Moreover, he has "no desire for full participation in the community life of his adopted land"; he thinks of himself as an outsider and feels content as a spectator in many of the community affairs." His "activities in the community are symbiotic rather than social."(36)

The psychological predisposition that Siu describes for the Chinese sojourners has also been noted by Nathan Urieli (1994) for the case of Israeli immigrants to Chicago who claim to have left Israel for strictly economic, short term advantages. Israeli immigrants to the U.S., as so called “permanent sojourners” have to contend with Israeli disapproval of having emigrated from Israel; they “wish to be considered as Israelis who temporarily live abroad, and they express high sensitivity towards being stigmatized as *yordim*.”<sup>1</sup> For Urieli, these sojourners are characterised by “rhetorical ethnicity,” a form of ethnicity which does not lead to elaborate institutional structures. As Urieli puts it, it

involves a strong commitment to the country of origin at the symbolic level, but with almost no manifestations of ethnicity in terms of community activities, membership in ethnic organisations or ethnic neighbourhoods. (441)

The present analysis attempts to show that, with some modification, the same features can be identified for the case of the former Jewish displaced persons in Germany who until 1989 were the numerically strongest element within contemporary German Jewry and still today represent its political and social backbone.

### **The Jewish Displaced Persons In Germany**

After the defeat of Nazism, Jewish survivors of the concentration camps and others who survived in hiding or in the forests of Eastern Europe eventually arrived in the western occupied zones of Germany where they were housed in displaced persons’ camps such as Belsen and Zeilsheim in northern and central western Germany or Landsberg and Föhrenwald in the south. Their numbers swelled after a new wave of anti-Semitic pogroms especially in Poland in 1946. This group which saw itself as the *She’erit Hapletah*, the “remnant of the saved”<sup>2</sup> and as such quickly developed a rich Jewish and Zionist oriented culture in the camps, nevertheless considered its stay there as in a waiting room (Königseder and Wetzel, 1995) and as on “cursed soil”: the survivors were hoping to reach either Palestine or North America in the shortest possible time in order to start a new life. Most indeed succeeded. Of an estimated 250,000 refugees, only about 15,000 to 20,000 eventually remained in Germany, largely against their intention. Some of them remained for health reasons, others had married Germans, but the majority of these found themselves ever more integrated in the German economy. Attempts by many especially in the 1950s to try to start a new life in Israel or the United States failed and they usually returned to West Germany to resume their business ventures or professional

career. All of this notwithstanding, they never considered Germany as their home, they “sat on packed suitcases”—these suitcases often actually existed—and largely remained socially aloof from their environment, with Israel as their imaginary home.

The following case study of three brothers and their families demonstrates, I believe, a number of characteristics typical for true sojourners: (1) the life of these eastern European Jews in Germany focused almost entirely around their attempt to earn as much money as quickly as possible; (2) they remained socially and politically aloof from their German environment; (3) they invested little if any energy and money in German Jewish communal infrastructure and as such can indeed be seen as “rhetorical ethnics”; (4) they are intensely family oriented and (5) their attachment to their “homeland”—an imaginary homeland, to be sure, since they never lived there—is not merely rhetorical: it is strong enough that four out of nine of their children decided to emigrate to Israel.

### **Three Brothers**

The three Mincz brothers whose families I will sketch in the following pages survived the Shoah together with one sister in various camps; four other siblings—two younger brothers and two sisters—perished. The surviving four came to Germany, lived in the DP camp of Landsberg/Bavaria for a short while before they began their later career. Their parents and grandparents had lived in Olkusz, a mid-sized town in Upper Silesia. Their father Jacob Mincz and his wife Miriam were successful and respected business people in town, but the problems began when a ghetto and a *Judenrat* were set up in Olkusz; later that *Judenrat* placed Jacob Mincz at the top of its list to be deported; as a member of the Jewish establishment, he was expected to join the *Judenrat* but had refused because he did not want to collaborate with the Germans; in retaliation, he was one of the first to be deported, together with the poorest Jews in the town.

These four siblings then survived first through a long odyssey of flight and in hiding, and later with luck and partly some connections in labor, not extermination camps such as Blechhammer in Upper Silesia, not Majdanek or Auschwitz. At the end of the war, they, too, were sent on the death marches and by sheer coincidence, the three brothers found each other again in Buchenwald; their sister survived in Groß-Rosen concentration camp. After the defeat of Nazi Germany, Albert, Ignaz and Jurek went to Landsberg where they were united with their surviving sister Gertrud. Gertrud married a fellow survivor, Leon Liebermann, whom she had met in Landsberg and soon thereafter left with him for the United States where he had relatives who had sponsored him. Of the remaining three brothers, Albert, the eldest, left the Landsberg camp after some

months in early 1946 in order to try his luck at a variety of business ventures in and around the city of Fürth near Nürnberg. Early on, he also had plans to emigrate to the United States; however, he could not get a visa, apparently because he was caught in black market activities and for the Americans therefore had a criminal record. The other two brothers left Landsberg shortly thereafter and joined their eldest brother, who was clearly also the strongest figure, if not an *Ersatz* father, in business. Much of this economic activity at first originated with the U.S. army: the Mincz's bought from them, often in auctions, and then went to sell to the Germans, especially used cars and furniture. They also started a hotel. But the furniture business grew in leaps and bounds, and by 1970 at their pinnacle, they had expanded to over 80 stores all over West Germany; these stores operated according to the cash and carry principle, with many stores open only one day per week. *Fürther Möbel* was a name quite well known in Southern Germany especially.

In terms of their personal lives, Albert met Eva Piffko from Zurich who was visiting friends in Fürth and he then married her in 1952. In comparison to other DPs his age, this was a fairly late marriage since many other survivors married and had children within the first year(s) of their lives as DPs. It appears that for all three brothers, setting up a solid material base first was more important—or their business activities were so all-consuming that there was no time for family. Ignaz, who had tried to emigrate to the United States and lived there for almost a year in Brooklyn, returned and was the next to marry, in 1956, a woman from Switzerland as well but no relation, and Jurek married an Auschwitz survivor, Raina Zisman, in 1959. Yet once married, Albert in particular showed the typical case of a DP who was virtually obsessed with his family and showered his children with the most effusive love. As his daughter Miriam put it,

... and for [my father] the children were—the absolute, the apple of the eye, well the children were more important than his own life, and to build an existence for them and to experience a beautiful life that really was his *raison d'être*. That was for him the most important thing, the children. And I have that, by the way, that story with the children, that must be a Holocaust thing, because at some point I was with Jurek on a plane, some way to some birth of one of his grandchildren, and there we spoke about this, and there he said: For us—you don't understand that—these children are *Wunderkinder* [prodigies], that we, when we were in the camp, if anyone would have told us there, you will get out of here and will have kids, and perhaps grandchildren, that we would never have believed. Well this, that once more that could be

experienced that one had one's own kids, and these kids would have kids again, and perhaps even these kids in Israel to—this was a total wishful dreamy illusion. And therefore this business with the children. So the children are much more important than the wife. The children are—this is a totally obsessive- a totally crazy obsessive love (*Affenliebe*), this love to the children. And with my father, that was totally madly strong, it was an all inclusive, total love to the children. He would have done anything for his children, in fact he did. (Miriam, p. 14)

Gaby, the youngest sibling, shares this view:

Well, we have a very close family life. A close family life and a very loving family life. For my father, the family meant everything, my father almost loved his children too much already. So my father simply tried to give his children only what he himself through the war and the concentration camp did not have, to make good for it. And I as the youngest member, and between myself and - between me and my oldest siblings there is a difference of in part twelve and sixteen years. And so I was the baby (*Nesthäkchen*) and really got pretty spoiled... Well, and this is really still today like that. So my mother tries really hard to hold the family together and we really have a pretty close relationship to our mother...(Gaby, 10)

Of Herman's five children, four were born in short sequence, and the last one, Gaby, followed 16 years after the first born, Miriam, and twelve years after Chaim who was fourth in line. Of the other two brothers, Ignaz had one daughter, Naomi, born in 1957, and Jurek and his wife had two children born within two years after they had married. Although these families were much smaller, the ties between parents and children were similarly intensive as in the case of Albert. Nevertheless, in the long run, the brothers' intensive involvement with their families put a strain on their relationship as brothers. This was undoubtedly aggravated by the fact that there was no integrative family environment through other siblings and most of all, through parents who could have held the relationship together. The three brothers therefore were pulled apart not in the least by the competing demands of their wives, and some blame Fela, Ignaz's wife, especially for being the main instigator of trouble. Not that they did not try to reconcile their differences. Attempts were made, for example to have the three fathers-in-law mediate in the conflict, but to no avail; in the end, they even had to take out their differences in the courts.

These conflicts first led to Ignaz (in 1975) and then Jurek (1978) leaving *Fürther Möbel*, but since Albert had to pay out his brothers, extremely high interest rates in the 1980s and Albert's own deteriorating health eventually put the firm into bankruptcy in 1984. One year later, Albert died of cancer, and his children put a large part of the blame for his death on their uncles.

### **The Social Context**

I would argue that the conflict between the brothers and the downfall of *Fürther Möbel* can be explained in part by three structural characteristics that directly or indirectly have to do with the effects of the Shoah and their sojourner status: first, the Mincz brothers lacked the wider integrative family context on account of the genocide. Without siblings, parents or relatives they constituted three nucleated islands onto themselves; second, as sojourners, they lacked significant ties to other Jews both in Fürth and later in Munich where some family members eventually had begun to gravitate to. As sojourners, thirdly, they also lacked viable social and political ties to the surrounding German society. As Chaim put it,

My father had absolute integrity. Really beyond any suspicion to do any crooked things. He was absolutely honest, absolutely correct, a correct businessman and very successful, but, whether he liked it or not, from a particular point of success, in order to progress, you simply need a certain protection at the higher level, something that would also have to do a lot with politics. And my father never advanced to that, he was simply always the Jew. (Chaim, 5)

The consequences of their social isolation became apparent especially at the time of the firm's bankruptcy when the media and the press launched into a campaign accusing the Minczes of a fictitious business failure in order to pocket their employees' social benefits plan funds; an accusation which, after house searches and a subsequent trial, turned out to have been unfounded. There were no friends to rely on either in the Jewish community which in Fürth was weak in any case, or in the wider German context. They were pretty much left to fend for themselves.

From the sojourner point of view, and in light of the particular sentiments of concentration camp survivors, their lack of ties to the surrounding German world was understandable; but why were they so poorly linked to the community of their fellow Jews? Here, an important role might have been the feeling of betrayal felt by Albert about the Jewish leadership in his native

Olkusz which was responsible for putting his father on the first transport. As Miriam put it

...there was also some kind of a conflictual situation for my father, he had a very, very big disappointment concerning the Jews. That is, when the Germans came into this town of Olkusz, my father's father was the first to be asked to go into the *Judenrat*, because from the respectable families, they were of course the first to form the *Judenrat*. My grandfather resisted that with all his strength, so he was not in the *Judenrat* and said, with the Germans he would not - not cooperate. That is how he saw it then. And on the first transport that was sent to the camps—it was normal, and that's the way it was, from the poorer families, that is, from the bottom up, not from the top down, that is from the poorer families and the simple families, they were taken on the first transport, and on that first transport then my father (real grandfather) somehow was right part of that, somehow as revenge [...] that my grandfather did not want to participate in the *Judenrat*, and it was a bitterness about that which my father carried with him his whole life, that he had been betrayed by Jews. There was then somewhere an incredible bitterness towards Jews. He also experienced a fair bit in the camps concerning the Jews, it really was not all rosy. (Miriam 13)

### **The Jewish Community**

Yet if we look beyond the Mincz family, we find that the lack of involvement in community affairs, certainly a cause of the poverty of intra-Jewish ties, extends to a much larger section of the *Jüdischen Gemeinden*. We have here the seemingly contradictory phenomenon of a Jewish population with a very strong Jewish identity who nevertheless show rather little interest in their community. I believe this can only be explained by their mentality as sojourners, of a group of people who were not planning to make Germany—and its Jewish community—their home. A striking illustration of this general lack of interest in developing the community is the following story told by Jurek:

Jurek Mincz: There was also a Russian Jew, a young man alone, 21 years old. And in this club room [in the Jewish community centre of Fürth, YMB] he slept on the floor for over a year.

Raina Mincz: Because the *Gemeinde* was not able to provide him with an apartment.... Can you imagine that? (...) I have a newspaper article, where he slept on the floor. (...) There was a picture of him in the

*Fürther Zeitung*, not with his face but with his back, and it described his life, from Russia, landed in Fürth, in the *Kultusgemeinde*...

And the synagogue alone has x number of rooms, and Mr. S [a Jewish leader, YMB] could not give him any, and so he had to live in that room where they smoked and did God knows what....

J: I managed, at any rate, in a house where I have apartments, a woman died, an older woman, is a two room apartment, subsidised housing, so I gave that to the young man, and starting the first of September he'll have an apartment. (Jurek, II/18)

In other words, instead of doing all he could to accommodate a newcomer to the community, also as a means to perhaps attract other Russian Jews to Fürth in order to rejuvenate the community, the leader of the community discouraged that potential, and there were no voices there strong enough to challenge him. The fruitless opposition by the Mincz brothers over many years to the dictatorial Mr. S., leader of the community, proves this point. Indeed, this authoritarian structure of many Jewish communities in Germany must be attributed in large part to the low level of community involvement and participation which in a voluntary organisation would tend toward democratic decision making: it is not a question of size alone that makes a community thrive or inversely, to be paralysed. Only in recent years can we discern a marked change to more open structures—a change that goes hand in hand with an ever weaker sojourner mentality in the second generation.

On the other hand, while they were not significantly involved in Jewish community affairs, they did use the community as a service. Although not particularly observant, they did go to synagogue on the High Holidays, their children did get Jewish religious instruction in place of Catholic and Protestant classes in school, and most of all, the Zionist Youth Organisation (ZJD) provided a means to foster a Jewish identity with a strong Zionist orientation. In this sense, the German Jewish community is markedly different from North American Jewry where the emphasis in Jewish education runs along religious/cultural lines and less along lines of Zionism. Indeed, I would hypothesise that of all of the European Jewish communities with the exception of Austria, postwar (West) German Jewry was, and still is, the most Zionist oriented community in Europe which cannot be understood without the sojourner mentality of its Eastern Jewish component.

### **Sojourner Mentality and the Second Generation**

In the Mincz family, this Zionist orientation together with the sojourner mentality had tangible consequences. Most Jewish children in Fürth were

organised in the ZJD (Zionist Youth organisation) with regular meetings in the community centre and various summer programs, especially summer youth camps (*machanot*) in the Alps and elsewhere. This in turn served as an ideal preparation for the childrens' *aliyah* (emigration) to Israel. Chaim, for example, who however says that in Germany he "never had Jewish friends," entered the ZJD at around age fifteen and was very active there as a *madrich* (youth leader) in the summer and winter *machanot* (youth camps). Soon thereafter, around age seventeen, and through a Zionist organisation again, he came to Israel for a two year stay (Chaim,16). Miriam as well attributes her Zionist commitment in part at least to the Zionist youth organisation.

Miriam: Well then I came to Israel that was - that is, I was in Israel before, but I wanted to go to Israel after *Abitur*, that was my plan very early on already, with fourteen, fifteen, even before I was in Israel I knew that I wanted to emigrate to Israel, so I was the Zionist pioneer in our family so to speak. That was for various reasons, first because at home we basically had a Zionist education from my father, and second, we were also organised in the Zionist Youth.... (p.2)

Q: What influence did the ZJD have exactly?

Miriam: I can only speak for myself. Well, I believe that was a very good framework and that—for me that was certainly a support and it also helped somewhere solve our identity problems somehow. Well I identified with that incredibly much. It gave me an emotional charge, so I believe that in our time this really influenced us a lot. (Miriam, 16)

Of the nine children, four eventually did make *aliyah*, and it is significant that these four are to be found among the older six, whereas the younger three children remained in Germany. I would argue that when Miriam, for example, grew up—she was in Gymnasium at the time of the Eichmann trial in Israel and of some major Nazi trials in Germany, the Six Day War and the anti-Israeli turn in the German student movement—the political atmosphere was entirely different from the respective period in Mark's, Lilian's, or Gaby's time: they could value their materially comfortable existence and they experienced a new sympathetic attention to Jews and an explosion of remembrance of the Holocaust in German society which is also clearly reflected in their attitude:

I often asked myself the question why we are here in Germany of all places. Of course also in consideration of the past. How can somebody who was persecuted in the Third Reich or who suffered so much under the Germans, decide to stay in Germany. I asked myself this question

because inside me there was a problem of comprehension, it was schizoid from reasoning, although here we had it here anything but bad. So my question did not come out of suffering (Not) but simply out of a mental schizophrenia. I mean we grew up magnificently, we had...neither financial problems nor did we have a bad adolescence, that is we grew up like in paradise, one has to say that too, and put this into the equation. And Germany also isn't a country where in the country anyways, from the viewpoint of politics, one would suffer. (Gaby, 13)

Mark, who in contrast to Gaby was very much involved with the ZJD nevertheless found that he was "more tied to Germany than my brother"; (Jonathan had moved to Israel):

M: Well, I was always more here psychologically (*innerlich*) than my siblings, I always had far more contact here and something in me is at home here. (Mark,7)...

Q: But at the same time, you live here, as a Jew in Germany...is that or is that not a problem?...

M:Of course it is a problem.

Q: I am thinking of Ezer Weizman's speech

M: Well I don't have the feeling that someone can dictate whether I am allowed to live here or not...

So I certainly do not live unconflicted in Germany, I think all of what I said makes that clear.

Q: Is that then something like "foreign in their own land" or not?

M: Hm. I would turn this totally the other way. At home in a foreign land. (Mark, 29)<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, they feel a certain measure of estrangement from Israel. Mark only hints at that; he was in a *kibbutz* with his non-Jewish girlfriend, it was "a very difficult time, that is, at that time was the war in Lebanon-" and he wanted to be different from his brother who had made *aliyah*. (Mark, 7) Gaby put it like this:

Gaby: Don't ask me now whether I would live in Israel, would want to

Q.:Yes, but?

G: Because I absolutely would not.

Q: Why not? Too hot?

G: No, because I cannot stand the people there

Q: But why?

G: Because for me, they are all idiots

Q: How so?

G: In Israel it is like they are all unfriendly, everybody thinks he is the president of all the countries of the world, and there is no service in the original sense, one cannot subordinate oneself, they have no culture, no politeness, no friendliness, and nothing of what makes a life worth living. (Gaby,16)

Nevertheless, even among those children who decided to stay in Germany the sojourner mentality has by no means been overcome. This is most apparent in the family status of all children: while Miriam, Chaim, Naomi and Jonathan—the children who made *aliyah*—all married and have children, of the five who remained in Germany, only Lilian married and has children. It is telling, however, that she married within the closest perimeter of the family, so close that it was described as virtual incest by some family members. She married her uncle's closest friend's son, a man with whom Albert was in concentration camp and who is also close to her father Jurek. We could interpret that as a way of replicating her parents' position and essentially reaffirming her status in the sojourner community. Naomi is a special case: she returned to Germany in the course of her disintegrating marriage to Mark Kaplan. She now lives in Hamburg with her son and on occasion sees Mark Mincz who lives there as well and works as an architect.

It is important to see, however, that the sojourner status alone did not determine this difference. The number of eligible Jewish marriage partners in Germany is limited, as Gaby explains:

Q: There are only a few [Jewish] people left, right?

Gaby: No, years ago there was talk of seventy-two Jews in Fürth, but that must be already ten years ago, I was still in school, and since then it has always been that the older people died and nothing came from below, that is, the youth partly went to Munich, partly I had a girlfriend; my first great love was also a Jewish girl from Fürth, that was an absolute phenomenon, because, because same age and then also compatible emotionally, like two drops of water in the sea, right, but she in the meantime is happily married in New York. So nothing really is keeping anybody here, the active youngsters leave and the old ones die off, so at some point it is all finished. (Gaby,11)

Chaim is more specific:

Q: Do you think [that your brothers are not married] has to do with the fact that they cannot find Jewish women, or not?

Chaim: (a) I believe that it has to do with the fact that they cannot find Jewish women because the Jewish women who sojourn (*aufhalten*) in Germany, are basically a catastrophe. To bring a woman from Israel to Germany usually fails because you tear them out of their acceptedness, you plant them in a totally new, alien environment, then one has a job and they work, I don't know, twelve, thirteen hours per day, one barely sees the woman and who does she have contact with? (Chaim, 12)

Naomi as well, who at age thirty-nine is still being supported financially by her father, has studied Judaics at Hamburg University and now works as a freelance translator in Hamburg, has not found another eligible Jewish partner. More perhaps than the others who remained in Germany, she feels especially deeply alienated from her German environment and probably sees herself doubly as a sojourner in Germany: first, as a Jew like her parents and cousins, and second as an Israeli whose aliyah essentially was a failed project. She dreams of returning there to live, travels to Israel often, has a large collection of Israeli music and video cassettes and cultivates friendships in a mostly Israeli and North American oriented environment.

It is telling in this regard that Mark and Andreas, those in the second generation who live with German partners, would not object to starting a family—but their partners are not interested in converting to Judaism, and as long as they do not convert, they do not see themselves in a position—or at least are not quite ready—to start a family.

Q: Any thoughts of marrying, having children and so on?

Mark: Yes, there is the wish....Yes, well I mean that is of course more difficult in the moment where I live with a non-Jewish woman and to reconcile this with the demands of family and also one's own needs, that is more difficult, right....So the question then how do you do that, and that is in America surely much easier than here, I think it is also not that unusual, I don't know, that the wife simply is not Jewish and the man is Jewish and the children are being raised Jewish, in the spectrum of American Judaism this is surely a little more common than here, no...

Q: Really?

M: Yes, so here, I don't know, normally at least the woman has to convert and it always then also -

Q: And your girlfriend would do that or not?

M: No ...

Q: Ok, but would she be opposed if your kids were brought up Jewish?

M: No

Q: She wouldn't be opposed

M: No. Hm. So we have to, have somehow to find a form for that, and that is not so easy. (Mark,25)

## Conclusion

In short, what in the DP generation was still being considered the “land of Amalek” or the “cursed German soil,” and is being articulated in the framework of a sojourners mentality has been transformed in the second generation in a rather varied pattern of responses. Miriam, the “eldest born of the eldest brother” (Miriam, 1) never felt at home in Germany and left right after *Abitur*; it is noteworthy, nevertheless, that she sells German books and prints in Jerusalem and thus does maintain cultural ties to the land in which she was born and raised; Andreas and Benjamin, management consultant and physician, both in Munich, studied in Germany and stayed there; while Andreas seems to have accepted his German environment, Benjamin seems more of an escapist, described as a happy go lucky hippie type motor cyclist who lives, in his sister Miriam's judgement in a “dream world.” Chaim, who had begun to settle in Fürth and who had set up a fitness studio there, eventually settled in Israel, a move that was facilitated by three factors: first, his earlier stay there, second his meeting an Israeli woman and third his problems with the law in Germany—likely a consequence of being a son of survivors. Naomi, in turn, followed in Miriam's footsteps, left for Israel after *Abitur*, married there and had a child there; she returned to Germany in the course of a separation from her Israeli husband but has remained in an Israeli dream world in Germany, without a clearly defined professional career; Jonathan as well seems to have been committed early to leave for Israel which he did following his *Abitur*, but it is perhaps not an accident entirely that he married a woman whose father was from Austria and who is a scholar of German Jewry in Israel. The three youngest cousins: Jonathan's brother Mark and his sister Lilian and their cousin Gaby all settled firmly in Germany: Lilian in a ghettoised milieu closely resembling that of her parents; Mark trying to be reflective of the holocaust and defining his very own idiosyncratic Jewish identity, and Gaby, perhaps following most closely in his fathers footsteps by being totally involved in his work in order not to have to think about his Jewish existence in Germany.

In light of the current discussions about Jews in Germany and German Jews, Jews as temporary sojourners or as firmly settled in Germany, the case of the Mincz family suggests that the period of sitting on packed suitcases has come to an end and that for Jews in the second generation, living in Germany has indeed become, as Mark had put it, being “at home in a foreign land.”<sup>4</sup>

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup>. Yordim means “those who descend”, derogatory term for emigrants from Israel.
- <sup>2</sup>. The term was taken from a passage in the bible (Haggai 1, 12). It describes those who returned from the biblical exile to Jerusalem.
- <sup>3</sup>. “Foreign in their own land” refers to the title of a book by Broder and Lang (1979).
- <sup>4</sup>. It is becoming ever more apparent that among the younger generation, a fundamental transformation in the orientations of German Jewry is taking place, towards a substantial affirmation of Jewish life in Germany. I have dealt with this recently in my discussion of the biographical account of a young Jewish woman in Berlin (Bodemann, “Öffentliche Körperschaft”). The first author, to my knowledge, to have taken this position is Sander Gilman; see to this the introduction in Gilman and Remmler (1994). In my own book (Bodemann, *Gedächtnistheater*, 55 and passim) I had still taken a more ambivalent stand, but recent evidence, statements from younger German Jews, Russian and non-Russian, confirms this new Jewish assertiveness. (See to this Bodemann, 1997).



## **GEOGRAPHIES OF MEMORY: PROTOCOLS OF WRITING IN THE BORDERLANDS**

Azade Seyhan

Es warteten auch andere Türken an der Deutschland-Tür. Ein Mann mit dem Schaf, ein Hodscha mit seinem Minarett. Ein illegaler Arbeiter verkleidete sich als Fußballer, so hoffte er durch die Grenzkontrolle nach Deutschland durchzukommen. Der Bauer und sein Esel warteten auch. Sie warteten und warteten. Die Deutschland-Tür ging auf und gleich wieder zu. Es kam ein türkischer Toter, seinen Sarg tragend.<sup>1</sup>

[Other Turks were also waiting at the Gate to Germany. A man with his sheep, a hodja with his minaret. An illegal worker masqueraded as a soccer player hoping to get through the border patrol into Germany. The farmer and his donkey waited, too. They waited and waited. The Gate to Germany opened and then immediately closed. A dead Turk came out carrying his coffin.]

- Emine Sevgi Özdamar

To cross the linguistic border implies that you decenter your voice. The border crosser develops two or more voices. This is often the experience of Mexican writers who come to the United States. We develop different speaking selves that speak for different aspects of our identity.<sup>2</sup>

- Guillermo Gómez-Peña

This century, now in its final countdown to closing the door on a millennium, will probably go down in demographic history as an era of mass migrations of unprecedented magnitude, cutting across national, ethnic, religious, cultural, class, urban, and rural lines. "To the forcibly induced migrations of slaves, peasants, the poor, and the ex-colonial world that make up so many of the hidden stories of modernity," writes Iain Chambers, "we can also add the increasing nomadism of modern thought. . . Our sense of belonging, our language and the myths we carry in us remain, but no longer as 'origins' or signs of 'authenticity' capable of guaranteeing the sense of our lives."<sup>3</sup> The mythic formulations of our originary communities now manifest themselves "as traces, memories and murmurs that are mixed with other histories, episodes, encounters."<sup>4</sup>

The last two decades have witnessed the widespread displacement and resettlement of a multiplicity of populations as a result of war, economic

necessity, labor migration, brain drain from countries of the Third World, search for political asylum, or the dissolution of one-time national borders, such as the unification of Germany and the demise of the Soviet state. The various ethnic, religious, and national groups that have left their traditional homelands voluntarily or under threat of death, torture, poverty, or imprisonment surge in endless streams toward the gates of more affluent and politically stable countries of North America and Europe. The reception of these groups often takes place in an arena of contestatory and confrontational politics and is imbricated in the larger debates calling for “traditional national identities” or in “proposals for new forms of transnational community, and assertions of regionalized corporate identities.”<sup>5</sup>

An active European site of fiery debates, where stakes involving issues of labor migration, immigration, patriation, and national and ethnic identity politics are very high, is the reunified German state. At this historical juncture, approximately six million foreigners, including the so-called *Gastarbeiter* (guest-workers), refugees, various political and economic exiles, writers, artists, and professionals are permanently living in Germany. In the embattled Europe of the post-Cold War era, Germany with her economic stature, political power and stability, generous welfare system, and what until recently were very flexible asylum laws, has become, perhaps quite unwillingly and unwittingly, a new diaspora for an eclectic body of displaced peoples. However, since Germany is officially not a country of immigration, foreign-born residents of the German state who have lived, worked, and paid taxes there for decades and their German born children cannot claim citizenship and the rights and privileges pertaining thereto.

In order to meet the labor needs of its postwar industrial growth, West Germany began importing workers from the countries of the Mediterranean basin. The first treaty to recruit short-term workers was signed in 1955 with Italy. Bilateral agreements with other countries followed in quick succession. Under the terms of the treaty signed with Turkey in 1963, the first crew of 100,000 Turkish workers arrived in West Germany. Although initially only poor Anatolian farmers joined the army of recruits, eventually artisans, civil servants, teachers, and small business owners, all increasingly frustrated by the economic hardship that was eroding the middle class, boarded the train to Munich. In 1973, when the need for workers had stabilized, recruitment was frozen (*Anwerbestopp*). However, whenever the economy demanded additional labor force, employers devised ways of letting more foreign workers in through the loopholes in the system. In the course of time, a great number of Turkish workers and their families decided to stay. During the last two decades, many political refugees from Turkey also sought asylum in Germany, bringing

the number of Turkish residents there close to three million. Most Germans are, at best, oblivious to this culture in their midst and, at worst, openly hostile to it. Although the Turkish community in Germany has been transformed from a migrant labor force into an ethnic minority, it has virtually no political representation. The nationalistic passions that swept Germany after the reunification brought the citizenship debates to a halt and “created a climate in which resident non-Germans were equated to asylum seekers and tarred with the same brush of illegitimacy.”<sup>6</sup>

The German concept of citizenship is based on blood ties and birth place—*ius sanguinis*—and not residency, acculturation, language, and circumstance—*ius soli*. Consequently, the Turks of Germany are consigned, physically and figuratively, to a life of detention at the border. The literary works of many Turkish-German writers represent in naturalistic, parodistic, or allegorical genres the waking life of the Turkish subject as an uninterrupted nightmare of applying and reapplying for passports, visas, and residence and work permits. Caught in the interstices of geographical and cultural borders, the Turkish residents of Germany embody an essentialist “foreignness” marked by a hybridity of speech, custom, mannerism, and style. In tones resonant of the lament of the eternally “foreign” Turk, the Chicana poet, novelist, and critic Ana Castillo writes in her essay, “A Countryless Woman,” that she is commonly perceived as a foreigner wherever she is, including the United States and Mexico.<sup>7</sup> Guillermo Gómez-Peña, a Mexican writer, critic, and performance artist, who now lives and writes in America but is not (yet) a Chicano, maintains that living the history of border crossings, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization shreds the fiber of monolithic national or ethnic identities. Gómez-Peña sees himself as a Latin American, a Mexican, and a Mexican in the process of Chicanization. In America, he does not have a grasp of Chicano slang, in Mexico, his speech betrays patterns of *pochó* idiom, in Spain, he is called *Sudaca*, and in Germany, he is mistaken for a Turk.<sup>8</sup> Like Castillo, who eloquently expresses Lukács notion of the “transcendent homelessness” of the *mestiza* and Gómez-Peña, who has settled into the permanence of transition, the Turkish-Germans, neither Turkish nor German, wander forever along the Möbius strip of cultural borderlands. Their social, cultural, and linguistic nomadism and struggles have produced a literature of powerful resonance at the periphery of German society.

The cultural activism of Turkish and other non-German writers, artists, and academics is both a response and a form of resistance to the social intolerance and injustice that daily confront the many foreign residents of Germany. In spite of the high degree of critical sophistication that the works of non-native German writers have attained, their writing is still not stripped of the label

*Migrant(en)enlitteratur* (migrant literature). Like the term *Gastarbeiter*, this designation diminishes the impact and distorts the parameters of the significance of this body of writing. The word *Migrant* houses connotations of impermanence, instability, detachment, and lack of social commitment and eschews empowering notions of adaptability, resilience, and synthesis. In order to examine more fully the critical and historical implications of this literature, I would like to draw on the transitive momentum of the concept of borderlands writing. This theoretical metaphor marks a turning point in contemporary cultural criticism, for it transforms the notion of a geographical space to include a historical place. It generates a conceptual field where word and act, different idioms, intellectual heritages, and cultural memories are engaged in exchange, confrontation, and renegotiation.

Although the topos of border originated in an actual topography, at a geographical border, it has since travelled to sites where borders mark passages not necessarily in space but rather in time, history, and memory. It is the challenge posed to individual and collective memory during the passage through the borderlands that lends the writing of dislocated peoples its poetic urgency. The writers of the modern diaspora can claim neither the homeland nor the host land as theirs. They need another place, a third space, often a place of writing which belongs to the geographies of language, memory, and myth. Memory is an essential component of individual, ethnic, or national identity. For the displaced people of modern diasporas, however, collective memory is often jeopardized. The reductive strategies of politicization or ideologization further challenge the endurance of cultural legacies in diaspora. Therefore, the necessity for remembrance and its realization in writing, or (more precisely) re-writing, often take on the function of a sacred ritual. In this context, writers become “speakers” of memory *par excellence*. Literature emerges as an institution of memory, the topos of subjective and historical agency in a time of emotional loss. What was lost, forgotten, erased, or occluded, is recovered in figurative discourse. Unlike official histories, literature can accommodate alternative memories and contestatory scripts of the past.

“To make themselves the master of memory and forgetfulness,” writes Jacques Le Goff in *History and Memory*, “is one of the great preoccupations of classes, groups, and individuals who have dominated and continue to dominate historical societies.”<sup>9</sup> When those minority groups that are often perceived as *personae non gratae*, such as Arabs in Europe and the United States, Mexicans in the Southwest United States, Turks in Germany, and Koreans in Japan become objects of critical, academic, and media scrutiny, they suffer further disenfranchisement, as their own stories and histories are rewritten and reinterpreted in a way that erases their past and confiscates their present.

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Individual and collective memories in the works of immigrant writers of the United States and Germany, who are the subjects of my recent research, constitute a vast complex of social history that represents what Le Goff considers its own “counterweight” or response to the one-sided flow of representation and information generated for the defense of certain interests. In what follows, I shall attempt to illustrate how memory recovers history, retells, reinvents, and repossesses it for individual and collective empowerment in the tales of two writers, Gloria Anzaldúa, a Chicana/*tejana* poet and critic from the United States side of the U.S.-Mexican border and Emine Sevgi Özdamar, a Turkish writer living in Germany. Their writing illustrates the critical development that is changing preconceived notions about so-called minority literatures.

I think it is no longer feasible to map in a seamless way either an American or a German identity. Both the United States and, more recently, Germany have come to represent the modern diaspora for growing numbers of people who leave their homelands for political and economic reasons. The choice of writers in this comparative reading was suggested by the border situation of their respective cultures with regard to the concept of a eurocentrically defined history. Turkey is at the eastern border of Europe, and Mexico exists at a double border, that is, on the southern margin of the United States as well as on the western margin of Europe. Historically, both the Mexicans in the United States and the Turks in Germany constituted the backbone of imported (and often unskilled labor), although the history of Turkish labor in Germany is a much more recent phenomenon dating only from the 1960s. Both groups have faced the most extreme forms of economic exploitation and have traditionally been considered undesirable aliens. Though economically indispensable, they represent the *personae non gratae* among immigrant groups in their respective host countries. Whereas the Asian-American, for example, is generally regarded as ambitious, industrious, and academically gifted (the stereotypical science or math whiz), the Chicano is often represented as a wetback and a temporary or seasonal laborer. Turks in Germany are represented in almost identical terms. Since Turks are a predominantly Moslem, though a secular and westernized people, they are considered culturally inferior to other “guest workers” from a Christian culture, such as Greeks or Italians. The juxtaposed reading of these two literary traditions of exile is not motivated by a mere comparatist impulse and is not meant to detract from the complex particularities of either one. Rather, it aspires to enhance both their uniqueness and their universal appeal by mutual reflection and by generating an awareness of the implicit dialogue that connects them. The work of a “conscientized” writer, in the words of Ana Castillo, is “to be open to the endless possibilities of

associations,”<sup>10</sup> whether using cultural metaphors familiar to the intended reader or borrowing from other cultural traditions.

The works of Gloria Anzaldúa and Emine Sevgi Özdamar portray their historical and personal destinies as gendered and ethnic subjects and their positioning between different languages, idioms, and generational and cultural terms. Women of Turkish and Mexican descent, traditionally confined to home and hearth in self-aggrandizing patriarchal family structures, struggle to reinvent, without the benefit of historical precedent, a legitimate identity in yet another foreign idiom. And beyond and above their linguistic and narrative experimentation, the works of Anzaldúa and Özdamar should perhaps be recognized as a memorial to family and collective histories that are being forced into oblivion by our high-tech modernity. Computers, fax machines, the Internet, the World Wide Web overwhelm us with stored memory and a neverending flow of information that is impossible to sort out and process. The ubiquitousness of this information overload has ironically led to a demand for human memory which has come to represent “the attempt to slow down information processing, . . . to recover a mode of contemplation outside the universe of simulation and fast-speed information and cable networks, to claim some anchoring space in a world of puzzling and often threatening heterogeneity. . . .”<sup>11</sup>

On the whole, the transfigurations and transplantations at cultural borders have developed in three successive and sometimes synchronic states. The first phase in emergent ethnic literatures tends to be confessional, comprising mostly personal and collective stories of passage and immigration. These are often in the form of interpretive chronicles of a group and written in the native language. The second phase is in the language of the country of immigration and takes in its purview an aesthetically inscribed field of social observation and critique. The critically transformative third stage is a borderland of different languages, rites of passage, and negotiations between myth and reality, memory and presence, madness and reason, and factual account and revolutionary experimentations in language and style. Since these stages may emerge both diachronically and synchronically depending on immigration histories and patterns, they cannot be classified in a strictly historical order but rather are characterized by various transformations of personal and collective memory, which “is sometimes retreating and sometimes overflowing.”<sup>12</sup>

The critical interest of this discussion centers on memory as an act of construction initiated and reinforced by subject positions, pedagogical imperatives, critical training, and a dialectic of fragmentation and unity. Memory is always a re-presentation, making present again that which no longer is present. And representation is inherent to language. The theory debates of the

poststructuralist era have shown us that concepts of race, ethnicity, and gender are socially and culturally constructed and are shaped by specific historical conditions. Language is the primary tool for these constructions. Therefore, literary texts become a critical forum for understanding the conditions for the production of prejudice, discrimination, sexism, and xenophobia. The work of Anzaldúa and Özdamar is informed by a critical consciousness of how language creates dichotomies of mastery and loss and legitimizes structures of power. Through a sustained archeology and reconstruction of the lost continents of their respective cultures, these writers produce a discursive territory conducive to the creation of new forms of cultural community in exile.

Though not intended as a theoretical blueprint, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* illustrates how ethnic individuals and groups can situate themselves sequentially and simultaneously in contesting or overlapping positions of cultural memory. Anzaldúa, a self-proclaimed new *mestiza*, produces a text in the tradition of German Romanticism's *Mischgedicht* (mixed poem). A poetic performance of its own critical message and a crossover of various genres, her book presents its story in a collection of poems, reminiscences, personal and collective histories, and critical combat. Thus, the text itself emerges as a *mestizaje*, a crossfertilization of ideas, images, mourning, and memory. It resists generic limitations that may be geographical, historical, or cultural. The act of inscription at the borders establishes a position of questioning and challenge: "The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. . . . A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition."<sup>13</sup>

The border sites constitute zones of perpetual motion, confrontation, and translation. In writing and recollection, the concepts of home and border become transportable, carried around in the form of political commitment and critical vision, "in leaving home, I did not lose touch with my origins. . . . I am a turtle, wherever I go, I carry 'home' on my back."<sup>14</sup> As a lesbian poet/writer/critic of color, Anzaldúa sees herself always transgressing/trespassing at border sites. In one of the last poems of the book: "To live in the Borderlands means you," she writes: "To survive the Borderlands/you must live *sin fronteras*/ be a crossroads."<sup>15</sup> Anzaldúa's account is not just another postmodern self-reflexive analysis. It provides a critical space not only for political contestation and cultural clashes, but also ultimately for a new narrative of dialogic understanding. "I am participating in the creation of yet another culture," she writes, "a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value

system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and the planet.”<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, this new culture needs to preserve the memory of other languages and situate itself at polyglot borders. Anzaldúa’s writing is uncompromisingly bi- and trilingual—English, Spanish, Spanglish—all inflected by the memory of the ancient accents of Nahuatl, the language of *Aztecas del norte*, the Chicanos who believe their homeland to be Aztlán. This defiant retreat from high tech to Aztec is a passionate expression of the human need to live in the comforting and accommodating diachronic structures of our histories, in the reassuring flow of continuity.

In the Preface, Anzaldúa refers to her work as the representation of her “almost instinctive urge to communicate, to speak, to write about life on the borders. . . .”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the book is a testimony to the uncompromising power of a language forged at borders—of space, time, and memory—in legitimizing identity. She is relentlessly critical of those that have belittled hybrid languages born of sociohistorical necessity. “Even our own people, other Spanish speakers *nos quieren poner en la boca*. They would hold us back with their bag of *reglas de academia*.”<sup>18</sup> Subjecting the Spanglish speaker to the rules of academia and forcing locks on her mouth constitutes a full-fledged insensitivity to and misreading of the role of “border” languages. “*El lenguaje de la frontera*,” the border idiom, is a living, relevant product of change. “Change, *evolución, enriquecimiento de palabras nuevos por invención o adopción* have created variants of Chicano Spanish, *un nuevo lenguaje. Un lenguaje que corresponde a un modo de vivir*.”<sup>19</sup> This vibrant idiom, born of invention and adoption, records a diversity of social and linguistic registers.

Border culture with its valorization of many languages, dialogues, and sites of translation incorporates and expands theoretical insights developed elsewhere, most notably in Bakhtinian notions of dialogism and heteroglossia. The dialogic mode prevents monologism. Every speech form interacts with another and is subject to change and transformation. The dialogic imagination governs the generation of knowledge in the sphere of heteroglossia. Heteroglossia designates a certain configuration of physical, social and historical forces which cannot be replicated at a different juncture in time and space. The concepts dialogism and heteroglossia highlight and validate the dynamic flow of change, crisis, and transformation that informs human language and discourse at all cultural levels. Bakhtin argues, for example, that the various genres simultaneously employed in the novel (diary, letter, confessions, aphorisms) relativize “linguistic consciousness in the perception of language borders—borders created by history and society, and even the most fundamental borders (i.e. those between languages as such)—and permit expression of a feeling for the materiality of language that defines such a

relativized consciousness.”<sup>20</sup> The conversation between languages and voices at the heteroglot site takes on concrete form in the Borderlands, where linguistic cultures clash and harmonize in social speech forms of varying currency. Borderlands accommodate many variants of inofficial, hybrid and carnivalesque speech forms, languages for which there are no official dictionaries, which switch “from English to Castillian Spanish to the North Mexican dialect to Tex-Mex to a sprinkling of Nahuatl to a mixture of all these.”<sup>21</sup>

Anzaldúa’s richly accented, heteroglossic text is an eloquent response to the repeated charges directed at her tongue: teachers who punished her for speaking Spanish during recess, speech classes at college designed to get rid of her accent, the communal culture that denied women the right to talk back, purists and Latino/as who ridiculed her “mutilated” Spanish. “I am my language,”<sup>22</sup> Anzaldúa declares with justified pride, for she embodies the fluency of dialogic moves, “the confluence of primordial images” and “the unique positionings consciousness takes at these confluent streams.”<sup>23</sup> In the final analysis, in an age of shifting centers and borders, living multilingually is the best revenge. The heterogeneous reality we participate in “is not a mere crossing from one borderline to the other or that is not merely double, but a reality that involves the crossing of an indeterminate number of borderlines, one that remains multiple in its hyphenation.”<sup>24</sup>

Speaking for the artists creating at a time when “we witness the borderization of the world,” Guillermo Gómez-Peña declares that they “practice the epistemology of multiplicity and a border semiotics” and engage in “the creation of alternative cartographies and a ferocious critique of the dominant culture of both countries” and share a common enthusiasm in their “proposal of new creative languages.”<sup>25</sup> In yet another Borderlands, thousands of miles away from the Texas border, another corps of migrant scribes, Turkish women writers in Germany, similarly participate in a border semiotics, negotiate the use of conflicting cultural languages, reinvent self, geography, and genealogy in memory and imagination, and execute a relentless critique of both home and host cultures. Through an identification with or rejection, reconsideration, reacceptance, borrowing, and extension of their own native myths and literary traditions as well as those of the host country, these writers rewrite cultural memory. Like their fellow Chicana writers, *Türkinnen deutscher Sprache* (Turkish women of German language) write in an idiom that resists easy understanding, for it represents the conflicting and contestatory voices and the hopelessly fragmented collective memory of their ethnic/expatriate communities. The reinterpretation of native myths and national epics in their tales provides an allegorical insight into their present multiple identities.

One of the most accomplished performers of the new German Borderlands writing is Emine Sevgi Özdamar, a crossover artist, film and theater actress, dramatist, theater director, and writer. She was born in 1946 in one of Turkey's eastern provinces, Malatya, another border site where Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic are spoken and the legitimacy of the non-Turkish cultures is officially ignored and denied—Kurdish which is an Indo-European language is claimed to be a mere aberrant dialect of Turkish, a Turkic language. At nineteen, she crossed several borders and cultural and time zones and arrived in Germany. After an early stint as a factory worker, she studied drama in the former East Berlin, landing roles in many theater plays and feature films. Her dramatic training reveals itself in her conception of language as a performance art. Her writing validates and celebrates language in its various forms as speech, script, ritual of everyday life, cultural transaction and negotiation, and game of survival and mastery. Özdamar's first book *Mutterzunge* (Mother tongue) is a collection of autobiographical sketches, meditations on language, and fantastic satires that unfold in verbal images resembling a surrealist film. In 1991, she was awarded the coveted Ingeborg Bachmann prize in literature for her then unpublished novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus* (Life is like a caravanserai has two doors through the one I went in and through the other I went out).

The first two stories of *Mutterzunge*, "Mutterzunge" and "Großvaterzunge" (Grandfather tongue), illustrate how history and memory, geography and genealogy inhabit language. "In meiner Sprache heißt Zunge: Sprache" (in my language, tongue means language), reads the first sentence of "Mutterzunge," "Zunge hat keine Knochen, wohin man sie dreht, dreht sie sich dorthin" (the tongue has no bones; it turns wherever you turn it).<sup>26</sup> By deploying at the very onset of her tale a visibly organic metaphor of speech, Özdamar underlines the latitude of language, its acrobatic skill of expression, and its possibilities of articulation and action. "Zunge drehen" (twisting the tongue) is a literal translation of the Turkish idiom *dili dönmek*, often used in the negative as *dilim dönmüyor* (I cannot say or pronounce). The narrator then refers to herself as one with a "gedrehten Zunge" (twisted tongue),<sup>27</sup> someone capable of mastering difficult sounds. After her long sojourn in Germany, she feels that when she thinks of "mother sentences" spoken by her mother in her mother tongue, they sound like a foreign language she had mastered well.<sup>28</sup> The memories of the sounds of her language intricately linked to the sights of her homeland were fading away. Once when she asked her mother why Istanbul had become so dark, the mother replied: "Istanbul hatte immer diese Lichter, deine Augen sind an Alamanien-Lichter gewöhnt" (Istanbul has always been lighted like this, your eyes have become accustomed to the German lights.)<sup>29</sup> In order to reclaim

her mother tongue, she needs a detour through her “grandfather tongue.” This grandfather tongue is Ottoman Turkish, a hybrid language of the Ottoman court and the educated classes which was mostly made up of Persian and Arabic loan words and structures held together by Turkish connectors. Like Anzaldúa, who ventures into the memories of Nahuatl that recall the glory of a preconquest civilization, Özdamar excavates the lost accents of a language evocative of a long bygone era of power. By reclaiming this history and expanding the memorial territories of their respective languages, both writers defy the low status assigned to Chicano Spanish in the United States and Turkish in modern Germany, a Turkish that is no longer the sign of nostalgia for the Orient. As Roland Barthes once remarked, “[h]ow remote it seems, that period when the language of Islam was Turkish and not Arabic! This is because the cultural image is always fixed where the political power is: in 1877, the ‘Arab countries’ did not exist; though vacillating . . . Turkey was still, politically and therefore culturally, the very sign of the Orient.”<sup>30</sup>

Before 1928, Turkish used the Arabic script. In the twenties, Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of the Turkish Republic, undertook a series of reforms designed to transform the new republic into a totally secularized and westernized state. The Arabic writing system was replaced by a latinized alphabet that corresponded ideally to the sounds of Turkish, thus radically raising the rate of literacy. Özdamar’s narrator cannot read the Arabic script, and her grandfather never learned to read the Latin alphabet. If she and her grandfather were to lose their speech and had to communicate in writing, “they could not tell each other stories” (“könnten wir uns keine Geschichten erzählen”).<sup>31</sup> She, therefore, decides to take Arabic lessons from “the great master of the Arabic script” Ibni Abdullah. Thus begins her commute from her residence in East Berlin to Ibni Abdullah’s small apartment in West Berlin.

This site of learning language(s) is located at multiple borders. Berlin before the fall of the wall is a city divided, at the border of a country divided geographically, historically and ideologically. The single room of the apartment is divided with a curtain into living and learning quarters, where Ibni Abdullah gives lessons to students of Oriental languages. The narrator and her Arabic teacher have both crossed several linguistic and cultural borders, before settling in Berlin. They now engage in an effort to find common borders of language and culture. This is, among other things, a love story told in German and framed by conversations between Arabic and Turkish, the religious and the secular, the spiritual and the carnal, and the old and the new. Like Anzaldúa, Özdamar’s narrator experiences the semiotic memory of language as an act of inscribing on her body. “Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems,” writes Anzaldúa,

“*la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. . . . The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque*, a cultural collision.”<sup>32</sup>

The narrator’s experience of language and love in her body also marks a celebration of Arabic calligraphy. Since Islam forbade the representation of images, calligraphy became the dominant visual art form in Arabic and Ottoman culture. The narrator’s love of the picture alphabet and her desire for Ibn Abdullah intermingle and dominate her body and soul. One day he leaves her to complete her reading assignment on her own. Although he is gone, “his watchmen, his words stood in the room, some sat firmly across her legs” (“Seine Wächter, seine Wörter standen im Zimmer, manche saßen fest über ihren Beinen”).<sup>33</sup> She tries to “read” the inscribed images: “Ein Pfeil ging aus einem Bogen raus. Da steht ein Herz, der Pfeil ging, blieb stehen im Herz, ein Frauenaugen schlug mit den Wimpern. Jetzt hat sie ein Auge von einer Blinden, ein Vogel fliegt und verliert seine Federn über dem Weg, wo der Pfeil gegangen ist. (An arrow goes off from a bow. A heart stood there. The arrow gets stuck in the heart, a woman’s eye bats her eyelashes. Now she has the eye of a blind woman, a bird flies and loses his feathers on the way the arrow has flown.)<sup>34</sup> As the letters come out of the narrator’s mouth, she likens some to birds, some to hearts, some to caravans; still others remind the narrator of trees scattered in the wind, sleeping camels, running snakes, evilly raised eyebrows, eyes that cannot sleep, or the fat ass of a woman sitting on a hot stone in a Turkish bath.<sup>35</sup> This is a picturesque script, indeed, generously embellished by the speaker’s imagination. The letters speak with one another “without a pause in different voices” (“ohne Pause mit verschiedenen Stimmen”)<sup>36</sup> and wake the sleeping animals in her body. She tries to close her eyes, but the voice of love tortures her body which splits up like a pomegranate. An animal emerges from the bloody gap in her body and licks her wounds. She sees stones abandoned by the receded ocean waters under her feet. In the endless landscape, stones cry out for water. A sea flows from the animal’s mouth, raising her body high, and she falls asleep on the body of water and wakes up rejuvenated. She is like “a newborn wet bird” (“ein neugeborener nasser Vogel”).<sup>37</sup>

The symbolism of the split body healed in water, an element that knows no borders and boundaries is duplicated in Anzaldúa’s text. The barbed wire of the U.S.-Mexican border is like a “1,950 mile long open wound” in her body, the memory of the rape and plunder of her culture; it splits her, chops her up, mutilates her “*me raja me raja*.” But the sea whose “tangy smell” “seeps”<sup>38</sup> into her “cannot be fenced;” “*el mar* does not stop at borders.”<sup>39</sup> Standing at the edge between earth and ocean, her “heart surges to the beat of the sea.” With the ease the ocean touches the earth and heals, the narrator switches codes, a gesture that

in this narrative consistently acts as a panacea for the torn tongue, “*Oigo el llorido del mar, el respiro del aire*” (I hear the cry of the ocean, the breath of the air).<sup>40</sup> Like the body of Özdamar’s narrator, her body effortlessly becomes a bridge of language between two geographies and histories, between the world of the gringo (*gabacho*) and the wetback (*mojado*) the past and the present. Like body cells that are always renewed, words are born, grow, mature, change, die, and are reborn. By employing such regionalisms and colloquialisms as *gabacho*, *mojado*, *pa’* (for) and shifting and purposefully misplaced accents, Anzaldúa smuggles the variegated fabric of Chicano Spanish into Spanish and English. Thus a new language and identity free of national borders is celebrated in the Borderlands: “Deep in our heart we believe that being Mexican has nothing to do with which country one lives in. Being Mexican is a state of soul--not one of mind, not one of citizenship. Neither eagle nor serpent, but both. And like the ocean, neither animal respects borders.”<sup>41</sup> And neither does the bird, the image Özdamar’s narrator transforms herself into. Image, metaphor, and metonymy re-member bodies of language, culture, and their inhabitants dismembered by imperialism, war, conquest, colonization, poverty, and violence. They restore them not only to memory but also invest them with a kind of material reality. Karen Remmler sees in “the prevalence of metonymical references to displaced bodies, body parts, and conditions in postmodern theoretical discourse” the anxiety emerging from “a significant increase in the number of displaced persons across political, cultural, and economic borders since World War II.”<sup>42</sup> Names, identities, and histories that expired along with passports and visas can now only be brought back to life through the potent medicines of memory: language, image, script.

But what if that script is forgotten? “In der Fremdsprache haben Wörter keine Kindheit” (In the foreign language, words have no childhood),<sup>43</sup> observes Özdamar’s narrator. She tries desperately to correct this loss by looking for the history of her language in Arabic and by a narrative revis(ion)ing of the hybridity characteristic of Ottoman Turkish. She celebrates the visual poetry of Arabic letters. During the lessons in Ibni Abdullah’s house, her Turkish and Arabic sentences, lyrics to Turkish songs, and Koran recitations by other students are simultaneously spoken, clashing and harmonizing at once. Many Turkish words have Arabic roots, and by going to the roots, the narrator can trace branches of lyric, lore, and legend intertwined in the two linguistic cultures. She recites for her teacher Turkish words of Arabic origin: “Leb-Mund” (mouth), “Mazi-Vergangenheit” (past), “Yetim-Waise” (orphan). Bemused, he remarks that they sound strange when spoken with a Turkish accent. “Bis diese Wörter aus deinem Land aufgestanden und zu meinem Land gelaufen sind, haben sie sich unterwegs etwas geändert” (As these words got

up, left your land, and ran to mine, they've somewhat transformed themselves on the way),<sup>44</sup> she replies.

In the final analysis, this unusual love story transcends the boundaries of a meditation on language. It also tells a veiled political history complicated and sometimes compromised by the universal enforcement of Atatürk's hasty westernization reforms. Atatürk has been held accountable and criticized by the left and the right alike for the collective forgetting of Turkey's cultural past, her Islamic Ottoman heritage. Stranded in this historical lacuna, modern Turks feel frustrated in their struggle to define a cultural identity. "Ich habe zu Atatürk-Todestagen schreiend Gedichte gelesen und geweint, aber er hätte die arabische Schrift nicht verbieten müssen" (on Atatürk's death anniversaries, I have loudly recited poetry and cried, but he should not have banned the Arabic script), remarks the narrator, "Dieses Verbot ist so, wie wenn die Hälfte von meinem Kopf abgeschnitten ist. Alle Namen von meiner Familie sind Arabisch" (It is as if this ban has cut my head in two. All the names of my family members are Arabic).<sup>45</sup> Once again the loss of language is symbolized by the loss or mutilation of body parts. Nevertheless, the narrator considers herself fortunate to belong to a generation that has grown up with many Arabic words, a generation at the interstices of the past and the present of its language. For the most part, modern Turkish intellectuals overtly prefer to speak and write *öz Türkçe* (authentic or pure Turkish). The movement to reconstruct a form of pre-Ottoman proto-Turkish was initiated with Atatürk's founding of the *Türk Dil Kurumu* (Turkish Language Association). This association publishes a great number of books, professional journals, and dictionaries aimed at settling the debts of modern Turkish language to Arabic and Persian (and, more recently, to European languages such as English and French) and expanding its lexical possibilities through derivations of new words from root forms of modern and ancient Turkic languages. The ideology of reclaiming an "essential" Turkish language stripped of its history and organic development has come under attack, for it entails a practice of denying, forgetting, and erasing vital cultural heritages. Özdamar implicitly maintains that she can have much easier access to the knowledge of Arabic in Germany than in Turkey where her desire to reclaim her "grandfather tongue" could be construed as a politically reactionary gesture in the context of the secularist ideology that underwrites modern Turkish education. Like the Spanish academics who shudder at Anzaldúa's bastardized language, Turkish intellectuals protect their speech and script segregated from hybridized constructs, be they the legacies of the past or the necessities of the present.

Özdamar's narrative often resists translatability, although she translates Turkish expressions literally into German. Like most languages with a long oral

tradition, Turkish is an impossibly metaphorical and imagistic language that defies ready comprehension. Özdamar challenges the reader by expressions that border on the absurd, when not explicated. A reference to alleged revolutionaries who have been tortured reads: “Man hat ihnen die Milch, die sie aus ihren Müttern getrunken haben, aus ihrer Nase rausgeholt” (They made them puke through their nose the milk they drank from their mothers).<sup>46</sup> A fairy tale begins “Es war einmal, es war keinmal” (Once upon a time there was, once upon a time there was not),<sup>47</sup> the Turkish version of “once upon a time,” a turn of phrase that does justice to that rich ambiguity of the past. Referring to her paralysis when faced with Abdullah’s seizure, she says: “ich konnte ihn nicht fassen, meine Hände lagen wie Buchstaben ohne Zunge auf meinen Knien” (I could not contain him; my hands lay on my knees like letters without a tongue).<sup>48</sup> Turkish is, furthermore, marked by numerous expressions that signify the body in pain. During her first visit to Abdullah’s apartment the narrator tells him that if her father had delivered her to his door for Arabic lessons, he would have said: “Ja, Meister, ihr Fleisch gehört Ihnen, ihre Knochen mir, lehre sie, wenn sie ihre Augen und Gehör und Herz nicht aufmacht zu dem, was Sie sagen, schlagen Sie, die Hand der schlagenden Meister stammt aus dem Paradies, wo Sie schlagen, werden dort die Rosen blühen” (Yes master, her flesh belongs to you and her bones to me, if she does not open her eyes, ears and heart to what you say, hit her, the hand of hitting masters hails from paradise, where you hit, there roses will bloom).<sup>49</sup> Without further explanations—in our postfeminist age—this statement can easily be interpreted as one man giving another the right to inflict violence on his own daughter’s body. Here Özdamar mixes several Turkish sayings and proverbs. When parents deliver their children (male or female) to a teacher, they say “eti senin, kemigi benim” (her/his—Turkish does not have a gendered third person singular form—flesh is yours, bones are mine). This expression illustrates the great faith put in teachers in Turkish culture. A teacher is believed to play a more important part than the parent in the formation of the child. “Dayak cennetten cikmadir” (spanking hails from paradise) is a proverb that sanctions the necessity of punishing children who misbehave. The third expression is one about roses blooming where the master touches.

Why does Özdamar not explain her far-out expressions and risk misinterpretation? Both Anzaldúa and Özdamar present the reader with a text, like a map full of blank spaces. Anzaldúa will switch from English to Spanish to Spanglish and write whole poems and paragraphs in Chicano Spanish without providing a translation. Özdamar provides everything in German translation but bombards the reader with the most unheard of turns of phrase that make no sense to a German (or any non-Turkish) speaker. Both writers

expect the reader to engage in a more informed and conscientious way with another discursive practice. Multicultural citizenship requires not only the admission of not knowing the other but also a willingness to learn about the other. Following Özdamar's lead, I am reminded of a Turkish proverb that illustrates this statement better than any critical formulation: "Bilmemek degil, öğrenmemek ayip" (Not to know is no reason to be ashamed, but not to learn is). Anzaldúa echoes Özdamar's unspoken sentiment in her Preface, when she declares that she will make no apologies for the unique language of her people. "[W]e Chicanos no longer feel that we need to beg entrance, that we need always to make the first overture," she states, "to translate to Anglos, Mexicans and Latinos, apology blurting out of our mouths with every step. Today we ask to be met halfway."<sup>50</sup>

Anzaldúa and Özdamar do not interpret their mission as storytellers to be one of mere entertainment. They aim to instruct and guide the reader, the Anglo, the Mexican, the Latino, the German, and the Turk in crossing the border into other cultural times and domains and in decoding the borderized text of the Chicana and the Turkish-German women. As immigrants, "minorities," and women, they had to undertake the labor of self-translation, always sparing their "hosts" that arduous task. Their writing is a new challenge for the reader to join a conversation of genuine cultural bilingualism. It is an effort to reverse the one-sided perceptions of lesser known, "non-status," often misunderstood and misrepresented cultures. Like many other Chicana and Turkish-German woman writers, they create their literary traditions not only from their own cultural memories but also from the literary communities they enter in exile and immigration. In this way, they free cultural production from its adherence to the notion of an "ethnic" aesthetics and urge both the producers and consumers of these emergent literatures to become conversant in a multicultural idiom.

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## Notes

1. Özdamar, "Karagöz in Alamania. Schwarzauge in Deutschland," *Mutterzunge*, 61.
2. Gómez-Peña, "Bilingualism, Biculturalism, and Borders," 156.
3. Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, 18.
4. *Ibid.*, 19.
5. Brinker-Gabler and Smith, "Introduction," 1.
6. Kolinsky, "Conclusion," 185.
7. Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*, 21.
8. Gómez-Peña, "Bilingualism," 153.
9. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 54.
10. Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers*, 170.
11. Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 7.
12. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 54.
13. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 3.
14. *Ibid.*, 21.
15. *Ibid.*, 195.
16. *Ibid.*, 81.
17. *Ibid.*, Preface.
18. *Ibid.*, 54.
19. *Ibid.*, 55.
20. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 323f.
21. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, Preface.
22. *Ibid.*, 59.
23. *Ibid.*, Preface.
24. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, 107.
25. Gómez-Peña, "Documented/Undocumented," 130.
26. Özdamar, *Mutterzunge*, 7.
27. *Ibid.*, 7.
28. *Ibid.*, 6.
29. *Ibid.*, 7.
30. Barthes, *New Critical Essays*, 116.
31. Özdamar, *Mutterzunge*, 12.
32. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 78.
33. Özdamar, *Mutterzunge*, 42.
34. *Ibid.*, 42.
35. *Ibid.*, 16.
36. *Ibid.*, 24.
37. *Ibid.*, 25.

- <sup>38.</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 2.
- <sup>39.</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>40.</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.
- <sup>41.</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.
- <sup>42.</sup> Remmler, “Sheltering Battered Bodies in Language: Imprisonment Once More?”, 218f.
- <sup>43.</sup> Özdamar, *Mutterzunge*, 42.
- <sup>44.</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>45.</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>46.</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.
- <sup>47.</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.
- <sup>48.</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.
- <sup>49.</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>50.</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, Preface.