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Building Good Relationships by Learning from Bad Ones

D L O R A H   A G A M A

Abstract:

This article examines the relationships among the communities depicted in Heinrich von Kleist's "The Earthquake in Chile" through ideas outlined in Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's work. Kleist's work primarily concerns the effects of calamities in a discordant community in which care webs as theorized by Piepzna-Samarasinha emerge. The care webs that emerge, however, cannot last long. They are a momentary feature. Despite Kleist's interest in showcasing the limitations of care webs, his text is not interested in relishing in defeatism. Instead, the text becomes a main site at which to showcase the potential of people coming together to help one another.

In Heinrich von Kleist's "The Earthquake in Chile" (1807), we see a segment of Santiago form care webs after being hit by a natural calamity. People from all walks of life willingly started to share resources with each other as one community. Despite the social structures that separated sinners from saints prior to the calamity, segments of the population that survived came together to share resources with their neighbors. The story showcases the importance of developing and maintaining relationships in the community. But it also emphasizes the significance of the quality of these relationships. In this article, I will examine Kleist's text through the lens of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's theorization of care webs as means by which to support one another during times of crisis.

The notion of care webs as theorized by Piepzna-Samarasinha values the emergence of complex networks of people in constructing a supportive community. Care webs describe relationships among people built on interdependence and care. Making a care web sustainable is attainable if each individual fulfills their responsibilities in the long term. Collective care, as the author describes it, works best if each member supports the collective. Here, crowdsourcing emerged as one way a collective of disabled queer and trans people of colour could show their support for one another. At its best, the care web Piepzna-Samarasinha describes in their work seemed functional, coordinated, and the collective was unified. People from different backgrounds, going through different waves of life, come together as a community—as a care web. As the author notes, "nobody deserves to die or suffer from lack of access, even if they've been an asshole" (48–49).

A similar sentiment can be identified in a key scene in Kleist's "The Earthquake in Chile." Despite being discriminated against and marginalized by her community, Josefa did not reject a request for help. After the earthquake had hit the town of Santiago, the social outcasts Jeronimo and Josefa found themselves spared from execution. After being condemned by the community for their controversial actions, the couple felt vindicated and became filled with great joy in finding access

to community again in the aftermath of the destruction that hit their hometown. Although they avoided execution, they were still worried about their family's safety after all the criticism they endured. These worries slowly faded when Don Fernando reached out to Josefa to breastfeed his hungry child. She obliged. Despite having reason to avoid contact with fellow citizens—after all, some of those citizens eagerly hoped to witness her execution—Josefa helped the family in need. She in turn was praised by the people she helped, which gave her a sense of peace and belonging to the community once again. Highlighting this union of peoples, the narrator in Kleist's text notes,

> Men and women of every social situation could be seen lying side by side, princes and beggars, ladies and peasant women, government officials and day laborers, friars and nuns: pitying one another, helping one another, gladly sharing anything they had saved to keep themselves alive as if the general disaster had united all its survivors into a single family. (60)

The sudden warmth, kindness, and generosity from the community were so foreign to Josefa and Jeronimo that one gesture was enough for them to overcome their suspicion grounded in the hardships they faced. The urgency to belong and the collective care expressed in this moment in time supported a sense of security for the couple and their family. They even decided to remain in Chile with the rest of the community despite having forged plans to leave the country in the aftermath of the earthquake. They were starting to finally see the light at the end of their tunnel once they faced hope in the acceptance from the people around them.

But the care web that emerged did not last long. To examine this, we will first turn to Piepzna-Samarasinha's discussion care webs. Describing the sensation of accomplishment when the care web started to work, Piepzna-Samarasinha writes, "At its height, it was everything good that social media made possible—instant

connection with a million people with shared identities and interests, who could listen to you when you were in crisis or answer a disability question that no one near you knew the answer to" (37). Crowdsourcing indeed also emerges as a valorized mode of community in Kleist's text, where immediate bonds were formed among the community of Santiago, bringing together the rich and poor, sinners and saints alike. Solidarity emerged as social structures started to break down. But this only lasted for a while. Forming care webs felt easier to do than sustaining them, which is also something that Piepzna-Samarasinha noted depended on the difficulty to maintain interdependence in the face of social and cultural differences as well as embodiment. In Kleist's text, the care-based social structures that emerged likewise started to fail.

The tragic ending of Kleist's text indeed points to the inability of the care web to last beyond the moment. Protagonists Josefa and Jeronimo once again faced criticism from the people of Santiago, who were reminded of their status in the community prior to the calamity. The scene escalated quickly with everyone's fury fueling the hatred that Josefa and Jeronimo almost eluded. The focus on community, mending relationships, and repenting changed once the social dynamics reverted back to the hatred and oppression widespread prior to the earthquake. Josefa and Jeronimo were killed in the end, which positions us to question what the whole point of the text is. Why was there a such great emphasis on what seemed like collective care only for the text to refute the capacity of care to sustain in the long term? Is it just another tragic story that provides nothing more than entertainment for its readers? Maybe not. Digging deeper, "The Earthquake in Chile" could teach people about the importance of making good quality and lasting relationships by narrating a story about the exact opposite of this. The text established that Josefa and Jeronimo's relationship with the rest of the community was poor and disconnected. This is why the moment when they felt the community's support after the earthquake made available a whole new reality for them. The text then illustrated what can be possible in a community and how frail that care-based relation is.

Kleist's text requires readers to see beyond the few pages of Josefa and Jeronimo's story. In the grand scheme of things, cultural texts like "The Earthquake in Chile" serve as a reminder for us to remember that the quality of relationships matters. Though Josefa and Jeronimo somehow experienced what it is like to belong in their community, they did not have a good relationship with the community to begin with. Josefa's selfless actions were not and will never be enough to reconcile with the people of Santiago. As much as readers might desire a happy ending for the couple, good bonds are not formed overnight. More robust social infrastructures for interdependence are required in order to help all involved see their place in care webs. The text showcases that striving to build good relationships with others also requires more robust, broader social formations that reach beyond a small collective in order for collectives to thrive. While "The Earthquake in Chile" teaches us that we should not only extend kindness when it is convenient, but that kind infrastructures should guide all we do. This goes for Josefa and Jeronimo as well as the rest of Santiago. In the grand scheme of things, the world is a place for everyone to not just simply coexist, but to live together and support each other regardless of background. Josefa and Jeronimo may have never fully experienced the true beauty of what a community really is, but we the readers of their story might learn from their experience and try our best to create a world in which kindness and care can thrive.

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"Left to Memory": Mapping the Forgotten in Leonard Ng's "Forgotten Roads"

HUI WONG

Abstract:

This paper engages with some theoretical work from German Media Studies to articulate the work of remembering in poetry as a "mapping" of loss. Centring Singaporean poet Leonard Ng's "Forgotten Roads" in this analysis, I explore how the question of what it is that media do, drawn from the theoretical context of cultural techniques, may bear upon literary criticism. Ng's poem centers the act of remembering thematically, and its reading of it performatively remembers. This act is part of what I call a poetic discourse, which, in this paper, has as its foil legal discourse, the operations of which are considered in Cornelia Vismann's *Files*. As Wismann seeks to provide a genealogy of law that demonstrates how legal symbolic discourses cancel the past, I provide Ng's poetic discourse as an example of a symbolic discourse that recovers and refuses to forget. I conclude by way of a reading of Sigfried Kracauer's essay "Farewell to the Linden Arcade" to demonstrate that the "poetic" is more of an orientation than a genre.

In 2019, Poetry Festival Singapore published an anthology of poems titled *Contour: A Lyric Cartography of Singapore*. The text's performative challenge and task is made known from its title. In Singapore's bicentennial year (two hundred years after its colonial beginning), *Contour* intervenes into the histories of its mapping. *Contour* offers what it terms a "lyric cartography." How is poetry cartography? What does it mean to map lyrically? Leonard Ng's poem in this anthology, "Forgotten Roads," takes these questions on literally: the poem is about roads and maps; it is a lyrical reflection on what maps do in the face of "development" and modernity: "these roads / no longer marked on maps / left to memory and the jungle" (lines 4-6). This paper reads Ng's poem and the themes contained within it as a starting point to think about what it is that maps, as discursive productions of the domain of state law, do with regard to the maps that one retains in memory. I suggest that Ng's poem is performative: it is the act of reading that ensures that the forgotten and cancelled under legal discourse continues a symbolic existence that resists the concealment of its disappearance. This paper seeks to explore how in what can be variously considered "mapping" (by which I mean symbolic processes that seek to elide the things they have changed), that which is forgotten can be meditated on to critique the conditions of their loss. This meditation pierces the progress of history toward Walter Benjamin's angel: it disavows any history that seeks to dispense with historicizing.

Perhaps a place to begin reading the map in Ng's poem is through Baudrillard's reading of Borges' fable of the map that equals the empire. Baudrillard suggests that reading the fable now takes us "full circle"—"it is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory [...] that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map" (1). A Baudrillardian take on the making and forgetting that maps do is that the line between reality and its reference is blurred; mapping in this view bears on Ng's poem by framing the temporality of mapping. If mapping precedes the territory, indeed *engenders* it such

that lived experience is lived on maps, the forgotten roads "no longer marked on maps" suggests that what is engendered by the map is a relationship to the subject wherein their lived experience is lived on the map itself—in this case, the poem's speaker is expected to forget the road following the marking of the map, and should they intervene, they intervene on the level of the map.

Baudrillard's intervention rests on articulations that are supported by references to the time of "today," presumably in opposition to the "then." This time of his theory is unclear, though based on his references to McLuhan it might be inferred that electronic media periodizes. But what Baudrillard's sees as simulation's colonization of the real that destroys the real—"[i]t is the real, not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours" (1)—remains in an uneasy position insofar as the "we" who is implied in Baudrillard's "today" also remains un-interrogated. In Baudrillard's calling upon the "we," "us," and "ours" who are all together in hyperreality can be found a universal subject whose subjectivity is ultimately swallowed by the simulacra; the map of the empire supposedly accounts for all of its subjects as well as its sovereign territory.

The uneasiness of a universal subject that I suggest arises here is best addressed through a close-reading of Ng's poem that asks what it is the poem, as literary practice, does. The movement of the text works in three stanzas: the first, a blooming of the road: "Suddenly they bloom / beneath your feet, / growing away from you / like bamboo—these roads / no longer marked on maps" (lines 1-5)—these are the first half of the lines quoted in this paper's introduction. Then, the second stanza, a remembering through the play of signs: "But there are always signs. / Ornamental plants. Shattered clumps of asphalt," (7-8) concluding with a third stanza, which tells a story of the road's disappearance: "Once a kampong stood here; houses, roads; / then a highway crashed through [...] But this road was left behind / without cables or street lighting, / and the leaves from the trees on either side / have fallen here for decades, have fallen and fallen, / beneath our feet, sinking soft, / leading us nowhere now / except into the

past" (10-11; 14-21). The poem's structure is then one that seeks to contradict itself. By ending on "the past" and beginning with the sudden present-tense "bloom," the poem enacts a kind of recovery of the very past it is proclaiming has been forgotten (by digging into the past). That is, the poem is performing the act of memory in the face of forgetting.

Is the "us" who is led in the past in Ng's poem the same "us" to whom Baudrillard refers when he speaks of the "us" "today"? Is the "lyric cartography," the poetic mapping that Ng offers us, different from the infinite referentiality of that mapping of the hyperreal to which Baudrillard refers? Crucially, on this possible difference, what Ng is trying to refer to is not the real qua something to which a signifier refers, as Baudrillard would have it; rather, Ng's real is simply that which has been foreclosed by the state's mapping. Ng's poetic mapping is not entirely coextensive with Baudrillard, as it suggests that there is still a "real" insofar as there is still a past. However, while Baudrillard operates on a level whose politics seek to universalize and capture every act within the hyperreal, acts that have no time nor history because the hyperreal has swallowed history too, this very same discourse nevertheless suggests that something still remains—hence the "vestiges" of the real, the "desert of the real." This admission that the "real" remains is a loose thread in Baudrillard that gestures to the possibility of finding a language to describe what is happening on a symbolic level in Ng's text.

As I have laid it out, the difficulty is now in accounting for the *process* of mapping and describing how it works as it is embedded in time and history, rather than a description that seeks to swallow all possible discourses under a heading of "simulation." What Baudrillard gives is the connection between "the real" and the symbolic order of mapping (as well as the imaginary, which for Baudrillard is unsurprisingly also extinguished; for Baudrillard, there is no longer such a thing as an "image" with an imaginary double or phantasm [51]) that provides a way into talking about the connection between poetry, waste, and the various iterations of "the real." Cornelia Vismann's genealogy of law brings this connection further. As she explains, "[i]n Roman antiq-

uity a plough was dragged around the yet-to-be-built city to mark the spot where the gate was to be. [...] The gate creates the *ager Romanus*, the urban area of Rome. With the city the law comes into being. City and law are coextensive" (15); she then references Lacan's reading of this Roman marking: "In its nature, the door belongs to the symbolic order, and it opens up either on to the real, or the imaginary, we don't know quite which" (302). For Vismann, the door of law, exemplified by the Roman mapping, opens up to both: beyond the threshold of the law is both the imagined authority that supports it, which proves to be nothing but the desire for there to be an authority, and the real that operates through files in the work of cancelling, storing, manipulating, destroying and transforming. The anecdote of Roman antiquity is about the real operation of drawing a line on the territory, *mapping* it by transformation and thereby also cancelling the territory that was, to create a symbolic world. This is a legal act, and for Vismann one of the first legal acts. Hence, the map always already precedes the territory as the operation of creating a territory involves mapping. The question that Ng leads us to ask is regarding the temporal *before* mapping. For Vismann, asking what is "before the law" is complex; the law is an endless referential puzzle (thereby echoing Baudrillard despite the distance between the objects of each one's discourse), but, in technical terms, "the writing that stands before the law is a draft or prescript" (25). Vismann's point is that the law disavows its mutability: the concealment and disposal of its "before" as a draft is part of the law's very condition. The law's inaccessibility constitutes it. Hence, if the act of mapping is a legal act, the forgetting that Ng points to, the waste of maps, is intentional insofar as old roads have no place in law.

  If Ng's poem can be read as memory, as I argue, the pertinent question is to ask how exactly the poem remembers. By describing the poem as "performative," I regard the poem as enacting the work of which it speaks; that is to say that the act of reading the poem is the act of memory. With Vismann in mind, this operation is made more apparent by way of a contrast between what I refer to as the poetic discourse and the legal discourse. Structured as a poem that reaches into the past by beginning with the

present, the act of reading becomes the act of remembering. The third stanza, which recounts the violent history of the highway, is a making-known of the operation of law. This operation, which is law's history, is precisely what Vismann describes as the real that is cancelled and unsayable in the symbolic discourse of law. Ng, strikingly, has spelled it out in his poem. The dispossession of houses in the *kampong* (village) as re-mapping is the cancellation of one set of documents for the putting in place of another. This operation of law through files seeks to be forgotten. Operating in direct contradiction to the law, which seeks to elide its own history or notion of a "before," the poetic discourse as I have laid it out here is a remembering and making visible that is enacted by the act of reading: the poem puts the operation of law before us.

Similarly, reprising the history of the highway is an act of repetition, the injunction to read and thereby enact the event again in memory. This notion of repetition has psychoanalytic bearing; for Freud, repetition is different from remembering: "Remembering [...] could not but give the impression of an experiment carried out in the laboratory. Repeating [...] implies conjuring up a piece of real life" (152). Where remembering is a memory spoken, repetition is an acting out of "real life." Ng's poem is both: reading of the highway is a repetition of the act of remembering, insofar as the memory is not the reader's and thus reading is the repetition of the real memory of another. While Freud's repetition lies in the possibilities enabled by introducing the safety of the analytical setting wherein the analyst and analysand may "work-through" the unsayable memory implied by the act of repetition, the poem has no such reparative goal. Ng is not attempting to perform an individuated healing practice, but impels the reader to contend with the event that caused the repetition. It does not make sense to ask readers to heal themselves through the memory of another; rather, the repetition in this case has the act of remembering that lays bare the real operation of law as an end. The reader finds themselves not just remembering, but refusing the symbolizing work of the law by speaking that which has been foreclosed, namely the dispossession of land for new roads.

In another way, the poem is also instructive. As opposed to the discourse of law, which seeks to elide its operations in moves that mystify, Ng's poetic discourse makes known its own operations and in doing so clarifies and instructs. In the second stanza, where Ng speaks about signifiers that point to the past—Baudrillard's vestiges of the real—Ng's speaker trains the reader's eye. The second stanza, comprised of three lines, is first a reminder, then a demonstration by example: "But there are always signs. / Ornamental plants. Shattered clumps of asphalt. / Trees set in ordered ranks like soldiers on parade" (lines 7-9). Again, attention might be paid to the movement of the poem. "But there are always signs" comes after the first stanza, which is a wistful recounting of the roads; the "but" thus acts as a jolting reminder that the legal discourse enacted through maps is not the singular truth. Though maps may precede the territory, Ng's point is that no act of cancellation is ever fully successful. Some form of what was there before remains, and what is needed is a trained eye. As well, Ng's comparison between trees in "ordered ranks" and the "soldiers on parade" discloses the work of the poem as reading the process of the law, which conditions both the military and the territory, against itself. This moment may be read as biographical, too: as a Singaporean man, Ng's experience in mandatory military conscription provides the backdrop to this reference. Ng lived experience of the force of the law as a soldier on parade in concealed military bases is ironically reconfigured in the ambiguous meanings of this line as he makes known the hidden operation of the law, just as he brings to light the hidden workings of the army. This part of Ng's poem can be read as training a poetic sensibility, demonstrating how the legal discourse may be regarded as something to be undone and deconstructed by revealing its workings.

Ng's poem, as performative and instructive work, foregrounds the sensibility required in order to remember the remnants involved in legal discourse, what I have here referred to as the real foreclosed by the work of its symbolic order. It also demonstrates how an orientation toward reading as remembering is an end in itself, in that reading is the work of remembering that refuses the legal discourse's imposition of

selective and intentional forgetting. With this theoretical framework, it might be useful to now think through what it is that literature that memorializes, remembers, and recovers in the face of legal and economic force is doing performatively. In Siegfried Kracauer's "Farewell to the Linden Arcade," Kracauer's "farewell" is both a historicizing of the time of the arcade—an institution and space no longer needed in the next stage of capitalism—and a kind of memoir of the arcade that, in parallel ways, performs what Ng's poem does. The Linden Arcade, for Kracauer, was a space that held a unique role within a specific historical moment of capitalism. Constructed through the ironworks that marked the flourishing of industrial capitalism, the "half light" of the arcades housed the phantasmagoric, perverse other of the bourgeois capitalism outside it: "Everything excluded from this bourgeois life because it was not presentable or even because it ran counter to the official world view settled in the arcades" (338). As capitalism continues, this function of the arcades vanishes; Kracauer concludes the essay: "What would be the point of an arcade [Passage] in a society that is itself only a passageway?" (342). In Kracauer's view, the arcades was the sign of its own demise. The conditions of its production signalled the way it would end. The society that is itself a passageway has no need for a bourgeois morality that conceals its desires in the dark underground; the drawing out of objects from the arcades kills their ghostly presence, leaving behind a department store of mass-produced commodities. One thinks of Baudrillard's "ecstasy of communication" wherein the perverse and obscene constitute communication itself.

In the opening paragraph to his essay, Kracauer recounts: "When I recently strolled through it [the Linden Arcade] once again, [...] the work of destruction was already almost complete. [...] Fortunately, the old Renaissance architecture—that horribly beautiful imitation of style from the time of our fathers and grandfathers—still peeked through here and there" (337). Kracauer then goes on to describe gaps in the new construction where traces of the old arcade may be found: a pillar that still "brazenly displayed its brick relief work," and other signs of the old that were "now sink-

ing into a mass grave of cool marble" (337). In the next paragraph, and as a segue into his theorizing, he remembers his "boyhood fantasies" of "the dark passageway" (338). Approaching Kracauer's work as poetic is both generative and not very difficult, for it lends itself well to poetry. Set before his theorizing and his historicizing, these two paragraphs reads like a witnessing: it is a testimonial that recounts his experience with a disappearing arcade, or an arcade that has since disappeared. But maybe this kind of legalistic language fails here: if it is a witnessing, what is the crime and who is the perpetrator? If the answer is capitalism, what is the justice? If the justice is simply a call to overturn capitalism, then what is the critique? That is, why include this remembering? In the face of these questions, Kracauer's theorizing, historicizing, and witnessing all become a kind of making-known in the style of Ng's; hence Kracauer's pointing to signs of the arcade's disappearance in the architecture, like Ng's instructive moment. These observations are not (only) rhetorical flourishes, but observations set into text that are intended to bring to light the intentionally erased violent process of transformation and replacement. The concealment of the architecture of the old arcade is quite literally the elision of the process of cancellation that Vismann considers part of the work of law; here, it is not just the law, but capitalism, modernity, and its discontents.

It is possible to see Kracauer and Ng performing, quite literally, the work of remembering in the face of an active and selective forgetting; forgetting in law, perhaps, but really through any work that seeks to displace and transform, to disavow what it used to be. This speaking and symbolizing the foreclosed against processes that seek to erase their own past (law, capitalism) intervenes into movements that refuse to reflect and meditate on the damage they cause. Here, finally, is the scene of the "historical materialist" against the catastrophe at the feet of Walter Benjamin's angel of history: "Articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it 'the way it really was'. It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger" (391). Ng's poem and Kracauer's essay are not the wistful rememberings of subjects who are trying to work through their relationships with a now foregone past; these are works that

seeks to encounter history, "appropriating" that which is under the "danger" of disappearing. This work seeks to force a meditation on that which seeks to conceal its history, which I have called "mapping," not in order to disavow the disappearance of the object meditated on (the road and the Linden Arcade)—it would be reductive to think of Ng and Kracauer's writing as pure fantasy to defend against their disappearing objects—but to disavow the kind of discourses and symbolic acts that seek to erase their operations of erasure and their concomitant damage. The remnant, the vestiges of the real, the waste that is intentionally lost and concealed yet observed and remembered through poetic orientation, becomes that which is spoken and remembered in order to refuse the operation of forgetting.

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A "Common" Sense: When Public Space Fails Us—A Study of Two Films

STACY THOMAS

Abstract:

In their 2022 book *On the Inconvenience of Other People*, Lauren Berlant examines how social (and physical) infrastructures are broken down during times of crisis or transition. They also discuss alternatives to these broken infrastructures, and how non-reproductive forms can be built or can grow out of the chaos of those glitches. One such alternative Berlant approaches is the *sensus communis*: an aesthetic or philosphical theory of felt communal sense that can operate in place of a traditional "Commons." Through the discussion of *Transit* (2018), directed by Christian Petzold, an example is presented of how public space can easily be broken down or corrupted by forceful takeover. *Transit* also demonstrates how attempts to covertly build supportive networks under such conditions are fragile and prone to collapse under pressure. *In the Air* (2009) by Liza Johnson is another example of loss of infrastructure due to oppressive forces. However, Johnson's film presents an alternative to the concept of common space. Through "embodied tactics" (circus performance, in this instance), we see opportunities to unlearn dependence on institutional structures, helping to articulate new ideas through the political potentialities at the core of Petzold's film.

When an idea of a "Commons" (an egalitarian space open to anyone for public discourse and connection) disappears, a vacuum is created, and that space cannot exist for long. It will morph and be sucked into any pockets it can find. Or, it might cause an entire community to crumble and disperse, flying off into the ether. In the two films discussed in this article, *Transit* (2018) by Christian Petzold and *In the Air* (2009) by Liza Johnson, this vacuum effect is observed and resolved with two very different outcomes. Using Lauren Berlant's ideas of the *sensus communis* in their book *On the Inconvenience of Other People*, I will show how these two films' disparate narratives demonstrate the necessity for subversive organization—organization outside of the framework of institutionally sanctioned connection—and alternative modes of community connection such as is demonstrated in *In the Air*.

Both films explore themes of broken community and systemic oppression: one film based on a Nazi-era novel that follows political prisoners and refugees in quasi-modern France; the other, a short film about a group of neglected teenagers in a defunct industrial town in America. They are both examples of community breakdown effected by outside oppressive forces. The respective oppressors presented in the films are different in force but also appear the same in nature: capitalistic forces (Fascists, corporations) unleashed on unprepared populations. Johnson's subjects wander listlessly in an eroded town that was left for dead by industry. The Nazis in Petzold's film descend swiftly and violently, arresting public space, private space, and the people within it who scramble for escape. Both of these examples, which can be viewed either as opposing ends of a stick or as different stops along a timeline, show how loss of common space can lead to social breakdown. The abuses captured in the films can be violent or insidious, but they achieve the same end: fractured social structures. However, Johnson's film offers a possible preventative measure, while Petzold's demonstrates the scenario played out to the bleakest end.

Georg's Web of Safety in *Transit*

Berlant posits that the very idea of a common, public and democratic space is no longer possible in our age of police surveillance, closed circuit television, and corporate ownership of public spheres. A genuine space of this nature, Berlant explains, is impossible, requiring "people to honor the common spirit of the common. It turns out that this trust has no object to sustain it, that any place in ordinary life might convert in a snap to an event in which something alive or held close to life has been massively transgressed" (Berlant 80).

We can observe just such a transgressive event in one of the opening scenes of *Transit*. Georg leaves his friend (we assume they are friends, but the tone between them is so tense that they seem more like recent allies or accomplices) to run a dangerous errand. When he returns, he finds the street full of storm troopers, his friend one of a group of confused strangers being held, lined up and arrested; a space which moments before had been safe public territory had vanished, like walls being moved in a labyrinth. Georg breaks away and escapes, and as he runs a woman in civilian dress calls out to give him away to authorities. Any structure of safe public space is crumbling away, rendered meaningless in the span of a couple of hours.

Georg must seek refuge in various private spaces, and when in public by keeping on the move, keeping to himself, being invisible. On one hand, he laments this isolation. As the narrator explains in a sequence reminiscent of well-known refugee narratives: "That was the terrible thing. Not that they stare at you, your dirty, tired face, your torn clothing. The terrible thing is, they don't see you. You don't exist in their world" (*Transit*). However, it is this invisibility that keeps Georg safe, forcing him to embrace and embody his role as outsider.

As a balance to this isolation out in the open, there is a common web being created in private. It is disjointed, tenuous, but vital, its connections made covertly and quickly. As the movie progresses, we witness Georg getting pulled into the intimate relationships and spaces of strangers: the father-son bond in Melissa's apartment, agree-

ments of transit and romantic commitment in Richard's hotel room. In these instances, the idea of private space is turned on its head. There is foreshadowing of this inversion in Paris, when Georg encounters the lonely hotelier in the dead writer's room, and learns from her of the suicide and a wayward wife. The moment of honest intimacy between himself and the hotel owner runs counter to our expectation of how two strangers might relate; it is as though the privacy and urgency of the space gives them permission to risk honesty. Are they both reaching blindly for safety? This desperate search for connection continues when Georg reaches Marseille. He encounters Driss and Melissa, Marie and Richard, the dying composer, and the woman with two dogs— all of them connected psychically and physically by a common thread of survival, all of them seeking (secretly) for allies. He is able to form the beginnings of bonds where there is private space available. But, without the ability to congregate, to become more than only random, separate numbers, with shrinking public and private space, they are defeated, the web is broken, and Georg ends up alone, once again exposed in a public space.

Common Movement in *In the Air*

In her writing on the (failed) formal and democratic spaces of the public commons, Berlant puts forward the concept of the *sensus communis*: a "higher gut feeling" associated with the common space that can exist outside of any physical or literal framework (Berlant 83). Rather than the fleeting, false public safety of a commons that can be manipulated or taken away by an overpowering entity such as a psychotic corporation or a murderous political regime, the sensus communis is innate—primal, even— and is based on a felt sense of commonality, rooted only in mutual safety.

The protagonists in *In the Air* (three teens) are adrift too, wandering the streets as Georg does in Marseille. Not welcome in the spheres of their parents (the adults are distracted by addiction and work), they are forced to occupy open, exposed areas of their broken-down town.

As in *Transit*, the oppressive force in *In the Air* is omnipresent. However, the fascist regime which descends upon the towns and cities of France is tangible, and seen. The oppressors of *In the Air* are absent; they have vacated the town which they used for capitalist gain, leaving the remaining occupants to fill in the gaps. These spaces are seen in the empty, boarded up storefronts and streets which the teens occupy—they are displaced and invisible, just like Georg in Marseille. Rather than finding common ground in the private spaces of strangers, as Georg does, they find another common-private space: the gym where they practice circus arts (*Transit*).

Although they lack the foundation of a supportive larger community and common space, the teens have been—covertly—building a *sensus communis*. They have been learning to depend on each other's physical bodies for support, slowly building bonds of trust. We see this when two potential sweethearts are volunteered for collaboration easily and without malice by their peers. With a simple glance, the two youths transform into a couple, dependent on each other's physical bodies, existing in each other's intimate space. It is just this sort of "embodied tactic," Berlant proposes, which can be an alternative to traditional forms of public, political discourse requiring any sort of democratic common (Berlant 115).

"How can a discipline of the ordinary body toward pleasure and kindness create an atmosphere for a new economy's good life that does not begin with where the wealth is and judgments of who's deserving?" Berlant asks (111). The answer is in the final scene of *In the Air*, where we witness the community come together to join in a collaborative, spontaneous "perceptual event that bypasses cognition." Awkwardly, but working together, the teens from the circus club are joined by the adults of their community to perform acts of choreographed team dance to the poignant lyrics of a nineties techno song: "Do you think you're better off alone?" (Alice Deejay).

As Berlant summarizes in the following quote, when it is their turn to create a common space by extending these bonds—the *sensus communis* they have built on their own—to the adults in their lives, the teens are ready to do so:

The film's older figures appear too beaten down to protest the exploitation of supply-chain capitalism, and the abandonment of working populations by the wealth hoarders seems to produce less a politics than rampant and depleting nervous conditions, from irritation to short fuses and numbness. The receptive posture of aesthetic attention helps the youths to loosen or unlearn their defenses against taking each other in. They train each other, then the adults, to reoccupy existence in a chilly place. Individuals may be exhausted, but as a whole they've not yet given up on the world. (111)

Johnson's subjects find their commons, not in a place but in an event, and not alone but together. Their physical expression of unity supercedes the lack of a formal common space.

Sensus communis as Political Act

In Transit, a hostile, oppressive force descends quickly upon a society, leaving inhabitants scrambling for quickly receding safety. In this environment, as trust in public spheres and institutional systems vanishes, connections are attempted in private. Unfortunately, as Georg and his companions discover, the kind of bonds forged under such circumstances break under pressure, as all of his connections scatter in the final moments of Marseille's occupation.

Contemplating the statement "We are in it together!" which proliferated during the COVID-19 panic, Berlant writes, "Who is 'we'? What is 'it'? Fantasies of democracy as the experience of collectively equal exposure to vulnerability tried to establish a ground where there is no ground" (113). This is the "lack of ground" that Georg experienced when the woman on the Paris sidewalk, a complete stranger, gave him away to authorities as he tried to escape incarceration. It is the lack of ground experienced by all people displaced or dismissed by an aggressive or unseeing society, institution, or family.

In answer, the teens in *In the Air* manage to (perhaps subconsciously but no less significantly) find new ground by forming a *sensus communis* in the absence of any sanctioned public space to do so. "The frictions of counternormative affective infrastructures can bring structural political imaginaries to their knees," Berlant writes (115).

In the Air's example of transformation-through-interaction can be used as a jumping-off point for discussions around alternatives to the traditional and problematic concept of a commons for public discourse, and what "discourse" even means in these contexts.

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Contemporary German Politics: Introduction of the Transnational Cleavage

GÜZIN KARAGÖZ

Abstract:

There have been apparent shifts in political trends in the aftermath of the large refugee influx in 2015. This paper aims to explain the shift from more traditional center-left-and-right parties to far right sentiment as a result of the application of catch-all politics. Research on the topic of the refugee influx tends to discuss its impact on current politics and how politicians responded. This research does not contextualize the shift in long-term political trends. To describe the shift in political party systems in Germany, I address past trends and how the transnational cleavage caused by the influx of migrants led to present ones. I tie together discourse on the 1994 as well as 2005 elections using the theories of Otto Kirchheimer on catch-all politics and Stein Rokkan and Seymour Martin Lipset's work on cleavages. This approach sheds light on the connection between past and present political structures in Germany.

Introduction

Immigration to and from the Germanic lands can be traced back to the early seventeenth century and continues to be prominent today. Both religious and economic migrants were drawn to Germany as a result of the destruction of the Thirty Years' War (Hanewinkel 2022). Following World War I, the Weimar Republic became home to the thousands who escaped the consequences of the Russian Revolution (Hanewinkel 2022). During World War II, the strong need for labour resulted in both voluntary and forced migration of many into the region. Due to the lack of labour force unable to meet the increased demand in the 60s, Germany recruited workers from several countries and allowed for migrants to be "guest workers." More recently, there has been an increase of migration into the country due to the large influx of asylum seekers in 2015 (Hanewinkel 2022). Post-World War II globalization led to the introduction of a transnational cleavage in Germany through the influx of migrants, which caused a shift in traditional cleavages such as religion. Traditionally dominating political parties like the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and Christian Social Union (CSU) did not take a stance consistent with their platforms and chose a strategy of catch-all politics instead. As a result, these center-left and right parties started the process of dealignment from their traditional stances on the politics of migration. An increase in the issue salience of migration politics disrupted voters' loyalty to specific parties. Issue salience refers to the most pertinent issue that parties address that is the driving factor for their platform. Simultaneously, an increase in right-wing populism led to the creation of radical parties such as the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

How has the political environment shifted as a result of the large influx of migrants in 2015? In this paper, I demonstrate how a transnational cleavage emerged following the influx, shifting long standing views of traditional parties such as the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social

Union (CSU) in Germany. I argue that a catch-all attitude displayed by traditionally center-left and center-right wing parties has led to a deviation from such views to the creation of far-right rhetoric in Germany. In order to support my claim, I draw on popular political science theories such as Otto Kirchheimer's catch-all politics and Stein Rokkan and Seymour Martin Lipset's political cleavage theory. In addition, I utilize peer reviewed articles to build my argument case around how these theories apply to modern day German politics.

The rest of this paper is divided into four parts. In the first section, I sketch the current political parties active in German politics. In the second section, I give background information on how the party system in Germany formed, specifically the buildup and outcomes of the 1994 election. In the third section, I analyze the shift of electoral success of past traditionally dominating parties by examining the build-up and outcomes of the 2005 election. In the fourth and final section, I elaborate on the future implications of the shift in party politics in the aftermath of the large influx of refugees in 2015.

Party Politics in Germany: Breakdown of Current Trends

Even though the same political parties have persisted in Germany since its reunification in 1990, their agendas shifted as a result of globalization. Listed below are the current political parties in Germany, from far left to far right, respectively:

• Die Linke (the left): far left, rooted in the former communist party, with strong support in the East (Foundation 2021).

• Die Grünen (the Greens): center left, evolved out of environmentalist, anti-nuclear and anti-war protest movements in the 1970s, popularity nationwide has increased exponentially in recent years (Foundation 2021).

• *Social Democratic Party (SPD):* center left, historically known to champion worker's rights, oldest party in Germany (Foundation 2021).

• Free Democratic Party (FDP): center right on economic issues but center left on civil liberties issues, post-war German politics (Foundation 2021).

• *Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party Christian Social Union (CSU):* center right, traditionally working together (Foundation 2021).

• Alternative for Germany (AfD): far right, anti-immigration, shunned by all other parties (Foundation 2021).

Those shown above in italics represent the earliest left-and right-wing parties in Germany today. Others originated after these parties, making them the foundations of current German politics. According to the Bertelsmann Foundation, even though the East-West divide post reunification in Germany has narrowed, its influence remains (Foundation 2021). Remnants of this divide led to the prioritization of different issues in West and East Germany. Over time, increasing prosperity in both regions allowed for parties to focus on sociocultural issues, such as addressing migration flows. To address contemporary debates around the 2015 refugee influx, traditional parties such as the CDU-CSU and the SPD resorted to catch-all politics and shifted their party platforms towards the opposite ends of the spectrum. To analyze changes seen in contemporary politics of Germany, it is necessary to evaluate its past.

Political Party Structure in the Past

In the 1994 second general election, the two coalitions were the CDU-CSU-FDP (TAN) and the SPD-the Greens (GAL) (Gibowski 1995). Despite their reunification in 1990, issue salience in West and East Germany were deemed separate because it had not been long since their reunion. "The dominant issues in both western and eastern Germany relate to everyday concerns" (31). Major issues in the 1994 election in the West were unemployment and immigration (30). The issue of asylum seekers "had strongly preoccupied German politics for many years and generated far-reaching political and social debates" (30). Shortly preceding the 1994 election, as a result

of migrants being posed by right-wing Republicans as a threat to already scarce jobs, the issue of immigration moved to the top in terms of political salience from September 1991 until July 1993. The issue began to lose importance "when the governing parties and the SPD opposition reached an agreement on amending Germany's asylum laws, …[which] led very rapidly to a decline in the number of asylum seekers" (31). Consequently, "right-wing Republicans profited from the public debate conducted on the strong influx of asylum seekers and foreigners" (31). Their platform was based around anti-immigrant sentiment, which attracted voters who felt threatened by the influx of immigrants. "The asylum-seeker issue, which was so important in western Germany for a long period of time, became prominent in the new Länder only for a short period of time in the summer of 1993." A reasoning for this was that "most asylum seekers and ethnic German resettlers prefer to settle in the western Länder" (31).

On the other hand, the Green Party had little to no influence in East Germany, while it had some appeal in the West (Gibowski 1995, 31). Inglehart first introduced the concept of post-materialism in 1977, which was based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It states that after the basic needs of a human being are met, such as food and shelter, then people start to consider issues outside of that circle (Mcleod). This can be observed in the 1994 election since "Bread-and-Butter issues" dominated while post material issues were of little importance in the West and observably no importance in the East (Gibowski 1995, 31). Consequently, the future state of the Green Party will depend on how quickly Eastern Germany assimilates into Western Germany (Gibowski 1995). During this election, the Greens have "replaced the FDP as the third strongest party in general elections," but only stable in western Germany (38). This foreshadows the current trends regarding the Greens in the 2020s since their popularity is increasing exponentially.

Particularly in the 1994 election, the right-wing coalition tended to attract older voters. By contrast, the left-wing coalition's electorate was mostly made up of younger

voters (Gibowski 1995). Cleavages within the political system, not the current events discussed by leading candidates in debates, help to explain this age discrepancy (Gibowski 1995). For example, a religious cleavage between the Catholics and Protestants exists in western Germany, and voters with religious ties and those without any in eastern Germany (Gibowski 1995). The ideologies of CDU-CSU and SPD voters were heavily based around the religious cleavage:

> The CDU-CSU attracts more voter support among Catholics in western Germany and the few Catholics who live in eastern Germany than among Protestants. Conversely, the SPD attracts more voter support among Protestants than among Catholics, both in western and eastern Germany. In western Germany the SPD also attracts more voter support among persons without religious affiliations. (42)

With the introduction of the new dimensions of competition through the introduction of the transnational cleavage via the influx of refugees, however, this trend has shifted in contemporary German politics.

Prosperity after World War II, coupled with the expansion of the welfare state, deemed survival as a given in Western Europe. This led to more of a focus on sociocultural issues, which gave rise to the cultural theory that entails the degree of perceived threat to the status quo. The most glaring evidence of this would be the refugee influx as explained below.

Changes in Electoral Success

Shortcomings of the political system were brought to light through the introduction of a new transnational cleavage, specifically related to the immigration debate during the 2010s. Prior to the influx of migrants into Germany, the CDU committed to low-

er tax rates to secure electoral success in the 2009 election (Zolleis 2009). These tax cuts later evoked an ill-responsive strategy for the refugee influx as the government did not have adequate funding to accommodate for the increased population.

Since the 2005 election, reforms have been indeterminate compared to previous years: the most prominent change in the political program for parties was the departure from the reform agenda in multiple spheres such as economic and social policy (Zolleis 2009). Even though the CDU remained rooted in Christian ideals and democratic principles (Zolleis 2009), "it could not retain its dominance without appealing to the increasingly post-ideological center, even if this entailed disappointing traditionally conservative-minded supporters" (Bock 2018, 379). As suspected, this was not well received by the traditional supporters of the CDU. "Attacks on Merkel [through social media as a response towards her interaction with a 4-year-old Palestinian refugee] were accompanied by criticism of her inaction towards refugee suffering at Europe's doorstep" (379). In addition to criticism towards an indeterminate approach to an increasingly salient issue, "the refugee situation illustrated that not all was well in Germany: state institutions struggled and revealed the inadequacy of public institutions after years of cuts" (384).

The left-wing response was that of economic safeguarding while the right-wing response was that of reform. Helmut Schmidt focused on rebuilding the strength of the German economy and did so by merging unemployment and welfare state systems. This caused a reduction in amount and eligibility in benefits, which cost him the traditional supporters of the Social Democrats. As Christopher S. Allen noted, "From the late 1970s to the present, we have seen both Social Democratic parties downplay or minimize traditional social democratic policies such as: worker participation, extending the public provision of social welfare and pressing for increased democratic governance and regulation of market activity" (Allen 2018, 639). A reasoning for this is how the "neoliberal tenor of the European Union (EU) economic policy and continued globalization, threatened both the traditional welfare state social spending as well

as the trade union working-class base that represented its primary support" (637). The right-wing response was more radical compared to the Social Democrats. A significant supporter base of conservatives saw the migrant influx as the last straw in maintaining CDU's traditional values, which led to the creation of an alternative to centrism (Bock 2018). The Alternative for Germany (AfD) was founded in 2013 to oppose the idea of the euro rescue through which Europe would bare the responsibility of refugees from other regions. They supported an anti-Merkel sentiment in support of authoritarian statehood and closed borders (Bock 2018).

One of the leading causes for this shift to the extreme is indeterminism from the government. "Neither critics from the left, demanding solidarity with crisis countries and the end of austerity, nor from the right, dissatisfied with rescue packages and the modernization of a conservative party, could challenge her popular centrism" (Bock 2018, 384). There exists a pattern of Otto Kirchheimer's catch-all party thesis in both left-and right-wing parties in contemporary German politics (Allen 2018). This shift to the center was triggered via the introduction of a transnational cleavage through the influx of migrants. The prior religious or class-based cleavages led political parties in Germany to base their platforms around where their constituents lied within that spectrum. With the migrant influx, parties shifted their traditional stances to attract the most amount of votes for their campaign. The right-wing parties shifted towards the center-left, and the left-wing parties shifted towards the center-right. This shift among traditionally left- and right-wing parties upset constituents who didn't align with the party that they support. This led to the spreading of harmful rhetoric through the creation of far right and ethnopopulist party, called the Alternative für Deutschland. In his transnational analysis of the matter, Martin Eiermann notes, "As Emily Ekins has pointed out in her analysis of the US electorate, a key feature of contemporary populism is heterogeneity of supporters rather than commonality of vision. The same argument holds for the AfD" (Eiermann 2017). Less than 10% of AfD supporters are concerned with their own economic situation, but 69% are concerned with the distributional as-

pect of the welfare system due to welfare chauvinism, which states that benefits of the welfare system should be given to who "deserve" it, which is the "native" population more times than not (Eiermann 2017).

Future Implications

Even though the general trend in AfD supporter base seems to be consistent within residence status and age, it is not as consistent as traditional cleavages apparent in the CDU-CSU or SPD before the introduction of a new cleavage. As of now, "the AfD … trumps the Social Democrats as the party with the largest share of working-class supporters and surpassed die Linke as the party with the lowest median household income" (Eiermann 2017). Since "the institutions of Germany's fortified democracy are much less equipped to confront a party with mass appeal and parliamentary representation that undergoes a process of political radicalization" (Eiermann 2017), there exists a thin line preventing a party rooted in populism from potentially rising to power.

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Unlearning *Heimat*

KWAN LING YAN CHARIS

Abstract:

The concept of *Heimat* has played a significant role in shaping German identity and national discourse. However, it has also been associated with exclusionary and nationalist politics, resulting in the marginalization of minority groups. This essay explores the idea of unlearning Heimat and critically examines its implications for community building and social inclusion. Drawing on the works of Lauren Berlant and Mithu Sanyal, this essay argues that unlearning *Heimat* requires a process of deconstruction and reconstruction of social structures and identities. It further suggests that this process involves a critical reflection on the historical and cultural roots of *Heimat* and an exploration of alternative ways of belonging that embrace diversity and difference. Through a close analysis of cultural and literary texts, this essay demonstrates how unlearning *Heimat* can enable a more nuanced understanding of German identity and foster a more inclusive and just society. Overall, this essay advocates for a transformative approach to community building that challenges the dominant framework of belonging and foregrounds the multiplicity of human experiences and expressions.

With the effects of social polarisation becoming more salient in contemporary society, it should be evident that issues related to immigration and belonging are often weaponized against minority groups. This can be seen in the rhetoric surrounding *Heimat*, a word that conjures up a sentimental yearning for a long-lost home that memorialises a limited and exclusive view of the German identity. According to Mithu Sanyal, the term *Heimat* has also been co-opted by far-right political forces to justify exclusionist policies and perpetuate the marginalization of minorities (53). Therefore, to dismantle dominant ways of thinking that support the current structures of power and control, this essay proposes to use Lauren Berlant's notion of "unlearning" to investigate how the idea of *Heimat* can be reimagined. Berlant believes that one could unlearn by forging multiple paths available to move forward. In other words, this idea suggests that unlearning requires one to be creative and to seek out a diversity of perspectives and experiences, and it implies that one ought to be willing to engage with people who have different backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences than our own in order to dismantle simplistic understandings of what it means to be in community. This essay will first examine how prejudice against outsiders is created through social infrastructures and language. Next, it will discuss how unlearning can be used to dismantle the dominant framework of belonging to restore equality in interpersonal and communal relationships.

Berlant offers a careful attempt to understand what sustains people's sense of connection to the world that reflects the social conditions of current capitalist and other structural crises. In particular, Berlant invites their readers to see world-building as infrastructure-making and suggests that "an infrastructural analysis helps us see what we commonly call structure is not an intractable principle of continuity across space and time, but a convergence of force and value in patterns of movements that's only solid when seen from a distance" (Berlant 25). In Berlant's interpretation, infrastructures are a crucial element for understanding how power operates in society, one that is both a social and cultural entity that shapes the way individuals perceive themselves and their

surroundings. One can certainly see this with the vernacular infrastructures based on one's communities, such as the concept of *Heimat*, which are themselves constantly being remade, repaired and rebuilt especially through memory cultures. Through infrastructure, communities, nations and all kinds of collectives materialize and extend their particular ways of reproducing themselves. It is also through infrastructure that marginalization and ostracization occur. Infrastructure may entrench injustice in systems and thus can serve to naturalize those relations, and infrastructure does not simply reflect existing inequality but can engineer new forms. This calls into question the infrastructure of *Heimat* that is premised upon the "three Hs" (Haut, Haar und Haemoglobin) or in English, "skin, hair and haemoglobin" (the S-H-H formula) (Sanyal 50). As reflected in Sanya's essay "Home," this infrastructure has worked to carve up the nation (Germany) into preserves of those who belong, while ingraining and hardening the means of social exclusion into tangible material structures, such as restrictive immigration policies that prevent others from belonging. From being constantly interrogated with questions such as "Where are you from?" to having their loyalty to the German state questioned, these forms of infrastructures surrounding *Heimat* have perpetuated multiple forms of violence against the migrant group, at the same time serving as a site for fascism and neoliberalism.

     Berlant developed the concept "cruel optimism" precisely to capture the "paradox of persisting in practices, regimes, or acts that harm us," which parallels the dominant discourse surrounding *Heimat* (Anderson et. al. 131). In a similar vein, *Heimat* has been invoked as a nostalgic memory term that heavily extracts its value from the past, which simultaneously generates harm in the present by excluding those who are not remembered. By over-attaching to this narrow definition of *Heimat*, far-right political forces have been able to justify their political discourse that perpetuates the marginalization of others. In the context of Sanyal's essay, recurring themes such as the lack of respect, prescribed inferiority, and the rendering invisibility of immigrants' contributions are prevalent in the use of language and other discursive practices that

stems from casting some as different on their alleged biological differences—i.e., having a different S-H-H formula. Progressive ideologies, which are often grounded in a tension between demands for equality and a privileging of differences among people, frequently reproduce the idea that all this struggle requires is to establish a level playing field among the people in a society. While equality is an important goal, in order to start thinking about it one first has to self-reflect and unlearn some commitments to hostile structures in which even some of the best of us are often entrenched.

As one of the central tensions in the concept of *Heimat* is the struggle between nostalgia and progress, untangling the concept of *Heimat* would require a shift in German memory culture that moves away from repeating existing narratives but negotiates new and shared narratives instead. This sounds simple on the surface, yet the water immediately becomes murky as one digs deeper into the conversation. As Berlant theorized, by promising us much with a big set of tasks between that goal and our current lived experience, the idea of a commons indeed becomes a burden that slowly wears us down. Therefore, instead of being merely a political goal that stimulates community organizing, the commons would also function well as a site at which to unlearn the world that helps us see what aspects of our lives require reassessment. Unlearning would thereby fostering better relations with other people.

Berlant's essay and Sanyal's proposed definition of *Heimat* share a common thread of challenging prevailing modes of power and envisioning new possibilities for social and political change in contemporary society. In other words, the task is to channel divisive political energies away from their defensive formation and turn them into a more democratic mode of politics, which implies cultivating an ability to embrace the discomfort of true equality—i.e., what Berlant calls the inconvenience of an "equally valued social being" (Berlant 105). As such, building a sustainable version of *Heimat* could mimic Berlant's notion of unlearning. At its core, unlearning involves an ongoing process of critical self-reflection and challenging one's assumptions and beliefs that have been shaped by dominant cultural norms and values. Since the ex-

isting discourse around *Heimat* has mostly been exclusionary in nature, unlearning a monolithic version of *Heimat* reveals powerful alternatives to the narrow conception of identity and creates a framework for social and political transformation.

One way to use unlearning to break down the existing framework of belonging and restore equality in interpersonal and communal relationships is to create multiple paths available to move forward. Berlant recognises that a commons is a constantly evolving and contested space that requires ongoing effort and a willingness to engage in the messy and often difficult work of political organizing and mobilization. Therefore, they proposed to create a space and time that is open to negotiation rather than "attaching oneself to the meritless and impossible mission of trying to resolve them" (Volpert 2022). Rather than aspiring to achieve an impossible goal, one could unlearn by building new infrastructures, finding ways to disrupt and reorganize existing infrastructures, or creating alternative systems for supporting and valuing diverse communities. By doing so, this could resemble what Sanyal calls "formulating the *Heimat* in plural," which refers to cultivating a common understanding that accounts for the lived realities of "an increasing number of Germans by acknowledging how (im)migration enriches the *Heimat*" (Sanyal 57).

Besides giving voices back to those who feel like they do not belong so that they can speak up about crafting a sustainable future in the political sphere, collectively as a society, one should also readjust their attitude towards the bigger topic of globalisation and immigration with care and prudence as if 'those people' were a member of our own kind. Coming from a Canadian perspective, society cannot function without considering immigrants and their gratuitous contributions as they take prominent roles in our communities. Therefore, the involvement of diverse voices is much needed in social conversations to succeed in protecting communities and stopping further degradation in interpersonal and communal relationships. As Berlant wrote, "the repair or replacement of broken infrastructure is necessary for any form of sociality to extend itself" (Berlant 24). Without opening up the conversation to include those who histor-

ically have been excluded from the commons, *Heimat* would only continue to serve the dominant group's interests at the expense of minorities.

Writers such as Berlant and Sanyal have reflected on the question regarding the ways in which infrastructure has not just been a feature of exclusion but as an organization of collective living. In many ways, the commons and *Heimat* offer a reimagination of what it means to belong in any community, particularly in contemporary Germany. Ultimately, unlearning involves embracing a more fluid and dynamic understanding of identity, one that recognizes the ways in which individuals and communities are shaped by a variety of means and aspects, including race, ethnicity and class. It also implies that identity does not have to be restricted to one version, but it could be negotiated to allow various individuals to find their place of belonging within a community. By embracing this complexity, individuals and communities can begin to build new forms of solidarity and connection that are grounded in a shared vision of achieving equality.

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Gatekeeping Belonging:
An Investigation of Conceptions of Home

LEA LASSEN

Abstract:

The world in which we live is diverse and many communities and families reflect this diversity as well. Each of us has unique experiences that make us who we are. As a result, identity and belonging are dynamic processes that are hardly ever straightforward. This article will examine how belonging in Germany is burdened by structural features that both seek to integrate people but also mark them as inherently different. Structurally, the state has come to legally recognize and accommodate a diverse population; and yet, conservative segments of that population reject inclusion. Minoritized peoples find themselves rejected by conservative forces comprised of individuals who fear newcomers do not conform to their established set of beliefs.

The historical and contemporary movement of people throughout the world has resulted in the increased diversity of populations. As a result, the demographics of a given society are hardly ever uniform. For instance, Germany has been a place of cultural convergence for centuries. By 2021, one in every four individuals in the country had a migrant background (Statistisches Bundesamt Nr. 162). Such collective diversity is not fundamentally negative. Yet some oppose and seek to eradicate it. Institutionally, alternative forms of belonging have received legal recognition from the German government (Sanyal 51). However, this legal inclusion does not necessarily reflect the lived experiences of individuals, for instance that of migrants. Many find their identities invalidated by others because they do not reflect the often stereotypical beliefs that are held about them. Some vehemently veer away from accepting multiculturalism and thereby tear at the collective fabric of society out of fear. They seek safety in the form of an imagined homogeneity to shield themselves from the uncertainty and vulnerabilities that accompany any new relationship (Berlant 75–76). This fear is one that can be counteracted by individual experience with and acclimation to difference.

By 2020 the population of Berlin alone represented over 190 nationalities (Statistik Berlin Brandenburg). But this diversification is not a recent development. Looking at the Berlin region in particular, one finds that, already in the 17th century under Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg many protestant religious refugees from France, Bohemia, the Netherlands and Switzerland came to live in Brandenburg-Prussia – which at the time was suffering from devastating population losses as a result of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) (Bade and Oltmer 66).

Germany's historical diversity informed various political developments in the course of time. Some German institutions have come to recognize and accommodate this multiplicity by helping people find their home in Germany. But individuals marked by difference are still left at odds with the structural features underpinning their lived experiences in the country. For them, the 20th-century nationalist conception of *Heimat* (home), which is associated with stringent ideas about race and cultural destiny

that favour a Eurocentric Christian sense of communality tied to geography (i.e., blood and soil rhetoric), remains out of reach.

In the 1970s, Germany's reform government started to shift the narrative of Heimat until it came to be understood by many as "a subjective feeling closely linked to sensory impressions and memories" (Sanyal 52–53). Significant legal steps towards recognizing belonging as a fluid concept include the adaptation of the principle of *jus soli* (citizenship by birthplace) in 2000, as well as its 2014 dual-citizenship extension. Those with *jus soli* citizenship who grew up in Germany no longer have to decide between keeping their German or their parents' citizenship (Sanyal 50; BMI). These adoptions have better aligned the state with the diverse and mixed origins of individuals in Germany. Nevertheless, some within society still reject such recognition and inclusion. New right-wing parties like the AfD (Alternative for Germany) advocate a different understanding of citizenship, namely for *jus sanguinis* (citizenship by bloodline). This version of citizenship dictates that citizenship should only be hereditary and not otherwise obtained. They have also drawn up new distinctions by labelling people as either "passport" or "bio-Germans" (Sanyal 51; Bennhold and Vancon). Here, passport Germans refer to those holding institutional belonging through citizenship, whereas bio-Germans refer to those who hereditarily fit into their narrowly defined and racialized ethnos of "the Volk" (the people).

Drawing on the work of Lauren Berlant, we can note that such distinctions create a "lack of fit between the personal and the structural standpoints from which the world is imagined and acted on" (76). Nationalistic sentiments such as *Heimat* have been used by many regimes as a tool to generate solidarity – to motivate and improve war efforts on the home front. In Germany, this is no longer the case. The country has embraced its post-war constitution as a liberal/representative democracy. Liberal democracies are characteristically pluralist and proceduralist (Wolkenstein 333). They uphold collective representation through equal participation in and access to elections and attempt to construct peace through institutions and laws (Abts and Rummens 410).

It is no longer the institution's role to manufacture belonging but to organize and accommodate differences.

Interacting is necessary in a society where we exist within and share the same spaces (Berlant 75, 100, 110). Moreover, we depend on these interactions to secure resources, thus taking substantial communal roles in our lives. The power that people have over each other is recognized by institutions as well. When expressing the importance of integration (through, for example, language learning) the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community stated that it "should ensure that immigrants have equal opportunities and the chance to participate in all areas" (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community). Note that it says should and not does. This is because acceptance and equal opportunity are not guaranteed by others within society. The state has created a set of straightforward ways to obtain belonging through citizenship. However, in the everyday lives of individuals, this plays a more nuanced role towards belonging, where interactions shape our daily lives.

Overall, the state has benefited from (im)migration and although it may no longer propagate exclusion along the same lines as it did in the past, it does not assist in facilitating community on a societal level (Sanyal 57). The state and its institutions are in a position to foster feelings of belonging and encourage better cooperation among its citizens but have instead chosen to distance themselves from this role. In part, this can be attributed to the institution's past authoritarian rule during World War II, where belonging and exclusion were employed in especially damaging ways. The desire to avoid overreaching into societal views of belonging is thus understandable. But this choice leaves a void that can be filled by different voices. A space which could be used to provide individuals with a broader sense of belonging to create a "unity in diversity" might, on the other hand, be filled with exclusionary ideas. An individual's principles are guided by the laws and values of the state(s) they inhabit. In Germany, the legal system has constructed an inclusive framework, where one is able to choose which cultural values to adopt – within the limits of the state. But, the perceptions that people

have surrounding identity, in light of institutional pullback, now come primarily from other individuals within society.

Fear is at the core of exclusion. The fear of letting go of a narrow picture of the community, accepting that the future will be different and that people have to share it with others. The reality is that a homogeneous community does not exist and has not for most of human history. Change and difference are not inherently negative; they can make us question and reevaluate which of our values (like societal and structural conceptions of belonging) still hold relevance (Sanyal 58). Still, some choose to fear change, destructively hyper-fixating upon specific individuals within society. Where (im)migrants are often a central point of attack, as to some, they signal an immediate threat to their way of life. The Kosovo War (1998–1999), the Syrian civil war since 2011, and the current Russian invasion of Ukraine, to name a few, have caused many to flee their country to find refuge elsewhere. Due to the proximity and resources of various European Union states, they are often destinations of choice. In 2015 and again in 2022, Germany saw an influx of over a million asylum seekers and refugees (Bennhold and Vancon; Statistisches Bundesamt Nr. N010). Devastating events have not only displaced many but have increased unease as well. During the height of the Syrian refugee crisis, some nations put up border fences or outright refused entry (UN-HCR). As Berlant contends, "[w]hen things stop converging in the reliable patterns of social and material reproduction, they also threaten the conditions and the sense of belonging" (Berlant 95). Some distance themselves to create artificial environments of homogeneity that sustain their sense of normalcy, with which they feel their resources and power among the collective are more secure. Indeed, these feelings often emerge in political discourse via agendas of collective security, where some elevate homeland (*Heimat*) security above human rights, and deeper socio-political factors are reduced to simplistic solutions (Wodak 77; 95; 258). Security issues must be taken seriously, but should also not be oversimplified by directing fault to singular groups of individuals. It is also important to recognize that some, out of personal fear, attempt to emo-

tionally charge such issues to push their one-size-fits-all agenda, such as heightened immigration restrictions.

Fears surrounding uncertainty and change have garnered the construction of the AfD political party to encompass them. And although groups like this speak of unity in terms of "us" and "we" it is a smoke screen obscuring their subconscious discomfort with confronting the unknown, the "other" – those who do not fit into their mould, and are deemed to be too different (Berlant 101). The establishment of a political party as such would and often does signal the will to accomplish a goal. However, their concept of hereditary belonging is about retaining and not attaining. It is not about productive discourse, rather it is an attempt to obtain lasting recognition of their ideas in the social domain – to reinvigorate their nativist sentiments, despite institutional adaptations to the cultural diversity of the country.

The delineation of belonging and identity by fear is tangible. It plays out in society through active discrimination that is calcified by bystander inaction (Salzmann 111). Many, as a result, find themselves pushed beyond the margins of society and made to question their sense of identity and belonging entirely. Some may seek and find community, possibly in others who have experienced a similar denial of belonging, but others may not. Much hinges on our interactions with one another – materially as well as emotionally. A rejection of who you believe you are can leave one feeling ashamed, despite not having done anything wrong other than having a different perception of belonging. Consequently, some may choose to forgo social relations altogether and throw themselves into a work metric that does not concern itself with well-being, rather appraising the individual as a commodity – a perilous fate (Harney and Moten). The bottom line is that people generally want to belong to places. One such example is the sheer number of individuals who have adopted Western names despite having different familial roots (Sanyal 57). Certain experiences push people to give their children Western names in order to extend to them the possibilities that they otherwise might not be able to access. Much is yielded in order to belong and have equal access to the

same resources and opportunities.

      In one way or another we all encounter uncertainty, and amidst unfamiliarity, this uncertainty can be heightened. But, when we allow fear to assume control we close ourselves off from the possibility to create a stronger community that everyone strives to be a part of. One often finds that communities of diverse individuals, who know the vulnerability and hurt of having their belonging invalidated, are stronger. They "know about the power of alliances" and are thus less likely to exclude others on the basis of imposed beliefs and more likely to be there for one another (Salzmann 113). The first step should be to create a social "commons" where no consensus about belonging has to be reached (Berlant). Where, instead of attempting to suppress individual cultural identities to find comfort and cohesion in similarity, we are able to find unity in an understanding of shared difference. Each of us comes with unique experiences that shape our identities that inform where we find belonging. The institution may have adapted to become more legally inclusive of these different dynamics, but it is up to all of us within society to help realize belonging; to recognize that change should not be feared and that belonging should not be denied. As contradictory to community building as it might seem, it is crucial that we first venture out as individuals to experience diversity. To get comfortable with it, so that when we come back together we have the experience required for change and difference not to phase us. It is also a step towards understanding that we each, despite our intent, play into and give normative force to division through terms like "native-speaker" and questions like "Where are you from?" For, it is our "patterns, habits, norms and scenes of assemblage and use" that make up our collective infrastructure (Berlant 95).

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Die deutsche Sprache - auf dem Weg zur Inklusion

OWEN MEUNIER

Abstract:

Sprachen entwickeln sich im Laufe der Zeit. Kultur und Sprache sind miteinander verflochten, und Kultur hilft, die Veränderungen in der Sprache besser zu verstehen. Deutsch entwickelt sich weiter, da sich die zeitgenössische Kultur in Mitteleuropa durch soziale Bewegungen, soziale Medien und Einwanderung verändert. Deutsch ist eine geschlechtsspezifische Sprache und schließt nicht-binäre Personen aus, weshalb sich Sektionen der LGBTQ2SIA+ Bewegung für Veränderungen in der Sprache einsetzten. Darüber hinaus verändern soziale Medien die Art und Weise, wie Deutschsprachige Menschen die Sprache verwenden, indem sie neue Wörter einführen und verschiedene grammatikalische Strukturen vereinfachen. Außerdem führt die Einwanderung dazu, dass die Sprache ihre eigene Einzigartigkeit entwickelt. Diese Veränderungen machen die Sprache für verschiedene Deutschsprachige zugänglicher, wie nicht-binäre Menschen und Eingewanderte, die alle einen wichtigen Teil der deutschen Gesellschaft bilden.
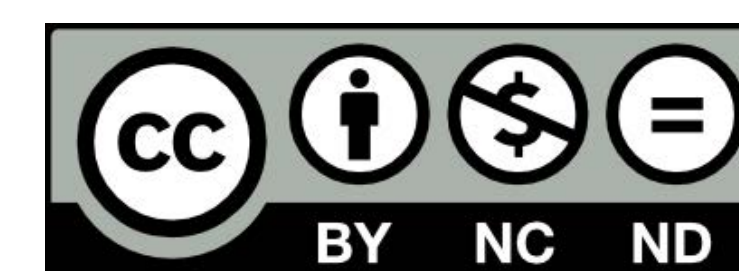
Inwieweit hat sich die deutsche Sprache entwickelt, um die heutige Kultur widerzuspiegeln?

Es ist unvermeidlich, dass sich Sprachen weiterentwickeln. Weltweit sprechen mehr als 130 Millionen Menschen Deutsch, was zur Evolution der deutschen Sprache beiträgt ("8 Dinge, die Sie"). Kultur und Sprache sind verflochten und eine Kultur kann die Struktur der Sprache erklären. Sprachliche Phänomene wie die Verwendung eines grammatikalischen Kasussystems im Deutschen können grundlegende Fragen zur mitteleuropäischen Kultur beantworten, beispielweise wie Deutschsprachige präziser in ihrer Sprache werden (Dovalil & Hanulíková). Außerdem entwickelt Deutsch sich mit dem Wandel der Kultur durch soziale Bewegungen, Einwanderung, Globalisierung und soziale Medien. In diesem Zusammenhang spiegeln sich die vorgenannten Phänomene in neuen linguistischen Entwicklungen und Änderungen wider.

Deutsch ist eine stark geschlechtsspezifische Sprache und schließt nicht-binäre Personen aus, die sich nicht als männlich oder weiblich identifizieren. Deshalb fördern Sektionen der LSBTTIQ Bewegung Änderungen an der Sprache. Geschlechtergerechte Sprache ist entscheidend in der zeitgenössischen Kultur. Deutschsprachige passen sich diesen Veränderungen trotz einiger Widerstände an. Die Sprache hat sich daher so weit entwickelt, dass der österreichische Verfassungsgerichtshof diese sprachlichen Veränderungen aufnimmt. Seit 2018 erlaubt das Gericht Personen, die sich nicht als männlich oder weiblich identifizieren, einen anderen Eintrag wie „divers" oder „offen" im Personenstandsregister und in Urkunden ("Im Deutschen tut sich"). Das Gericht ist einflussreich und kann durch Gesetze die gegenwärtige Kultur prägen. Es ist wichtig, dass Regierungen und Gerichte geschlechtergerechte Sprache akzeptieren, da diese Institutionen Diversität fördern und eine positive Wirkung auf die Menschen haben können.

Es gibt viele verschiedene Möglichkeiten, eine geschlechtergerechte Sprache zu verwenden. Man kann sich mit Worten anders ausdrücken. Zum Beispiel statt Leser

oder Leserin zu sagen, kann man „eine Person, die liest" sagen ("Im Deutschen tut sich"). Auf diese Weise wird das Geschlecht der lesenden Person nicht angegeben. Zusätzlich schuf Lann Hornscheidt, Profess_x für Gender Studies und Sprachanalyse am Zentrum für transdisziplinäre Geschlechterstudien der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, das genderfreie Pronomen „ens" ("Im Deutschen tut sich"). „Ens" ist der Mittelteil aus dem Wort „Mensch" und es kann als Pronomen oder Wortendung benutzt werden. Neopronomen sind eine andere Möglichkeit, die Sprache inklusiver zu machen. Neopronomen sind eine Mischung aus den Pronomen „er" und „sie" und ergeben zusammen „sier" oder „xier" ("Pronomen Ohne Geschlecht"). Das Pronomen xier war bis 2021 eines der meistgenutzten deutschen Neopronomen in Filmen und Serien ("Pronomen Wie Xier Und Sier – Illi Anna Heger – Grafische Dokumentation, Comics, Theorie Und Xier Pronomen"). Zudem spielte „Die Transgender-Tagung Berlin 2007" eine bedeutende Rolle bei der Einführung des Personalpronomens „nin" und des dritten Geschlechts des „Indefinitivums" (Fischer). Diese Idee wurde von Cabala de Sylvain in dem Projekt „Sylvain-Konventionen" weiterentwickelt. Das Indefinitivum ist eine Bezeichnung für Personen, „die sich weder als männlich noch als weiblich identifizieren" (Fischer). Die vorgeschlagenen Strategien sind inklusiv, wenn man über nicht-binäre Menschen spricht, weil sie nicht angeben, ob eine Person männlich oder weiblich ist.

Das Gendersternchen ist ein weiterer bekannter Weg, um nicht heteronormative Personen zu bezeichnen (Kolek 118). Es ist einfach, das Gendersternchen zu verwenden. Ein Asteriskus oder Sternchen zwischen der männlichen und weiblichen Endung im Plural kann eine nicht binäre Person zu beschreiben (119). Das Gendersternchen erfüllt viele Zwecke, wie eine nicht binäre Person zu beschreiben oder ermöglicht es Menschen, geschlechtsfrei zu sprechen. Vít Kolek hat in seiner Studie 145 Zeitungsartikel untersucht, die das Gendersternchen-Thema diskutieren (120). Zu diesem Thema gab es viele Medienberichterstattungen. Das sogenannte Gender hat eine Diskussion in den deutschen Medien ausgelöst. Die Medien interessieren sich für geschlechtergerechte

Sprache. Obwohl einige Artikel negativ sind und geschlechtergerechte Sprache kritisieren, indem sie die Petition „Schluss mit Gender-Unfug" unterstützen, gibt es viele Berichte, die die Wichtigkeit der geschlechtergerechten Sprache erklären (127). Die Zeitungen, die liberale politische Ideologien unterstützen, wie z.B. Die Tageszeitung, sind wichtig für die Förderung einer geschlechtergerechten Sprache (120). Die Medien haben einen starken Einfluss auf die Gesellschaft (Perse & Lambe). Die Tatsache, dass die Medien Bewusstsein für dieses Thema verbreiten und das Gendersternchen in ihren Schriften benutzten, ist Beweis, dass die Sprache sich immer mehr zu einer geschlechtergerechten Sprache weiterentwickelt. Es ist klar, dass diese Bewegung den Sprachgebrauch verändert und somit auch die Menschen dazu bewegt, sich zu ändern.

Für Eingewanderte und Geflüchtete ist es manchmal eine Herausforderung, Deutsch zu lernen (Höppner). Jedoch sind die Einwander*innen und Geflüchteten ein wichtiger Teil deutschsprachiger Gesellschaften und auch sie haben Einfluss auf den deutschen Sprachgebrauch. Zum Beispiel haben manche von diesen Gruppen einen eigenen Dialekt oder Sprechstil namens Kiezdeutsch. Kiezdeutsch zeichnet sich durch eine Vereinfachung mancher Sprachstrukturen aus (McWhorter). Diese Vereinfachungen aus dem Kiezdeutsch wirken sich auf alle Jugendlichen in deutschsprachigen Ländern aus, weil die deutsche Jugend die Sprache von Einwander*innen und Geflüchteten nachahmen. Diese Kreativität spiegelt die zeitgenössische und innovative Kultur wider. Die Modifikationen an der Sprache mit dem kiezdeutschen Dialekt machen die Sprache für Eingewanderte und Geflüchtete inklusiver und zugänglicher. Das gibt ihnen die Möglichkeit, in weniger komplexem Deutsch zu kommunizieren.

Außerdem benutzen Deutschsprachige Influencer mehr englische Wörter, um mehr Leute aus aller Welt anzuziehen. Auf diese Weise und durch weitere Phänomene, wie beispielweise die Globalisierung, wird Englisch immer mehr in die deutsche Sprache integriert. Seit Jahrzehnten benutzt insbesondere, aber nicht nur, die Jugend mehr Anglizismen. Das Jugendwort des Jahres 2021 war das englische Wort „Cringe" ("'Cringe' ist das Jugendwort"). Cringe wird benutzt, „wenn man etwas peinlich findet"

("'Cringe' ist das Jugendwort"). Eine mögliche Erklärung dafür ist, die sich allmählich vereinheitlichende Welt, in der wir leben, und die „immer größere Bedeutung", die Englisch in Deutschland erhält (Cords). In Bezug auf inklusive Sprache wird das englische *they*-Pronomen verwendet, um sich auf nicht-binäre Personen zu beziehen: „man kann auch die *they*-Pronomen direkt übernehmen". Zum Beispiel kann man „They geht zum Kino" sagen ("Trans in Deutschland • Geschlechtsneutrale Sprache | Gender-Neutral Language"). Deutsch verlässt sich auf Englisch, um seine Sprache inklusiver zu machen.

Technologie hat die Art und Weise verändert, wie die Leute die Sprache verwenden. Diese Medien verändern die Etikette der Kommunikation, indem sie den Sprachgebrauch informeller machen. Zum Beispiel benutzt insbesondere die Jugend „Jugend-Jargon" wie einfachere grammatikalische Strukturen und erstellt ein neues Vokabular, um komplexe Wörter zu ersetzen (Cords). Man muss erwähnen, dass es unter Linguist*innen eine Debatte zu diesem Thema gibt, ob das zum Niedergang der Sprache führt (Cords). Schulen und Universitäten äußern Bedenken über die Verschlechterung der Sprache (Cords). Das Medium ändert jedoch, wie die Jugend schreibt. Allerdings hat es keinen Einfluss auf die Fähigkeit der Jugend, die Sprache genau zu verwenden. „Aus sprachwissenschaftlicher Sicht gibt es für die Vermutung, dass jugendlicher Sprachgebrauch zu den Verursachern des Sprachverfalls gehört, keine Beweise", meint Andrea Eva Ewels, Geschäftsführerin der Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache (Cords). In Wirklichkeit wird die Vereinfachung die Sprache sie nicht zerstören (Cords). In der Tat kann es der Sprache helfen, weiter zu gedeihen, in dem es den Menschen mehr Möglichkeiten gibt, sich auszudrücken.

Im Großen und Ganzen sollte die Sprache die reale Struktur der Gesellschaft widerspiegeln (Kolek 129). Modifikation an der deutschen Sprache bereichern die Sprache und helfen die Sprache inklusiver zu formen. Zusammenfassend kann man sagen, dass sich die deutsche Sprache in hohem Maße entwickelt hat. Alles in allem wird die deutsche Sprache durch die LSBTTIQ Bewegung, den kiezdeutschen Dialekt, die sozialen

Medien, die Globalisierung und den „Jugend-Jargon" verändert. „Wir sprechen ja auch nicht mehr so wie im 6. Jahrhundert oder Mittelalter" sagt Andrea Eva Ewels (Cords). Eine Sprache entwickelt sich natürlich im Laufe der Zeit.

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Inszenierte weibliche Frechheit: Autorinnenkörper in der österreichischen Literaturszene

JEANNE VERWEE

Abstract:

Auseinandersetzungen mit Geschlechterinszenierungen sind heute nicht mehr aus der literarischen Forschung wegzudenken. Während die Kontingenz von Geschlechteridentitäten mit Judith Butler theoretisch schon tief eingebürgert ist, werden literarische Texte von Autoren und Autorinnen immer noch unterschiedlich bewertet. In Auseinandersetzung mit Autorinnen findet man ein grundsätzliches Dilemma vor. Einerseits sind die Werke von Schriftstellerinnen nicht auf ihre (weibliche) Identität zu beschränken, sondern fordern eine ernsthafte 'rein' textuelle Interpretation. Andererseits ist zu bemerken, dass junge Schriftstellerinnen wie Lisa Eckhart, Stefanie Sargnagel und Lydia Haider gerade eine Interpretation ihrer Texte provozieren, die den Körper als Deutungselement einsetzt. Die Problematik um die öffentliche Sichtbarkeit von Autorinnen, mit denen man im heutigen Literaturbetrieb konfrontiert wird, ist anhand der Haltung von jungen Autorinnen der österreichischen Literaturszene gut nachzuverfolgen. Die Frage wird sich stellen, welchen weiblichen Körper genau sichtbar ist und wie dieser mit dem Text in den Dialog tritt.

Lebendige Autorinnen

Als Barthes in den 1960er-Jahren schreibt, der Autor sei tot, stirbt mit dieser Auss-age ein männlicher Geniekult. Der zentrale Punkt Barthes' Essays ist, dass ein Text sich nicht so sehr an die Intention eines Autors bindet, als dass er ein "Gewebe von Zitaten aus unzähligen Stätten der Kultur" ist, die sich der Botschaft eines übergeord-neten Autors entzieht (Barthes 190). Damit wird die Individualität einer gottähnlichen Schöpferrolle, die nur Männern verkörpern konnten, zugunsten einer subjektlosen Be-wertung von Literatur verabschiedet. Der Versuch Barthes' zur Dekonstruktion einer Autorschaftsmythe führt in der feministischen Literaturwissenschaft zu einer Debatte um den Stellenwert der Autorin, wie sie Nancy Miller in ihrem Essay *Wechseln wir das Thema/Subjekt. Die Autorschaft, das Schreiben und der Leser* darstellt. Geschlecht als Kategorie für die Anerkennung eines Textes für bedeutungslos zu erklären, ist gle-ichzeitig ein Schritt in Richtung einer vermeintlich geschlechtsneutralen Literaturan-alyse als auch eine Gefahr, Autorinnen immer noch zu vergessen. Auf der einen Seite liest sich Barthes' Essay als eine den Feminismus unterstützende Kritik an die patri-archale Ordnung, in der nur Männer als Subjekte Bedeutung erzeugen können und als Autoren institutionalisiert werden, sodass Werken von Frauen und anderen Min-derheiten-Schriftstellern ausgeschlossen bleiben. Auf der anderen Seite wird mit dem Verschwinden einer übergeordneten Subjektivität auch die weibliche Subjektivität un-sichtbar gemacht, die als solche noch nicht institutionalisiert ist. Wie Miller argu-mentiert, hatten Frauen aber noch nicht die gleiche Möglichkeit zur Subjektwerdung: "Historisch gesehen steht Identität für die Frau nicht in jenem Verhältnis zu Ursprung, Institution und Produktion, das für die männliche Identität typisch ist. Deshalb fühlten sie sich (als Kollektiv) meiner Meinung nach noch nie durch zu viel Selbst, Ego, Cogito usw. belastet." (Miller 255) Laut Mandy Dröscher-Teille führt diese Subjek-tlosigkeit zu einem Ungleichgewicht. Während männliche Autoren hinter ihre Texte zurücktreten können, werden weibliche Autorinnen mit ihrem Verschwinden aus der

Literaturgeschichtsschreibung und gesellschaftlichen Diskursen gelöscht (Dröscher-Teille 59). Die Frage eine weibliche Autorschaft zu verbieten zugunsten einer ”monolithischen Gestalt anonymer Textualität" (Miller 252), wäre also voreilig. Da das Universelle auch nicht-weiblich ist, wie Miller argumentiert, soll der Körper der Frau als Teil ihrer Subjektwerdung innerhalb eines Textmodells vordergründig werden (256).

Öffentlichkeit als Sichtbarkeit

Seit dem, was in den 90er-Jahren die 'Rückkehr des Autors' genannt wird, stehen Autorkonzepte und Autorinszenierungen erneut im Mittelpunkt der Forschung. Nicht zuletzt, weil der gegenwärtige Literaturbetrieb sich durch die Entwicklung des Internets und der sozialen Medien stark der Person der Autor*innen zuwendet. Instagram- und Twitter-Accounts, Blogs, Vlogs und Fernsehauftritten sind heute für die Positionierung im literarischen Feld bestimmend. Digitalität bietet dabei nicht nur ein zusätzliches, unverbindliches Hilfsmittel zum Erreichen eines Lesepublikums, sondern es ist fast unmöglich geworden, die immer als inszeniert wahrgenommene Autor*innenpräsenz zu umgehen: „Ging es mit Blick auf die älteren Autorengenerationen bisher vorwiegend darum, festzustellen, ob sie sich inszeniert haben, so steht bei der jüngeren Autorengeneration die Frage nach dem ‚Ob' kaum mehr zur Debatte, sondern es wird vielmehr nach dem ‚Wie' gefragt" (Künzel 13). So trägt Elfriede Jelineks Rückzug aus der Öffentlichkeit ironischerweise sogar zu ihrer Bekanntheit und Kennzeichnung als Autorin bei. Diese Entwicklungen nutzen Verlagen und Autoren, indem sie anhand von personenbezogenen Darstellungen die Verkaufszahlen zu steigern versuchen. Es gilt, zu provozieren, zu skandalisieren und die Eigenheiten und Fähigkeiten von Autor*innen zu inszenieren, um so ihren Wert im literarischen Feld zu vermehren (Bressem 2).

Das impliziert, dass Autor*innen nicht nur mehr Texte brauchen, um auf das literarische Feld zu überleben: Schriftsteller*innen sollten in der Öffentlichkeit als leibhaftige Personen präsent sein. Das heißt, dass auch körperliche Aspekte wie Stimme oder

Körperhaltung sowie Kleidung und typische Handlungen zum Markenzeichen von Autor*innen werden. Sie verkörpern jetzt ein Image, sind Teil einer Szene (Bressem 2). Obwohl Genette mit seinem Begriff des Paratextes schon einen ersten wesentlichen Schritt leistete, außertextuelle Elemente in die Interpretation eines Werkes zu integrieren, bleibt das Konzept immer noch auf dem Werk oder das Objekt ‚Buch' beschränkt. Dahingegen wird in der 'performative Turn' darauf hingewiesen, dass gerade die Präsenz der Körper von Autor*innen in der Öffentlichkeit am wirksamsten Aufmerksamkeit erregt, sodass sie für eine Literaturanalyse unvernachlässigbar wird (Schröter 10).

Während diese Entwicklungen im Literaturbetrieb auf den ersten Blick den Autorinnen eine Möglichkeit bieten, als schreibende Frauen sichtbar zu werden, sollte man mit einer eindeutig positiven Bewertung solcher Entwicklungen vorsichtig sein. Es ist nicht die Absicht, dass die Auseinandersetzung mit dem literarischen Text aus dem Blick gerät. Für Autorinnen gibt es nämlich eine lange Tradition von Interpretationen, die ihre Werke fast ausschließlich auf ihren biografischen Körper reduzieren. Wie Mandy Dröscher-Teille zeigt, gab es da auch nach Barthes' Essay eine unterschiedliche Behandlung zwischen Autor und Autorin: "Leistete das Diktum Barthes' für den männlichen Autor eine partielle Auflösung der Verquickung zwischen Text und Autorschaft, so wurde in Bezug auf die Autorin die Verbindung von Autorinnenkörper und Text nie ganz aufgehoben" (55). Der Text wurde ohne wesentliche Indikationen "in Form medialer Fremdinszenierungen und überformter autobiographischer Deutungen" (55) auf die Weiblichkeit der Autorin komprimiert. Auch heute wird Stefanie Sargnagel als künstlerisch tätige Frau in einem Interview eingeführt mit den Worten: "Diese Frau hat offensichtlich keine Kinder" („Jung Sterben"). Und in einer akademischen Arbeit von Helmut Göllner über junge Schriftstellerinnen wird es für notwendig gehalten, in Klammern zu erwähnen, dass "das Monster Lydia Haider" (Göllner 239) Mutter zweier Kinder ist, bevor sich eine Analyse ihrer literarischen Sprache zu widmen. Solche Aussagen sind Ausdruck einer Haltung gegenüber Autorinnen, sie nur als Körper wahrnehmen zu können. Das hat dazu geführt, dass die Kategorie der Autorin sich nie historisch

entwickeln konnte (Dröscher-Teille 56). Anders gesagt, das Konzept der Sichtbarkeit soll für die feministische Literaturpraxis nuanciert werden. Das Problem war nie, dass Frauen nicht sichtbar sind. Nur bedeutet Sichtbarkeit nicht auch direkt Gleichheit, wie Peggy Phelan es in ihrem Buch über repräsentative linke Politik formuliert: "if representational visibility equals power then almost-naked young white women should be running Western culture" (10). Autorinnen wollen als weibliche Schreibende sichtbar sein, nicht lediglich als die Kategorie Frau, wie sie von Männern abgegrenzt wird.

Nuancierte Sichtbarkeit:

Die Komplexität der weiblichen Sichtbarkeit im literarischen Feld lässt sich in zwei grundsätzliche Fragestellungen teilen. Zum einen stellt sich die Frage, welches Bild von Weiblichkeit genau sichtbar wird. Wenn weibliche Subjektivität und Körperlichkeit vordergründig werden sollte, dann sicherlich nicht als festgeschriebene Kategorie. Obwohl in der Theorie die Kontingenz von Geschlechteridentitäten mit Judith Butler unbestritten ist, sind Repräsentationen von Weiblichkeit oft noch Resultat einer männlich imaginierten symbolischen Ordnung. Es ist aber als Kategorie des Unrepräsentierbaren, als Kategorie der von der Ontologie Ausgeschlossenen, dass Subversion laut Judith Butler möglich ist (Hart 124). Dazu ist eine spielerische Haltung notwendig. Die Unrepräsentierbarkeit von Weiblichkeit kann in dem Maße dargestellt werden, als dass sie als 'Effekt' entlarvt wird. Wenn sich Weiblichkeit als eine Folge von Wiederholungen performativer Akte definiert, liegt die Subversion "in der Möglichkeit anderer Arten des Wiederholens, im Durchbrechen oder in der subversiven Wiederholung dieses Stils" (Butler 302). Die Aufführung von Weiblichkeit ist damit nicht als Festlegung, sondern als Durchbrechung und Relativierung von Weiblichkeitsbildern gedacht (Dröscher-Teille 65). Das Musterbeispiel dieses Spiels ist die Selbstinszenierung Madonnas. Während sie scheinbar maskulin-patriarchalischen Weiblichkeitserwartungen entspricht und damit Erfolg erzeugt, demontiert sie das erzeugte Bild zugleich, indem sie patriarchale

Erwartungshaltungen gegenüber weiblicher Sexualität verunsichert (Schröter 92–3).

Aber nicht nur Popstars, auch junge Autorinnen wie Lydia Haider oder Lisa Eckhart widmen sich in ihrem öffentlichen Aussehen dieser Methode der spielerischen Konfrontation. Lydia Haider durchbricht gezielt Weiblichkeitsbilder, indem sie traditionell männliche Haltungen wie das breitbeinige Sitzen und Akte wie das Rauchen übernimmt. Auch zieht sie sich gerne teilweise wie ein rechtsextremer Nazi an, um dieses Bild dann mit ihrer restlichen Kleidung entgegenzuwirken (Göllner 240). „Feminismus heißt", so die Autorin, „dass man als das was man vielleicht von vielen gesehen wird, nicht einlöst" („Treffen"). Lisa Eckhart dahingegen überführt das Weibliche in das Klischeehafte, indem sie in „gewagten Outfits" (Biedermann), die wie Lingerie aussehen, als eine Art femme fatale auftritt und so die Tendenz zur sexuellen Objektivierung anspricht. In der Inszenierung sowohl einer subversiven Durchbrechung als auch einer radikalen Bestätigung der Weiblichkeitsbilder, werden die Zuschauer*innen mit ihren Erwartungen konfrontiert. Die Leute sollen, in Haiders Worten, "sehen, dass sie blöd sind" („Hassen"). Auch im textuellen Bereich ist bei den Schriftstellerinnen eine solche ironische Haltung mit den von Männern geprägten Normen erkennbar. So stellt Lydia Haider 2020 den Sammelband Und wie wir hassen. 15 Hetzreden zusammen, welcher aus weiblichen Hetzreden besteht. Die Intention dessen ist, eine Männerdomäne zu besetzen und die Männer im Hassen zu übertreffen („Hassen"). In einer solchen weiblichen Gegenkultur, die sich mit einer spielerischen Wut ernsthaft gegen patriarchale Strukturen wehrt, kommt Weiblichkeit als historische, letztlich jedoch unfixierbare Kategorie zum Vorschein.

Die zweite Fragestellung, die den Begriff der Sichtbarkeit nuancieren soll, ist auf welche Weise der Körper zur Deutung eines Textes angebracht werden soll. Wie schon angedeutet, bedeutet der Wille zur Sichtbarkeit nicht zugleich, dass der Text auf die Selbstdarstellungen einer Autorin zurückgeführt werden sollte. Um zu vermeiden, dass der Text als Körper interpretiert wird, wird bei jungen Autorinnen der Körper als Teil des Textes aufgeführt, indem sie ihre Texte 'performen'. Damit steht der Körper aktiv im Dienste des Textes, funktioniert als zusätzliches Deutungselement statt als passiver

Referenzpunkt. So lässt sich sagen, dass der Körper in Performances sichtbar gemacht und im Werk eingesetzt wird, um nicht darauf beschränkt zu werden. Bei einer Performance sind sowohl Performer als Publikum leiblich anwesend. Deshalb erlauben Performances von Texten zusätzliche Sinneswahrnehmungen wie Gesichtsausdruck, Körperhaltung, Interaktion mit dem Publikum, um den Prozess des Deutens zu steuern (Novak 55). Auch können bei der oralen Umsetzung eines schriftlichen Textes akustische Elemente hinzugefügt werden, die so nicht im schriftlichen Text beinhaltet waren und die Interpretation auf diese Weise erweitern (71). Die Grenze zwischen Text und dessen Aufführung zerfließt, sodass die Performance sich der reinen Repräsentation eines Vorgegebenen entzieht. Laut Vicky Bertram ermöglicht die Theatralität von Performances es für Frauen, ihren Körper öffentlich von Objektivierungen zu befreien, indem sie sie als aktive Elemente in den Prozess der Bedeutungsvermittlung integrieren (40).

Körperliteratur junger österreichischer Autorinnen

Obwohl bei vielen der jungen österreichischen Schriftstellerinnen, so wie Stefanie Sargnagel, Lisa Eckhart, Raphaela Edelbauer und Lydia Haider diese Tendenz zu Performance zu bemerken ist, kann der Körper dennoch auf unterschiedliche Weise als Deutungselement eingesetzt werden. Als ein Beispiel einer fast übersteigerten Weise, wie der Körper Teil einer Performance werden kann, gilt das Werk des enfant terrible der österreichischen Literaturszene Stefanie Sargnagel. Ihr Werk setzt sich nicht nur aus veröffentlichten Texten und Lesungen zusammen, sondern ist von den öffentlichen Skandalen, Social Media Posts und der zum Markenzeichen gewordenen roten Mütze untrennbar. Sie schreckt in ihren Texten nicht vor dem autobiografischen Ich und vor Genrevermischungen zurück, sodass letztendlich Text und Körper ineinander übergehen. So sehr sie aber eine autobiografische Interpretation provoziert, so stark verweigert sie sie auch: Indem Sargnagel das Faktuale mit dem Fiktionalem vermischt, sich widersprechende Fakten der Öffentlichkeit preisgibt, fiktionale Fig-

uren aufführt als wären sie echt, und sogar öfters gesteht, dass sie nur eine Rolle spielt („Ang'fressen"), ridikülisiert sie den Willen zur Fixierbarkeit ihrer Identität.

Anders funktioniert das Verhältnis zwischen Text, Körper und Identität bei der Autorin Lydia Haider. Während auch Haider in der Öffentlichkeit präsent ist, gibt es bei der Schriftstellerin und Musikerin der literarisch-liturgischen Band gebenedeit eine stärkere Trennung zwischen ihrer Privatperson und der Autorin. Erstens lässt sich sagen, dass Haiders Texte kein Ausdruck einer individuellen Identität sind. Im Unterschied zu Sargnagel, sind ihre fiktionalen Texte stärker mit von Haider unabhängigen Figuren ausgestattet, und die Erzählstimme, die in den Romanen kongregation und rotten nicht unzufälligerweise ein wir ist, ist nicht auf die Person Haider zurückzuführen. Trotzdem wird von Kritiker*innen oft versucht, Haiders Geburtsort Steyr an den Handlungsort des Textes zu verknüpfen (Jabłkowska 40). Zum zweiten will Haider auch in der Öffentlichkeit nur als Autorin erkennbar sein, was man davon ableiten kann, dass sie in Interviews nie von ihrem Mann, Kindern, Freunden oder sonstigen Privatsachen spricht. Es geht ihr lediglich um den Schaffensprozess ihrer Werke: die Themen, die Sprache, das Schreiben. Wenn bei der Diskussion des Ingeborch Bachmannpreises das Jurymitglied Philipp Tingler sich an die Autorin richten will, fasst er unabsichtlich den Kern der in dieser Arbeit aufgegriffenen Problematik zusammen: „Ich kann sie [Lydia Haider] nicht sehen auf meinem Monitor. Das ist leider immer das Problem bei der Lesung, dass man die Autorin so wenig sieht." Seine Frage an die Autorin, welches Anliegen der Text verfolgt, weigert sich Lydia Haider zu beantworten, was folglich eine Diskussion über die Autonomie des Textes zwischen den Jurymitgliedern auslöst. Das Video des Bachmannpreises ist kennzeichnend für ihre Herangehensweise: Die Autorin ist sichtbar auf dem großen Zoombildschirm, aber trotzdem schweigt sie, überschaut die Interpretationen, lässt den Text wirken. Ihr Schlusswort ist schließlich auch wieder ein Text („Tddl 2020 Lydia Haider Diskussion").

Trotzdem bedeutet das nicht, dass Haiders Texte nur dazu da sind, gelesen zu werden und unabhängig vom weiblichen Körper Wirkung erzeugen. Im Gegenteil:

Schreiben ist für die Schriftstellerin eine körperliche Angelegenheit. Nicht nur hat die Autorin ihr Bedauern darüber geäußert, dass die Leser*innen im Endprodukt des Textes die Materialität ihrer Handschrift nicht sehen können, auch ist das Hören von Musik für sie ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des Schreibprozesses („Literaturpreis"). Dazu bittet die Sprache von Haiders Texten darum, körperlich aufgeführt zu werden. Dass ein Satz sich in kongregation über 54 Seiten erweitern kann, ist nur, weil die mündliche Sprache in der Schrift gespiegelt wird, bei der die Pause einer Zeichensetzung meistens auch nicht hörbar ist. Da eine solche Sprache im schriftlichen Medium an seine Grenzen stößt, wird einen Eindruck der Atemlosigkeit erzeugt. Beeinflusst von Ernst Jandl, über den Haider eine Dissertation mit dem Thema rhythmischen Subversion schreibt, legt Haider großen Wert auf die eigene Aufführung der Texte. Die Autorin prüft das Geschriebene mittels Tonaufnahmen und ärgert sich über Kolleg*innen, die sich auf eine Lesung nicht vorbereiten („Ich schreibe"). So werden die Lesungen zu Performances, bei denen die Körperlichkeit zur Bedeutung des Textes beiträgt.

An dieser Stelle soll betont werden, dass die Körperlichkeit der Performances Haiders trotz Sichtbarkeit der Autorin auf den Text gerichtet bleibt. Wenn man Haiders Name bei Youtube eingibt, erscheint neben zahlreichen Interviews auch eine performative Lesung der Schriftstellerin im Zeichen der Andy Warhol-Ausstellung im mumok. Haider sucht im Video keinen Blickkontakt mit der Kamera, sondern fängt direkt an zu lesen, mit dem Körper eindeutig auf den Text gerichtet („Performative Reading"). Im Video des Ingeborch Bachmannpreises spielen die leichten Bewegungen im Raum sogar keine Rolle mehr, da die Schriftstellerin sitzt und nur mit der Stimme agiert („Tddl 2020 Lydia Haider Lesung"). Der Dialog, der in den Performances entsteht, ist einer zwischen Text und Körper, aber dieser Körper bleibt der Körper einer Schriftstellerin.

Die Frage stellt sich jetzt, wie der Dialog zwischen Text und Körper zu analysieren ist. Obwohl es für fiktionale Texte schwieriger auszumachen ist (Schröter 10), könnte man bei Lydia Haider behaupten, dass ihre Texte zur Selbstdarstellung der Autorin beitragen statt nur umgekehrt. Ihre Texte prägen sich durch einen eigenen Stil

aus: In ihnen wird das Vulgäre mit dem Sakralen kombiniert, sodass eine Mischung zwischen Jugendsprache und biblischer Sprache entsteht. Der Text ist als Sprachgebilde in ähnlicher Wiese wie ihre Kleidung als feministisch zu verstehen, da Haider in dem kompromisslosen Vereinen von unvereinbaren Registern mit dem Anstand bricht, und gerade in der Durchbrechung der Erwartungen sprachstrukturelle Normen hervorhebt. Die Autorin kompliziert die repräsentative Funktion der Sprache, und schließt so an eine Definition von Feminismus an, die sich in ihren eigenen Worten „von der Zeit in der wir leben überhaupt nichts gefallen [lässt]" („Treffen"). Auch der Plot bricht mit dem ständigen Ermorden der nicht stark ausgeprägten Figuren mit bürgerlichen Handlungsnormen einer literarischen Geschichte. Trotzdem kommen Haiders Texte in der Performance erst echt zurecht, wie auch die Jurymitglieder des Ingeborg Bachmannpreises letztendlich gestehen. In dem Anwenden von Stille und leichten Bewegungen im Raum, bringt Haider in ihrer Performance den Text zum Atmen. Was Helmut Göllner die "Rache an der Verschönerung und Humanisierung" (Göllner 225) in Haiders Texten genannt hat, wird in der oralen Aufführung erst recht verwirklicht, da hier die Hässlichkeit des Unvereinbaren in dem Anwenden von Pausen, Betonungen, Beschleunigungen und Verlangsamungen wiederum ästhetisiert wird. Der atemlose Text wird sozusagen zur Ruhe gebracht, sodass letztendlich die Hässlichkeit genießbar wird. Durch die Hörbarkeit, wenn man so will Spürbarkeit des Körpers der Schriftstellerin, wird das Lesepublikum Komplize der Verschönerung einer eigentlich unterdrückenden Sprache. Auf diese Weise wird der Körper in den Bedeutungsprozess eingesetzt, sodass letztendlich die Autorin sichtbar wird, als Frau, deren Körper unfixiert ist.

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