

CULTURAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN-ROMANIAN

LITERATURE:

RICHARD WAGNER AND HERTA MÜLLER

by

ANCA-ELENA LUCA HOLDEN

(Under the Direction of Martin Kagel)

ABSTRACT

In my dissertation, I discuss literary representations of cultural identity formation and dissolution in selected works by contemporary German-Romanian authors Richard Wagner and Herta Müller. Wagner and Müller are ethnic Germans who emerged as prominent authors under Ceaușescu's dictatorship. Along with other German-Romanian authors, they were part of the literary group *Aktionsgruppe Banat* (1972-75), one of the most important dissident groups in Romania. In their writings, Wagner and Müller openly criticized the communist regime. They also questioned the cultural identity of the Banat-Swabian communities in which they grew up. As a result of their political opposition to the regime, they were harassed by the *Securitate* and banned from publishing.

Because of their German heritage, political experience under the communist regime, and their status as immigrants *and* political refugees in West Germany, Wagner and Müller occupy a unique position in contemporary German society and culture. In their works, they challenge the nation-state as the basis of German nationalism and question cultural definitions of "Germanness" based on biological, territorial, and state-

centered concepts. While Wagner's primary focus is on the cultural, linguistic, and political challenges that East-Central European ethnic German immigrants face in West Germany, Müller's works concentrate almost exclusively on the oppression and persecution under Ceaușescu's dictatorship and the tyrannical atmosphere of the Banat-Swabian village.

In my analysis of Wagner's fiction, I discuss three figures of Banat-Swabian writers who construct personalized cultural identities and attempt to re-invent themselves as writers during Ceaușescu's regime and after immigration to West Germany. In my analysis of Müller's works, I examine the narrative strategies that five characters, four Banat Swabians and one ethnic German, employ to interrogate and resist conceptualizations of "Germanness" in the aftermath of World War II, under Ceaușescu's dictatorship, and after immigration to West Germany. Wagner's characters negotiate triangular cultural identity paradigms between the "periphery" (the Banat and communist Romania) and the "center" (West Germany), which combine elements of Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and Western languages and cultures. The cultural identity of Müller's protagonists, however, is marked by acute fragmentation as a result of their traumatic experiences in the Banat-Swabian village and communist Romania.

INDEX WORDS: cultural identity, German-Romanian literature, transculturality, "Germanness," Richard Wagner, Herta Müller, the Banat, communist Romania, West Germany

CULTURAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN-ROMANIAN
LITERATURE:
RICHARD WAGNER AND HERTA MÜLLER

by

ANCA-ELENA LUCA HOLDEN

B.A., Covenant College, 1996

M.A., University of Georgia, 1999

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2010

© 2010

Anca-Elena Luca Holden

All Rights Reserved

CULTURAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN-ROMANIAN

LITERATURE:

RICHARD WAGNER AND HERTA MÜLLER

by

ANCA-ELENA LUCA HOLDEN

Major Professor: MARTIN KAGEL

Committee: RONALD BOGUE
THOMAS CERBU
MARJANNE GOOZÉ
KATHARINA WILSON

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2010

DEDICATION

To Jim and Daniel,
and to my parents Ioan and Felicia Luca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing this dissertation was made possible with the unfailing support of my professors, family, and friends. I owe immense gratitude to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Martin Kagel. His outstanding intellectual energy, scholarly guidance, academic wisdom, and warm friendship have been invaluable throughout my years as a graduate student at the University of Georgia. He is an amazing role model and mentor, whose unwavering academic, emotional, and moral support inspired me and helped me move forward with the dissertation. Dr. Kagel believed in my project and my ability to complete it and generously supported and encouraged my ideas with brilliant advice and critical insight. He gave me direction and a sense of accomplishment when I lacked it.

I am deeply grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Ronald Bogue, Dr. Thomas Cerbu, Dr. Marjanne Goozé, and Dr. Katharina Wilson, whose remarkable scholarship and dedication to students have greatly inspired me. Their insightful questions and comments as well as their exceptional editorial skills helped me polish my dissertation and improve my writing skills. I thank each of them for their enthusiastic support and guidance.

To my friends and colleagues, Letitia Guran and Iulia Pittman from the University of Georgia, and Ramona Uritescu-Lombard from Harvard University, I am thankful for their cheerful encouragement. I owe special thanks to Ms. Nell Burger and Ms. Regina Adams at the University of Georgia for their exemplary administrative assistance and enthusiastic encouragement. I am indebted to *The Center for Humanities and Arts* and the

Dean's Award for Research in the Arts and the Humanities at the University of Georgia for generously funding my research trip to Romania. Special thanks to Dr. George Guțu at the University of Bucharest for his generous academic support. I am grateful to Dr. Karen Remmler at Mt. Holyoke College and my students at Smith and Mt. Holyoke Colleges for their enthusiastic encouragement. I thank our churches in Massachusetts, Florida, and Georgia for their prayers and heartfelt encouragement. My special thanks are reserved for Melanie Rivard, Trish and Craig Nicolson, Klaus and Christina Nüßlein, Richard and Laura Vachet, Chip and Norma Pettigrew, Jessica Archer, and Barry St. Clair. Many thanks to Dr. Tatiana Scott for her medical advice and help when I most needed them.

Most importantly, the members of my immediate and extended family in the USA, Romania, and Holland have been an unwavering center of support and love. To Mircea and Irina Luca, Iuliana Vasilie, Gina and Livius Sacasan, Liana Puscas, Relu and Mariana Puscas, and Octavia de Weerd, I am thankful for their encouragement and prayers. My parents, Ioan and Felicia Luca, have been life models of faith in God, love, prayer, tremendous understanding, and loving encouragement. Their faith, courage, and endurance under Ceaușescu's dictatorship and friendships with ethnic Germans from Romania greatly inspired me. I am deeply grateful to Judi and Sid Holden for their love, encouragement, and prayers.

Words are not enough to express my deep gratitude to my son, Daniel, whose love, patience, and encouraging words, "Mama, you can do it," were a tremendous blessing and unspeakable source of strength and joy. I thank Jim, the love of my life and my hero, whose unconditional love, amazing patience, steadfast encouragement, and

inspiring faith in God, carried me through the highs and lows of this project. My largest gratitude is reserved for God. His love, strength, and grace I felt each step of the way.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1 THE “GERMANS” OF ROMANIA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	15
Transylvanian Saxons: Invited Colonists with a Privileged Status	16
The German Colonization of the Banat:	
A Case of Constrained Immigration	20
The German Colonization of Bukovina:	
A Case of Austrian Rule and German Culture.....	23
German-Romanians in Romania: 1918-1989	27
2 THE FORMATION OF GERMAN-ROMANIAN	
CULTURAL IDENTITY	34
Transylvania.....	36
The Banat	42
Bukovina	44
Literature Written in German in Romania: 1918-1945.....	46
<i>Rumäniendeutsch</i> : Usage and Misusage of an Invented Concept	51
German-Romanian Language and Literature After 1945	53
<i>Aktionsgruppe Banat</i> : “Eine Minderheit in der Minderheit”	64

	The Preeminence of Poetry in Modern German-Romanian Literature: 1965-1989	74
	1980-1989: The Last Decade of German-Romanian Literature?	75
3	GERMAN-ROMANIAN AUTHORS AND THE QUESTION OF “GERMANNESS” OF CONTEMPORARY GERMAN LITERATURE.....	79
	What Makes <i>Aussiedler</i> “German”?	82
	“German” <i>and</i> Politically Persecuted	92
	The Challenges of the “mitgebrachte Sprache”	95
	German-Romanian Authors and German Migration Literature.....	103
	Interculturality, Transculturality, and the Case for “ <i>europäische Germanistik</i> ”	111
	Cultural Hybridity and Cultural Triangulation in German-Romanian Literature	114
4	BETWEEN THE “PERIPHERY”—“CENTER” POLARIZATION: CULTURAL IDENTITY IN RICHARD WAGNER’S FICTION	121
	An Introduction to Richard Wagner’s Life and Works	124
	Male Protagonists in Wagner’s Novels.....	132
	“Ausreiseantrag”: The Fragmentation and Dissolution of Cultural Identity at the “Periphery”	134
	“Begrüßungsgeld”: Negotiating “Germanness at the “Center”	146
	<i>In der Hand der Frauen</i> : A Berlin Identity Between the “Center” and the “Periphery”	162
	<i>Miss Bukarest</i> : The Illusion of Living and Writing Outside	

	the “Center”—“Periphery” Polarization	172
5	INTERROGATING “ <i>DEUTSCHTUM</i> ” IN HERTA MÜLLER’S FICTION.....	182
	An Introduction to Herta Müller’s Life and Works	187
	Herta Müller’s Language and Writing Techniques: An Overview.....	197
	“Die erste Diktatur, die ich kannte, war das banatschwäbische Dorf”:	
	The “ <i>Deutschtum</i> ” of the Banat Swabians in	
	“Niederungen” and “Die Grabrede”	206
	“Niederungen”	206
	“Die Grabrede”	223
	The Fragmentation of “ <i>Deutschtum</i> ” in “Dorfchronik”	231
	National Socialism, the Communist Regime, and “ <i>Deutschtum</i> ” in	
	<i>Herztier</i>	243
	“Ausländerin im Ausland”: Conflicting Conceptualizations of	
	“Germanness” in <i>Reisende auf einem Bein</i>	258
	CONCLUSION.....	284
	WORKS CITED	291

INTRODUCTION

The announcement on October 8, 2009 that the Nobel Prize in literature was awarded to Herta Müller led to a flow of mixed reactions. The choice of the Swedish Academy, which made Müller the twelfth woman to win the Nobel in its 108-year history, caught more readers than usual off guard and reinforced the Academy's reputation for being defiantly unpredictable.¹ Announcing the award, Peter Englund, the permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy, described Müller as a writer "who, with the concentration of poetry and the frankness of prose, depicts the landscape of the dispossessed."² While Müller's works were praised far and wide, there was also an undercurrent of astonishment that another relatively unknown author had taken home the big prize. In addition to the fact that her works were little known outside literary circles, much of the media coverage, especially in the United States and Great Britain, reflected a visible confusion as to the cultural identity of this author: the London *Times* and *The New York Times* led with the headlines "Herta Müller? Who is She?"³ and "Herta Who?"⁴ Editorials on both sides of the Atlantic introduced her as a: "German," "German-Romanian," "Romanian-or Romania-born German" writer.

¹ Dwight Garner, "A Prize that Shies from Predictability," *The New York Times* 8 Oct. 2009, 10 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/books/09prize.html>>.

² Mary Jordan, "Author's Nobel Stirrs Shock-and-'Bah,'" *The Washington Post* Oct. 9 2009, 30 Sept. 2010 <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/08/AR2009100800965.html>>.

³ "Herta Müller? Who is She? World Literature Broadens the Horizons of Monoglot Tunnel-Visioned Readers," *The Times* 9 Oct. 2009, 10 Nov. 2009. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article6866999.ece>.

⁴ A. G. Sulzberger, "Herta Who? Nobel Winner Not on Booksellers Radar," *The New York Times* 8 Oct. 2009, 10 Nov. 2009 <<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/10/08/herta-who-nobel-winner-not-on-booksellers-radar/>>.

In Romania, heated discussions took place among leading literary critics, writers, historians, and journalists who debated the significance of Müller's Nobel Prize for Romania and Romanian literature. Most agreed that since she writes in German and not in Romanian, Müller is not a Romanian writer, even though the vast majority of her works are set in communist Romania.⁵ In this sense, the Nobel Prize could not be claimed by Romania. At the same time, thanks to the Nobel Prize, Müller's literary perspective on life in the Romanian communist dictatorship will have a wider audience than most historical texts could ever achieve.⁶ Müller's strong political *engagement*, evident in all her works, was given additional significance by the twentieth anniversary of the opening of the Berlin Wall and of the fall of communism in East-Central Europe. Though the Nobel committee said the award was not timed to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the fall of communism, that is how it was perceived by many. Expressing her delight that an author who found a new home in Germany had won the Nobel, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel made a direct correlation between the prize and the fall of the Wall.⁷

Müller's Nobel Prize has brought into the spotlight the complexities surrounding the definitions of German identity today. Along with Müller's works, the rise to prominence over the last decades of a multiplicity of "other" literatures in German by writers of non-German background and ethnic German authors counter "the notion of

⁵ Marian Sultănoiu, "Este Nobelul Hertei Müller și al României? Cum răspund Manolescu, Goma, Pleșu, CTP și Cărtărescu," *Gândul* 8 Oct. 2009, 29 Sept. 2010 <<http://www.gandul.info/news/este-nobelul-hertei-m-ller-si-al-romaniei-cum-raspund-manolescu-goma-plesu-ctp-si-cartarescu-4972220>>.

⁶ Valentina Glajar, "Herta Müller," *The Literary Encyclopedia* 4 Jan. 2010, 10 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=12545>>.

⁷ Hillel Italie, "Nobel Prize Winner: Herta Müller," *The Huffington Post* 8 Oct 2009, 27, Sept. 2010 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/08/nobel-prize-winner-herta_n_313577.html>.

German as a unitary category.”⁸ Focusing on the heterogeneous and multicultural makeup of contemporary German society, these literatures interrogate “often unexamined notions of national identity, ethnicity, and race underlying nationally defined structures such as ‘German literature’ and the exclusions they imply.”⁹ Calling for a reevaluation and redefinition of the “Germanness” (“*Deutschtum*”) of German literature and cultural identity, these literatures challenge common assumptions about homogeneous identities and essentialized differences.¹⁰

Müller’s prize has also drawn attention to the little-known history and culture of ethnic German immigrants from Romania. Because of their German heritage and political experience with communist regimes, German-Romanian authors and their literature occupy a unique position in contemporary German society and culture. They challenge the nation-state as the basis of German nationalism and question cultural definitions of “Germanness” based on biological, territorial, and state-centered concepts. In addition to Herta Müller, other German-Romanian authors like Richard Wagner, Oskar Pastior, Dieter Schlesak, Gerhard Ortinau, Johann Lippet, Werner Söllner, Ernest Wichner, Franz Hodjak, Karin Gündisch, William Totok, Horst Samson, Helmuth Frauendorfer, and Gerhard Csejka have made successful careers in Germany as writers or journalists.

Although they are immigrants, they are not foreigners in Germany, because, as ethnic

⁸ Angelika Bammer, “Interrogating Germanness: What’s Literature Got to Do with It?,” in *A User’s Guide to German Cultural Studies*, ed. Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997), 37.

⁹ Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin, “Introduction,” in *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005), 9. See also Pieter Judson, “When is a Diaspora not a Diaspora? Rethinking Nation-Centered Narratives about Germans in Habsburg East Central Europe,” in *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, ed. Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005), 219-47.

¹⁰ Ibid. See also Klaus Hübner, “An Unmistakable Intercultural Diversity: Migrant Literature in Germany,” trans. Moira Davidson-Seger. *Goethe.de* Goethe Institut. March 2008, 2 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.goethe.de/kue/lit/aug/en3151492.htm>>, and Klaus Schenk, Almut Todorow, and Milan Tvrdík, eds., “Vorwort,” *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne* (Tübingen: A. Francke, 2004), vii-x, particularly p. vii.

Germans and native speakers of German, they lay claim to German identity. Yet, German language and ethnicity, which identified them as “Germans” in Romania and justified their immigration to Germany, made them as much outsiders in Germany as they had been in Romania. Due to their distinct accent and pronunciation and their use of archaic terms and expressions, their German was often perceived as odd and antiquated, reflecting a reality unknown to West Germans.¹¹ Consequently, these authors had to demonstrate, argue, and perform their “German” identity after they resettled in West Germany.

Since German-Romanian writers share with migration authors of non-German background some experiences linked to immigration, identity, and cultural hybridity, critics and scholars often consider German-Romanian literature as part, albeit as a special category, of migration literature (*Migrationsliteratur* or *Migrantenliteratur*). Yet the history, cultures, languages, and political systems that have shaped the cultural identity of German-Romanian authors distinguish them from any other category of migration writers in Germany. Unlike many migration writers, who started to write after they resettled in Germany, German-Romanian authors were established authors before they immigrated to Germany. While residing in Romania, most of them employed their writing to criticize Ceaușescu’s dictatorship and the *Dorf-* and *Heimatliteratur* of their ethnic communities, which attempted to construct a positive image of the German minority whose cultural identity had been tainted by their overwhelming support of the Nazi regime. Because of their criticism of the communist regime, several writers including Richard Wagner, William Totok, Gerhard Ortinau, and Gerhardt Csejka, were declared “enemies of the

¹¹ Patrice Neau, “Von Auszug der Dichter. Zur Problematik des ‘Ortswechsels’ bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren,” in *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne*, ed. Klaus Schenk, Almut Todorow, and Milan Tvrđík (Tübingen: Francke, 2005), 138-40.

state,” and, as such, subjected to brutal interrogations, beatings, and detention by the Romanian Secret Police (*Securitate*).

The label “German-Romanian” also obscures the fact that these authors come from three different regions in Romania: Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina, in which three distinct German cultures existed. Despite being geographically at the “periphery,” the German cultures in these three regions maintained strong cultural ties with the “center” as Western German-speaking cultures and countries were perceived. If during the Hungarian and Habsburg rules, ethnic Germans in Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina enjoyed a privileged status, during the communist regime when forced assimilation was practiced, they were considered *naționalități conlocuitoare* (“co-inhabiting nationalities”), which in reality meant “tolerated nationalities.”

In addition, the *Kollektivschuld* with which all ethnic Germans were charged after the collapse of the Third Reich not only changed their political, moral, and material status, but also had a significant impact on their literary output in German. As a result of the growing nationalism in Romania and the government’s inherent leveling and marginalization tendencies in the early 1950s, ethnic Germans were collectively labeled as *Rumäniendeutsche* (“German-Romanians”).¹² Betraying the political motivation behind its invention, the term *rumäniendeutsch* was supposed to distinguish German literature written in Romania from mainstream German literature and culture, which, at the time, was considered compromised by Nazism.¹³ Moreover, it was expected to underscore its ties with Romanian culture and language. Yet while attempting to distance itself from one culture (German) and prove its allegiance to the other (Romanian),

¹² Peter Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” in *Wortreiche Landschaft*, ed. Renate Florestdt (Leipzig: BlickPunktBuch, 1998), 108.

¹³ Wilhelm Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990), 270.

rumäniendeutsche Literatur was actually in an “in-between” position at the crossing of divergent political and cultural spaces.¹⁴ Despite the strong ties with both German and Romanian language, literature, and culture, German-Romanian literature was unique in that it had a distinct identity marked by a complex linguistic and cultural character. The generation of ethnic German writers that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s continued to be referred to as *rumäniendeutsche* authors both in Romania and after they immigrated to West Germany.

Having immigrated to West Germany as political exiles, German-Romanian writers did not view themselves as typical *Aussiedler* (“resettlers”) or *Heimkehrer* (“repatriates”) as the German state normally categorizes ethnic German immigrants from East-Central Europe. For German-Romanian authors, unlike most *Aussiedler*, resettling in Germany meant not a return to the *Heimat*, but a mere “change of location” (“Ortswechsel”). As critics of their ethnic minority group, the Romanian communist regime, and West German society and culture, German-Romanian writers question concepts of a homogenous German language, culture, nation, and identity, and expose the deceptions and processes of exclusion through which these conceptualizations are articulated.¹⁵ The cultural, linguistic, and political challenges that German-Romanian authors face in Germany and their efforts to reinvent themselves as writers take central stage in their writing.

¹⁴ Gerhard Csejka, “Über den Anfang. Betrachtungen die neuere deutsche Lyrik in Rumänien betreffend,” *Neue Literatur* 5 (1970): 17 and Gerhard Csejka, “Bedingtheiten der rumäniendeutschen Literatur,” in *Reflexe*, ed. Emmerich Reichrath (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1997), 45.

¹⁵ Thomas Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” in *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe*, ed. John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 494.

Of all German-Romanian immigrant authors, Richard Wagner (b. 1952) and Herta Müller (b. 1953) focus the most on questions and issues linked to the cultural identity of ethnic Germans during Ceaușescu's dictatorship and after immigration to Germany. Although Müller's writings have received much more critical attention than Wagner's in recent years, his texts have gained increasing critical interest. A versatile writer and the author of over thirty volumes of poetry, prose, and essays, Wagner is the winner of numerous prestigious literary prizes and is considered one of the most prominent writers in contemporary German literature. Recent criticism focuses on Wagner's immigrant characters, most of whom are Banat-Swabian men. They are examined as *Aussiedler-flâneur* figures who oscillate back and forth between their past at the "periphery" in the Banat and communist Romania, and their present experiences at the "center" in West Germany. Most critics examine these characters in relation to their struggle with the formation of cultural identity.¹⁶ Matthias Keidel's 2006 study *Die Wiederkehr der Flaneure. Literarische Flanerie und flanierendes Denken zwischen Wahrnehmung und Reflexion*, examines Wagner's *flâneur* figures based on the typology of the literary *flâneur* in modern and postmodern German literature. Wagner's stroller figures are discussed in relation to the literary *flâneur* characters in the works of authors like E.T.A. Hoffmann, Franz Hessel, Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann,

¹⁶ See Graham Jackman, "'Alone in a Crowd': The Figure of the 'Aussiedler' in the Work of Richard Wagner," in *Coming Home to Germany*, ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 157-70; David Rock, "'A German Comes Home to Germany: Richard Wagner's Journey from the Banat to Berlin, from the Periphery to the Centre (sic!),' " *The German Monitor*. 59 (June 2004): 55-71; Helen. L. Jones, "'Real Existing Socialism' and Its Misogynistic Consequences. The Male Protagonist in Literary Texts by Christoph Hein, Milan Kundera (sic!) and Richard Wagner," in *Christoph Hein in Perspective*, ed. Graham Jackman, *The German Monitor* 51 (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2000): 137-38.; and Petra Meurer. "Rasende Flaneure. Kulturelle Identität und Gender in den Texten Richard Wagners und anderer rumäniendeutschen Autoren," *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006): 186-95.

Peter Handke, Botho Strauß, Bodo Morshäuser, Jochen Schimmang, and Cees Nooteboom.

Analyzing Wagner's innovative narrative strategies, critics like Matthias Keidel and Ulrich van Loyen consider the author a trendsetter within the newly-emerged genre of the *Berlinroman* as well as the tradition of the *Familienroman* that investigates the German past.¹⁷ Wagner's literary perspective offers new or little-known information as well as insights about the history, culture, and life of ethnic Germans from East-Central Europe. In addition, Wagner's novels reveal the intricate historical and cultural links between West German and Eastern European cultures.

The author of over twenty works that include novels, short prose, essays, and collections of collage poems, Herta Müller has received much critical acclaim because of her unique language and innovative literary techniques such as the "imagined awareness or perception" ("die erfundene Wahrnehmung")—her trademark technique—the invention of neologisms, the "alien gaze" ("der fremde Blick"), and the focus on detail. The majority of the critical studies dedicated to Müller's works analyze the poetic language and images through which her characters uncover, attack, and resist oppression under the dictatorial rule in her Banat-Swabian village and under Ceaușescu's totalitarian regime. Several recent studies investigate the cultural, historical, social, and political questions raised in Müller's works within a larger East-Central European context. In her 2004 book *The German Legacy in East Central Europe as Recorded in Recent German-Language Literature*, Valentina Glajar analyzes the complex legacy of the German and

¹⁷ See Matthias Keidel, "Asphalt-Denker. Flaneure auf den Spuren des Zeitgeistes bei Jochen Schimmang und Richard Wagner," in *Straße als kultureller Aktionsraum*, ed. Sandra Maria Geschke (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2009), 224-35; and Ulrich van Loyen, "Richard Wagners *Habseligkeiten* und der Abschied von der postkommunistischen Moderne," in *Minderheitenliteraturen. Grenzerfahrung und Reterritorialisierung*, ed. George Guțu, Ioana Crăciun-Fischer, and Iulia-Karin Pătruț (București: Paideia, 2008), 255-71.

Austrian presence in multiethnic regions in East-Central Europe under the Habsburg Empire, the Nazi regime and the communist regime, as depicted in works by Gregor von Rezzori, Edgar Hilsenrath, Erika Pedretti, and Herta Müller. Iulia-Karin Pătruț's 2006 study *Schwarze Schwester—Teufelsjunge. Ethnizität und Geschlecht bei Herta Müller und Paul Celan* focuses on the construction of "ethnicity" and "gender" in the works of Celan and Müller, as two authors who come from cultural and ethnic minorities that have been oppressed during the Nazi regime and Ceaușescu's dictatorship.¹⁸

In recent years, Müller's writing has also been explored in relation to trauma theories as well as recent feminist theories about the body, as conceptualized by theorists like Sigrid Weigel, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, and Julia Kristeva.¹⁹ Lyn Marven's 2005 book *Body and Narrative in Contemporary Literatures in German* discusses the representation of the body in texts by Herta Müller, Libuše Moníková, and Kerstin Hensel. Marven posits the concept of trauma as a structure which characterizes the experiences and continuing effects of the Eastern Bloc on women from former communist countries, i.e., Romania, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany respectively.²⁰ Examining the relations between the representations of the body and narrative strategies in Müller's works, Marven argues that there are close links between the effects of trauma and the process of psychological development, in which body image is implicated in the acquisition of language.²¹

¹⁸ Paul Celan has a major influence on Müller's writing. Müller reworks some of his images and motives in her own texts.

¹⁹ See also Beverly Driver Eddy, "Testimony and Trauma in Herta Müller's *Herztier*," *German Life and Letters*, 53.1 (2000): 56-72 and Brigid Haines, "The Unforgettable Forgotten: The Traces of Trauma in Herta Müller's *Reisende auf einem Bein*," *German Life and Letters* 55:3 (July 2002): 265-81.

²⁰ Lyn Marven, *Body and Narrative in Contemporary Literatures in German* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 2005), 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

In my dissertation, I analyze literary representations of cultural identity in selected works by Richard Wagner and Herta Müller. I examine the impact of the Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German cultures, languages, and politics on the formation and fragmentation or dissolution of the cultural identity of ethnic Germans during Ceaușescu's regime and after immigration to West Germany. In addition to the fact that cultural identity is a major theme in Wagner's and Müller's works, there are other similarities and differences that make a comparative study of their works extremely appealing.²² Both Wagner and Müller are Banat Swabians who openly criticize Ceaușescu's dictatorship and the cultural identity of the Banat-Swabian communities in which they grew up. Both were involved, Wagner as a co-founding member, and Müller as a participant, in the literary group *Aktionsgruppe Banat* (1972-75), one of the most important dissident groups in Romania in the 1970s. Both were persecuted and harassed by the *Securitate* and were banned from publishing, and, since they were married at the time, they immigrated together to West Germany. Following their arrival in Berlin the German media featured them as experts on Ceaușescu's dictatorship and East-Central European topics. Despite these similarities, the focus of their writing since resettling in West Germany has evolved in different directions, even though both authors remain preoccupied with their experiences in the Banat, communist Romania, and West Germany. Müller's focus remains tirelessly on exposing the terror and persecution under Ceaușescu's dictatorship as well as the ethnocentrism, rigid norms, and collaboration with the Nazi regime of the Banat Swabians. While continuing to discuss the experience

²² Müller's and Wagner's early works have been discussed in René Kegelman's 1995 book *'An den Grenzen des Nichts, dieser Sprache...'*, which examines the works of German-Romanian authors published in Germany in the 1980s. Diana Schuster's 2004 study *Die Banater Autorengruppe: Selbstdarstellung und Rezeption in Rumänien und Deutschland* discusses the self-representation and reception in Romania and West Germany of the group of Banat authors that were active in the *Aktionsgruppe Banat*.

of Banat Swabians during the Habsburg Empire, under Ceaușescu's regime, and after immigration to West Germany, Wagner's texts also draw attention to several little-discussed categories of newcomers to Germany like East-Central Europeans and former East German citizens. He also investigates several relatively under-explored aspects of the Holocaust like the genocide of the Roma. In addition, both Wagner and Müller examine in their works the effects of migration, displacement, consumerism, the commodification of culture, and materialism on the formation of cultural identity in post-communist Eastern Europe and post-unification Germany. In my study, I analyze the differences and similarities in Wagner's and Müller's literary treatment of cultural identity.

In my analysis of Wagner's works, which I present in Chapter 4, I discuss Wagner's treatment of cultural identity in four texts, which have as their protagonists three Banat-Swabian male writers. Drawing from previous critical studies, which discuss Wagner's male characters primarily as *Aussiedler* and *flâneurs*, I focus on the condition of the three characters as ethnic German immigrant writers and political exiles who attempt to reinvent themselves as writers. My analysis offers a new perspective on these characters related to the manner in which they negotiate Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German languages and cultures in order to construct individualized cultural identities. In addition to presenting in-depth analyses of the writer-characters in "Begrüßungsgeld" (1991) and *In der Hand der Frauen* (1995), I discuss the protagonists in two texts, "Ausreiseantrag" (1991) and *Miss Bukarest* (2001), which have not been previously discussed as portraits of ethnic German writers.

In my analysis of cultural identity in Müller's works, which I present in Chapter 5, I examine Müller's distinctive poetic language and narrative strategies in five works. In these texts, I focus on five characters, four Banat Swabians and one ethnic German, who uncover, interrogate, and resist conceptualizations of "*Deuschtum*"²³ in the aftermath of the Second World War, under the communist regime, and after immigration to West Germany. While I employ aspects from previous critical analyses that discuss the treatment of "*Deuschtum*" in Müller's *Erzählung* "Niederungen" (1984) and in her two novels *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989) and *Herztier* (1994), I offer a fresh perspective on these works by focusing on the devices the protagonists use to uncover, question, and denounce the cultural identity models that are imposed on them. I also examine two female characters and their critical attitude towards the "*Deuschtum*" of their Banat-Swabian communities in Müller's short stories "Die Grabrede" (1984) and "Dorfchronik" (1984)—two texts which have not been discussed in relation to cultural identity so far.

While Wagner's characters negotiate triangular cultural identity paradigms between the "periphery" (the Banat and communist Romania) and the "center" (West Germany), which combine elements of Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and Western languages and cultures, the cultural identity of Müller's protagonists is marked by acute fragmentation as a result of traumatic experiences in the Banat-Swabian village and communist Romania.

Since achieving a better understanding and appreciation of Wagner's and Müller's works presupposes considerable historical, political, and linguistic background

²³ I use "*Deuschtum*" instead of "*Germaness*" when I discuss Herta Müller's texts that are set in Banat Swabian villages because it is the term that the author uses in reference to a particular conceptualization of the Banat-Swabian German identity, which was defined by ethnocentrism, collaboration with the Nazi regime, and intolerance.

knowledge of the Banat-Swabian, communist Romanian, and West German cultures, in Chapter 1, I present a brief historical overview of the colonization of Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina by ethnic Germans. My historical analysis concentrates on the twentieth century, with particular emphasis on the communist era between 1944 and 1989, a focus in the writings of both Herta Müller and Richard Wagner. Even though my analyses of Wagner's and Müller's works focus on the literary treatment of the Banat-Swabian cultural identity, in Chapter 2, I examine the development of the literatures in German and the (trans)formation of German cultural identity not only in the Banat, but also in Transylvania and Bukovina. As in the Banat, in Transylvania and Bukovina rich German cultures and literatures flourished over several centuries. Discussing the German cultural identity and literature of each of these three regions offers a clearer understanding of their cultural and linguistic specificities as well as their position to each other and to Romanian and West German cultures and languages. My analysis in Chapter 2 focuses on the period from the second half of the twentieth century to the present, in which I examine the formation of *rumäniendeutsche Literatur* and language. I briefly discuss the anti-regime resistance through literature practiced by the members of the literary group *Aktionsgruppe Banat* (1972-75) and examine its impact on the life and writing of Richard Wagner and Herta Müller.

In Chapter 3, I offer a succinct history of the *Aussiedler* and analyze the process by which their "German" identity is established in West Germany. I examine the special status of German-Romanian authors as "Germans" and "political exiles" with particular focus on Herta Müller's and Richard Wagner's immigration experiences. I also discuss some of the major challenges, especially those linked to their German language ("die

mitgebrachte Sprache”) that German-Romanian authors faced after immigrating to West Germany. I then map out the differences and similarities between German-Romanian writers and authors of German migration literature, which I analyze in connection with two current cultural approaches to contemporary German literature: “interculturality” and “transculturality.” Finally, I discuss the theoretical concept of the “third space” in recent German-Romanian literature, which I examine in relation to the concept of cultural triangulation. The confluence of Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German languages and cultures, I argue, is a defining trait of the cultural identity of German-Romanian authors, and cultural triangulation is central to the content and structure of Wagner’s and Müller’s works.²⁴

²⁴ Discussing Herta Müller’s unique cultural identity, Valentina Glajar notes that it lies “in the juncture of the Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and German presence and the style in which she imagines and gives expression to them.” Valentina Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe* (New York: Camden House, 2004), 152.

CHAPTER 1

THE “GERMANS” OF ROMANIA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The arrival of ethnic Germans in East-Central Europe is a result of three distinct but often interrelated processes: conquest and colonization, migration, and border changes.¹ In former and present-day regions of Romania, ethnic Germans have historically gone from being thriving colonists in the Hungarian and Habsburg Empires and one of the two largest minorities in Greater Romania² to a mere source of income during Ceaușescu’s dictatorship. Although they are often referred to as “the Germans of Romania,” the suggestion of a homogenous minority group is misleading since it actually consists of different groups of ethnic Germans distinguished from each other by their history, culture, customs, and dialects. Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina are the three main regions in present-day Romania that used to be inhabited by large German populations. The time of their immigration and particulars of their settlement played a pivotal role in the development of their unique cultural identities and literatures. Due to their insular existence and bicultural experiences, ethnic Germans became “in-betweens with dual identities, mixed loyalties and participation in two cultures” who developed the ability to

¹ Stefan Wolff, “From Colonists to Emigrants: Explaining the ‘Return-Migration’ of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe,” in *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*, ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2002), 5.

² “Greater Romania” describes Romania’s territory between World War I and World War II. It included Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina, and the Quadrilater (Southern Dobrudja)—territories which Romania lost after the Second World War.

live and negotiate between cultures.³ Yet despite being geographically isolated from mainstream German-speaking cultures and countries, the German cultures that flourished in Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina maintained strong cultural ties with Western German-speaking cultures and countries. Therefore the three regions should not be viewed only as islands of German-speaking cultures, as many critics do, but as part of a transcultural archipelago that housed a variety of German identities and cultures.⁴

In the following, I discuss the history of the colonization of Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina by ethnic Germans and examine the history of the German population of Romania after 1918, which marks the incorporation of the three provinces into Romania. My historical analysis concentrates on the twentieth century, with particular emphasis on the communist era between 1944 and 1989, a focus in the writings of both Herta Müller and Richard Wagner, who were born into and lived under Romania's communist regime.

The Transylvanian Saxons: Invited Colonists with a Privileged Status

Following the conquest of the principality of Transylvania by the kingdom of Hungary, which began in the eleventh century and was completed by the end of the twelfth century, Hungarian kings began inviting ethnic Germans and Szeklers (Hungarian speaking pastoralists) to colonize Transylvania in order to consolidate the borders of their newly acquired territories. Around 1141, King Geysa II invited inhabitants from Franconia to

³ Rainer Ohliger, "Minority Existence in Twentieth-Century Central and Eastern Europe: Between Self and Other?" in *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel (sic!) and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 44, 40.

⁴ Andreas Herzog, "'Transkulturalität' als Perspektive der Geschichtsschreibung deutschsprachiger Literatur," *Kakanien Revisited* 6. 5 May 2003, 6 May 2007
<<http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/AHerzog1.pdf>>.

colonize as guests the eastern border of Transylvania.⁵ They were followed by other ethnic Germans from the Mosel-Rhein region, Luxemburg, Flanders, Lorraine, Thuringia, Bavaria, and from Lower Saxony.⁶ In the documents from 1150, they are referred to as *teutonici hospites* or *flandrenses*. However, sometime thereafter the Hungarian chancellery began designating any arrivals from the Holy Roman Empire as *saxones*. The name stuck, even though they did not come from Saxony.⁷

Around 1206, Andreas II, the grandson of Geysa II, continued to invite ethnic Germans who were now known as *hospites regni saxones*, or the “Saxon guest colonizers,” with the explicit purpose to defend the crown (*ad retinendam coronam*), protect the eastern borders of his kingdom, and convert the pagans to Christianity.⁸ The Magyar kings operated on a principle laid out by St. Stephen, the legendary founder of the Hungarian nation, who, in a “*Libellus de institutione morum*,” instructed his son, Emmerich, that the guest colonizers bring with them “verschiedene Sprachen und Sitten, verschiedene Lehren und Waffen [. . .], die alle Reiche und den königlichen Hof schmücken und erhöhen, [. . .] denn schwach und vergänglich ist ein Reich, in dem nur eine Sprache gesprochen wird und einerlei Recht gilt.”⁹ The progressive thinking of this canonized monarch was prophetic, so to speak, as the colonization of Transylvania with ethnic Germans was politically, culturally, and economically profitable not only for the

⁵ Helmut Protze, “Wie die deutschen Siedler nach Siebenbürgen kamen,” in *Wortreiche Landschaft*, ed. Renate Florstedt (Leipzig: BlickPunktBuch, 1998), 12.

⁶ Peter Motzan, *Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik nach 1944. Problemaufriss und historischer Überblick* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1980), 12.

⁷ Eginald Schlattner, “Die Sprache der Glocken. Mein Sibiu, mein Hermannstadt: eine Hommage an Europas Kulturhauptstadt 2007,” *Tagesspiegel* (12 Feb. 2007): 29.

⁸ George Guțu, “Rumäniendeutsche Literatur—Hauptaspekte ihrer Entwicklung: Ein Überblick,” *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch* 4 (1987): 598 and Protze, “Wie die deutschen Siedler nach Siebenbürgen kamen,” 12.

⁹ Immo Eberl and Fassel Horst, eds., *Die Donauschwaben. Deutsche Siedlung in Südosteuropa. Ausstellungskatalog*. 2nd ed. (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1989), 66.

Hungarian monarchy but also for the Romanians, who formed the majority of Transylvania's population.¹⁰

The German colonists were agriculturalists, handcrafters, and merchants who took possession of the *Fundus Regius*, i.e., royal lands offered as autonomous settlement regions. The territory that they made their own encompassed Transylvania's central highlands between the East, South, and West Carpathians. In time, they formed an ethnic and linguistic entity that enjoyed a privileged status in the area as the Hungarian kings gave them autonomy and the right to own property. Paradoxically, they were the "free subjects" of the king but they also had the right to elect their own reigning prince or lord and use German common law. German colonizers were one of the three voting parties of the Diet along with the Hungarian nobility and the Szekler upper class. Their privileged status was guaranteed by the *Andreanischer Brief* of 1224, also known as the *Goldener Freibrief*, or "Golden Charter."¹¹

In 1486, the German colonists were allowed to form an autonomous territorial administration called the *Universitas Saxonum* as a result of the economic prosperity of the merchants and handcrafters. Its political, administrative, and religious center was the present-day city of Sibiu (German: Hermannstadt).¹² Indeed, a new bourgeois stratum and intelligentsia had developed in the towns of Sibiu, Braşov, Bistriţa, Mediaş, Sebeş, Orăştie, and elsewhere that had the time and the financial means to invest in education and culture. In 1438, the Three Estates of Transylvania, i.e. the Hungarian nobility, the

¹⁰ Some 40,000 Romanian serfs also existed in the region who had to pay rent in kind and also give 100 days of forced labor a year to their German and Szekler landlords. See James Chastain, "Transylvanian Saxons," *Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions* 12 Sept. 2004, 19 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.ohiou.edu/~chastain/rz/transax.htm>>.

¹¹ Karl Kurt Klein, *Literaturgeschichte des Deutschtums im Ausland*, ed. Alexander Ritter (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1979), 5.

¹² Guţu, "Rumäniendeutsche Literatur—Hauptaspekte ihrer Entwicklung: Ein Überblick," 599.

Sachsen, and the Szeklers, formed the *Unio Trium Nationum* (Union of the Three Nations). This was a pact of mutual aid which ensured that serfs, mostly Romanians, were excluded from the political and social life of Transylvania. Although they formed the majority of Transylvania's population, Romanians were considered a "tolerated" nation, a status maintained until after the First World War.

Following its defeat at the battle of Mohacs in 1526, Hungary lost Transylvania to the Ottoman Empire. Then in 1542 the province became an autonomous principality ruled loosely by the Ottoman Porte. Its political autonomy was enhanced by the change in the religious life of the Transylvanian Germans who adopted Lutheranism and forsook Catholicism. Transylvanian-German representatives of humanist ideals and principles, who borrowed from Western Europe, contributed significantly to the shaping of a distinct cultural and spiritual identity of the German population. After the Austrian Empire defeated the Ottomans in 1687, again at Mohacs, Transylvania received the status of a principality. Although the rights of Germans in Transylvania were still recognized by the Empire, their political impact within it began gradually to decline.

After 1711, Austrian control over Transylvania was consolidated and the princes of Transylvania were replaced with Austrian governors.¹³ The pressure of Austrian bureaucratic rule gradually eroded the traditional independence of the principality. From 1876 to 1918, Transylvania was part of the Hungarian state within the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. During this time, aggressive Magyar liberal nationalists, who wanted

¹³ Between 1734 and 1737, Emperor Karl VI (1685-1740) ordered the deportation of eight hundred Protestants from Kärnten and Salzkammergut to Transylvania. The move of these deportees, who became known as "Landler," was called "transmigration." See Mathias Beer, "Österreichische Protestanten ('Landler') in Siebenbürgen seit dem 18. Jahrhundert," in *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa. Vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Klaus J. Bade, Pieter C. Emmer, Leo Lucassen and Jochen Oltmer (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2007), 818–20.

to dissolve all other nations into a united Hungarian national state, pressured the German population to assimilate by imposing heavy Magyarization. Despite these sustained efforts, the Transylvanian Germans succeeded in maintaining their identity by preserving and cultivating German language and culture. These efforts were greatly enhanced by the German Lutheran church and the principality's continual cultural and economic exchanges with German-speaking countries. The cultural identity of the Transylvanian Germans was threatened again in 1918 when Transylvania was incorporated into Romania.

The common language—*Siebenbürgerdeutsch*—that flourished in Transylvania was clearly molded after the South German-Austrian standard. As I will show in Chapter 2 of this study, the literary productions generated here were not supposed to craft an Austrian identity in Transylvania's Saxons.¹⁴ While proud of the influences coming from the West, Transylvanian Saxons also aimed at a distinct identity, as they were equally proud of their own ancestry in what had become their fatherland.¹⁵

The German Colonization of the Banat: A Case of Constrained Immigration

In 1526, the Banat of Timișoara became a part of the Ottoman Empire, which acquired the region from Hungary following the battle of Mohacs. In 1718, it was conquered by the Habsburg armies led by Prince Eugen of Savoy. William O'Reilly contends that this region was to be “an experiment in colonial government of a type the Habsburg

¹⁴ Michael Markel, “Ich wohne in Europa/Ecke Nummer vier,” Identitätsprobleme einer Minderheitenliteratur im Spiegel der siebenbürgen-deutschen Literaturgeschichte, in *Die deutsche Literaturgeschichte Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis heute*, ed. Anton Schwob (München: Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1992), 168.

¹⁵ See Adolf Meschendörfer's *Vorträge über Kultur und Kunst*, (Kronstadt 1906) 10, 24f, 50, 53f, 61, 64f.

administration had not tried before.”¹⁶ More specifically, it was to be “an entrepôt for merchants and ministers, soldiers and settlers, a new site for development and design.”¹⁷

In 1720, Count Claudius Florimund Mercy was appointed Governor of the new Austrian colony. The region was said to be poorly populated by Romanian and Serbian peasants and shepherds and transformed into a marshland by the Turks.¹⁸ The Count was charged with turning the *terra deserta* of the Banat into a settled agricultural region. Consequently, he recruited skilled settlers from those Habsburg domains that used to be part of the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁹ The Banat had a reputation as “a frontier region which was beset by border wars, marshland, and illness.”²⁰ Therefore, benefits such as freedom from serfdom, initial exemption from taxes, travel stipends, loans for seeds, implants, and tools, housing apportioned in master-planned villages and fields allotted from the farmland around the village, and the much-desired association with the Habsburg Empire were offered to lure potential immigrants. The Habsburgs preferred German settlers to colonize the Banat since it was believed that they could fulfill five key aspects that would benefit the empire. They would be a bulwark of Christianity, be loyal subjects, serve as a buffer for Hungary from the rest of the Balkans, transform the Banat into the grain basket of the monarchy, and Germanize the region.²¹

The Banat Swabians, also known as *Donauschwaben*, migrated from Swabia in three waves, each corresponding to the Habsburg monarchs (two emperors and one

¹⁶ William O'Reilly, “Divide et impera: Race, Ethnicity and Administration in Early 18th-Century Habsburg Hungary” in *Racial Discrimination and Ethnicity in European History*, ed. Gudmundur Halfdanarson (Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2003), 78.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Renate Florstedt, *Wortreiche Landschaft. Deutsche Literatur aus Rumänien – Siebenbürgen, Banat, Bukowina. Ein Überblick vom 12. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig: BlickPunktBuch, 1998), 62.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ O'Reilly, “Divide et impera: Race, Ethnicity and Administration in Early 18th-Century Habsburg Hungary,” 79, 81.

empress) who were in power at the time. Although the majority of the Banat colonizers were not Swabians, these three migration waves are referred to as *Schwabenzüge* (“Swabian migration waves”). The term *Schwabenzug* was coined by the Banat-Swabian author Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn in his 1914 novel *Der grosse Schwabenzug*. The first *Schwabenzug* (1722-26), also known as the Caroline Colonization (*Karolinische Ansiedlung*), occurred under Karol VI who reigned from 1711 to 1740. Non-German colonists such as Serbians, Bulgarians, French, Spanish, and Italians arrived with the Swabians. The number of settlers during this first wave is estimated to have been between 15,000 and 40,000 people. Between 1733 and 1736, colonization of the Banat was expanded by the immigration of “pensioners” who were Spanish and Italian members of the Austrian army who were discharged from the military following the loss of their possessions during the War of Polish Succession (1733-38). Although these former militants remained loyal to Carol IV, their colonization of the Banat was imposed upon them since refusal to immigrate to the region would result in the loss of their pension or their monthly allowance.²²

The second *Schwabenzug*, or the Theresian Colonization (*Theresianische Ansiedlung*) (1763-72), took place under Empress Maria-Theresia, the only woman-monarch of the Habsburg dynasty, who reigned from 1740 to 1780. Although historians do not agree on the number, it is estimated that approximately 40,000 settlers arrived in the Banat during this period. Between 1744 and 1768, colonizers included “the undesirables”—vagrants, poachers, smugglers, prostitutes, and peasants, who being in

²² Data concerning the three Swabian migration waves—if otherwise not noted—are from: “Colonization of Banat.” *GenealogyRo.Group. Genealogy Probate and Investigations* n.d., 12 Aug. 2007 <<http://www.genealogy.ro/cont/2.htm>>.

conflict with their landlords, were sent by force to the Banat through the “Temeswarer Wasserschub” system, i.e., the transport by ship to Timișoara, the Banat.

The third colonization wave, or the Josephine Colonization (*Josephinische Ansiedlung*) (1781-87), occurred under Joseph II (1780-90). Approximately 3,000 families of colonists settled in the Banat during this period. After 1785, prospective colonists were required to present two hundred *florini* in order to be granted permission to immigrate to the Banat. The first two migration waves were restricted to Roman-Catholics, but Joseph II’s 1781 Edict of Tolerance, which guaranteed religious freedom (the first time in over 150 years), opened the colonization of the Banat to Protestants as well. This edict brought radical changes to the social structure of the Habsburg lands. In contrast to mass migrations, another “private colonization” also occurred during which wealthy Hungarian families in the region invited migrants to work their estates. This was popular from 1780 until the middle of the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, colonization of the Banat slowed down numerically and its ethnic background diversified as settlers from Bohemia, Austria, and Slovakia arrived in the Banat.

The German Colonization of Bukovina: A Case of Austrian Rule and German Culture

German colonists of Bukovina (whom they called *Buchenland*) arrived as early as the thirteenth century following the disintegration of the Tatar Empire. They introduced stone masonry to the region, conducted the trade of the province, built churches and fortresses, and started artisan and merchant guilds. However, under subsequent Turkish rule and in the absence of further immigration to the area, the Germans assimilated into the native

population (mostly through intermarriage), converted to Eastern Orthodoxy, or simply emigrated.²³

The Habsburgs acquired Bukovina in 1775 from “an ailing and disintegrating Ottoman Empire.”²⁴ Geographically set in the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire, and Prussia, Bukovina formed the northern region of the Romanian principality of Moldavia, which was a tributary to the Sublime Porte at the time.²⁵ As in the case of the Banat, the Habsburgs portrayed Bukovina as *terra deserta*, a “strip of land with ‘three or four market towns and eleven villages, the rest consisting of forest and rugged land.’”²⁶ In reality, this region was far from being a mere “strip of land” as it was composed of 4,035 square miles of territory and thirty villages.²⁷ The Habsburgs handsomely bribed Ottoman and Russian officials to acquire the region and expand its territory, which testifies to its considerable strategic importance.²⁸ Valentina Glajar criticizes “the less than honorable means”²⁹ of the Habsburgs’ colonial politics, which, as Benedict Anderson remarks, relied on maps, censuses, and statistics that became institutions of power and dominion.³⁰

The second German colonization of Bukovina started at the end of the eighteenth century and extended to the beginning of the nineteenth century. The colonists were handcrafters, miners, and peasants who came from Zips region and the Gündler Land,

²³ Sophie Welisch, “The Bukovina-Germans During the Habsburg Period: Settlement, Ethnic Interactions, Contributions,” *FEEFHS Journal* x (2002): 81.

²⁴ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 17.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Bukovina Handbook*, (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1919), 13.

²⁷ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 18.

²⁸ For a list of these bribes see Hannes Hofbauer and Viorel Roman, *Bukowina, Bessarabien, Moldawien: Vergessenes Land zwischen Westeuropa, Rußland und der Türkei* (Vienna: Promedia, 1997), 27.

²⁹ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 18.

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, “Census, Maps, Museum,” *Becoming National*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 243-58.

whose inhabitants were known as the *Zipser Sachsen*. Germans Bohemians (today called “Sudeten Germans”) and Swabians also emigrated from the Rhein-Main area.³¹ These colonists had economic and political privileges and were subjects of both the feudal lord and the Habsburg Emperor.³² “Heer, Beamtentum und deutsche Sprache” was the traditional imperial Austrian government method applied in Bukovina.³³ Yet, the Austrian civil servants who settled in the region never felt at home.³⁴ In 1849, Bukovina became a crown land of the Empire with a certain degree of self rule. As a home to Romanians, Ruthenians (Ukrainians), Poles, Gypsies, Hungarians, Jews, and ethnic Germans, Bukovina became an authentic “Miniaturbild der gesamten Monarchie,”³⁵ often nicknamed as “Europa im Kleinen”³⁶ and “Schweiz des Ostens,”³⁷ but also the “k. & k. Strafkolonie.”³⁸

Over a short time period, Bukovina experienced a cultural boom that included a number of first-time achievements in the region: the first stone house was erected (1786), the first café opened (1788), the first gymnasium was established (1813-17), the first metropolitan residence was built (1866-78), and the first university was founded in 1875 in Czernowitz. By the nineteenth century, Austrians and Jews were the main promoters of German culture in Bukovina. Following Bukovina’s annexation to the Habsburg Empire, the Jewish populations, already present in the region prior to the Austrian rule,

³¹ Guțu, “Rumäniendeutsche Literatur—Hauptaspekte ihrer Entwicklung: Ein Überblick,” 599.

³² Welisch, “The Bukovina-Germans During the Habsburg Period,” 82.

³³ Rolf Schneider, *Die problematische Wirklichkeit. Leben und Werk Robert Musils. Versuch einer Interpretation* (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1975), 12.

³⁴ Motzan, *Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik nach 1944*, 19.

³⁵ Ludwig Adolf Simiginowicz-Stauffe, *Die Völkergruppen der Bukowina: Ethnographische kulturhistorische Skizzen* (Czernowitz, 1884), 9.

³⁶ Erich Beck, *Bukowina. Land zwischen Orient und Okzident* (Freilassing: Pannonia, 1963), 84.

³⁷ Ortfried Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler. Die Deutschen aus West-Wolhynien, Galizien, der Bukowina, Bessarabien, der Dobrudscha und in der Karpatenukraine*. (München: Langen Müller, 2005), 138.

³⁸ Karl Emil Franzos, *Deutsche Dichtung*, vol. 35 (Berlin, 1904), 174.

appropriated “das Deutsche als förderndstes Mittel westlicher Bildung.”³⁹ In fact, Otfried Kotzian suggests that “in wohl kaum einer anderen Landschaft Ost-bzw. Südosteuropas sind die Juden den Weg in eine Assimilation in die deutsche Sprache und Kultur so bewußt gegangen wie in der österreichischen Bukowina.”⁴⁰ By embracing the German language and culture many Jews aimed to secure affirmation and acceptance into the dominant Austrian culture while maintaining the Jewish faith and traditions. As the destabilizing effects of the German host culture on their own cultural identity became obvious, the secular Jews of Bukovina sought other mainstays on which to base their Jewish identity. Besides Zionism, they developed a secular Yiddish culture—a secular *Yiddishkeit*, which added a new dimension to the debates about Jewish identity.⁴¹

The cultural identities of the ethnic Germans of Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina, as well as those of the German-speaking Jews of Bukovina, were challenged by each government. Yet in time, these people shaped their own self-made identities as *Siebenbürger Sachsen*, *Banater Schwaben*, and *Bukovinians*. Nonetheless, the Transylvania Saxons, the Banat Swabians along with the Austrians and the ethnic Germans of Bukovina maintained and perpetuated a strong sense of descending from and belonging to the mainstream German culture while some German-speaking Bukovinian Jews were devoted to cultivating their cultural allegiance to Jewish traditions. At the end of the Habsburg Monarchy, Yiddish cultural life reached its full bloom in Bukovina and was the homeland of many prominent Yiddish writers.

³⁹ Klein, *Literaturgeschichte des Deutschtums im Ausland*, 218. It is believed that Jews came to Bukovina in various migration waves. David Schaary, for example, contends that they came in the first century during the Roman occupation. A second wave supposedly immigrated in the Middle Ages when Jews came from Byzantium, and a third, the “Chazars” came from the Volga and the Caucasus regions. See Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 162.

⁴⁰ Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 162.

⁴¹ For a more ample discussion, see Joshua Shanes, “Yiddish and Jewish Diaspora Nationalism,” *Monatshefte* 90.2 (1998): 178-88.

German-Romanians in Romania: 1918-1989

Following the creation of the second German Empire in 1871, some twelve million German-speaking people (both ethnic Germans and Jews) remained citizens of the Habsburg and Tsarist empires.⁴² After the collapse of the two empires, notable German-speaking minorities lived in France, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Italy, and the Soviet Union. The ethnic German diaspora became a key issue for Germany, and was addressed in its domestic and foreign policy, proposing two ethnopolitical solutions. First, there was the revision of national borders to include territories with ethnic German populations into regions under German control; secondly, the resettlement of these populations from their historical areas of settlement, which at times was portrayed as a necessary “evacuation.”⁴³ The Nazi regime drew on both, using the first as a reason to invade several countries in East-Central Europe and the second forcibly to transfer ethnic Germans into the Reich.

While the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire and the devastation of the First World War had prompted major migrations within and outside of Europe, the two major threats to liberal democracy in the twentieth century, namely Nazism and Communism, produced “the most potent forms of exile.”⁴⁴ Labeled as a “real exile” since it was “government imposed,” exile in the twentieth century affected millions of people who were directly and indirectly forced to leave their homes and homelands.⁴⁵ By 1950, “about fourteen million ethnic Germans had either fled their homeland or had been

⁴² Rainer Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” in *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel (sic!) and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 262.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Eva Hoffman, “The New Nomads.” *Letters of Transit. Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss*, ed. André Aciman (New York: New Press, 1999), 41.

⁴⁵ John Glad, *Literature and Exile* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1990), 6.

expelled. Roughly two-thirds of these were resettled in what became the Federal Republic of Germany.”⁴⁶

After 1918, Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina, which were formerly colonies of the Habsburg Empire, became part of Greater Romania. On December 19, 1919 in Paris, Romania and the Allies signed The Treaty of the Minorities by which the minorities living in the newly-annexed regions (among them Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Czechs, Jews) were declared subjects of the Romanian Monarchy and were granted equal rights.⁴⁷ The ethnic German populations soon became disillusioned with the Romanian state for failing to respect their rights guaranteed by this treaty, as they were pressured to assimilate into Romanian culture. Some ethnic Germans attempted to assimilate (e.g., by Romanizing their names, intermarrying with Romanians, and by joining Romanian political parties, especially the Communist Party), but the majority lived a split existence divided between public and private spheres. At home and in the German community they would speak German and follow German traditions; in public, they had to use Romanian and follow the customs and regulations imposed by the Romanian state. Still, the state guaranteed the right of ethnic Germans to run their own schools, churches, publishing houses, newspapers, literary magazines, and radio and TV shows in German. All of these were, however, closely monitored and controlled by state officials, and were expected to operate as tools of communist ideology.

On June 26, 1935, Germany issued the *Reichsarbeitsdienstgesetz* (the Reich’s Labor Service Law) by which all male and female Germans under the age of twenty-five

⁴⁶ Stefan Wolff, “Conclusion,” in *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*, ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2002), 222.

⁴⁷ Ioan Scurtu, *The Ethnic Minorities in Romania. Documents*. 3 vols. Vol. I, 1918-1925. (București: Arhivele Naționale, 1994-1999), 174-78.

had to perform compulsory labor for the National Socialist State.⁴⁸ This law also applied to ethnic Germans born outside of Germany. In 1938-39, areas of compact German settlement outside of Germany (Austria, parts of Bohemia and Moravia, Danzig and western Poland) were annexed to the Reich. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, at the request of the Nazi government, some 625,000-650,000 ethnic Germans living outside of the territories annexed to or occupied by Germany in 1938-39 were “transferred” or immigrated voluntarily to Nazi Germany.⁴⁹ Thus, by 1943 it is estimated that 214,630 ethnic Germans from Romania were registered in Germany.⁵⁰ At the end of war, over 50,000 ethnic Germans from Romania were enrolled in the Nazi army.⁵¹ Ralf Grüneberger claims that 300 ethnic German-Romanians served as security forces in Auschwitz.⁵²

On August 23, 1944, Romania ended its military alliance with Nazi Germany and joined forces with the Soviet Union. Eight days later, the Red Army entered Bucharest (Romania’s capital), and thus Romania fell under the control of the Soviet Union, which aided the Romanian Communist Party’s rise to power. Romania was henceforth closely supervised and supported by the Soviet Union in the implementation of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the furthering of the Socialist Revolution. Following the model of the Soviet Union, Romania strove to build a classless society and hence, the Romanian Worker’s Party (this represented the fusion of the Communist and the Social Democratic Party) issued on February 6, 1945, Decree 86, also known as the “Statute of the Minor

⁴⁸ Dumitru Șandru, “Emigrarea germanilor din România în Reich (1940-1944),” in *Romania and Western Civilization: România și civilizația occidentală*, ed. Kurt W. Treptow (Iași: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997), 419-20.

⁴⁹ Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 262.

⁵⁰ Șandru, “Emigrarea germanilor din România în Reich (1940-1944),” 424.

⁵¹ See *Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor de Externe*. Vol. 133, pp. 249-51.

⁵² Ibid.

Nationalities.” This guaranteed to those minorities in Romania that represented at least 30% of the population in a given city or county the right to use their mother tongue as the language of instruction in schools. This statute was often exercised by the ethnic German minority. It could not, however, undo the devastating effects of the deportation of ethnic Germans into Soviet labor camps, which had been condoned by the Romanian government.

It is estimated that, in addition to the 5,324 ethnic Germans from Crișana, Satu Mare, Maramureș, and Sălaj—territories that in 1945 were still under Hungarian administration,⁵³ 69,332 ethnic Germans from Romania were deported to labor camps in the Soviet Union. In addition to their harsh treatment in labor camps at the hands of the Soviets, these deportees also faced the confiscation of their material goods and property by the Romanian communist state. To its credit, Romania twice opposed the deportation of its Germans to the Soviet Union. On January 13, 1945 under Prime Minister Nicolae Rădescu, Romania lodged a complaint with the Soviet government and condemned the abusive treatment of the German population in Romania.⁵⁴ However, the Prime Minister was quickly silenced as he was forced to resign his post after just two months in office and the deportations continued.

In the closing days of the Second World War, in response to the Soviet invasion of these territories that used to be part of the Third Reich, over twelve million ethnic Germans, largely women and children, became involuntary immigrants when they were expelled or fled from the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and

⁵³ Helmut Berner and Doru Radosav, *Und keiner weiß warum: Eine deportierte Geschichte* (Ravensburg: Landsmannschaft der Sathmarer Schwaben, 1996), 242.

⁵⁴ For more information, see Georg Weber, Renate Weber-Schlenther, and Armin Nassei, eds., *Die Deportation der Siebenbürger Sachsen in die Sowjetunion 1945-1949* (Köln: Böhlau, 1996).

Yugoslavia.⁵⁵ A part of these immigrants, who are collectively known as the *Vertriebene*, resettled in Austria and in regions that would become East Germany. Others moved further west in the states of Nordrhein-Westfalen and Rheinland-Pfalz.⁵⁶ The “rationale” behind this form of ethnic cleansing was that “no relevant groups of people with German citizenship or of German origin would remain in East-Central Europe.”⁵⁷ Despite this hostile attitude, it is worth noting that these ethnic Germans were at first not welcomed in West Germany.

In 1949 a broad interpretation of the West German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) established that ethnic Germans living in Central and Eastern Europe were also German citizens. The new rendition of “German” ethnicity prompted massive immigration to West Germany. Motivating discrimination and assimilation pressure, large numbers of ethnic Germans from the USSR, Poland, and Romania arrived in Germany. Thus, from 1950 to 1987, some 1.4 million ethnic Germans entered Germany from Central and Eastern Europe, with 2.6 million more arriving between 1988 and 1999. In 1957, ethnic Germans were for the first time officially called *Aussiedler*, or resettlers. Those entitled to claim *Aussiedler* status had to fulfill a series of so-called “objective” features that would distinguish ethnic Germans from other immigrants. They included heritage, language, and cultural or ethnic orientation.

The annual number of immigrants to Germany often mirrored “periods of domestic political liberalization or crisis” in the countries of origin. Under Nicolae

⁵⁵ Kevin Marc Larson, “Germans as Victims? The Discourse on the *Vertriebene* Diaspora, 1945-2005,” master’s thesis, Georgia State U, 2006, 9.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Data concerning the history of *Aussiedler* in Germany from 1949 to 1989 discussed on pp. 31-32—unless otherwise indicated—come from: Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 263-68.

Ceaușescu's dictatorship, one of the darkest periods in Romania's history that ended in 1989 with the dictator's execution and the fall of the regime, people lived in constant terror, suffered from food and heat shortages, dire poverty, and endured illnesses, which were exacerbated by heavy communist indoctrination and Ceaușescu's obsessive personality cult. Given this dehumanizing climate, numerous ethnic Germans filed for exit visas in order to immigrate to West Germany. The communist regimes of both Poland and Romania used "concessions on exit permits for *Aussiedler* as "leverage" in order to improve their political relations with the Federal Republic of Germany and to receive economic and financial aid." Ceaușescu, for example, agreed to release members of the German minority to the Federal Republic for hard currency, the infamous *Kopfgeld*, which amounted to up to DM 8,000 per ethnic German migrant.⁵⁸ Many of those who immigrated were bought out discreetly by the West German government. Romania holds a sad record regarding the emigration of its ethnic Germans. Between 1950 and 1987, 206,000 ethnic Germans emigrated from Romania (representing 15 percent of the European total), which was second only to emigration from Poland. Between 1988 and 1999, this number rose to 219,000 (8 percent of the total).⁵⁹ If in 1910, approximately 800,000 ethnic Germans lived in Romania, by 2002, this number had dropped to approximately 60,000 representing primarily elderly Germans who were unwilling to emigrate.⁶⁰ This massive emigration of ethnic Germans within a century stands in stark contrast to the long history and culture of Germans living in the regions

⁵⁸ John J. White, "A Romanian German in Germany: The Challenge of Ethnic and Ideological Identity in Herta Müller's Literary Work," in *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*, ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 182, endnote 2.

⁵⁹ Münz, "Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany," 268-69.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

who impacted not only the cultures and languages of Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina, but also influenced other regions in Romania and beyond.

CHAPTER 2

THE FORMATION OF GERMAN-ROMANIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

Although they were geographically isolated from the mainstream German culture, ethnic Germans in Romania succeeded in resisting assimilation into the dominant cultures they had resettled into while maintaining cultural ties with Western German-speaking cultures. Out of the German cultures of Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina grew rich transcultural traditions which shaped the identity of tens of thousands of ethnic Germans and Romanians for hundreds of years. The legacy of the German cultural heritage is visible today in the architecture, the historical documents, the dishes, music, traditions, terms, and concepts that have been incorporated into the Romanian language and culture. Yet of all these cultural artifacts, literature has succeeded most in encapsulating these cultures that were once a strong presence on Romanian territories.

As a repository and perpetuator of historical and cultural specificities, literature tends to “record what history and public memory often forget.”¹ Besides its social function, literature also offers options of agency for critical scrutiny and creative expression. This is especially evident in writing occurring between and across linguistic, cultural, historical, and sociopolitical borders. As outsiders and insiders both to the culture of origin and to the one of adoption, transnational authors become chroniclers of the histories and stories of the displaced that will go otherwise unrecorded. At the same

¹ Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 12.

time, their literature reflects aesthetically “complex strategies of translating in an effort to negotiate [the writers’] loyalties to nation, language, ethnicity, class, and gender.”²

The literatures in German written in Transylvania and the Banat reflect the historical, cultural, and linguistic specificities of each group of German colonizers. In Bukovina, however, the characteristics of the texts in German are distinctly different as most of their authors were Jewish. One of the common features shared by the texts written in German in Transylvania and the Banat was that writers made a sustained effort to cater to the cultural identity of a given ethnic German group. In Bukovina writing and publishing in German was not only a way to gain recognition within the German-Jewish minority, but also an expression of the fact that German-Jewish writers cherished a high cultural European heritage.

In this chapter, I examine the development of the literary history of the literatures in German written in Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina. I also analyze their influence on the transformation of German cultural identity in these regions. My analysis focuses on the period from the second half of the twentieth century to the present. I start by mapping out the beginnings of the literature in German of Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina and the (mis)use of the concept *rumäniendeutsche Literatur*. Next, I will outline a brief history of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* (1972-75)—a literary group formed and led by German authors known for its remarkable teamwork, political *engagement*, and criticism of Ceaușescu’s regime and the Banat-Swabian culture. This literary group had a long-lasting influence on future generations of both German-Romanian and Romanian writers. The writings of Richard Wagner, one of the founding members of the group, were strongly impacted by his active involvement in the *Aktionsgruppe* as was

² Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, 8.

Herta Müller's, who was also associated with the circle. I will examine several key factors that made poetry in German-Romanian literature the most utilized and effective literary genre in criticizing Ceaușescu's megalomaniac dictatorship. Finally, I will discuss the controversy over the disappearance of German-Romanian literature after 1990.

Transylvania

Despite being geographically cut off from other German-speaking cultures in Europe, ethnic Germans who lived in Romania maintained strong cultural ties with the places and cultures they had emigrated from, which gave the German cultures that flourished in Romania a pronounced transcultural character. From the beginning of their history in Transylvania and up to the onset of communism in Romania in 1945, numerous ethnic Germans traveled throughout Europe and studied at universities in Germany, Austria,³ and Switzerland, and, also in Prague, Krakow, and Italy. Students, theologians, lawyers, business people, clergy, and artists returned to Transylvania with personal experiences and stories, as well as Western ideas and texts. In addition, Western (primarily German-speaking) scholars, priests, artists, and writers visited Transylvania. These cultural imports served as authentic bridges between the "center" and the "periphery," as the West (particularly the German cultural space) and German communities in Eastern Europe were perceived.

While cultural exchange was active, Transylvanian Saxon intellectuals realized that at times they were "out of step" with the cultural, historical, political, and spiritual

³ It is estimated that between 1377 and 1530 over one thousand students from Transylvania studied at the University of Vienna alone. See Stefan Sienerth, "Die deutsche Literatur Siebenbürgens, des Banats und der Bukowina," in *Wortreiche Landschaft*, ed. Renate Florstedt (Leipzig: BlickPunktBuch, 1998), 27.

issues that concerned the contemporary mainstream German and Western culture. Over time, the awareness of this disconnect contributed to the development of an inferiority complex that began to be felt deeply at the turn of the century. Literature especially was perceived as being in need of more dialogue with the German mainstream culture and Western thought. The tension between striving to cultivate and transmit a language and a culture that would reflect the cultural experience of ethnic Germans living in Romania, on one hand, and becoming more attuned with the European cultural climate, on the other hand, was a struggle for ethnic German writers in the twentieth century.

Throughout its history, Transylvanian German literature received different labels that reflected the strong impact of the socio-political pressures it faced. If during the Enlightenment this literature had developed a cosmopolitan and pluri-ethnic self-consciousness, during the Nazi time it was reduced to a literature with a “völkisch” character.⁴ The multiethnic (or supra-ethnic) identity acquired during the Habsburg Monarchy was transformed into an ethnic-territorial identity after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁵ After 1945, the Transylvanian-Saxon identity gradually transformed into the problematic *rumäniendeutsche* identity, a construct devised by the communist government aimed to blend the literatures of Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina into a homogeneous literature in an effort to assimilate them into the dominant Romanian culture.

The literary life of Transylvania dates back at least to the first German writings recorded in the sixteenth century by ethnic Transylvanian Saxons. According to tradition, however, Klingsor, the famous *Minnesänger*, came from Transylvania, and since the

⁴ Markel, “‘Ich wohne in Europa/Ecke Nummer vier,’” 168-71.

⁵ Herzog, “‘Transkulturalität’ als Perspektive der Geschichtsschreibung deutschsprachiger Literatur,” 4.

region is mentioned in heroic sagas such as *Rabenschlacht*, *Rosengarten*, and *Wolfdietrich*, critics conclude that a rich oral tradition of folk songs, fairytales, legends, and proverbs must have circulated in and about Transylvania, probably from the beginning of the German colonization of the region in the twelfth century.⁶ From the middle of the nineteenth century until the end of the twentieth century, numerous collections of German folk tales, legends, anecdotes, and proverbs were published in Transylvania. A critically acclaimed example of this genre was Joseph Haltrich's *Volksmärchen aus dem Sachsenlande in Siebenbürgen* published in 1856 in Berlin owing to the support of the Brothers Grimm.

The first documented recording of a text authored by a Transylvanian Saxon was written in Latin in 1481 and then translated into German as *Traktat über die Sitten, die Lebensverhältnisse und die Arglist der Türken*. It was one of the most widely read texts of the time in Europe, and its author, who was enslaved by the Turks, was considered one of the founders of Oriental Studies. Martin Luther's introduction to the 1530 edition of the book also contributed to its exceptional popularity. In the sixteenth century, Humanist and Reformation ideas were imported to Transylvania through books and pamphlets brought back by students and professors who had studied at German universities. Before the building of the first printing press in the sixteenth century in Transylvania, an event that had an unprecedented impact upon the province's literary production, written texts such as historical epics, geographic descriptions, polemic pamphlets, hymnals, catechisms, collection of sermons, didactical tracts, commentaries of Greek and Latin classics, were published in small numbers outside of Transylvania. A notable figure of

⁶ Data concerning the literary history of Transylvanian Saxons discussed on pp. 38-41 come from: Stefan Sienerth, "Die deutsche Literatur Siebenbürgens, des Banats und der Bukowina," in *Wortreiche Landschaft*, ed. Renate Florstedt (Leipzig: Fördervereien BlickPunktBuch, 1998), 27-31.

this time was Damasus Dürer (1535-85), a Lutheran priest, whose collection of sermons written in German present him as a noted pioneer of the Transylvanian Saxon literature. Besides the fact that his texts showed the strong influence of Luther's German, they also demonstrated the author's remarkable imagination and narrative skill, his profound humanity and knowledge of the traditions and customs of the time. Dürer's writings are recognized for succeeding in compiling and transmitting authentic pictures of the life of Transylvanian Saxons in the sixteenth century.

The first texts of literary fiction in German by Transylvanian Saxons were written in the seventeenth century. Ironically, they were first published outside of Transylvania. The Braşov-born Johann Gorgias (1640-80), who studied at Wittenberg University, wrote a number of erotic novels that were a resounding success and were published in several editions in Germany. For his literary success, Gorgias was named court poet by the Emperor. He was also admitted into the elitist literary circle "Elbschwanenorden." Andreas Pinxner (1674-1710), another Transylvanian who studied in Wittenberg, published the erotic novel *Die hitzige Indianerin*, which records the narrator's encounter with an Indian woman he met while traveling to Java. Fearing that due to their erotic content their books would not be received well in Transylvania, Gorgias and Pinxner concealed their success back home, where the books remained largely unknown.

Another notable figure of the literary scene of the time is Baron Valentin Franck von Franckenstein (1643-97), who gained fame as the translator of Ovid into the Transylvanian Saxon dialect, Romanian, and Hungarian. Translating into and from German became a major literary activity for Transylvania Saxons, Banat Swabians, and German-speaking-Bukovina writers. Today, thanks to the translation efforts of twentieth-

century ethnic German writers from Romania, contemporary Romanian literature continues to gain recognition and critical acclaim outside of Romania.

During the Enlightenment, newspapers played a leading role in Transylvania by providing scientific, political, and socio-economic information. These forums offered a much-needed space in which public opinions could be expressed and action plans developed. Yet, while newspapers enjoyed an increasing popularity among readers, books were less successful. Only 200-300 volumes per book-title were published at the time. Critic Stefan Sienerth suggests that the small number of books published should be attributed to the readers' lack of interest (which was very small to begin with) and not to the scarcity of talented authors.

Thanks to the newspapers of the time, the French July Revolution of 1830 and the Revolution of 1848 were well reported in Transylvania. Many Transylvanians realized that administrative, cultural, and economic structures in their own society needed to be modernized. The nationalist and democratic aspirations of these revolutions, recorded in the manifestos, fiction, and poems published in newspapers and literary magazines in Transylvania, stirred strong ethnic and nationalist feelings, particularly among ethnic German readers, who started to show a growing interest in defining their own cultural identity as "Transylvanian Saxons." Consequently, writers began to publish novels and stories that would explore issues and concerns linked to the cultural identity of the Transylvanian Saxons. Two of the most representative writers of this new literary wave were Daniel Roth (1801-59) and Joseph Marlin (1842-49). While Daniel Roth published historical-political novels featuring local Transylvanian-Saxon protagonists and concerns, according to critic Stefan Sienerth, Joseph Marlin succeeded through his novels and short

stories from the series *Geschichten des Ostens* in crossing over local and regional borders by tackling themes pertaining to the multinational and multicultural climate of Eastern Europe. Once Transylvania lost its administrative autonomy in 1876, due to the Austrian-Hungarian *Ausgleich*, Transylvanian Saxons experienced strong Magyarization pressures. As a result, they were even more prone to cling to their ethnic and cultural identity.

By the nineteenth century, Transylvanian-Saxon literature contributed to the development of a national identity that both legitimized the ethnic German groups to the outside world and mobilized the inner emotional creative forces of the German population. Not surprising, while crystallizing cultural and ethnic identity, this literature was marked by “Heimattümelei,” complacency, narrow horizons, and lack of interest in discovering its unique roots. At the turn of the century, however, Transylvanian author and editor Adolf Meschendörfer employed his newspaper, *Die Karpathen* (1907-14), as a platform geared to challenge fellow writers to criticize their self-gratifying German culture, abandon epigonic attitudes, dialogue with German authors from the Banat and Bukovina, and to become more interested in European literary concerns and developments. Meschendörfer practiced what he prescribed to others. An example is his novel *Leonore*, published in 1908 as a feuilleton in *Die Karpathen*, which disparages the life and traditions of his fellow Transylvanian Saxons. *Leonore* is considered the first modern novel in the Transylvanian-Saxon literature, as it draws from the aesthetics of German impressionism, which was en vogue at the time. It was only shortly before the Second World War that Transylvanian-Saxon literature started to spark the interest of readers and critics outside Transylvania as its authors began to address aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural issues of larger European concern.

The Banat

Compared to Transylvania, the Banat has a shorter German literary history. Two representative writers of mainstream German literature were born in Timișoara, the capital of the Banat: Nikolaus Lenau (1802-50), and writer and theatre director Johann Friedel (1751-89). Lenau does not mention the Banat in his writings (he left the region when he was still an infant), and Friedel makes only a few references in passing in his writings.⁷

Literary activity in German in the Banat started in the nineteenth century. As in Transylvania, it had a pronounced regional focus. This was due, in part, to the systematic Magyarization that occurred after the short period (1718-78) of Austrian administration of the Banat. In contrast with the Transylvanian Saxons, who developed strong and influential cities, had access to high culture and European philosophical, theological, and humanist ideas, the Banat-Swabian culture was predominantly rural. Its literature was focused on capturing the atmosphere of the village and the life and plight of the Swabian peasants.

Similar to their effect in Transylvania, the 1848-49 revolutions that swept Europe had a great impact in the Banat. When the last German colonizers arrived in the Banat at the end of the eighteenth century, Banat Swabians still perceived themselves as “Germans” and as “Austrians.” However, when ideas and aspirations for liberalism and nationalism reached the Banat via newspapers and periodicals, the ethnic Germans of the Banat started to understand themselves as “Banat Swabians.” As in Transylvania, literature played a central role in building and perpetuating the cultural identity of the

⁷ Data concerning the literary history of the Banat discussed on pp. 42-44 come from: Sienerth, “Die deutsche Literatur Siebenbürgens, des Banats und der Bukowina,” 31-32.

Banat Swabians. Viktor Ornedi-Hommeneau's newspaper *Von der Heide* (1909-19, 1922-27), for example, served to connect Banat-Swabian writers and readers with one another and to plan and debate ideas and projects pertaining to political, cultural, and socio-economic issues that were of interest at the time.

Representative Banat-Swabian writers of the nineteenth century were Karl Wilhelm von Martini (1821-85), Johann Nepomuk Preyer (1805-88), and Eugen Probst (1858-1937). The literary works of these authors contributed significantly to the awakening of national feelings among the Banat Swabians. As one who lived most of his life away from the Banat in Vienna, Graz, and Prague, Martini wrote novels that take place in locations outside the Banat, in multicultural South Eastern Europe. Like Martini, Probst spent most of his life in Vienna away from the Banat, yet his critically acclaimed stories take place in the Banat.

As in Transylvania, the tension between the need to affirm and perpetuate the cultural values and interests of the ethnic group, on the one hand, and the desire to enter into a dialogue with mainstream German cultures, on the other, is evident in the Banat. While writers like Johann Szimits (1852-1910) concentrated their efforts on collecting and publishing oral stories in Swabian dialect, poets Karl Gürnns (1855-1930) and Josef Gabriels d. Ä., a Banat-Swabian peasant, wrote their poems in *Hochdeutsch*, literary German.

An important literary figure and advocate for the preservation of the Banat Swabian culture was the writer and journalist Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn (1852-1923), whose literary works *Glocken der Heimat* (1910), *Der große Schwabenzug* (1913), *Meister Jakob und seine Kinder* (1918) and journalistic activity pointed to the impending

threats of the systematic Magyarization of the Banat Swabians after 1867. In the light of this politics of forced assimilation, Müller-Guttenbrunn campaigned for the development of a self-reliant and independent ethnic and cultural consciousness among the Banat Swabians. Although at the beginning of the twentieth century the German literature written in the Banat had a pronounced regional character, poet and dramatist Nikolaus Schmidt (1874-1930) gained critical acclaim in the mainstream German culture with his collection of poems *Dudelsacklieder eines Schreinergeresellen* (1909) and the play *Die braven Bauern* (1910).

Bukovina

In Bukovina, known as “Europa im Kleinen” or “die Schweiz des Ostens” due to its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural populations, German language and Austrian culture were imposed by the Austrian colonizers. However, only approximately 10% of Bukovina’s population was made up of ethnic Germans who had emigrated from south-eastern regions in today’s Germany, such as Bohemia and the Zips.⁸ Unlike in Transylvania and the Banat, where a German legacy was cultivated and passed on in an effort to consolidate the cultural identity of German ethnic minority groups, in Bukovina the appropriation of German language and Austrian culture promised political and socio-economic advantages as well as acceptance by the dominant class and culture.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, literature in German in Bukovina was authored by German-speaking Jews who were assimilated into the German culture, and Romanians like Jancu (1836-1922) and Theodor Lupul (1838-58) who published

⁸ Kotzian, *Die Umsiedler*, 138; and Sienerth, “Die deutsche Literatur Siebenbürgens, des Banats und der Bukowina,” 32.

exclusively in German. The Romanian national poet Mihai Eminescu (1850-89) and the Ukrainian Jurij Osyp Fedkovyc (1834-88) published at the beginning of their literary careers both in their native language as well as in German.⁹

In contrast to other colonization histories around the world, where the colonizers imposed their language and forbade natives to speak their mother tongues, locals were allowed to use their native languages in Bukovina. The cultural exchange that took place in Bukovina via translations and through the German university of Czernowitz was remarkable. Being multilingual was the norm rather than the exception in Bukovina, a feature that also characterized the literature produced there. Thus, it was quite customary for newspapers and literary magazines to be published in several languages.

Besides German-speaking Jews, literature in German was also authored by ethnic Germans. Representative writers in this category are poet and architect Karl Kugler (1816-92), translator and historian Ludwig Simiginowicz-Staufe, and author and journalist Ernst Rudolf Neubauer (1822-90), who also worked as a journalist in Vienna. Along with Simiginowicz-Staufe, who was a prolific fiction writer, translator, and essayist, Neubauer is considered one of the founders of the literary tradition in German in Bukovina. Neubauer was the editor of the periodicals *Bukovina* and *Sonntagsblatt* and the publisher of the 1855 *Lieder aus der Bukovina*, a collection of poems and literary and historical articles.¹⁰ The literary and journalistic activity of the Jewish Bukovinian writer Karl Emil Franzos (1848-1904) gave the Bukovina German literature a supra-regional prestige and helped it overcome its regional flavor.¹¹

⁹ Sienerth, "Die deutsche Literatur Siebenbürgens, des Banats und der Bukowina," 32.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 33.

Literature Written in German in Romania: 1918-1945

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the German literatures written in Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina experienced an increasing tension between striving to outgrow their provincial character and overcome their inferiority complex, on the one hand, and, on the other, attempting to maintain the cultural identity specific to the ethnic German groups they represented. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Transylvania's unification with Romania in 1918, ethnic Germans started to experience unprecedented isolation from mainstream German language and culture. Intellectuals and writers especially strove to bridge the gap between the "center" (the West) and the "margins" (East-Central Europe) in order enter into a dialogue with European literary movements. They also focused on establishing cultural contacts and exchanges with the Banat-Swabian writers and intellectuals.¹² German mainstream authors and literary movements and styles from different time periods were "symbolically re-territorialized" causing the literary scene to become fragmented.¹³ In addition, various German political organizations, cultural associations, and periodicals were revitalized and/or founded. In 1933, the German national theatre (*Landestheater*) was established in Hermannstadt (Sibiu). In 1788, this city had witnessed the founding of the first German theatre, which featured primarily plays by Transylvanian-Saxon dramatists. While Modernism, Symbolism, and neo-romantic subjectivism left visible traces in the works of authors like Egon Hajek (1888-1963), Bernhard Caspius (1889-1981), and Heinrich Zillich (1898-1988), late Expressionism shaped the works of Hermann Klöß (1880-1940) and Franz

¹² Motzan, "Die vielen Wege in den Abschied," 108.

¹³ Gerhardt Csejka, "Der Weg zu den Rändern, der Weg der Minderheitenliteratur zu sich selbst. Siebenbürgisch-sächsische Vergangenheit und rumäniendeutsche Gegenwartsliteratur," in *Die siebenbürgisch-deutsche Literatur als Beispiel einer Regionalliteratur*, ed. Anton Schwob and Brigitte Tontsch (Köln: Böhlau, 1993), 65.

Xaver Kappus (1883-1966). An officer turned prolific journalist and writer, Kappus is best known as the recipient of Rainer Maria Rilke's famous letters *Briefen an einen jungen Dichter*.¹⁴

The 1923 Constitution that proclaimed Romania an indivisible and unitary nation state sparked passionate debates among politicians, historians, and writers regarding the status of the ethnic minorities living in Romania. As the government limited the use of languages other than Romanian, minority groups felt increasingly threatened in their attempts to maintain their cultural identity. As a result, deep feelings of isolation and abandonment were expressed for instance in Adolf Meschendörfer's *Die Stadt im Osten* (1931), Erwin Wittstock's *Bruder, nimm die Brüder mit* (1933), and Heinrich Zillich's *Zwischen Grenzen und Zeiten* (1936). Authors like Heinrich Zillich and Erwin Neustädter sought refuge in nationalistic and heroic tendencies. These were masterfully enhanced by Erwin Wittstock's symbolic use of ethnographic elements and psychological analysis of literary characters—techniques that were reminiscent of Transylvanian-Saxon narratives.¹⁵

In spite of increased isolation from mainstream-German culture, German literature produced in Romania became known outside of Romania thanks to authors like the Banat-Swabian Otto Alscher (1880-1944), who in 1912 published his novel *Gogan und das Tier* at the prestigious Fischer publishing house. His 1925 collection of short stories *Tier und Mensch* was a resounding success. A versatile writer and translator, the Bucharest-based author Oskar Walter Cisek (1897-1966) was very much at home both in the Romanian and ethnic German cultures of Romania, which gave him the status of a

¹⁴ Motzan, "Die vielen Wege in den Abschied," 108-109.

¹⁵ Ibid., 109.

reputable cultural mediator. Peter Motzan notes that while Cisek was preoccupied by the Balkan realities of his time, particularly the atmosphere of the small cities, which he often satirized, he was also interested in exploring the depths of the human.¹⁶ His works *Der Strom ohne Ende* (1937) and *Vor den Toren* (1950) were critically acclaimed outside of Romania where they received explicit appreciation from Thomas Mann, Arnold Zweig, and Oskar Loerke.¹⁷

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the production of German literature in Romania decreased considerably when an increasing number of authors immigrated to the West. Some of these writers are: Franz Xaver Kappus, who left the Banat in 1925 and resettled in Berlin, and Georg Maurer (1907-71). Maurer left in 1926 to study in Leipzig and later became a prominent writer in East Germany.¹⁸ The Bukovina-born author, screenwriter, and actor Gregor von Rezzori (1914-98) moved to Berlin in 1938 and became one of the representative modern writers in German.¹⁹

In the 1930s, when many ethnic Germans felt increasingly betrayed and neglected by the Romanian government, they turned to the seductive ideology of the German National Socialist Party that was rapidly infiltrating Romania. The arousing slogans appealing to the “Blutgemeinschaft” of all ethnic Germans across Europe, who were charged with the mission (*Sendungsbewußtsein*) to embrace and propagate Nazi

¹⁶ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 110.

¹⁷ Norbert Mecklenburg notes that Thomas Mann was particularly impressed by Cisek’s 1929 collection of short stories *Die Tatarin*. Oskar Loerke wrote an enthusiastic essay about Cisek’s 1937 novel *Der Strom ohne Ende*. See Norbert Mecklenburg, “Rettung des Besonderen. Konzepte für die Analyse und Bewertung regionaler Literatur,” in *Kolloquium zur literarischen Kultur der deutschsprachigen Bevölkerungsgruppen im Ausland*, ed. Alexander Ritter (Flensburg: Institut für deutsche Forschung und Information im Deutschen Grenzverein, 1984), 183.

¹⁸ Thomas Krause, “Literatur der deutschsprachigen Minderheit Rumäniens,” in *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland*, ed. Carmine Chiellino (Stuttgart: J.B Metzler, 2000), 178.

¹⁹ For a more comprehensive list of authors see Peter Motzan’s article: “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied” particularly pp. 110-11.

ideology, shaped the literature in German of the 1930s considerably. Many of the works that offered support for “Selbst- und Arterhaltung” were published in German publishing houses and enjoyed large circulation.²⁰ Founded by Heinrich Zillich (1898-1988), the literary journal *Klingsor* (1924-39) was considered one of the most important periodicals written in German in Southeast Europe. In its initial stage, the journal welcomed authors of various cultural backgrounds including German-Jewish authors from Bukovina. However, under the influence of Zillich’s anti-Semitism and growing affinity towards the Nazi ideology, the journal became an instrument of Nazi propaganda. Zillich resettled in Bavaria in 1936 and became an ardent supporter of the Nazi Party. Authors like Andreas Birkner, however, openly opposed the Nazi ideology. His 1944 novel *Wind in der Tenne*, for example, is a powerful example of a nonconformist attitude.²¹

It is estimated that by 1940, nine different nationalities lived in Bukovina.²² As the dominant language was German, literature in Bukovina was primarily written in this language. The literature in German produced in the Banat was primarily focused on the universe of the village. In Bukovina, by comparison, literature displayed both a local, provincial orientation and an intercultural, supra-regional direction ardently promoted by German-Jewish authors. Inspired by reputable German poets, Romanian folklore, and Hasidic thought, these authors struggled to claim that, although aesthetically their texts were part of the German and Austrian literary traditions, they were also creating a space for a Bukovina-specific literary individuality.²³ Thanks to the multicultural and multilingual background of these authors and their open attitude towards foreign cultures

²⁰ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 109.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 110.

²³ Ibid.

and literatures, many of them produced remarkable literary translations from and into German, Romanian, English, Russian, French, Italian, Yiddish, Portuguese, Ukrainian, and Hebrew.²⁴

The anti-Semitic politics of Nazi Germany led to the extermination of 60,000 Jews from Bukovina. A few German-Jewish writers, among them renowned poet and translator Alfred Margul-Sperber (1898-1967) fled Bukovina and resettled in Bucharest before persecution started. Others like Paul Celan (1920-70), Alfred Kittner, (1906-91), Immanuel Weißglas (1920-79), Alfred Gong (1920-81), Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger (1924-42) were put in camps, and yet others, like Moses Rosenkranz (1902-2003) and Rose Ausländer (1901-88) went into hiding, or were killed.²⁵ Undoubtedly, the most famous among these authors is Paul Celan, one of the most profound, innovative, and original poets of the twentieth century. After his two-year internment in a labor camp in Transnistria, Celan left Bukovina in 1945 and lived in Bucharest until 1947, when he left for Vienna. Alfred Margul-Sperber's poetry had a defining influence on Celan, which is especially visible in his early poems. Margul-Sperber was also instrumental in recommending Celan and his poetry to literary journals in Salzburg and Vienna, which published over seventeen poems by Celan.²⁶ Moreover, Margul-Sperber's wife, Jessika,

²⁴ Some representative translators are Alfred Margul-Sperber, who was the first to translate into German Guillaume Apollinaire's "Caligrammes," T. S. Eliot's "Waste Land," works by Gérard de Nerval, Robert Frost, Steven Wallace, Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, as well as by various Romanian and Native American writers. Immanuel Weißglas translated into Romanian Faust I and II and Adalbert Stifter's "Nachsommer." He also translated into German poems by Mihai Eminescu. Alfred Kittner translated into Romanian texts by Emil Botta and Jean Bart as well as numerous authors into German. Paul Celan translated into German texts by Romanian, French, Portuguese, Italian, Hebrew, Italian, and English authors.

²⁵ After their release from labor camps in the Ukraine, Alfred Kittner and Immanuel Weißglas moved to Bucharest and Alfred Gong went to Vienna and then resettled in New York.

²⁶ Rose Ausländer's first volume of poems *Der Regenbogen* was published in Bucharest also thanks to Margul-Sperber's mediation.

has been credited with creating the anagram “Paul Celan” from “Paul Antschel”—Celan’s real name.²⁷

Rumäniendeutsch: Usage and Misusage of an Invented Concept

The term *rumäniendeutsch* was coined between the First and Second World Wars as a “Sammelbegriff” that aimed to put under one roof all ethnic German groups living in Romania.²⁸ At the end of the 1960s, the term was used to describe the literary output in German produced in Romania. Today, *rumäniendeutsch* is also used in the West to denote ethnic German writers from Romania who have resettled in Germany.

The invention of the term *rumäniendeutsch* betrayed both the growing nationalism in Romania and the strong politics of assimilation practiced by the Romanian communist government as well as its inherent leveling tendencies.²⁹ Yet, the literary critics and authors whose texts it describes find the concept *rumäniendeutsch* questionable. Attempting to trace its political roots, Richard Wagner, for example, argues that this label was a “politische Sprachregelung” intended to show the double allegiance of this literature and the fact that it was connected both to the Romanian territory and the German culture.³⁰ In contrast, German-Romanian critic Gerhardt Csejka, who was directly involved in the 1950s in coining the term, argues that *rumäniendeutsch* was conceived as a necessary “classification concept” (“Zuordnungsbegriff”) geared to distinguish German literature written in Romania from mainstream German literature and

²⁷ Axel Schmitt, “Eine Dichtung aus Asche, eine Dichtung der Asche. Paul Celan und die Bukowiner ‘littérature mineure,’” *Literaturkritik.de*. July 2003, 14 Jan. 2010
<http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=6158&ausgabe=200307>.

²⁸ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 108.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Richard Wagner, “Sprachdesaster und Identitätsfalle. Der Schriftsteller als Rumäniendeutscher,” *Orbis Linguarum* 26 (2004): 346.

culture, which, at the time, was considered compromised by Nazism.³¹ Csejka further remarks that, while attempting to distance itself from one culture (German) and prove its allegiance to the other (Romanian), *rumäniendeutsche Literatur* was actually in a “vielstrapazierte Sondersituation,” also described as a “Zwitterstellung” or a “Niemandland” owed to its “in-between” position at the crossing of divergent political and cultural spaces.³²

Critic Harald Kaser argues that this “in-betweenness” or “third space” offered a fertile ground for artistic expression where complex strategies were devised in an effort to question the status quo and negotiate loyalties to nation, language, ethnicity, class, and gender: “zwischen der Versuchung, sich in der Enge einer Heimatkunst zu bescheiden, und der Gefahr, in den Leerlauf einer übernommenen, nicht bodenverwurzelten Bildungsdichtung hineinzugeraten, entsteht hier eine Kunst.”³³ The paradox and the attraction of German-Romanian literature reside in the fact that despite the strong ties with both German and Romanian language, literature, and culture, it has a distinct identity marked by a complex linguistic and cultural character. According to Richard Wagner, the current use of *rumäniendeutsch* in Germany indicates a “Ratlosigkeit, eine Formel, mit der der unwissende Einheimische alltäglich auf die exotischen Neuankömmlinge reagiert.”³⁴

³¹ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 270.

³² Csejka, “Über den Anfang. Betrachtungen die neuere deutsche Lyrik in Rumänien betreffend,” 17 and Csejka “Bedingtheiten der rumäniendeutschen Literatur,” 45.

³³ Qtd. in Motzan, *Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik nach 1944. Problemaufriß und historischer Überblick*, 28.

³⁴ Wagner, “Sprachdesaster und Identitätsfalle,” 346.

German-Romanian Language and Literature After 1945

Prior to 1944, ethnic Germans in Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina lived in relatively closed language islands in which the church, school, and the family counteracted rather successfully the mixing of German dialects (like *sächsisch* in Transylvania and *schwäbisch* in the Banat) with Romanian. Historian Karl Kurt Klein suggests that in Bukovina, German dialects were very little used while a particular kind of Austrian-German developed.³⁵ Dialects were considered one of the unmistakable marks of the cultural identity of each German minority group. *Hochdeutsch* was taught in schools and, as such, it was perceived almost like a foreign language.³⁶ Richard Wagner remarks that in the mass media, for example, *Hochdeutsch* was: “ein eigentümliches Gemisch aus Altrumäniendeutsch, Westdeutsch und DDR-Deutsch” and of Austrian terms and loan translations from Romanian.³⁷ Due to its morphological and syntactical particularities this *Hochdeutsch* was referred to as *Inseldeutsch* or *Sprachinsel*.³⁸ Under the influence of Romanian, Hungarian, and Russian (particularly Soviet) terms and expressions the literary *Hochdeutsch* of Romania developed a transcultural character that conferred a distinct mark on the works of German-Romanian authors like Richard Wagner and Herta Müller.

The rise to power of the communists was marked by forced collectivization and industrialization that caused massive relocations and the fragmentation of German cultural enclaves.³⁹ With the exception of a small number of German-speaking

³⁵ For more information see Karl Kurt Klein, *Literaturgeschichte des Deutschtums im Ausland*, 217-26.

³⁶ Motzan, *Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik nach 1944*, 26.

³⁷ Richard Wagner, “Der Spiegel der Identität einer Minderheit ist ihre Sprache,” *Mythendämmerung*, (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1993), 108-109.

³⁸ This term is attributed to critic Johann Wolf. See Motzan, *Die rumänische Lyrik nach 1944*, 25.

³⁹ Heinrich Stiehler, *Paul Celan, Oscar Walter Cisek und die deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur Rumäniens* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1979), 153.

intellectuals, the majority of the German population, who spoke dialect at home and Romanian at work, would hardly be exposed to and use *Hochdeutsch*, or read literature in *Hochdeutsch*. The political, social, economic, and cultural changes pushed forth by the new communist order imposed new terms, phrases, and meanings that had very few or no equivalents in German. Thus, these terms gradually infiltrated from Romanian discourse the dialects and *Hochdeutsch*, resulting in class-specific “Mischsprachen.”⁴⁰ Attempting to explain the dominance of German-Romanian poetry on the literary scene of the 1950s, Peter Motzan argues that it is attributed to the fact that poets did not draw from this mixing of languages, but, instead, used only German in their poems.⁴¹

Between 1945 and 1989, Romania experienced alternating periods of strict ideological imposition and relative political and cultural liberalization, also known as “frosts” and “thaws.” After seizing power in 1945, the communists practiced forced assimilation politics that, although being aimed at all ethnic minority groups, hit the German minority particularly hard. While the official communist propaganda upheld the equality of all people, in reality ethnic, political, and religious minorities were persecuted and even exterminated at times. This discrepancy between theory and practice was further exacerbated by the new term that the socialist state invented to refer to non-Romanian ethnic minorities, i.e., “co-inhabiting nationalities,” (Romanian: *nationalități conlocuitoare*), a label that in reality meant “tolerated nationalities.” The term “minority” was not used, because it implied a form of inferiority or inequality, which would have

⁴⁰ Stiehler lists several representative examples of Romanian terms, expressions, and idioms that have been either directly incorporated into German or translated from Romanian into German: instead of “zur Arbeit pendeln” people talk about “naveta machen” (from Romanian *naveta* = commute), “telefonieren” is replaced with “ein Telefon geben” from the Romanian idiom *a da un telefon*, literally translated as “to give a phone.” See Heinrich Stiehler, *Paul Celan, Oscar Walter Cisek und die deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur Rumäniens*, 152. See also Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 111.

⁴¹ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 111.

been in contradiction with the principle of equality—one of the fundamental doctrines of communist ideology.⁴²

The *Kollektivschuld* with which all ethnic Germans were charged, changed not only their political, moral, and material status, but had also a significant impact upon the literary output in German. Gerhardt Csejka explains that in the 1950s, ethnic German writers had to prove to the communist authorities that, in spite of their cultural connection to Germany, they condemned Hitler's dictatorship, and were eager to contribute to the furthering of the Leninist and Stalinist doctrines in Romania.⁴³ In his 1956 article "Die deutschen Schriftsteller und ihr Wirken in der RVR" [*Rumänische Volksrepublik* "People's Republic of Romania"—my tr.], Heinrich Simonis insists that despite the literary efforts of the "Ingenieure der menschlichen Seele," as Stalin used to call writers, there is still a lot of room for improvement, especially in German literature, which needs to be cleared of the "alten ungesunden, verknöcherten Geist" as well as of the "Steine" i.e., those writers who would neither promote the communist propaganda nor subscribe to the ideology of Socialist Realism.⁴⁴ Thirty years later, Nicolae Ceaușescu used the same metaphor of the "rock" to point out those ethnic German writers who would not conform to communist ideology.⁴⁵

Despite their precarious status as members of a "tolerated" ethnic minority, German-Romanian authors focused on Germany as their cultural center, developing what Richard Wagner calls a "Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Peripherie und Zentrum."⁴⁶

⁴² Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 118.

⁴³ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 270-71.

⁴⁴ Qtd. in Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 104.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁶ Qtd. in Susanne Broos, "Richard Wagner: Politik ist immer eine Dimension in meinem Schreiben," *Börsenblatt* 87 2 (November, 1993): 20.

Wagner believes that this tension has been productive since German-Romanian authors are the only ethnic German writers since the Second World War to produce prominent writers in contemporary German literature, such as Herta Müller, Oskar Pastior, Richard Wagner, and Werner Söllner.⁴⁷

Between 1947 and 1953, Romania experienced one of the darkest periods in its history. The Soviet Union imposed heavy Stalinization resulting in an unprecedented political persecution leading to thousands of arrests, forced collectivization of agriculture and industrialization, nationalization of private property, and heavy communist indoctrination. The process of Stalinization in the literary arena was ruthlessly completed in a relatively short time. Strict ideological conformity in the humanities and social sciences was demanded. Competence and aesthetics were to be replaced by ideology, professionals were dismissed or imprisoned and replaced by agitators and culture became an instrument for political-ideological propaganda. Dogmatic intolerance was practiced on a large scale, and literature, regardless of the language in which it was written, ceased to be an artistic creation. Its function was reduced to popularizing communist doctrines and to exposing the “remnants” of the bourgeois mentality. Socialist Realism, the new Soviet-imposed aesthetic, was an “artificial, arbitrary set of literary dictates” to which every writer in Romania was supposed to conform.⁴⁸ Based on whether they were opponents of or subscribers to Socialist Realism, writers were polarized into two opposite camps: the “aesthetes” and the “dogmatists.” Forced to forsake aesthetic pluralism, the

⁴⁷ David Rock and Stefan Wolff. “...a form of literature which was intentionally political.” Richard Wagner in Conversation with David Rock and Stefan Wolff,” in *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*, ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 143.

⁴⁸ Florin Manolescu, “Introduction,” in *The Phantom Church and Other Stories from Romania*, ed. and trans. Georgiana Farnoaga and Sharon King (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1996), ix.

“official” literature became a “tool in the service of the new society” which glorified “the achievements of the workers and peasants in carrying out the Communist Revolution.”⁴⁹

As a result, language was simplified, the number of themes permitted by the Party was severely curtailed, and certain literary genres, such as fantasy or erotica, and forms, such as Surrealism, were banned.⁵⁰

Art was submitted to a brutal process of political exploitation (“Instrumentalisierung der Kunst”) so that it could serve ideological purposes. As such, it lost its dialogical function both within and outside of Romania’s culture.⁵¹ Following Lenin’s theory of “two cultures,” the prewar literature was cast as the “old,” decadent, false, and degenerate culture of the bourgeoisie and replaced with the “new” proletarian literature of the Soviet model heralded as genuine, vivid, and authentic.⁵² During the 1950s, also referred to as the period of “vulgar sociology” and “proletcultism,” short prose was journalistic rather than imaginative in nature, reflecting the empty pathos of opportunists and Party activists of the moment turned “writers” overnight.⁵³ Among those writers who refused to subscribe to the proletcultist dogma, there were some who emigrated and others who wrote clandestinely “literature for the drawer.” Drastic censorship practiced by an intricate system overseen by the Party aimed to “re-educate” writers so they would conform to communist ideology. Non-dogmatist Romanian and German-Romanian writers, who wanted both to bypass the Party-controlled censorship apparatus and obliquely indict the regime, practiced resistance through aesthetic techniques of

⁴⁹ Manolescu, “Introduction,” ix.

⁵⁰ Ibid., x.

⁵¹ Stiehler, *Paul Celan, Oscar Walter Cisek und die deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur Rumäniens*, 123.

⁵² Manolescu, “Introduction,” x.

⁵³ Ibid.

poetic camouflage such as satire, allegory, irony, surrealist elements, or travesty, which address both the desperate situation of the time and the remarkable poetic skill of the writers.

East Germany was the only “officially approved” country with which German-Romanian authors were allowed to have cultural ties outside of Romania. The Party’s tight control over literary output is underscored by the fact that, at the time, in Romania there was only one newspaper in German, *Neuer Weg*.⁵⁴ Critic Peter Motzan characterizes this dire atmosphere as a “tabula-rasa-situation,” in which the ties with tradition and European modernism were classified as “decadent” and “dangerous.”⁵⁵

Although the “thaw” spurred by Stalin’s death in 1953 was felt in Romania, it lasted only until 1956 when, after the Hungarian Revolution was brutally repressed by Soviet troops, the Party tightened its control again. During this small window of liberalization, “censorship allowed the publishing of a few books that followed neither the themes nor the requirements of the political moment.”⁵⁶ In 1956, the literary journal *Banater Schrifttum*, founded in 1949, moved to Bucharest and was renamed *Neue Literatur*, marking the beginning of a new era for German-Romanian literature. In time, *Neue Literatur* became the most prestigious literary journal in German published in communist Romania, serving as a cultural forum that published poetry, short stories, interviews, critical essays, reviews, literary biographies, etc. After 1953, several authors such as Alfred Kittner, Oskar Walter Cisek, Wolf von Aichelburg, Erwin Wittstock, Andreas Birkner, Hans Bergel, Oskar Pastior, and Paul Schuster who had been politically

⁵⁴ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 112.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Eugen Negrici, *Literature and Propaganda in Communist Romania*, trans. Mihai Codreanu (Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1999), 42.

marginalized after 1948, were invited to publish in *Neue Literatur*.⁵⁷ The end of this short period of liberalization was marked in the history of the German-Romanian literature by the scandalous trial of five authors, Andreas Birkner, Wolf von Aichelburg, Georg Scherg, Hans Bergel, and Harald Siegmund, who were sentenced to a total of 95 years in prison and forced labor for disrupting the social order with their writings.⁵⁸ Discussing this trial as a case of repression that reveals the arbitrariness of the judiciary system, German-Romanian critic and translator Georg Aeschl contends that the charge against the five authors represents the *Urtrauma* of German-Romanian literature after the Second World War.⁵⁹

A relative liberalization took place in the early 1960s. Socialist Realism was rejected and replaced by a more vaguely defined “Socialist Humanism,” and the focus became the individual and his/her subjective world.⁶⁰ Several formerly banned genres such as fantasy, detective stories, and science fiction were rehabilitated, while techniques of literary experimentation and the influence of avant-garde movements also became visible in the literature of the time.⁶¹ Significant changes were evident in German-Romanian literature. Writers focused on the daily realities of the German minority, whose interests were conditioned by the political regime in communist Romania. For example, Paul Schuster’s two-volume novel *Fünf Liter Zuika* published in 1961 and 1965, respectively, represents a mélange of *Bildungs*-, *Familien*-, and *Zeitroman* written in a

⁵⁷ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 113.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Manolescu, “Introduction,” xi.

⁶¹ Ibid.

dialect-colored language, which unveils in a fragmented and ironic manner the hopeless perspective of twentieth-century Transylvanian Saxons.⁶²

Two movements distinguished themselves in German-Romanian literature of the late 1960s, reflecting the authors' firm belief in the autonomy of culture, the reconnection with pre-war literary traditions, and their strong affinity to modern forms of expression and experimentation with language.⁶³ Oskar Pastior (1927-2006) and Dieter Schlesak (b. 1934) made their literary debut with collections of poems: the first with *Offene Worte* (1965) and the latter with *Grenzstreifen* (1968). Both volumes reflected the new political liberalization and the hopes that were attached to it. Yet, both Pastior and Schlesak left Romania during this period of moderate liberalization (Pastior in 1968 and Schlesak in 1969) and resettled in West Germany. The 2006-winner of the prestigious Büchner Prize, Pastior has been highly praised for his experimental, sound-based, and pun-rich poetry. He and Schlesak consistently translated Romanian poetry into German. Like most German-Romanian authors who emigrated, Pastior and Schlesak became acclaimed mediators of Romanian culture and literature in German-speaking countries.⁶⁴

In the late 1960s, a relatively homogenous "Generationsgruppe" of German-Romanian authors started to emerge. Representatives of this group were Frieder Schuller, Joachim Wittstock, Franz Hodjak, Gerhard Eike, Rolf Marmont, and Bernard Kolf. These writers were close in age and had a similar literary style that focused almost exclusively on modernism.⁶⁵ They discussed *Heimatliteratur*, the dominant genre in German-Romanian literature at the time, and focused on *Bildungsdichtung*, which was especially

⁶² Motzan, "Die vielen Wege in den Abschied," 113.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 112.

⁶⁵ Csejka, "Über den Anfang," 19.

present in poetry.⁶⁶ Furthermore, these authors strived to dialogue with Western literary trends and developments of the time. They also focused more on the readers' interests and tapped less into personal experiences. Aphorisms, paradoxes, and word-play were employed to expose and deconstruct idealized language, clichés, and prejudice that characterized *Heimatliteratur*, which was upheld as a constitutive part of the German cultural identity of German ethnic minorities. However, writing was now not a matter of surrendering to personal emotions, but offered the possibility of experimenting with language.

Following his visit to China and North Korea in 1971, Ceaușescu made public his ill-famed “July Theses” intended to “revolutionize” Romanian culture by reintroducing Stalinist precepts, communist dogma, and Socialist Realism. Although presented in terms of “Socialist Humanism,” Ceaușescu’s theses in fact marked a return to the strict guidelines of Socialist Realism and attacks on non-compliant intellectuals. Due to the vehement protest of several leading Romanian writers (among them Zaharia Stancu, Eugen Jebeleanu, A. E. Bakonsky), the “July Theses” were not completely implemented. In an attempt to gain the approval of the intellectuals, Ceaușescu turned to an exaggerated form of nationalism (which the Party later crystallized into nationalist communism) and Protochronism, despite the fact that these were in clear contradiction with classical communism. In addition, Ceaușescu attempted to “regulate ideologically all forms of

⁶⁶ Data concerning the literature written by the “Generationsgruppe” emerged in the 1960s discussed in this paragraph come from: Motzan, “Überlegungen zu einer Geschichte der rumäniendeutschen Lyrik nach 1945,” *Neue Literatur* 3 (1973): 83.

intellectual and cultural activity” by imposing, along with his obsessive cult of personality, the diversionist myth of the endangered but proud motherland.⁶⁷

The end of cultural liberalization was signaled in German-Romanian literature by Anemone Latzina’s (1942-93) debut volume of poems *Was man heute so dichten kann* (1971), [“what one can write today”], which was published despite its suggestive title and its critical explorations of day-to-day social realities in communist Romania.⁶⁸ Latzina’s poems, which encapsulate her discontent with the regime’s curtailing of the individual’s freedom and rights, had an impressive echo on the writers of her time especially on the generation of writers who came to the fore throughout the seventies. Csejka describes this group as an almost homogeneous generation since all authors were born between 1945 and 1955.⁶⁹ These writers did not feel the burden of the *Kollektivschuld* charged against their parents, neither did they experience living and writing in a non-communist country. Urbanization, access to university education, the Vietnam War, the hippy movement, and rock-n-roll music significantly influenced their literary works.

The German-Romanian literature that was published in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s succeeded in carving out a distinctive place of its own between an obsolete regional literature and sterile Socialist Realism. By successfully tackling a variety of literary genres ranging from literary models of the early 1900s to concrete poetry, this literature became known, albeit for a short period of time, as “the fifth German literature,” after that of West Germany, East German, Austria, and Switzerland.

⁶⁷ Negrici, *Literature and Propaganda in Communist Romania*, 94, 93. Negrici suggests that the birth of this myth is owed to the “deepening of the resentment of those equal in poverty and origins against those different by extraction and wealth” (*Literature and Propaganda* 93).

⁶⁸ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 114.

⁶⁹ Neau, “Zur Problematik des ‘Ortswechsels’ bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren,” 130.

⁷⁰ Both Dieter Schlesak and Gerhardt Csejka criticized this categorization. While Schlesak drew attention to the provincial character of this literature,⁷¹ Csejka remarked that it lacked the necessary autonomy to be perceived as *distinguished from* and not *attached to* both German and Romanian literatures.⁷²

Some of the defining characteristics of this literature encompassed simple narrative techniques, such as anecdotes or parables; documentary style was mixed with grotesque fantasy, and flashbacks and alternation of narrative perspective as well as essayistic insertion created a mosaic-like *mélange* of texts and discourses.⁷³ Peter Motzan discusses these writing strategies as examples of classical modernity “im Großformat” that documented “eine Gleichzeitigkeit der Ungleichzeitigen auf kleinem Raum.”⁷⁴ During this period, East German literature started to be received with a growing interest since, up to a point, it shared two common traits with the literature in German published in Romania: the language and the Marxist-Leninist socialist order. Like many GDR authors, the generation of the “selbstbewußte Newcomer,” as Motzan calls the rising generation of authors of the late 1960s and early 1970s, German-Romanian authors aimed to use literature to question reality and to widen the narrow political and cultural horizon of their time.⁷⁵ In this atmosphere, a group of writers started to emerge at the

⁷⁰ Neau, “Zur Problematik des ‘Ortswechsels’ bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren,” 130. See also Franz Heinz, “Eingeständnisse über eine Ankunfts-literatur. Die Aussiedler-Autoren und ihre westliche Ernüchterung,” in *Die seibenbürgisch-deutsche Literatur als Beispiel einer Regionalliteratur*, ed. Anton Schwob and Brigitte Tontsch (Köln: Böhlau, 1993), 73; Schlesak, Dieter and Wolf Peter Schnetz, eds. *Grenzgänge. Deutsche Dichtung aus Rumänien* (Regensburg: Mittelbayerische Druckerei- und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1969), 5; and Johann Wolf, “Zu den sprachlichen Voraussetzungen der deutschsprachigen Literatur im rumänischen Sprachraum,” *Neuer Weg* (1977): 8892-98, (1978): 8908-15.

⁷¹ Schlesak and Schnetz, eds., *Grenzgänge*, 5.

⁷² Helmut Lehrer, “Der Mut zur Unfertigkeit. Interview mit Gerhardt Csejka,” in *Reflexe II*, ed. Emmerich Reichrath (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1984), 21, my emphases.

⁷³ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 114.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Motzan, “Die vielen Wege in den Abschied,” 114. See also Stiehler, *Paul Celan, Oscar Walter Cisek und die deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur Rumäniens*, 144.

University of Timișoara, in the Banat. Several of them formed the literary and political group *Aktionsgruppe Banat*, which, although short-lived (1972-75), had long-lasting influence on future generations of both German-Romanian and Romanian writers. It is estimated that between 1969 and 1971 about thirty authors made their literary debut in Romania, including the members of the *Aktiongruppe Banat*. This literary group shaped the literary development of both Richard Wagner and Herta Müller. While Wagner was one of the founding members of this literary circle, Müller had close ties with the group, her writings being considered a product of its intense literary activity.

Aktionsgruppe Banat: “Eine Minderheit in der Minderheit”

The literary circle known as *Aktiongruppe Banat* was founded in April 1972 in Timișoara⁷⁶ by authors William Totok (b. 1951), Werner Kremm (b. 1951), Johann Lippet (b. 1951), Richard Wagner (b. 1952), Rolf Bossert (1952-86), Gerhard Ortinau (b. 1953), Ernest Wichner (b. 1952), Anton Sterbling (b. 1953), and Albert Bohn (b. 1955).

⁷⁶ One of the leading multicultural and ethnically diverse cities, Timișoara became known for its politics of recognition of minorities. Besides Romanians and Banat Swabians, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Italians, and Roma lived in this city, which has always been “oriented toward a plural community life” (Neumann 43). Located in Western Romania at the borders with Hungary and former Yugoslavia, Timișoara, which was often called “Little Vienna,” witnessed cultural, economic, and political exchanges with the West. Many who fled the country during Ceaușescu’s regime crossed the border via Timișoara into Yugoslavia and then left either for Italy or for Turkey. Flea markets were stocked with goods coming not only from Hungary and Yugoslavia, but also from Austria, Germany, and Italy. In a time when only two Romanian TV channels broadcast only two hours per day offering programs and shows that were primarily praising the achievements of the “beloved” *conducător* (leader), i.e. Ceaușescu, Timișoara could intercept with self-manufactured antennas several Western radio and TV channels. Ceaușescu visited Timișoara only once and was unenthusiastically received. Timișoara was also the place where the first spark that led to toppling of Ceaușescu and his regime ignited as a result of the joined protest of Romanians and Hungarians. The small group formed by the members of a Reformed Hungarian church had initially taken to the streets and surrounded the house of their pastor, Lázló Tókes, to show their solidarity with their pastor, who, due to his open protest against Ceaușescu’s regime (he was particularly vocal about the destruction of Transylvanian villages), he was under house arrest from December 1-15, 1989 and was going to be evacuated. When Romanians joined the Hungarians, they all shouted anti-communist slogans requesting freedom. This rally quickly turned into an anti-communist demonstration that spread rapidly throughout Timișoara. Despite Ceaușescu’s harsh condemnation of the uprising as hooliganism and the sustained repression efforts of the military and the *Securitate*, the protest could not be stopped. On the contrary, it spread throughout the country leading to the toppling of Ceaușescu and of his regime.

They all studied *Germanistik* at the University of Timișoara. Bucharest-based poet Rolf Bossert was a corresponding member of the group.

The group owes its name to critic Horst Weber, who, in an article published on May 14, 1972, in *Neue Banater Zeitung*, described the young authors as an “Aktionsgruppe,” a label that was quickly adopted.⁷⁷ The *Aktionsgruppe* was the only literary circle formed and led by German authors. It was known for its remarkable teamwork, solidarity, and especially for its political *engagement*, which distinguished the group from other literary circles that were active at the time in Romania. The group’s aesthetics was characterized by critic Walter Fromm as “engagierte Subjektivität.”⁷⁸ Rejecting the idea that literature had an exclusively autonomous-aesthetic function, writers of *engagement literature* focused on promoting the socio-political function of literature. The *Aktionsgruppe* strived to establish a new rapport between art/author and the historical, social, and political reality by breaking off with the established literary tradition and by openly voicing its criticism against Ceaușescu’s regime. In its attempt to enter into a dialogue with the reader and critically evaluate socialist culture, the *Aktionsgruppe* replaced the abstract, impersonal *engagement* required by official ideology, with a commitment that emphasized precise observation of everyday reality, and replaced the perspective of the masses with that of the individual.

The *Aktionsgruppe Banat* played a decisive role in the development of the opposition against the totalitarian system. Richard Wagner describes the political orientation of the group as “western Marxism,” which was based on the ideas and theses

⁷⁷ Mircea M. Pop, “Din nou despre ‘Grupa de acțiune Banat’ și despre Herta Müller,” *Poesis* 16 January 2010, 1 March 2009 <<http://www.informatia-zilei.ro/pdf/suplimente/poesiscelmainou.pdf>>.

⁷⁸ Walter Fromm, “Vom Gebrauchtwert zur Besinnlichkeit,” *Die Woche*, 26 January 1979, 3.

of the Frankfurt School.⁷⁹ Their texts were published in periodicals in the cities of Timișoara, Brașov, Sibiu, Cluj and Bucharest. Since the group members were close in age, well educated, and informed about political, social, and cultural concerns both inside and outside of Romania, and because they shared similar ideological and poetological views, they brought a distinctive national dimension to an otherwise marginal German-Romanian literature.⁸⁰

Employing literature as a tool of aesthetic resistance against Ceaușescu's regime and by criticizing the antiquated Banat-Swabian *Regionalliteratur*, especially its ethnocentrism, the *Aktionsgruppe* became a "minority within the minority" ("eine Minderheit in der Minderheit") as Richard Wagner put it.⁸¹ As a consequence, the group became the object of harsh criticism by the communist regime and the Banat-Swabian community.

The *Aktionsgruppe* was also influenced by the writings of Bertolt Brecht, Franz Kafka, Paul Celan, Walter Benjamin, Heinz Kahlau, Sarah and Rainer Kirsch, Volker Braun, Jens Gerlach, Johannes Bobrowski, Helmut Heißenbüttel, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, *Wiener Gruppe*, *Gruppe 47*, and *Dortmunder Gruppe 61*. Poets of the Beat generation (especially its pacifism), and rock-n-roll music, to which the group members had access through the German and English mass media (most of the members spoke English), also had an impact on the group. Finally, its critique was sharpened by theories developed by the Frankfurt School. Discussions of the group centered also on Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Alexander Dubček, Ulrike Meinhof, student movements in Germany, critique of

⁷⁹ Neau, "Zur Problematik des 'Ortswechsels' bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren," 130.

⁸⁰ Motzan, "'Denn Bleiben ist nirgends.' Der Lyriker Werner Söllner im Kontext seiner Generation," *Gesellschaft der Germanisten Rumäniens* 16 January 2008, 10 March 2008 <<http://www.e-scoala.ro/germana/petermotzan26.html>>.

⁸¹ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 298.

capitalism, consumerism, and the Vietnam War. Ernest Wichner, one of the members of the *Aktionsgruppe*, recalls that, while he was interrogated by the *Securitate*, the latter labeled the literary group the “Baader-Meinhof gang.”⁸²

The *Aktionsgruppe* and those who attended the readings and meetings it organized were exposed to Western literary trends of the time such as concrete poetry and surrealism. Unlike many who protested against Ceaușescu’s regime by turning to Western capitalist models for counsel and refuge, this group of authors, while it denounced the character of Ceaușescu’s nationalist communism, still upheld Marxist principles aspiring for a form of what Richard Wagner calls a “socialism with a human countenance” (“Sozialismus mit menschlichem Antlitz”) and for a literature that would reflect everyday issues.⁸³

The preferred literary genres of the group were: concrete poetry, the short story, the essay, and text and group montages. Deconstruction, self-irony, surrealist and grotesque hyperbolic images, interchange of narrative perspectives, ranging from past and present accounts to improbable and impossible scenarios are some of the main writing techniques that the *Aktionsgruppe* experimented with. The focus of the group’s texts was not on expressing emotions; instead, it was on experimenting and playing with language in order to make the text a teaching tool. Established orthographic and syntactic rules were ignored to the point that the reality it described became “de-grammatized” (“entgrammatisiert”). For example, nouns were written in the lower-case, punctuation

⁸² Ernest Wichner, *Ein Pronomen ist verhaftet worden* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), 10.

⁸³ Richard Wagner, “Die Aktionsgruppe Banat,” in *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, ed. Wilhelm Solms (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990), 122.

norms were abandoned, and sentences were short and concise.⁸⁴ Another distinct feature of the members of the *Aktionsgruppe* was to collectively write texts. A representative example in this sense is the poem “Engagement.” Used as the opening reading at many group meetings, the poem became the group’s manifesto:

bist engagiert
ja
bin engagiert
ja ja
sehr engagiert
bist auch engagiert
ja
bin auch engagiert
sehr engagiert
ja ja
will aber nicht mehr engagiert sein
bin schon zu lang engagiert gewesen
will auch nicht mehr engagiert sein
bin auch schon lange engagiert gewesen
ja
mit dir da
mit dir da auch
bin nicht mehr engagiert ja
bin nicht mehr engagiert auch
ja ja
ja ja auch
doch wer einmal engagiert war
der wird engagiert bleiben immer
ja
ja ja.⁸⁵

The poem’s avant-gardist structure and content is evident in the dialogue format, the repetition of “ja” that confers a certain beat and musicality to the poem, and the absence of any punctuation.

⁸⁴ Roxana Nubert, “Rumäniendeutsche Literatur in der Zeit der Diktatur. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der frühen 70er Jahre,” *TRANS. Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 13.May 2002, 13 August 2006 <<http://www.inst.at/trans/13Nr/nubert13.htm>>.

⁸⁵ William Totok, *Die Zwänge der Erinnerung. Aufzeichnungen aus Rumänien* (Hamburg: Junius 1988), 73-74.

A type of montage practiced by the *Aktionsgruppe* is illustrated in the poem “Wir,” which was put together from fragments of poems by Albert Bohn, Johann Lippet, Gerhard Ortinau, William Totok, Richard Wagner, and Ernest Wichner. In a laconic, matter-of-fact style, the poem recounts the clash between two generations of poets, the “jungdichter” and the “altdichter,” and the two opposing value systems they represent, reflected by the adjectives “klein” and “groß.” Conspicuous are several innovative features including the unconventional writing of nouns in the lower case, the Germanized English verb “to kill,” and the repetition of a very basic syntactic pattern: subject, verb, and object.

der kleindichter hat den großdichter gekillt
 den großdichter hat sein ruhm in verdacht gebracht
 der jungdichter hat den altdichter zu tode beleidigt
 der altdichter hat den jungdichter verräter genannt.⁸⁶

Breaking off with tradition also meant poking fun at both the idiosyncrasies of the Banat-Swabian community and the provincial character of its *Heimatliteratur*. To this end, the *Aktiongruppe* employed Swabian dialect in their texts and mocked Swabian proverbs and sayings by using them literally. The group also deconstructed the idealized image of the Swabian village and criticized the Banat Swabians for their ethnocentrism, conservative and patriarchal norms, and collaboration with Nazi Germany.⁸⁷

The body of texts that the members of the *Aktionsgruppe* wrote developed the characteristics of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have called a “minor literature,” which include: “the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a

⁸⁶ Wichner, *Ein Pronomen ist verhaftet worden*, 136.

⁸⁷ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 116.

political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of the enunciation.”⁸⁸ Because in their texts the *Aktionsgruppe* authors subverted syntactic norms and experimented with language, played with phrases, altered meanings, and employed Germanized English terms, they “deterritorialized” the German language, which, as an *Inseldeutsch*, was deterritorialized to begin with.⁸⁹ Further, the overtly political nature of this literature is self-evident given its criticism of both Ceaușescu’s dictatorship and of Banat-Swabian culture and the ethnocentric politics. Due to the fact that the deterritorialized language was employed collectively and that many texts were the result of collaborations among the group’s members, the literature produced by the *Aktionsgruppe* constituted a “collective assemblage of enunciation.”⁹⁰ Yet this literature was, as Richard Wagner remarks, the expression of a minority within a minority, and not representative of the entire ethnic minority.⁹¹ However, thanks to its “blend of the aesthetic and the political” and “anti-identitarian, open-ended politics of becoming,” it succeeded, albeit for a short period of time, in deterritorializing relations of power, inducing “becomings,” and generating “possibilities for collective self-invention.”⁹²

The *Aktionsgruppe* was dissolved in October 1975, after Richard Wagner, Gerhard Ortinau, William Totok, and the critic Gerhardt Csejka, who was the most ardent supporter of the *Aktiongruppe*, were accused of alleged subversive activities against the communist regime. They were brutally interrogated by the *Securitate*, their apartments

⁸⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “What is a Minor Literature?” in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986), 18.

⁸⁹ For a detailed discussion on the features of a “deterritorialized” language see Roland Bogue, “The Minor,” in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles J. Stivale (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2005), 110-20. See particularly pp. 111-12.

⁹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, “What is a Minor Literature?” 18.

⁹¹ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 298.

⁹² Ronald Bogue, “The Minor,” in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles J. Stivale (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 2005), 119.

were ransacked, and their phones tapped. All were sentenced to jail.⁹³ William Totok served eight months in prison and the others lost their jobs or were relocated to small villages and banned from publishing. After the brutal dissolution of the *Aktionsgruppe*, the incongruities between Marxist ideals and Ceaușescu's socialism, which culminated in an era of terror and totalitarianism spurred by the dictator's nationalist communism and his personality cult, one by one, all the members of the *Aktionsgruppe* immigrated to West Germany. Before he left Romania in 1987, Richard Wagner became part of the Timișoara-based literary circle *Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn*, a group that was approved by the authorities. After leading this group from 1981 to 1982, Wagner left it in 1983 along with other writers when interference by the *Securitate* became unbearable.

Despite the short-lived existence of the *Aktionsgruppe*, its impressive literary activity was comparable to a certain extent to that of renowned literary circles like *Gruppe 47* and the *Wiener Gruppe*. Drawing a parallel between the *Aktionsgruppe* and the *Wiener Gruppe* (1946-64), critic Diana Schuster concludes that both groups shared several features: both staged readings with text montages in the form of “happenings”; both perceived themselves as “outsiders,” nonconformist, avant-garde movements; both protested openly against the established social order of the day and the backwardness of the readers and of the editors; and both had a tendency to use dialect in their writings—not in the conventional vein of perpetuating regional tradition, but rather in an attempt to break away from it.⁹⁴

The similarities between the *Aktionsgruppe* and the *Gruppe 47*, according to Roxana Nubert, consist of two major features. First, the texts produced by both groups

⁹³ Wagner, “Die Aktionsgruppe Banat,” 125.

⁹⁴ Diana Schuster, *Die Banater Autorengruppe: Selbstdarstellung und Rezeption in Rumänien und Deutschland* (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 2004), 58.

are representative examples of *Kahlschlag*; second, a high priority for the members of both groups was to cleanse the language of the bombastic constructions and clichéd phrases and terms used by the Nazi propaganda, in the case of *Gruppe 47*, and by Ceaușescu's nomenclature in communist Romania, in the case of the *Aktionsgruppe*.⁹⁵ Diana Schuster points, however, to a major difference between these two literary groups, namely their motivation. Initially, the *Gruppe 47* was politically orientated and strove to "clean up" language in the hope of social renewal. In time, the group abandoned its political agenda almost entirely, opting to form a completely depoliticized literary elite. The *Aktionsgruppe*, by contrast, was consistent until its dissolution in its attempt to produce a politically-motivated literature. One should not forget, though, that the *Aktionsgruppe* was extremely short-lived, which likely contributed to its maintaining a consistent agenda.

The *Aktionsgruppe* had a long-lasting influence not only on the development of German-Romanian but also upon Romanian literature in communist Romania. The solidarity demonstrated by its members during their interrogations by the *Securitate* was exemplary and inspired many young Romanian writers and artists. The texts of this literary group were commended by Romanian authors for their clarity of style, innovative use of vocabulary, poignant irony, and bold criticism.

The 1982 publication of the collection *Vînt potrivit pînă la tare*, which included translated poems in Romanian by authors who were members of, or associated with, the *Aktionsgruppe*, such as Anemone Latzina, Franz Hodjak, William Totok, Johann Lippet, Rolf Bossert, Richard Wagner, Horst Samson, Werner Söllner, Helmut Seiler, and Helmut Britz, was particularly well received by Romanian authors of the time and had a

⁹⁵ Nubert, "Rumäniendeutsche Literatur in der Zeit der Diktatur," n.pag.

long-lasting impact on Romanian literary criticism. Critic Ion Bogdan Lefter notes that this anthology is still taught today at the University of Bucharest.⁹⁶ Prominent contemporary Romanian writers such as Mircea Cărtărescu, Mariana Marin, Ion Bogdan Lefter, Dan Petrescu, Nora Iuga, and Caius Dobrescu admired the group for its perception of literature both as art and as a socio-political venue used to expose and protest against Ceaușescu's regime. Petru Ilieșu—one of the best-known and appreciated poets of the 1980s—was also influenced by the ideas of the *Aktionsgruppe*. His outlook, which was shared by other authors of his generation, was fed by his contact with the world of music, especially Western rock music. In 1982 Ilieșu conceived a protest manifesto against Ceaușescu's regime that included such slogans as: "Down with the criminal Ceaușescu!" and "Down with the Communist Party!," which poet Alexandru Gavrilu also used. Soon after he went public with his protest, Ilieșu was arrested. He was questioned and later set free through the intervention of Nikolaus Berwanger, the ex-editor-in-chief of the *Neue Banater Zeitung*. Once more, the population could see that despite the subservience demanded by the communist regime, open protest was possible.

The *Aktiongruppe* is often mistakenly considered as representative of the German-Romanian literary scene of the 1970s. Yet, there were other ethnic German authors who were actively involved in writing and publishing. Although compared to the *Aktionsgruppe Banat*, Transylvanian-Saxon writers such as Frieder Schuller (b. 1942), Rolf Frieder Marmont (b. 1944), Franz Hodjak (b. 1944), Bernd Kolf (b. 1944), Werner Söllner (b. 1951), and Klaus Hensel (b. 1954) were less caustic, they also broke with tradition. At the same time, these writers still adhered to the idea that poetry has a certain

⁹⁶ Ion Bogdan Lefter, "O 'provocare': Grupul de Actiune Banat," *Observator cultural* 209 Feb. 2004, 24 July 2010 <http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Ernest-Wichner-poet-german-din-Romania*articleID_10283-articles_details.html>.

“aura,” and in their texts they mostly cultivated a broad spectrum of established composition techniques.⁹⁷

The Preeminence of Poetry in Modern German-Romanian Literature: 1965-1989

Among the literary genres employed by German-Romanian authors between 1965 and 1989, poetry was the preferred one. Curiously, drama was a genre that was not tackled at all. When asked about the reasons that led to the preeminence of poetry, authors such as Herta Müller, Richard Wagner, William Totok, Gerhardt Csejka, Werner Söllner, Alfred Kittner, and Dieter Schlesak cited as causes of this phenomenon: the absence of a “living” (“lebendig”) German,⁹⁸ the problem of transposing into prose or drama the day-to-day life of the German minority immersed in the Romanian language and culture, and the fact that, unlike novels, short stories, and drama, poetry often escaped censorship since political messages were more easily encoded in poetry, using metaphors, similes, or allegories.⁹⁹ One problem with some of the novels and short stories published at the time lies in the “flatness” of the language, as Csejka suggests. For example, Hodjak employs a type of German in his prose that would have been more fitting in West Germany or in East Germany but not in Transylvania, where the plots are set.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Gerhardt Csejka argues that the dialogues in Hodjak’s prose sound artificial, since they are not representative of the language spoken by the German minority. Still, there were also notable exceptions. For example, Arnold Hauser’s 1972 novel *Der fragwürdige Bericht*

⁹⁷ Motzan, “Rumäniendeutsche Lyrik der siebziger bis neunziger Jahre,” in *Deutschsprachige Lyrik des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Ursula Heukenkamp and Peter Geist (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2007), 732-47.

⁹⁸ Richard Wagner remarks that the German language that the 1960s German-Romanian authors found themselves in the possession of was an antiquated written language that many critics labeled as “Konservensprache.” See Wagner, “Der Spiegel der Identität einer Minderheit ist ihre Sprache,” 108.

⁹⁹ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 299-305.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 307.

Jakob Bühlmanns was well received in Romania and abroad (in Austria in 1972, and in East Germany in 1974).

The Banat Swabians and the Transylvanian Saxons spoke a dialect or a mixture of dialects and Romanian at home and with friends as well as on the job and in official transactions. *Hochdeutsch* was used in German schools, newspapers and journals as well as at church, and during the one-hour weekly German TV program. Like the *Hochdeutsch* spoken at the beginning of the century, this type of *Hochdeutsch* was based on the German from Luther's Bible, but it was also influenced by East German (and a small number of West German) books and films that people had access to. Although authors wrote primarily in this type of *Hochdeutsch*, they also used Swabian and Transylvanian German dialect, as well as Romanian. Clearly, the nature of the culture and language of the German minority was hybrid: neither purely German (as practiced in German-speaking countries) nor Romanian but a mixture of both that in time formed the German-Romanian (*rumäniendeutsch*) identity. This use of *rumäniendeutsch* is different, though, in nature and scope than the one promoted by the communist regime. I will explore this further in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this study.

1980-1989: The Last Decade of German-Romanian Literature?

Imposing a nationalist, populist communism, Ceaușescu transformed his leadership in the 1980s into a tyrannical dictatorship that culminated in an erratic personality cult. He continued to strengthen his personal power by nurturing the myth of the endangered motherland in need of a savior, by speculating on his subjects' patriotic feelings, promoting a xenophobic communism, and by isolating Romania from the rest of the

world.¹⁰¹ He also impoverished the population, depriving it of food and electricity, which he sold to foreign lenders in order to pay off Romania's national debt.¹⁰²

The Ceaușescu regime practiced a hostile form of politics against minorities that, coupled with the disastrous economy, prompted many to apply for exit visas or to flee the country. Among these, ethnic Germans were the most numerous. The small number of readers of German who would be comfortable reading literature in *Hochdeutsch* was diminished considerably by massive emigration. This deepened the “chronic identity crisis” of German-Romanian literature which from its beginnings struggled with its identity and the fundamental question: who reads this literature? Surprisingly though, this literature was enthusiastically received in the GDR. Letters sent from East Germany to the editors of *Neue Literatur*, the literary journal in which many German-Romanian authors published, indicate that the journal was used as a reader in numerous GDR schools.¹⁰³

Ironically, the bleak 1980-1989 decade was one of the most flourishing periods of German-Romanian literature. Writers focused on examining identity loss, resignation, helplessness, the absurd, paradox, life in a politically suffocating atmosphere, lack of hope and perspective, departure and death. Authors like Richard Wagner, Herta Müller, Franz Hodjak, and Werner Söllner centered on subjective perception, intuitive observation, and radical introspection. While reflecting the fragmentation of life and the

¹⁰¹ Negrici, *Literature and Propaganda in Communist Romania*, 71-80.

¹⁰² Ceaușescu's regime succeeded in paying off the national debt of 21 billion dollar that Romania had acquired from foreign lenders by selling them food and electricity and by stopping the import of goods such as coffee, cigarettes, and medicine manufactured in the West. Under these circumstances, the Romanian people experienced hard years of shortages which lead to deep poverty and rampant diseases. See Anca L. Holden, “Liminality, Hybridity, and the Aesthetic of Experimentation with Language,” in *Bodies and Representations*. ed. Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru, Madalina Nicolaescu, and Helen Smith, *Women's Voices in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, vol. 2 (București: Editura Universității, 2006), 113, footnote 14.

¹⁰³ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 309.

prevailing political, cultural, and economic oppression, the labyrinth-like narratives and the poems that resemble authentic shorthand reports fascinate through their modernity and high aesthetic quality. Feelings of anger, doubt, cynicism, sarcasm, a grim sense of humor, and frustration dominate German-Romanian literature of this period. Disgusted with the rampant economic and political miseries and frustrated that their resistance through literature and their anti-Ceaușescu protest activities were unable to bring about changes in Romania, one by one German-Romanian authors left Romania for West Germany. Almost an entire generation of German-Romanian authors left Romania at the time, including: Herta Müller, Karin Gündisch, Richard Wagner, Hans Lippert, Helmuth Frauendorfer, Rolf Bossert, Werner Söllner, and William Totok. By 1989, Anemone Latzina, Franz Hodjak, Joachim Wittstock, and Roland Kirsch (who died in 1989 in circumstances that to this day remain mysterious) were the only renowned German-Romanian authors still living in Romania. While Hodjak left Romania in 1992 and resettled in West Germany, Joachim Wittstock continues to live and write in Bucharest.

The premise of a 1989 literary conference held in Marburg suggestively titled *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur* that featured authors Herta Müller, Richard Wagner, William Totok, Werner Söllner, Alfred Kittner, and Dieter Schlesak, and literary critic Gerhardt Csejka, was that German-Romanian literature has ceased to exist after all its major representatives had left Romania.¹⁰⁴ The same argument is made by Christina Tudorică in her 1997 book *Rumäniendeutsche Literatur (1970–1990). Die letzte Epoche einer Minderheitenliteratur*. Tudorică's book and the conference and its proceedings that were published as a book with the same title in 1990 stirred much controversy. Arguing

¹⁰⁴ The proceedings of this conference have been published in a book format under the title *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, ed. Wilhelm Solms (Marburg: Hitzeroth 1990).

against the idea of the death of German-Romanian literature, Transylvanian-Saxon-Romanian writer Wolf von Aichelburg insisted that the claim was based on the fact that German-Romanian literature is often mistakenly equated with that of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat*.

The answer to the question whether the German-Romanian literature has come to an end or not is complex and it varies depending on the angle from which the question is posed. In view of the fact that Bucharest-based Joachim Wittstock (b. 1938), Eginald Schlattner (b. 1933),¹⁰⁵ who lives in Rothberg, Transylvania, and Dr. Carmen Puchianu (b. 1956), professor of literature at the University of Braşov, are the only notable German-Romanian writers who currently live and write in Romania, German-Romanian literature produced in Romania is barely alive. However, since the writings of most German-Romanian authors now living in Germany focus mainly on issues and problems that the German minority faces both in Romania and in Germany, German-Romanian literature is alive and well.

¹⁰⁵ Schlattner published his first book *Der geköpfte Hahn* in 1998 at the age of 65 followed by *Rote Handschuhe* in 2000 and *Das Klavier im Nebel* in 2005.

CHAPTER 3

GERMAN-ROMANIAN AUTHORS AND THE QUESTION OF “GERMANNESS” OF CONTEMPORARY GERMAN LITERATURE

Because of their German heritage, political experience with the communist regime, and their status as *Aussiedler* in Germany, German-Romanian immigrants and their literature occupy a unique position in contemporary German society and culture. Along with enclaves, colonies, and diasporic communities of German speakers in Central and Eastern Europe and around the globe, the cultures developed by ethnic Germans in Transylvania, the Banat, and Bukovina challenge the nation-state as the basis of German nationalism and confirm the historical importance of cultural definitions of “Germanness” over biological, territorial, and state-centered concepts.¹ The enduring cultural tropes that form the basis for German ethnic and national identity make the history of ethnic Germans influential in the current German debate over immigration.²

Shortly after German-Romanian writers arrived in the 1980s in West Germany, where they expected to be received as “Germans,” they discovered that they were considered *Aussiedler* (or *Spätaussiedler*) and often taken for Romanians or foreigners.³ German language, which identified them as “Germans” in Romania and justified their immigration to Germany, made them as much outsiders in Germany as they had been in

¹ O'Donnell et al., eds., “Introduction,” 9. See also Judson, “When is a Diaspora not a Diaspora? Rethinking Nation-Centered Narratives about Germans in Habsburg East Central Europe,” 219-47.

² O'Donnell et al., eds., “Introduction,” 12.

³ In an interview from 1997, Wagner explains that many ethnic German immigrants suffer from the fact “daß sie in Deutschland nicht als Deutsche annerkannt werden.” Qtd. in Rock, “A German Comes Home to Germany,” 60.

Romania. Moreover, German immigration authorities probed and disputed whether they were entitled to “German identity” and German citizenship. While in Romania, they believed that their works written in German were part of German literature; in Germany, however, the texts they published, some to high critical acclaim, were often considered a special category of “migration literature,” known as *Migrationsliteratur* or *Migrantenliteratur*, which was primarily authored by guest workers and their descendents as well as by Afro-German writers and a growing number of political exiles and refugees and other types of immigrants.⁴

Until recently, migration literature has been viewed as “a newcomer at best, and at worst, as a tag-along to so-called ‘real’ German literature.”⁵ Yet an increasing number of critics argue that both literature in German by ethnic German authors and *Migrationsliteratur* should be considered as examples of the “range of German literature.”⁶ By interrogating “often unexamined notions of national identity, ethnicity, and race underlying nationally defined structures such as ‘German literature’ and the exclusions they imply,” both *Migrationsliteratur* and literature by ethnic German authors counter “the notion of German as a unitary category” calling for a reevaluation and redefinition of the “Germanness” of contemporary German literature and German cultural

⁴ Successful political refugees and exiles writers include the Czech-born German writer Ota Filip (b. 1930), the Iranian born German SAID (b. 1947) and Torkan Daneshfar-Pätzoldt (b. 1941) who publishes under the pen name TORKAN, Bulgarian-born Ilija Trojanow (b. 1965), Bosnian-German Saša Stanišić (b. 1978), and immigrants like the Hungarian-born Terézia Mora (b. 1971) and the Japanese-born Yoko Tawada (b. 1960) who publishes both in German and Japanese.

⁵ Marilya Veteto-Conrad, “‘Innere Unruhe’? Zehra Çirak and Minority Literature Today,” *Rocky Mountain Review* (Fall 1999): 61.

⁶ Angelika Bammer, “Interrogating Germanness: What’s Literature Got to Do with It?” *A User’s Guide to German Cultural Studies*, ed. Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997), 40.

identity.⁷ In recent years, rethinking German literature within intercultural, transnational, and transcultural frameworks that take into account literature written by authors of non-German background and ethnic German authors has been the focus of several studies on literary criticism⁸ and of a growing number of German programs and departments in Germany.⁹ These initiatives seek to redefine the “Germanness” of German cultural identity and literature.

In the following, I will present a brief history of the *Aussiedler* and analyze the process by which their “German identity” is established. Next, I will examine the “Sonderstatus” of German-Romanian authors as “Germans” and “political exiles” with particular focus on Herta Müller’s and Richard Wagner’s immigration experiences. Then, I will discuss some of the major challenges, especially those linked to their “mitgebrachte Sprache,” that German-Romanian authors faced after immigrating to West Germany. Next, I will look at the differences and similarities between German-Romanian writers and authors of *Migrationsliteratur*, which I will discuss in connection with two current cultural approaches to contemporary German literature: “interculturality” and “transculturality.” In closing, I will discuss the idea of the “third space” in recent German-Romanian literature, which I will examine in relation to the concept of cultural triangulation. The confluence of Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German languages

⁷ Bammer, “Interrogating Germanness,” 37. See also Hübner, “An Unmistakable Intercultural Diversity: Migrant Literature in Germany,” and Schenk et al., eds., “Vorwort,” vii-x, particularly p. vii.

⁸ Carmine Chiellino, ed., *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: J.B Metzler, 2000), Schenk, Klaus, Almut Todorow, and Milan Tvrđík, eds., *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne* (Tübingen: Francke, 2004), Alois Wierlacher and Andrea Bogner, eds., *Handbuch interkulturelle Germanistik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), and Nicole Colin, Joachim Umlauf, and Alain Lattard, eds., *Germanistik, eine europäische Wissenschaft? Der Bologna-Prozess als Herausforderung* (München: Iudicium, 2006).

⁹ At Bayreuth University there is a major titled “Interkulturelle Germanistik.” In 2007-2008 the Herder Institut in Leipzig ran a program on transcultural German studies. A chair for “Transkulturelle Germanistik” was recently established at the Technische Universität Dresden.

and cultures is a defining trait of the cultural identity of German-Romanian authors; while cultural triangulation is a central theme and one of the structural principles in Wagner's and Müller's works.

What Makes *Aussiedler* "German"?

With the exception of Oskar Pastior and Dieter Schlesak, who escaped Romania in the 1960s,¹⁰ contemporary German-Romanian literature is written by a group of authors who immigrated to West Germany during the 1970s and 1980s. If the majority of ethnic Germans envisioned immigrating to Germany as a "return" ("Rückkehr") to the land of their forefathers, German-Romanian writers did not entertain such hopes. Resettling in West Germany was for them a mere "change of locations" ("Ortswechsel") since they did not consider either Romania or Germany as their "zu Hause."¹¹ While in Romania, they always felt a distance between themselves and Romanian culture and nation. Richard Wagner, for example, explains that the only sense of belonging that he initially had was to the Banat-Swabian region and culture.¹² After he started to write and publish in German, he and other fellow German-Romanian authors developed an affinity with the German state.¹³ The idea of searching for the *Heimat* was not an ideal they pursued by immigrating to Germany, because, as one critic put it: "mit Übersiedlung nach Deutschland radikalisiert sich eigentlich die Grunderfahrung der existentiellen Heimatlosigkeit und der Fremdheit."¹⁴ By resettling in Germany, German-Romanian writers hoped that, unlike in communist Romania, they would be able to live and write

¹⁰ Pastior left Romania in 1968 and Schlesak in 1969.

¹¹ Neau, "Zur Problematik des 'Ortswechsels' bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren," 129.

¹² Rock, "A German Comes Home to Germany," 67.

¹³ Ibid., 55, 66.

¹⁴ Neau, "Zur Problematik des 'Ortswechsels' bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren," 141.

freely as Germans. Yet shortly after their arrival in Germany, they discovered that there was a significant discrepancy between their self-perception as “Germans” and the conceptualizations of “German identity” that the German state and society upheld. An exacerbating factor was that these writers perceived themselves as political exiles and refugees and not as *Aussiedler* (or *Spätaussiedler*) as the German state categorized them.

In the 1980s, unlike the majority of fellow ethnic Germans from Romania whose motivation to immigrate was based on family reunification (“*Familienzusammenführung*”), politically persecuted German-Romanian writers chose or were forced to immigrate. The German state did not distinguish between traditional ethnic German immigrants and ethnic German political exiles. Rather, it put them all into one category labeled: *Aussiedler*. A brief overview of the history of this category of immigrants in Germany and of the German immigration law will help explain, at least in part, the manner in which the German state treated German-Romanian writers after arriving in Germany and how they were perceived in German society.

Since the early 1950s and to this day, the German state considered ethnic Germans who immigrated to Germany as “privileged co-ethnic immigrants.”¹⁵ They came almost exclusively from Poland and Romania and, in the 1990s, from the former USSR and its successor states. In 1957 they were officially called re-settlers (*Aussiedler*) and entitled to the same status and access to benefits as post-war expellees.¹⁶ As privileged immigrants, their political and moral justification for admission to Germany is based on repressive measures (deportation, suppression of the German language, political

¹⁵ Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 265.

¹⁶ Rainer Ohliger and Rainer Münz, “Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants in Twentieth-Century Europe: A Comparative Perspective,” in *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel (sic!) and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 5 and Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 265.

and economic discrimination) that they were subjected to in their homelands.¹⁷ An additional argument in favor of the claim to the *Aussiedler* status was the fact that until 1989 all ethnic Germans of Central and Eastern Europe lived under communist rule.¹⁸ *Aussiedler* are entitled to become citizens and make use of a series of benefits designed to facilitate their integration, such as: the claim to a subsidized apartment, free German language courses, and courses of vocational and professional training.¹⁹ In addition, they have a claim to payments like public pensions for which most foreign immigrants would be ineligible.²⁰ Yet these benefits are conditional upon receiving the *Aussiedler* status, which, in turn, is contingent upon establishing the immigrants' "German identity." In 1992, the so-called "Law dealing with late consequences of the Second World War" (*Kriegsfolgenbereinigungsgesetz*) limited the option of future applications for *Aussiedler* status and subsequent entry to Germany to ethnic Germans born before 1993. This regulation will gain importance after 2010 when people born in 1993 reach the age of eighteen and will no longer have independent claim to *Aussiedler* status. Some of them, however, will still be able to immigrate legally to Germany within the framework of family unification.²¹

For several hundred of years "Germanness" was primarily defined in cultural terms.²² Germany's national self-image was that of a homogeneous, mono-cultural *Kulturnation*, in which German identity formation relied on distinct language, customs,

¹⁷ Münz, "Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany," 265.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 270.

²⁰ This is true even for those ethnic German immigrants who did not contribute to German pension insurance. See Hubert Heinelt and Anne Lohmann, *Immigranten im Wohlfahrtsstaat am Beispiel der Rechtspositionen und Lebensverhältnisse von Aussiedlern* (Opladen: Leske+Buderich, 1992).

²¹ Münz, "Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany," 270.

²² Wolff, "From Colonists to Emigrants," 3.

and traditions.²³ “Germanness” became politically significant only after the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1806. While for hundreds of years ethnocultural differences had neither been a problem nor a source of mobilization, with “the arrival of nationalism as a political ideology and the emergence of the nation-state as the primary principle of organizing people into political units,” ethnicity began to matter as “a factor in domestic and international relations.”²⁴

Along with the creation of nation-states in the nineteenth century, the demands or claims for territories, the question of “what or where is Germany?” became a matter of establishing “who was German.”²⁵ As a result of the implementation in 1866 of the *Kleindeutsche Lösung* that excluded multinational Austria in favor of a nation-state defined by ethnic and spatial homogeneity, the principle of blood lineage (*jus sanguinis*) became a key concept in German citizenship in the German Empire.²⁶ The blood principle was the basis of the 1913 *Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* (Citizenship

²³ In her article “For Want of a Word...: The Case for *Germanophone*,” Katherine Arens shows how Germany’s national identity emerged during the time of the Romantics in reaction to “the hegemony of French culture in the eighteenth century, around a German versus French dichotomy of political and social values framed in the *deutsche Klassik*.” See Katherine Arens, “For Want of a Word...: The Case for *Germanophone*,” *Die Unterrichtspraxis/ Teaching German* 32.2 (Autumn 1999): 131-32. The nineteenth-century construct of the history of the German nation as the *Land der Dichter und Denker* envisioned Germany’s national identity either as a transnational community of descent or as a *Kulturnation* which was best characterized by the ideals of high culture or *Bildung*. Great literary and cultural historians were largely responsible for setting a mono-cultural concept of national identity in “opposition to the national political situation,” because although Germany had a “tendency toward political fragmentation, its culture managed nonetheless to unify” (Arens 132-34). Whereas England and France defined themselves in terms of “political, social, and moral rights and responsibilities of their citizens and the institutions which support them,” Germany substituted political consciousness with a self-made cultural history, which, as Arens argues, is “considerably more ephemeral than governmental, religious, or economic organizations” (134). German literary historians (especially those in exile acting as historians of German-language literature) have used this “preferred national self-definition” to combat German history and provide a stable national image that stresses the “success of a rising bourgeoisie to assert its own identity in the face of French cultural and military colonization, and the self-revelation and propagation of that identity through high culture in particular” (Arens 131).

²⁴ Wolff, “From Colonists to Emigrants,” 3.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ David Abraham, “Constitutional Patriotism, Citizenship, and Belonging,” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 6.1 (2008): 146-7.

Act), which promulgated that only descendents of Germans could be German citizens.²⁷

The deliberate adoption of the *jus sanguinis* principle indicated that the new German nation-state wanted to promote and preserve an ethnic tradition as well as maintain links with ethnic Germans outside its political boundaries.²⁸ Consequently, the majority of ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe became members of a German diaspora.²⁹ Under the 1913 law, members of the German diaspora scattered around the globe could claim German citizenship by providing German lineage, even though their ancestors had left Central Europe centuries ago, as was the case with the Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians, for example.

In 1871, with the creation of the second German Empire, some twelve million German-speaking people, both ethnic Germans and Jews were citizens of the Habsburg and Tsarist empires.³⁰ However, the collapse of these two empires and the effects of the First World War turned some 6.5 million Germans from “members of the titular nation

²⁷ Wolff, “From Colonists to Emigrants,” 3.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 262. Azade Seyhan notes that the term *diaspora* has moved in current usage into a broadly conceived semantic realm. See Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, 11. Although it originally designated the forced dispersion of major religious and ethnic groups, such as the Jews and the Armenians, a dispersion “precipitated by a disaster often of a political nature,” in the modern age, greatly diversified exile and ethnic communities, expatriates, refugees, guest-workers, and other dispossessed groups sharing a common heritage have moved into the semantic domain of the term. See Gérard Chaliand and Jean Pierre Rageau, *The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas*, trans. A.M. Barrett (New York: Viking, 1995), xiv and Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, 11. Chaliand and Rageau remark that the term *diaspora* gets contested when applied to other religious, ethnic, or minority groups. In an attempt to define the larger context and modern uses of the term, they suggest in addition to forced dispersion to foreign regions, the following criteria that “constitute the specific fact of a diaspora: “the role played by *collective memory, which transmits both the historical facts that precipitated the dispersion and a cultural heritage (broadly understood)*—the latter being often religious,” “*the will to survive as a minority by transmitting a heritage,*” and “*the time factor*” that bears testimony to the survival and adaptation of a group possessing the above characteristics (xv-xvii). In *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, Robin Cohen adds that the memory of the single traumatic event that caused the dispersion bind the members of the exiled group together by continuously reminding them of the great historic injustice they suffered. Cohen also asserts that diasporic communities are committed both to the restoration and maintenance of the homeland and its creation. See Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: U College London P, 1997), 19. In Cohen’s view, globalization created opportunities for diasporas to emerge, survive, and thrive and thus radically expanding the scope of the study of modern diasporas (176).

³⁰ Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 262.

into national minorities.”³¹ Overnight they became *ethnic* Germans residing in newly established nation-states.³² Although this change in status affected them politically, culturally, and psychologically, it enabled them later to cope to some degree with the unexpected challenges of resettling in West Germany, where, contrary to their hopes, they continued to be treated as a “minority group,” not automatically included in the German nation. While today ethnicity is an important factor for most categories of migrants in Germany, ethnic German migrants differ in one crucial respect. For them, “ethnicity plays an important role not only when immigrating, but also *before* the act of immigration when living as ethnic minorities in a nation-state dominated by another ethnic group.”³³ In contrast, labor migrants and most refugees are “only turned into an *ethnic* minority *through* the process of immigration and often through the experience of political or social exclusion.”³⁴

During the inter-war period, the future of German ethnic diasporas became a key issue of German politics and, later, a foreign policy issue as well.³⁵ At the time, the German government and the elites promoted two ethno-political strategies: the revision of borders in order to include territories with ethnic German populations and the resettlement of ethnic Germans from their historical areas of settlement, sometimes portrayed as a “necessary” evacuation.³⁶ Nazi Germany realized both strategies: from 1938 to 1939 through the annexation of areas of compact German settlement like Austria, parts of Bohemia and Moravia, Danzig and western Poland, and from 1939 to 1944

³¹ Ohliger and Münz, “Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants in Twentieth-Century Europe: A Comparative Perspective,” 5.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 15.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 262.

³⁶ Ibid.

through the “transfer” of 625,000-650,000 ethnic Germans living outside territories annexed to, or occupied by, Germany in 1938-39.³⁷

During the Nazi regime, ethnic Germans were known as *Volksdeutsche*, a term that Hitler himself supposedly coined and which first appeared in a 1938 memorandum of the German Reich Chancellery.³⁸ Describing ethnic Germans living outside the Reich who did not have German citizenship, the term *Volksdeutsche* carried for Hitler and other Germans of the 1930s and 1940s overtones of blood and race, which, as Doris Bergen points out, are not captured in the English translation “ethnic Germans.”³⁹ In the aftermath of the Second World War, ethnic Germans were referred to as *Vertriebene* (“expellees”) when along with German citizens they became refugees or were expelled from their traditional areas of settlement and deported to the British, Soviet, and US occupation zones of Germany.⁴⁰ The 1953 Federal Law concerning the Refugees and Expellees (*Bundesflüchtlings- und Vertriebenengesetz*) regulated the admission and absorption of former German citizens and the immigration of the remaining ethnic German minorities living in communist countries of Europe.⁴¹ Under this law, the concept of ethnic origin was the basis for being part of the German nation for those who professed their Germanness in their homelands.⁴² Ethnic Germans were defined by descent, language, and cultural and ethnic orientation.

³⁷ Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 262.

³⁸ Doris Bergen, “The Nazi Concept of ‘Volksdeutsche’ and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 29.4 (Oct. 1994):569.

³⁹ Bergen remarks that the term *Volksdeutsche* stands in contrast to Imperial Germans (*Reichsdeutsche*), which described German citizens living within Germany. For a detailed discussion on the concept of *Volksdeutsch* see Bergen, “The Nazi Concept of ‘Volksdeutsche’ and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe,” p. 569.

⁴⁰ Münz, “Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany,” 261.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁴² *Ibid.*

“Germanness by descent” was granted central importance in the 1949 *Grundgesetz*. In the late 1980s and 1990s, with the arrival of ethnic German immigrants from the Soviet Union, however, the meaning of “descent” became more difficult to establish.⁴³ It was during this period that *Aussiedler* became known as *Spätaussiedler*.⁴⁴ Contrary to ethnic Germans in Romania, ethnic Germans in the Soviet Union were highly assimilated. The “Germanness” of their cultural identity was weakened by the predominant use of Russian in everyday communication, interethnic marriages, and enforced atheism.⁴⁵ Because by definition *Aussiedler* are Germans who do not “immigrate” but “wander” or “turn back” (*zurückwandern* or *zurückkehren*) or “come back home” (*heimkehren*), establishing their “Germanness” is central to their inclusion in the German nation.⁴⁶ In addition to proving strict descent or blood lineage, ethnic Germans were required to show “a turn to Germanness” (*Hinwendung zum Deutschtum*), and “bring their life stories into conformation with prototypic plots.”⁴⁷ The process of establishing one’s “Germanness” by identification (as opposed to descent) presupposes providing evidence of having the proper kinds of relationships and experiences of suffering, repression, and cultural identification. As a result, descent is not envisioned any longer as a biological or genealogical relation, but as an ideology used to legitimate identifications.⁴⁸

⁴³ Stefan Senders, “*Jus Sanguinis* or *Jus Mimesis*? Rethinking ‘Ethnic German’ Repatriation,” in *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants*, ed. Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 88.

⁴⁴ Richard Wagner, “Lehrjahre eines Immigranten. Über den Versuch, in einem anderen Land anzukommen,” *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 11 Dec. 2004, 45.

⁴⁵ Ohliger and Münz, “Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants in Twentieth-Century Europe: A Comparative Perspective,” 7.

⁴⁶ Senders, “*Jus Sanguinis* or *Jus Mimesis*? Rethinking ‘Ethnic German’ Repatriation,” 88-89.

⁴⁷ Abraham, “Constitutional Patriotism, Citizenship, and Belonging,” 148 and Senders, “*Jus Sanguinis* or *Jus Mimesis*? Rethinking ‘Ethnic German’ Repatriation,” 90.

⁴⁸ Senders, “*Jus Sanguinis* or *Jus Mimesis*? Rethinking ‘Ethnic German’ Repatriation,” 88.

The ambiguity of repatriate claims to German identity has led to the “establishment of bureaucratic procedures designed to test ethnic Germans, to investigate their identities (sic!) and probe their stories.”⁴⁹ Since the legal concept of German identity is fundamentally romantic—it assumes an inner core of true identification—individuals are called on to demonstrate the “truth” of their identifications by presenting and representing their stories. While going through this process, ethnic German immigrants must tell, perform, and argue their identities. Despite the “romantic ideology” driving German identity law, the bureaucracy that enacts it is founded on the assumption that applicants will lie and merely imitate “Germans.”⁵⁰

The problem with this version of German immigration policy is that by seeking to “reproduce Germany in *Germany’s own image*,” it excludes difference from its narrative of national reproduction.⁵¹ In other words, German citizens are “produced in relation to models both ideal and abject.”⁵² Because German identity law is founded on “*recovery* rather than transformation,” Stefan Senders finds it “fundamentally narcissistic.”⁵³ “Ideologies of recovery,” he further argues, are “troublesome” because in their extreme forms they have “proved an ideal foundation for despotism and totalitarianism,” while in their lesser forms, they “undermine democratic principles.”⁵⁴ Germany’s narcissistic approach to national reproduction leads to the occupation of what Claude Lefort calls the “empty place” of power that is fundamental to democracy.⁵⁵ As a result, in place of “the

⁴⁹ Senders, “*Jus Sanguinis* or *Jus Mimesis*? Rethinking ‘Ethnic German’ Repatriation,” 88.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 92.

⁵¹ Ibid., 88.

⁵² Ibid., 91.

⁵³ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), 279.

people,” one finds “Germans.”⁵⁶ Stefan Senders contends that “mimetic identification” is a “dynamic and reciprocal process” that “undermines any fantasy of recovering a ‘true’ German identity.”⁵⁷ Yet as the changes in the German immigration law show, descent alone does not define identity. Identity therefore, is not given, but constructed as the result of a constant process of transformation whereby personal and cultural identities are continually (re)created and performed.

In recent years, the German government has started to make significant changes to the guidelines that redefine “Germanness” today. One example is the relatively recent revision of the citizenship law according to which German citizenship is for the first time in German history no longer exclusively defined by blood lineage (*jus sanguinis*).⁵⁸ Yet despite creating new ways of defining the German nation, “conservatives are demanding a German-dominant culture of the national majority (*Leitkultur*) and the prestige of *Heimat* (home or place of belonging) is on the rise for right-wing extremism against foreigners.”⁵⁹ While the emphasis in the 2004 and 2005 immigration laws is on foreigners’ “integration,” it is unclear to what extent they are invited to participate in “an

⁵⁶ Senders, “*Jus Sanguinis* or *Jus Mimesis*? Rethinking ‘Ethnic German’ Repatriation,” 97.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁸ On January 1, 2000 a new nationality law went into effect in Germany, which allows foreigners living in Germany to become German citizens. At the heart of the reform is the supplementing of the traditional principle of descent (*jus sanguinis*) by the acquisition of nationality by birth (*jus soli*). Up to this point, citizenship was identified according to the principle of descent. In 2001 the major political parties of Germany finally agreed to adopt an official definition of a country of immigration. The immigration law (*Zuwanderungsgesetz*) passed on March 22, 2002 is in many ways restricted to immigrants qualifying as highly skilled professionals who may be naturalized only after a period of ten years of uninterrupted residency in Germany. Immigration is not considered a transient phase anymore, but a constitutive part of German reality. See Sandra Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity,” in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism*, ed. Monika Fludernik (New York: Rodopi, 2003), 343.

⁵⁹ Elke Segelcke, “Experiences of ‘Otherness.’ Writing National and Multicultural Identities in Postunification Germany,” in *Critical Essays on Contemporary European Culture and Society*, ed. Ursula E. Beitter (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 166.

ongoing German project” or to join Germans in “charting a future course for themselves as seemingly equal partners in something new.”⁶⁰

“German” and Politically Persecuted

Shortly after their arrival in the 1980s in West Germany, German-Romanian authors discovered a discrepancy between their *imagined* and the *real* picture of West Germany. While living and writing in communist Romania, West Germany appeared as *the* center of culture, political freedom, and social security.⁶¹ Yet some of the practices they encountered in the first days of their stay in the admission camps in capitalist Germany were strikingly similar to those they had experienced in communist Romania, including tedious bureaucratic procedures and the curt and inscrutable attitude of officials.⁶² One of the procedures that they were subjected to entailed having to demonstrate, argue, and perform their “German identity.”

In her essay “Und noch erschrickt unser Herz,” Müller explains that the process of having to demonstrate her “German identity” entailed “disclosing” (“offenlegen”) her biography, a procedure that she found opposite to “narrating” (“erzählen”).⁶³ The problem with having to “disclose” as opposed to “narrate” one’s life story, Müller argues, is the fact that its authenticity is automatically questioned.⁶⁴ Indeed, when Müller indicated that she was politically persecuted in communist Romania, the immigration official immediately asked her if she would have received the same treatment if she had been Romanian. Müller’s affirmative answer prompted the official to send her to the

⁶⁰ Abraham, “Constitutional Patriotism, Citizenship, and Belonging,” 151.

⁶¹ Neau, “Zur Problematik des ‘Ortswechsels’ bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren,” 138.

⁶² Neau, “Zur Problematik des ‘Ortswechsels’ bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren,” 133-34 and Heinz, “Eingeständnisse über eine Ankunfts-literatur,” 74.

⁶³ Herta Müller, “Und noch erschrickt unser Herz,” in *Hunger und Seide* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995), 23.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

“Ausländerpolizei” because on the form that was used to establish the *Aussiedler* status there was no provision to account for applicants who were both “German” and “politically persecuted.”⁶⁵ The clerk’s explanation that there was no “vorgedrucktes Formular” for both claims, is indicative of the fact that “German identity” had to fit into a prescribed identity prototype which allowed no room for difference.⁶⁶

That the German immigration service perceived Wagner and Müller as foreigners was confirmed by the fact that, as soon as they were admitted in the transit camp, they were handed a German-Romanian dictionary, which, as Wagner sarcastically remarks, signaled the beginning of their career as “Romanians,” but also as “German-Romanians” or “Romanian-Germans.”⁶⁷ According to Wagner, German officials expressed their perplexity or cluelessness vis-à-vis the authors’ transcultural background with the label “Romanian-German” or “German-Romanian.” For most locals, the same labels were names for the “exotic newcomer,” and for those too lazy to think Wagner and Müller were simply “the Romanians.”⁶⁸ Yet both Wagner and Müller had a very strong sense of their German identity. When living in Romania, Wagner argues, he never had “Identitätsprobleme, sondern eine klare Identität,” owed to the fact that German was not only his mother tongue but also the language of his “German” cultural identity.⁶⁹ While their “Germanness” was tested, both Wagner and Müller were struck by the immigration clerks’ indifferent attitude and their persistent inquiries into the writers’ political past, particularly their family associations with the Nazis and the deportations of their parents

⁶⁵ Müller, “Und noch erschrickt unser Herz,” 25. Richard Wagner reports the same incident in *Ausreiseantrag*. See *Begrüßungsgeld. Ausreiseantrag* (Frankfurt a.M.: Luchterhand, 1991), 172.

⁶⁶ Müller, “Und noch erschrickt unser Herz,” 25.

⁶⁷ Wagner, “Lehrjahre eines Immigranten,” 45.

⁶⁸ Wagner, “Sprachdesaster und Identitätsfälle. Der Schriftsteller als Rumäniendeutscher,” 346.

⁶⁹ Qtd. in Rock, “A German Comes Home to Germany,” 55.

to the Soviet Union, which were accepted as evidence in support of one's German ethnicity.⁷⁰ Yet even after their "Germanness" was approved and Müller and Wagner were handed German identity cards, their application for German citizenship remained pending.⁷¹

In addition to being challenged by immigration officials, the "Germanness" of ethnic Germans from Romania is also contested by German society. On one hand, they have to convince the locals that they belong to the German cultural space, and, on the other, they have to explain to foreign immigrants why, as ethnic German immigrants, they are different from foreign immigrants. Yet both locals and foreigners reject this "Sonderstatus," which they often see as a manifestation of arrogance.⁷² Therefore *Aussiedler* are in a bind: they cannot be locals but would not see themselves as foreigners either.⁷³ Wagner contends that the paradox of simultaneously belonging to and being a stranger in Germany is based on the fact that for him "Germany" is not a territorial concept but a cultural one, because his conceptualization of "Deutschland" was always that of a "kultureller Begriff—die Kulturnation."⁷⁴ This may explain why Müller states that: "ich [kann] in Deutschland nie dazugehören und ich [kann] aus Deutschland nicht weggehen."⁷⁵ The struggles of having to disclose and argue one's "German identity" as

⁷⁰ See Richard Wagner, *Ausreiseantrag. Begrüßungsgeld* (Frankfurt a.M.: Luchterhand, 1988), 153, 179.

⁷¹ Wagner, "Lehrjahre eines Immigranten," 45. In her 2009 book *Cristina und ihre Attrappe*, Müller attributes the delay in obtaining the German citizenship to the fact that German immigration officials, being enticed by numerous letters and schemes of the *Securitate*, were suspicious that Müller was a *Securitate* agent. Müller found several reports in her *Securitate* file that reveal some of the schemes and venues—one of which were members of the Banat-Swabian association in Germany—that the *Securitate* used to incriminate Müller as an alleged *Securitate* agent.

⁷² Wagner, "Sprachdesaster und Identitätsfalle," 346.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁷⁴ Rock, "A German comes Home to Germany," 67.

⁷⁵ Müller, "Und noch erschrickt unser Herz," 30.

well as the paradox of being part of the cultural notion of “Germany” and yet strangers to the territorial concept of “Germany” are central themes in Müller’s and Wagner’s works.

The Challenges of the “mitgebrachte Sprache”

The most challenging side of the process that tested the “Germanness” of German-Romanian authors was their German language. If in Romania, German language was the highest asset and the quintessential mark of their German cultural identity, in Germany it was a stumbling block. Due to their distinct accent and pronunciation as well as the archaic terms and expressions the authors used, their “mitgebrachte Sprache”⁷⁶ was often perceived as odd and antiquated, reflecting a reality unknown to West Germans.⁷⁷ Unlike the German spoken at home by ethnic Germans, which Wagner insists was a “Sprachdesaster,” the German that authors wrote in, was the language of German literature.⁷⁸ This explains why Wagner insists that he always perceived himself as a German writer and his texts as being part of mainstream German literature.⁷⁹ Yet, as Müller explains, since it was ideologically contaminated the literary German that she and other German-Romanian authors used, sounded flat and strange. As such, Müller strived to extract and create new meanings in and through this language:

Das Deutsche ist meine Muttersprache, aber angesichts des Hiesigen eine mitgebrachte Sprache. Da, wo ich sie gelernt habe, war die Verholzung der Metaphern in der Politik eine ähnliche. In der gleichen Überanstrengung der Worte wurde sie dort wie hier unfreiwillig komisch und schlug fehl. Und war dennoch ganz anders: Ihre Absicht war finster und zielte auf das Leben. Auch die gewöhnlichen Wörter *Laden*, *Straße*, *Friseur*, *Polizist* sagten im alltäglichen Gebrauch mit dem jeweils gleichen Wort etwas anderes, weil die Dinge, die sie gleich benannten, anders waren. Man kann eine Sprache jedoch nicht zweimal

⁷⁶ Müller, “Und noch erschrickt unser Herz,” 32.

⁷⁷ Neau, “Zur Problematik des ‘Ortswechsels’ bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren,” 138-40.

⁷⁸ Wagner, “Sprachdesaster und Identitätsfalle,” 348.

⁷⁹ See Wagner’s interview with David Rock, “A German comes Home to Germany,” 55.

erlernen: Ich sag die alten Worte, ich spreche wie damals. Doch sehen muß ich darin etwas Neues.⁸⁰

Based on Müller's assessment of the literary German she used to write in while in Romania, Valentina Glajar argues that, for Müller, her German is "not a linguistic, but rather a cultural barrier."⁸¹ In the West, as in Romania it is both familiar yet foreign. I would add that in light of Müller's recent works, her "mitgebrachte Sprache," or "Minderheitendeutsch," as she also calls it, is also a fertile ground for language experimentation and the creation of new meanings that reflect her ingenuity and transcultural background. By blending German and Romanian languages and cultures Müller's texts reflect her efforts to create a private language of resistance that negates the totalitarian repression of the narrators' world.

The paradox that language is both a barrier and a fertile ground is vividly captured by Müller in the passage below in which she addresses her language as if it were a person. The contradiction between the message (that her language does not work well) and its execution (the poetic images and ingenious use of vocabulary) is striking:

Angekommen wie nicht da. Am Sand wie an den Ufern. Und langsamer als irgendwo fehlt mir die Einsicht. Mein Sprachzug und mein Minderheitendeutsch. Die Wolke hat den grauen Mantel an. Wie schmal die Kante ist, der Schienenstrang von einer Schläfe zu der andern. Wie hochwangig du mir schlägst. Und wenn ich reden will, legst du dich tot auf meine Zunge. Und wenn ich schweigen will, dann tust du so, als gäbe der Asphalt sich her für schießende, waldgrüne Maisfelder im Kopf. [. . .] Mein Minderheitendeutsch, jetzt wirst du angeknüpft. Jetzt wird der Faden dir zum Strick. Ich werd dich los, jetzt bleibst du mir erhalten.⁸²

⁸⁰ Müller, "Und noch erschrickt unser Herz," 32.

⁸¹ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central*, 152.

⁸² Herta Müller, "Mein Schlagabtausch, mein Minderheitendeutsch," in *Barfußiger Februar* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1987), 123.

The feeling of not feeling at home in language is a recurring theme in the works of other German-Romanian writers. For example, Gerhard Ortinau, one of the founders of the *Aktiongruppe Banat* states that:

Kein rumäniendeutscher Autor fährt ungestraft nach Berlin. Schon im D-Zug beginnt er sich selbst zu erleben. In der S-Bahn, zwischen Schönefeld und Alexanderplatz, kommt ihm allmählich ein Gefühl an, als befände er sich mitten in einem Buch, das er immer schon schreiben wollte, von dem er aber plötzlich mit Sicherheit weiß, daß er es nie zustande bringen würde, es sei denn, er gibt sich selber auf; als rumäniendeutscher Autor nämlich. Auf einmal fühlt er sich nicht wohl in seiner Haut, er ist mehr als betreten. Ist der Marx-Engels-Platz passiert, so verwirft er in einem Anfall großzügiger Verzweiflung alles, was er je geschrieben hat. Ihm will scheinen, er sei nicht nur ortsfremd hier, der größte Unterschied zwischen ihm und seinen Banknachbarn ist ihre gemeinsame Sprache.⁸³

The fact that one's own language was considered a "foreign" language both in Romania as well as in Germany inevitably led to what Patrice Neau calls a "sprachliche Heimatlosigkeit."⁸⁴ This raised quintessential questions about personal and cultural identity that are extricable, linked to and determined by language, especially the spoken language. Dieter Schlesak suggests that for the immigrant authors, the written language is the ultimate refuge ("Fluchtborg") that offers the possibility to rescue one's personal and cultural identity: "Und ich schreibe von der Suche nach einem Ort, wo man seine Identität findet, im Alltag, in der Illusion, in Depressionen, in der Hoffnung. Ein Ort, von dem ich weiß, daß ich ihn nie finden werde, höchstens irgendwann mal im Konjunktiv."⁸⁵

Yet it is not only the resistance that West Germans show to their peculiar German that made German-Romanian writers feel unwelcome and insecure, but also the grammatically incorrect use of Western German. For example, Stirner, the protagonist in

⁸³ Qtd. in Neau, "Zur Problematik des 'Ortswechsels' bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren," 139.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 140.

⁸⁵ Stefan Sienerth, *Dass ich in diesen Raum hineingeboren wurde. Gespräche mit deutschen Schriftstellern aus Südosteuropa* (München: Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1997), 273.

Wagner's "Begrüßungsgeld," a Banat-Swabian journalist who had recently immigrated to Germany, would rather be taken for a foreigner than a local, when he insists on using the grammatically correct "Pommes frites" as opposed to the colloquial "Pommes."⁸⁶ In addition, German-Romanian authors disliked the superficial adoption of Americanisms into the German language and the use of politically tainted slogans and signs. These foreign imports accentuated the authors' insecurity in discerning when a term was a legitimate neologism and when it was used as camouflage.⁸⁷

Added to their own insecurities about how to negotiate between their "mitgebrachte Sprache" and Western German were the critics' assessments of their texts. Müller, for instance, was (and still is) both praised and criticized for her language. Some critics even charge her for her alleged "incorrect" usage of German and for employing non-standard forms of German, which are considered marks of a non-native speaker.⁸⁸ According to Lyn Marven, the hostile attitude of German society and of critics towards these authors betrays both the "desire to exclude difference" as well as the attempt to categorize immigrant and ethnic German authors as non-German writers.⁸⁹ Marven pleads for the "recognition of difference (or rather, *différance*), which also contributes to the breaking down and decentering of the hierarchical hegemonic values."⁹⁰ Analyzing the language of migrant and ethnic German authors who publish in Germany, Angelika Bammer contends that their type of German breaks "Germanness apart to disclose its

⁸⁶ Richard Wagner, "Begrüßungsgeld," 186.

⁸⁷ Neau, "Zur Problematik des 'Ortwechsels' bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren," 139.

⁸⁸ Marven, *Body and Narrative in Contemporary Literatures in German*, 4. Marven also remarks that since these "mistakes" are only alleged and never cited, it is hard to judge whether they demonstrate the author's incorrect or creative usage. See Marven, 4, footnote 8. Libuše Moníková remarks that if she were to make some of Arno Schmidt's deliberate grammatical mistakes, it would be assumed that she does not know German. Libuše Moníková, "Ortsbestimmung: Dankrede zum Chamisso-Preis," *Prager Fenster* (München, Wien: n.p.: 1994), 43.

⁸⁹ Marven, *Body and Narrative*, 4-5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

intractable resistance to the foreignness.”⁹¹ In the early years of his career in Germany, Wagner was frequently praised for his “good” German. At readings and lectures, he was often asked who his translator was and how he managed to master the language in the short time since his immigration.⁹²

The resistance of German society against the “other” types of German of German-Romanian and other immigrant authors needs to be seen in a larger socio-political context. The influx into West Germany of large numbers of *Aussiedler* in the late 1980s and of East Germans after the unification was accompanied for a while by anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racist nationalism and a resurgence of “linguistic nationality.”⁹³ The intensity of anti-foreign sentiments articulated “a perceived threat to German ethnic identity and racial homogeneity.”⁹⁴ Lines dividing the “native” from the “foreign” were marked by a strong reinvigoration of “a fictive ethnicity of Germanness” in which national identity politics became language politics.⁹⁵ Marked by “fear of linguistic estrangement and a public preoccupation with preserving an authentic national interior,” the *nation* was “configured as a speech community of ethnic Germans.”⁹⁶ In an effort to reaffirm a supposed “ethnocultural homogeneity” some segments of the German population adhered to slogans like “Germany for Germans” and “Germany is not an immigration society” thereby promoting an “ethnoracial concept of nationhood and

⁹¹ Bammer, “Interrogating Germanness: What’s Literature Got to Do with It?,” 39.

⁹² Wagner, “Lehrjahre eines Immigranten,” 45.

⁹³ Uli Linke, “Ethnolinguistic Racism: The Predicament of Sovereignty and Nationhood under Global Capitalism,” *Anthropological Thought* 4. 2 (2004): 206-211.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 206, 211.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

identity.”⁹⁷ However, it must be noted that xenophobia and racist nationalism towards immigrants and *Aussiedler* were not representative attitudes held by the majority of Germans.

In Müller’s and Wagner’s recent texts, however, their “mitgebrachte Sprache” that is influenced by Romanian culture and language has developed into a new, tridimensional language in which the Banat-German and Romanian cultural and linguistic influences coalesce with Western German languages and cultures giving, expression to the new dimensions of the authors’ transcultural experience and identity. Müller’s distinct language and images have become her trademark and have earned her prestigious literary prizes. Today, critics consider Wagner one of the most notable writers in contemporary German literature. His texts fascinate because of their fresh language and ingenious approaches to controversial issues pertaining to German and Eastern Europe history, cultures, and politics.

Perhaps the most disappointing discovery that German-Romanian writers made after resettling in Germany was that, in the West, authors are often not assessed for the aesthetic qualities of their writing, but for the market value of their texts.⁹⁸ Consequently, German-Romanian authors felt pressed to view their writing as a commodity, because: “Wer sich nicht verkaufen kann, von dem kauft keiner etwas.”⁹⁹ Having left a repressive regime in which each manifestation in the mother tongue was pivotal and each good book published was considered an event, the overly saturated book market and the fatigued attitude of the readers in the West, were, in their estimation, indicators of a society ruled

⁹⁷ Linke, “Ethnolinguistic Racism: The Predicament of Sovereignty and Nationhood under Global Capitalism,” 207.

⁹⁸ Heinz, “Eingeständnisse über eine Ankunftsliteratur,” 77.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 85.

by exacerbated consumerism and materialism, in which people and art were treated like commodities.¹⁰⁰

After living in a regional context, in which their writing often served the interests of the close-knit ethnic German communities, most of these writers found it very difficult to conform to the expectations of the West, which demanded forsaking one's regional cultural identity and adapting to the interests of the dominant culture.¹⁰¹ The tumultuous histories of German ethnic groups, which they continued to tackle, were often perceived as "Randthemen" and mere variations of the "bigger" theme discussing the displacement experience of all Eastern European ethnic Germans.¹⁰² In the case of German-Romanian authors, the history and the plight of the Transylvanian Germans, the Banat Swabians, and the Bukovina Germans were themes that were "regionalbezogen," and hence had but little appeal to the large public.¹⁰³ If upon their arrival in Germany, German-Romanian authors were highly sought after as experts on Romanian communism, shortly after the demise of Ceaușescu's dictatorship, they discovered that themes linked to Romania sparked very little interest on the German book market. Thus many writers became quickly disillusioned by the shift in their status—becoming a "nobody" in Germany after being a "somebody," i.e., an acclaimed writer, in Romania.¹⁰⁴ As critic Franz Heinz observed, "alles sagen zu können bedeutet noch nicht, auch gehört zu werden; nicht bespitzelt zu sein, ist noch kein Freibrief für das allgemeine Verständnis."¹⁰⁵ While writing was a powerful weapon during the communist regime, in the West it is often

¹⁰⁰ Heinz, "Eingeständnisse über eine Ankunftsliteratur," 87-6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 79.

¹⁰² Ibid., 82-3.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 75.

¹⁰⁵ Franz Heinz, "Ein Dichter sagt nein. Zum Tode von Rolf Bossert," *Kulturpolitische Korrespondenz* 610.5 (March 1986): n.pag.

reduced to an uncertain means of making a living.¹⁰⁶ If in the East, the writer who protested against the communist regime was a hero, in the West and democracy, he or she is at best a tomfool.¹⁰⁷ The lack of societal motivation and recognition is accentuated by the absence of the censorship. After immigrating to West Germany, author Werner Schuller, for instance, stopped writing, blaming his lack of productivity on the absence of the censure experienced in communist Romania.¹⁰⁸ It is important to note that Müller has become a successful writer because she tackles almost exclusively themes related to the communist dictatorship in Romania. Although readers and critics are weary of her topics, Müller's language and images have earned her high critical acclaim. Despite the fact that Wagner explores in many of his works "periphery"-related themes and issues, his literary success rests in the ingenuity with which he shows the interconnectedness between the Banat/Eastern Europe and German/West, i.e., the "periphery" and the "center."

In the process of (re)discovering or reinventing their voice as writers, German-Romanian authors also faced the resentful attitude of critics like Alexander Ritter, who, analyzing pre-1989 German-Romanian literature, argues that "die deutsche Literatur, landläufig mit den Geschehnissen im binnendeutschen Literaturraum und Literaturmarkt gleichgesetzt, benötigt die anderen Literaturen außerhalb dieser Grenzen für die eigene Existenz nicht."¹⁰⁹ The major problem that Ritter sees when critics evaluate the literary quality of German-Romanian literature concerns the authors' choice of themes and language, which, in his view, do not correlate either to the critics' aesthetic demands or

¹⁰⁶ Heinz, "Eingeständnisse über eine Ankunfts-literatur," 77.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 80.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander Ritter, "Von der Güte des Dichterwortes. Über deutschsprachige Literatur des Auslands und des Literaturwissenschaftlers Not mit der Bewertung," in *Die siebenbürgisch-deutsche Literatur als Beispiel einer Regionalliteratur*, ed. Anton Schwob and Brigitte Tontsch (Köln: Böhlau, 1993), 7.

the readers' taste in German-speaking countries. In contrast, Peter Motzan suggests that without the texts in German produced in Romania, the literature written within the national confines of the German state would be "um mehr als einen exotischen Farbtupfer blasser."¹¹⁰ Even though literature written outside Germany does not condition the existence of German literature, the question arises: what is the contribution of this literature to the German literature written inside German-speaking countries? The answer is obvious when considering the example of Paul Celan and Elias Canetti. Although both were non-Germans who wrote in German, they are two highly acclaimed writers of German literature.

Despite all the impediments they had to face after immigrating to West Germany, many German-Romanian writers, among them Oskar Pastior, Herta Müller, Richard Wagner, Werner Söllner, Dieter Schlesak, Ernest Wichner, Rolf Bossert, Karin Gündisch and Franz Hodjak have succeeded in reinventing themselves as writers and in making a name for themselves, resonant in contemporary German literature. Richard Wagner argues that among other ethnic German groups from Eastern Europe, the ethnic German minority of Romania is known for being the ethnic German minority group that has most successfully integrated itself in Germany and has produced noteworthy authors in German contemporary literature.¹¹¹

German-Romanian Authors and German Migration Literature

Although the migration experience of German-Romanian authors is quite different from that of the majority of authors of "migration literature" (*Migrationsliteratur*) who are in

¹¹⁰ Motzan, "Die vielen Wege in den Abschied," 116.

¹¹¹ David Rock and Stefan Wolff, "...a form of literature which was intentionally political," 143.

one way or another connected with the condition and history of the *Gastarbeiter*, German-Romanian authors, especially Müller and Wagner, and their texts have often been analyzed in the context of “migration literature.”¹¹² Because their first language is German and they publish in German, some critics do not include German-Romanian writers in the category of “migration literature,” while others do because, like other migrant authors, they have immigrated to Germany. A brief overview of the historical and aesthetic development of “migration literature” will elucidate its specificities and clarify some of the major differences between texts written by German-Romanian and other migration authors.

Migrationsliteratur is a “Behelfsbegriff” for a disparate group of literary texts authored by a socially, ethnically, and culturally heterogeneous group of immigrants.¹¹³ Migration literature is by and about “Others” (“Fremde”), who share common “Schwellenerfahrungen” as a result of migration.¹¹⁴ In the 1960s and 1970s migration literature was authored by guest workers and became known as *Gastarbeiterliteratur*.¹¹⁵ The term *letteratura gast*, from which *Gastarbeiterliteratur* was later derived, was coined

¹¹² Herta Müller’s works have been examined in relation to texts by the Japanese-German Yoko Tawada author and Turkish-German writer and film director Emine Sevgi Özdamar. See Almut Todorow, “‘Das Streuen der gelebten Zeit’: Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Herta Müller, Yoko Tawada,” in *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne*, ed. Klaus Schenk et. al (Tübingen: Francke, 2005), 25-50; Bettina Brandt, “‘Schnitt durchs Auge: Surrealistische Bilder bei Yoko Tawada, Emine Sevgi Özdamar und Herta Müller,” *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Special Issue on Literatur und Migration, ix (2006): 74-83; and Maria S. Grewe, “Estranging Poetic: On the Poetic of the Foreign in Selected Works by Herta Müller and Yoko Tawada,” Diss. (Columbia U, 2009).

¹¹³ Todorow, “‘Das Streuen der gelebten Zeit’: Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Herta Müller, Yoko Tawada,” 25.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-7.

¹¹⁵ Following the bilateral labor-recruitment agreements that West Germany signed with Italy (1955), Spain and Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965) and Yugoslavia (1968) tens of thousands of workers moved to Germany. Even though most of them regarded their stay as temporary, many were joined by their families and eventually remained in Germany as permanent residents. Of the approximate 7.3 million immigrants in Germany today, the largest minority in present-day Germany continues to be Turkish with more than two million. See Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity,” 329. It is estimated that around 2.2 million Turks live in Germany today. See Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, and Anton Kaes, eds., *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration 1955-2005* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2007), 457.

sometime between 1975 and 1977 by a group of German-speaking authors of Italian origin. One of the earmarks that distinguished that distinguished this literature early in its history was its programmatic political focus geared towards exposing the socio-historical context of the living and working conditions of guest workers in the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹⁶ A central theme was the loss and search for personal and cultural identity. German society regarded *Gastarbeiterliteratur* primarily as a viable source of information on the history, culture, and traditions of the ethnic groups it represented.

The sociological emphasis of many early approaches to texts by guest workers and their descendants was betrayed in the names and labels that the body of these texts received including: *Betroffenheitsliteratur*, *Emigrantenliteratur*, *Ausländerliteratur*, *Grenzüberschreitende Literatur*, *Multinationale deutsche Literatur*, *Migrantenliteratur*, *MigrantInnenliteratur*, and *littérature mineure*.¹¹⁷ Analyzing these definitions and labels¹¹⁸ critics like Leslie A. Adelson remark that no matter how accommodating or intolerant they were, they were “not necessarily all that varied” since most often they entailed an effort to encapsulate, demarcate, and regulate the boundaries between this literature and a “body of literature considered by implication to be inherently German.”¹¹⁹ The marginalization and ghettoization imposed by these definitions revealed the

¹¹⁶ Katherine Arens, “Central Europe and the Nationalist Paradigm,” Center for Austrian Studies, Working paper (March 1996): 36.

¹¹⁷ In 1992, Sigrid Weigel launched the thesis of migration literature as a minor literature (*littérature mineure*) following the concept proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their essay on Kafka “What is a Minor Literature?” Weigel classifies migration literature as the “fourth” literature in German after Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Sigrid Weigel, “Literatur der Fremde — Literatur in der Fremde,” in *Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1968*, ed. Klaus Briegleb and Sigrid Weigel (München: Carl Hanser, 1992), 228-29.

¹¹⁸ For a comprehensive analysis of the label of migration literature see Carmine Chiellino, “Interkulturalität und Literaturwissenschaft,” in *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland*, ed. Carmine Chiellino (Stuttgart: J.B Metzler, 2000), 387-98.

¹¹⁹ Leslie A. Adelson, “Migrants’ Literature or German Literature? Torkan’s *Turfan: Brief an einen islamischen Bruder*,” in *Writing New Identities*, ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Sidonie Smith (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997), 216.

ethnocentric focus of the debates on this literature that was expected to “enrich” and integrate into the German literary landscape.¹²⁰ Since these contending labels were decided within a “center-margin” model, cultural difference was imagined “to reside *outside* an alleged German center.”¹²¹ As such, scholars and critics often precluded “rigorous analysis of the construction of differences in their social, historical, political, and cultural specificity.”¹²²

In the mid 1990s, the rise of second and third generation writers marked the surfacing of a “diasporic consciousness” that forged new alternative identities.¹²³ These “border-crossers” or “diaspora of the border,” as these writers who are primarily of Turkish descent are often referred to, do not share the nostalgia of their parents’ and/or grandparents’ generation, but have to create “an identity of their own which is no longer exclusive but cross-cultural.”¹²⁴ Since they do not have “any original memories of their home country,” reality “gets transformed into a myth,” in which very vague cultural and historical notions flourish that are derived from stories told by their families.¹²⁵ Having grown up in what Sandra Hestermann calls a “vacuum culture,” the “border crossers” construct a “consciously ‘hyphenated’” identity to which most of them relate positively.¹²⁶

Texts of the “border-crossers” are conceived in cultural in-between spaces in which cultures and languages intermingle and overlap. Although “cultural border-crossings may prove extremely enriching for highly educated and fully integrated

¹²⁰ Adelson, “Migrants’ Literature or German Literature?,” 217.

¹²¹ Ibid., 220.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity,” 341.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 340-41.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 340.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 340-41.

residents,” for others the border “acquires the meaning of a line of separation,” which gives them an “increasing sense of ambivalence and insecurity.”¹²⁷ Complicating their self-perceptions is the prevalent discourse of rejection of foreigners and “Others” in German culture and society marked by an increase in ethnic tension and conflict (open attacks on foreigners motivated by racism and xenophobia).¹²⁸ At the same time, certain sectors in German society like tourism, for example, do not hesitate to appropriate as tourist attractions the cultural diversity created by various ethnic communities.¹²⁹

“Border-crossing” writers do not understand themselves or their protagonists as being alienated from German society. They are rather concerned with “how to adjust to the fact of belonging.”¹³⁰ Their texts show the “other Germany” and what it means to be a German in modern Europe.¹³¹ Moreover, their literature takes up contradictions inherent in the authors’ hyphenated cultural identity by “positively re-casting the fact of belonging ‘neither here nor there’ in the mould of multicultural and hyphenated identities.”¹³² At the same time, “border-crossing” authors also downplay their diversity, protesting against having their authorship defined in terms of their national origins and in relation to migration literature or even *Gastarbeiterliteratur*.¹³³

Although migration is not part of the “border-crossers” experience and is only marginally discussed in their texts, readers and critics often read their texts against *Gastarbeiterliteratur* or migration literature, a gesture which Marilya Veteto-Conrad sees

¹²⁷ Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity,” 341.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 343.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity,” 349 and Marilya Veteto-Conrad, *Finding a Voice: Identity and the Works of German-Language Turkish Writers in the Federal Republic of Germany to 1990* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 49.

¹³¹ Arens, “For Want of a Word...: The Case for *Germanophone*,” 133.

¹³² Hestermann, “The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity,” 343-44.

¹³³ Adelson, “Migrants’ Literature or German Literature?,” 218.

as a ghettoization of Turks in terms of “Otherness,” i.e., as different from mainstream authors.¹³⁴ Feridun Zaimoğlu expresses his frustration with this biased reception, in his 2006 article, provocatively titled “Migrationsliteratur ist ein toter Kadaver.”¹³⁵ In this article, Zaimoğlu insists that the field of migration literature is “grazed” and finished.¹³⁶

Resentful of “being reduced to stereotyped subjects of exotic interest for German readers and critics,” “border crosser” authors challenge with wit and humor traditional categorizations of migrants’ literature.¹³⁷ A distinct characteristic of their literature is the invention of genuine literary concepts and models in which inner and outer perspectives as well as the perception of the “self” and the “other” are closely intertwined.¹³⁸ Their language, which is often a mixture of German and the language(s) of their parents, is not a means of representation anymore, as it was for the first generation of migrants, but “a carrier of meaning” and a space for poetic experimentation and creativity.¹³⁹ Moreover, language does not represent problems between cultures and identity, but instead “hinterfragt vielmehr, verfremdet die Abbildung realer Zustände, hebt die kulturellen Differenzen auf eine andere Ebene und macht deren Zuordnung unmöglich.”¹⁴⁰

The authors’ creative use of language is reflected in their self-definitions, which are ironic and witty plays on social and cultural clichés, as the titles of some anthologies

¹³⁴ Veteto-Conrad, *Finding a Voice*, 23-25.

¹³⁵ Feridun Zaimoğlu and Julia Abel, “Migrationsliteratur ist ein toter Kadaver. Ein Gespräch,” in *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006): 159-166. See particularly p. 165.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Adelson, “Migrants’ Literature or German Literature?,” 218.

¹³⁸ Michael Hofmann, *Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft. Eine Einführung* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006), 196. See also Theresa Beilschmidt, “Feridun Zaimoğlu’s Book *Liebesbrand* –German Literature of its Own Right?” 17 May 2009, 20 Jan. 2010 <<http://www.euroculturemaster.org/pdf/IpPapers0809/group6/2-Beilschmidt-Theresa-GO-GR.pdf>>.

¹³⁹ Beilschmidt, “Feridun Zaimoğlu’s book *Liebesbrand* –German Literature of its Own Right?” n.pag.

¹⁴⁰ Özkan Ezli, “Von der Identitätskrise zu einer ethnografischen Poetic,” in *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006): 67.

that publish texts by authors of various (Turkish, Russian, Polish, Croatian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Pakistani, and Iranian) ethnic and cultural backgrounds show: Joachim Lottmann's¹⁴¹ 1999 *Kanaksta. Von deutschen und anderen Ausländern*,¹⁴² Ilija Trojanow's 2000 *Döner in Walhalla*, Jamal Tuschick's 2000 *MorgenLand*,¹⁴³ and Nicol Ljubic et al.'s 2003 *Feuer, Lebenslust! Erzählungen deutscher Einwanderer*. Despite attempts to erase labels that stigmatize and marginalize them and their literature, these authors are often asked why they shy away from talking about their "migration experiences," because for most readers, a foreign-sounding name seems to guarantee a "foreign," i.e., "exotic" literature.¹⁴⁴

A common misconception of "border-crossing" authors is that their texts represent the most advanced writing practice by writers of a migration background.¹⁴⁵ While this may be true generally in terms of the writers' knowledge and use of German language, some of the strategies of representation they employ to respond to the German socio-cultural and political context were also used by writers of the *Gastarbeiterliteratur* and *Migrationsliteratur*. Analyzing German-Turkish literature from its beginnings to the present, Tom Cheesman delineates four strategies that German-Turkish writers adopt: (1) axialism, representing the minority in order to foster minority self-awareness and

¹⁴¹ He is considered the father of the German pop literature. See Julia Abel, "Positionslichter. Die neue Generation von Anthologien der 'Migrationsliteratur,'" in *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006): 238.

¹⁴² *Kanaksta* is a combination of the German slur for immigrant—*Kanake*, and the American slang "gansta."

¹⁴³ The German title of this anthology is a play on words, and, as David N. Coury remarks, "'Morgenland' can mean both the Orient as well as the Land of Tomorrow, suggesting, as the editor himself does, that writing from the Orient will shape the land—and literature—of tomorrow." David N. Coury, "Beyond the National: Sarah Khan and the Globalization of German Literature," *German Studies Review* 3.2 (May 2007): 243.

¹⁴⁴ Abel, "Positionslichter," 235 and Sabine Adatepe, "Significance of language preference in Turkish-German Migration Literature," March 2008, 20 Jan. 2010
<<http://www.sabineadatepe.de/MigrationLiterature.htm>>.

¹⁴⁵ Tom Cheesman, "Juggling Burdens of Representation: Black, Red, Gold and Turquoise," *German Life and Letters* 59. 4 (October 2006): 475.

improve understanding among majorities without, however, addressing common assumptions about homogeneous identities and essentialized differences; (2) refusing to engage with questions of identity and difference which translates in the absence of themes linked to crossing borders, learning new languages, ghettoization, negotiation between conflicting parental and peer cultures, disjunctive nation and diaspora minority histories; (3) parodic ethnicization—representing the minority through clichéd images and prejudices that the majority has of the minority; and (4) “glocalism”—seeking “to construct new imaginative contexts in which minority issues and concerns recede from the foreground in a wider cultural-historical perspective.”¹⁴⁶ Cheesman suspects that these four strategies are not specific to German-Turkish writers, but that they could inform the texts of other bi- and multicultural authors who juggle multiple burdens of representations and expectations on the part of various categories of readers.

In light of the fact that German-Romanian immigrant authors and the first and second and third generation of immigrant writers share only some experiences linked to immigration, identity, and cultural hybridity, some critics have recently attempted to expand the notion of “migration.” In the 2004 volume *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweisen einer interkulturellen Moderne*, for example, “migration” is examined both as a *crossing* of spatial, temporal, cultural, and linguistic borders as well as the *process of creating* new networks that are facilitated by intercultural, inter-, and intralinguistic movements.¹⁴⁷ According to this interpretation, “migration” should generate a less biased and less hegemonic reception of the literature it defines because it questions and deconstructs hierarchical paradigms of power such as: the “Other,” “superior,” “inferior,” the “center,”

¹⁴⁶ Cheesman, “Juggling Burdens of Representation,” 480-83.

¹⁴⁷ Schenk et al., “Vorwort,” *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne*, ix, my emphases.

”margin.” Following this line of argument, “migration” would not be restricted to define only ethnic German and immigrant writers but could be applied to any author who, engaging with various types of borders and peripheries, investigates through writing performative dimensions.¹⁴⁸ Notwithstanding the attempt to enlarge the meaning “migration,” I would argue that the term *Migrationsliteratur* in the title of this study is still problematic and limiting, since it is difficult to dissociate it from the fact that, historically, it connotes a certain marginalization and ghettoization of the literature(s) it describes.

Interculturality, Transculturality, and the Case for “*europäische Germanistik*”

While critical articles like those comprised in the 2006 volume *Literatur und Migration*, for example, still examine texts by ethnic German writers and authors with a migration background primarily in the context of migration, the focus has shifted in recent years.¹⁴⁹ Critical studies like *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland* (2000) and *Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur. Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter der globaler Migration* (2009) take a different approach concentrating on an “intercultural” versus “transcultural” understanding of the dynamic among cultures.

Although the concept of “interculturality” implies establishing cultural dialogues among more or less clearly definable homogeneous or heterogeneous cultures, it also presupposes emphasizing and strengthening the borders that delineate cultures.¹⁵⁰

Wolfgang Iser argues that because the underlying claim of “interculturality” is that

¹⁴⁸ Schenk et al., “Vorwort,” *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne*, ix.

¹⁴⁹ *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold, Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006).

¹⁵⁰ Olga Iljassova-Morger, “Transkulturalität als Herausforderung für die Literaturwissenschaft und Literaturdidaktik,” *Das Wort. Germanistisches Jahrbuch Russland* (2009): 39.

“each culture is unique and exclusive,” the peaceful co-existence of cultures is not realistic.¹⁵¹ Karen Jankowsky also points to the fact that the process of establishing intercultural dialogues can be “fraught with difficulties in articulating equality without either erasing or overly accentuating differences between groups.”¹⁵² It is not enough to acknowledge the existence of cultural diversity *within* a main (or dominant) culture, but it is also necessary to investigate the relationships among the “margins,” i.e., the cultures labeled as “different” *and* the “center.”¹⁵³ Jankowsky warns that when such relationships are not questioned, “the cultivation of knowledge about disparate cultures legitimates the dominant group’s hegemony, because this group’s values and characteristics will be more highly appraised.”¹⁵⁴

Perceived as a result of the inner differentiation and complexity of modern culture, “transculturality” has become in recent years a preferred framework to examine societies, cultural products, and personal and cultural identity. Unlike “interculturality,” which aims to establish a cultural dialog *among* cultures, “transculturality” is conceived as an exchange *across* cultures.¹⁵⁵ Due to porous geographical, cultural, and national borders as well as increased global interconnectedness, cultures, being tightly entangled with each other, are characterized today by high degrees of hybridization.¹⁵⁶ Cultural identities, Welsch argues, are not shaped only by borders of national cultures, but go

¹⁵¹ Wolfgang Welsch, “Transculturality: The Changing Forms of Cultures Today,” in *The Internationality of National Literature in Either America: Transfer and Transformation*, Vol. 1. *Cases and Problems*, ed. Armin Paul Frank and Helga Eßmann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999), 291.

¹⁵² Karen Jankowsky, “‘German’ Literature Contested: The 1999 Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize Debate, ‘Cultural Diversity,’ and Emine Segvi Özdamar,” *The German Quarterly* 70.3 (Summer 1997): 262.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 263, my emphasis.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Iljassova-Morger, “Transkulturalität als Herausforderung für die Literaturwissenschaft und Literaturdidaktik,” 39, my emphases.

¹⁵⁶ Welsch, “Transculturality: The Changing Forms of Cultures Today,” 336-37.

beyond exposing the individuals' multiple cultural connections.¹⁵⁷ Such is the case with German-Romanian authors and the writers of the second- or third-generation immigrant writers in Germany who do not conceive their cultural identity in terms of "nation-" but rather "culture"-related conceptualizations.¹⁵⁸ Wagner, for example, argues that the cultural identity paradigms of German-Romanian authors consist of "layers" ("Schichten") of cultures, which confer identity with a transcultural and hybrid structure.¹⁵⁹ As I will show in my analyses of Wagner's and Müller's works, cultures and languages are so tightly interconnected that, metaphorically, they function more like "webs" rather than "layers."

If until the late 1990s, critical approaches to migration literature emphasized cultural difference and sought to establish various forms of "literary area studies," critics are now arguing that transcultural experiences, opportunities and predicaments are no longer exclusive concerns of what used to be conveniently labeled as "migrant writing," but have become central features of various literatures across the globe—a process that increasingly undermines the habitual classification of literary texts in terms of "national," "regional" or "migration" literatures. In response to a transcultural conceptualization of literature, the notion of "europäische Germanistik" was proposed in the 2006 volume *Germanistik, eine europäische Wissenschaft? Der Bologna-Prozess als Herausforderung*. The volume was a response to the 1999 treaty known as the "Bologna Process" signed by twenty nine European countries who discussed the restructuring of European higher

¹⁵⁷ Welsch, "Transculturality: The Changing Forms of Cultures Today," 337 and 339.

¹⁵⁸ It was only during the Nazi regime, when ethnic Germans who lived outside the Reich were referred to as *Volksdeutsche* that the Banat Swabians developed and entertained the idea of being part of the "German nation." During the communist regime, however, they had a rather controversial hybrid social status as a result of being simultaneously Romanian citizens and ethnic Germans.

¹⁵⁹ Wagner, "Sprachdesaster und Identitätsfalle," 350.

education by making academic degree standards and quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe. Ortrud Gutjahr, one of the contributing authors to this volume, argues that in light of globalization, migration, disintegration, and cultural diversification, the new transnational literature that emerged at the end of the twentieth century in Germany as an expression of intercultural modernity, has prompted a paradigm shift in the discipline of *Germanistik*, which is now heading (or supposed to be heading) in a transnational and transcultural direction.¹⁶⁰ The adjective “europäisch” in connection with the discipline of *Germanistik* is meant to account for the various German cultural identities across Europe.¹⁶¹ However, despite Gutjahr’s encouraging assessment, other critics like Karl Esselborn are more skeptical and remark that: “die traditionelle Germanistik hat dagegen immer noch Mühe, von den älteren Vorurteilen gegen eine vermeintlich nur in konventionellen literarischen Formen die Ästhetik vernachlässigenden ‘Gastarbeiterliteratur’ [. . .] zur angemessenen Würdigung der nun plötzlich erfolgreichen Migrantenauforen überzugehen.”¹⁶²

Cultural Hybridity and Cultural Triangulation in German-Romanian Literature

The transcultural structure of texts by ethnic German writers and authors with a migration background is prompting scholars and critics to examine their texts through concepts of cultural hybridity. Although the rapid rise of hybridity studies continues to make its way in the academic community, interpreting transcultural literature through theories of

¹⁶⁰ See Ortrud Gutjahr, “Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft als europäische Kulturwissenschaft,” in *Germanistik, eine europäische Wissenschaft? Der Bologna-Prozess als Herausforderung*, ed. Nicole Colin, Joachim Umlauf, Alain Lattard (München: Iudicium, 2006): 110-45.

¹⁶¹ Karl Esselborn, “Neue Zugänge zur inter/transkulturellen deutschsprachigen Literatur,” in *Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur im Zeitalter globaler Migration*, ed. Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2009), 56-58.

¹⁶² Ibid., 45.

cultural hybridity needs to be approached with caution. A question of current debate is the extent to which postcolonial theory also speaks to literature of non-colonial settings. Despite the fact that transcultural literature and postcolonial literature show considerable overlap in the themes they examine that are linked to identity, difference and alterity, cultural hybridity, guest and host communities/countries, migration and displacement, there are also significant differences between the two, as not all migration takes place in a colonial setting, and not all postcolonial literature deals with migration. While the presence in Germany of *Gastarbeiter*, for example, was not a result of colonialism, their literature has much in common with postcolonial literature. Even though a comprehensive investigation of the similarities and differences between themes analyzed in migration and postcolonial literatures is beyond the scope of this study, I will briefly examine several current theoretical and critical approaches to the concept of the “third space” in German transcultural literature. I chose this particular concept because it applies to the works of Herta Müller and Richard Wagner.

According to Homi Bhabha the hybrid subject negotiates a new space, which he calls the “Third Space” contoured as an interstitial passage between fixed identifications. Conceptualized as “a space that can accept and regulate the differential structure of the moment of intervention without rushing to produce a unity of the social antagonism or contradiction, the Third Space contests the terms and territories of various cultures via “a dialogic process, through which something altogether new emerges.”¹⁶³ As “a contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation” and “the cutting edge of translation and negotiation,” the Third Space, can be explored and articulated through cultural

¹⁶³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 25, 28.

statements and systems of meaning.¹⁶⁴ Seeking to transcend the binary mode of thought and understanding by going beyond a synthesis of the colonial and nationalist positions, the Third Space accounts for the co-presence of antinomies, hypostases of duality or ambiguity, closeness or remoteness, contact or separation, conflict or resolution.¹⁶⁵

As it witnesses the production, rather than just the reflection, of cultural meaning, the Third Space further evinces the more or less fixed nationalities, ethnicities, and identities as they encounter each other aiming to show that “the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity” and that “signs can be appropriated translated, rehistoricized and read anew.”¹⁶⁶ Due to its productive capacities, the Third Space “may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*.”¹⁶⁷ Bhabha further argues that by exploring the “*in-between* space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves.”¹⁶⁸

In German migration literature the idea of in-betweenness was initially conceptualized as a “reservation designed to contain, restrain, and impede new knowledge, not enable it.”¹⁶⁹ Jim Jordan, who coined the term of the “two worlds paradigm,” remarks that from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, many critics and migrant writers resorted to images, metaphors, and motifs of performance to convey the migrant

¹⁶⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 37.

¹⁶⁵ Monica Popescu, “Cultural Liminality and Hybridity: The Romanian Transition,” *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 86 (Fall 2001): 49. See also Carmen Andras, “Romania and Its Images in British Travel Writing: In-between Peripherality and Cultural Interference,” *TRANS. Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 14 April 2003, 30 Sept. 2005 <<http://www.inst.at/trans/14Nr/andras14.htm>>.

¹⁶⁶ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 36-7.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁶⁹ Leslie A. Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto,” in *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*, ed. Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi (Rotterdam: Nai, 2001), 245.

as suspended, trapped, or stranded between two worlds, that of origin and of migration.¹⁷⁰ Migrant writers and their literature were expected to “bridge” or “mediate” the gap between the two worlds, cultures, and countries.¹⁷¹ Due to the rise of the generation of writers of the “border crossers” who construct a consciously hyphenated identity, in-betweenness is conceived as a space in which cultures and languages overlap and intermingle. Analyzing recent Turkish-German literature, Leslie A. Adelson conceptualizes in-betweenness as “Sites of Reorientation” (“Orte des Umdenkens”) or “imaginative sites, where cultural orientation is being radically rethought.”¹⁷² By using the metaphor of the “Tor” (which Adelson translates as “threshold”),¹⁷³ which she borrows from the renowned Japanese-German writer Yoko Tawada’s interpretation of Paul Celan’s poems, Adelson replaces the image of the bridge. According to her, Turkish-German literature is a “threshold that beckons, not a tired bridge ‘between two worlds’” (248).¹⁷⁴ Although she bases her theory on the example of Yoko Tawada, Adelson does not explore how these “Sites of Reorientation” function in other hybrid German writers and texts.

Unlike Adelson, who bases her discussion of the in-between space only on the example of Turkish-German writers, Azade Seyhan examines the “third space” with regard to an array of bi- and multicultural writers who have emigrated to the US and

¹⁷⁰ Some of these metaphors and images of performance include: tight rope walking, bridges, doorways, and gates. Moray McGowan has remarked that the use of such metaphors can be ironic or even self-mocking. See Moray McGowan, “Brücken und Brücken-Köpfe: Wandlungen einer Metapher in der türkisch-deutschen Literatur” in *Die andere deutsche Literatur: Istanbul Vorträge*, ed. Manfred Durzak and Nilüfer Kuruyazici (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 31-40, particularly pag. 37.

¹⁷¹ For an ample discussion of the “two worlds paradigm” see Jim Jordan, “More than a Metaphor: The Passing of the Two Worlds Paradigm in German-Language Diasporic Literature,” *German Life and Letters* 59.4 (October 2006): 488-99, here p. 498.

¹⁷² Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto,” 247.

¹⁷³ The literal translation of *Tor* is “gate.”

¹⁷⁴ Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto,” 248. For an ample discussion on Tawada’s interpretation of Celan’s poems see Adelson, “Against Between: A Manifesto,” 247.

Germany from various countries around the world. Seyhan conceives the “in-between space” as a “terrain of writing,” a “third geography” of memory, language, and translation.¹⁷⁵ She argues that the texts which thematize this space represent both a “celebration and an incisive critique of the different cultural spaces they inhabit.”¹⁷⁶ In sharing their experiences generated by linguistic, geographic, historical, cultural dis- and re-location, writers of the “third geography,” “invite their readers to see culture not as a fundamental model but in its interaction with other cultures.”¹⁷⁷ The participation of other cultures in the “third geography” is a key difference between Adelson’s and Seyhan’s conceptualizations of the in-between space.¹⁷⁸

With regard to German-Romanian authors, Richard Wagner maintains that they often strive to conquer (“erobern”) for themselves a “third space” outside of the “center-periphery” polarity.¹⁷⁹ For authors such as Paul Celan and Dieter Schlesak, “the third space” is a geographic location, i.e., Paris and Italy respectively, while for others like Oskar Pastior and Herta Müller, it is the forging of a personalized “Sprachwelt.”¹⁸⁰ Feeling confined by the “prefabricated and ideological language with its prescribed historical rules,” Oskar Pastior, for example, responded by inventing his own language in which familiar words or phrases become alien and meaning is elevated to another dimension.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, 15.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁷⁸ Deniz Göktürk warns, however, that while celebrating the “third space,” we ought to be cautious to remember local specificities and differences instead of grouping all hybrids in one “in-betweenness.” See Deniz Göktürk, “Turkish Delight—German Fright,” in *Mapping the Margins*, ed. Karen Ross and Deniz Derman (Cresskill: Hampton P, 2003), 180.

¹⁷⁹ Wagner, “Sprachdesaster und Identitätsfalle,” 351.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Qtd. in “Oskar Pastior,” *literaturfestival.com*. Internationales Literaturfestival Berlin. 13 Nov. 2009 <http://www.literaturfestival.com/bios1_3_6_1013.html>.

Wagner argues that in Müller's case, the "third space" constitutes the poetological language that she creates.¹⁸² Blending words, phrases, concepts, and sayings from Banat-Swabian dialect, the *Hochdeutsch* she learned in Romania, and Romanian, Müller probes the power of representation of language. Infused with unusual meaning, the combination of invented and existing terms creates in Müller's texts a private language of poetic resistance that negates the totalitarian repression of the narrators' world. Although Wagner does not specify what "the third space" is in his case, I would argue that it is an identity model that emerges as a result of avoiding the extreme positions that the vast majority of ethnic German immigrants adopt after immigrating to Germany. Ethnic German immigrants choose to be either professional exiles, and therefore to remain at the "periphery," or they strive to become entirely assimilated and thus gravitate towards the "center." While the professional exiles keep hold of the past by continuing to cultivate their Banat-Swabian-Romanian cultural identity, those who strive to become entirely assimilated suppress their cultural origin in exchange for embracing West German culture.

While in Romania, both Wagner and Müller avoided adopting extreme paradigms of cultural identity: either remaining tied to the Banat-Swabian culture and mentality or caving in to the communist ideology. Being critical of both identity models, Wagner and Müller abandoned these "center"- "periphery" models and forged their own cultural and literary identity by negotiating elements of the Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and Western German languages and cultures. After immigrating to West Germany, Wagner and Müller continued to explore and negotiate paradigms of transcultural cultural identity. In

¹⁸² Wagner argues that Müller constructs her "third space" as a poetological language resulting from her "moralischen Verhandlung der Diktatur." Wagner, "Lehrjahre eines Immigranten," 351.

the next two chapters, I will analyze how the Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and Western German triangular structures play out in Wagner's and Müller's works and examine the extent to which they serve as viable models that help decode clichéd representations and images of cultural identity and relate cultural differences to matters of power and rhetoric rather than essence.

CHAPTER 4

BETWEEN THE “PERIPHERY”—“CENTER” POLARIZATION: CULTURAL IDENTITY IN RICHARD WAGNER’S FICTION

*Man ist zuhause, wo man sein Denken wiedererkennt.*¹

A versatile writer and the winner of numerous literary prizes,² Richard Wagner is considered one of the most prominent writers in contemporary German literature.³ At a time when much of the spotlight is on the literature in German written “under the sign of Turkish presence,” Wagner’s texts draw attention to several little-discussed categories of newcomers to Germany: ethnic Germans (particularly from Romania), East-Central Europeans, and former GDR citizens.⁴ An outspoken critic of the crimes of totalitarian regimes, especially the abusive treatment of ethnic Germans in communist Romania, Wagner also tackles several relatively under-explored aspects of the Holocaust like the genocide of the Roma, for example. While he examines the past, Wagner also scrutinizes the present. The effects of migration, displacement, consumerism, commodification of

¹ Qtd. in Alexander von Bormann, “Einspruch. Widerspruch. Zuspruch. Zur Rhetorik des zeitgenössischen Gedichts. Am Beispiel der rumäniendeutschen Lyrik, insbesondere Richard Wagners,” *Wespennest* 82 (1991): 20.

² The literary prizes that Wagner received include: the 1987 Leonce- und-Lena-Sonderpreis, the Andreas-Gryphius-prize in 1988, with Gerhardt Csejka, Helmuth Frauendorfer, Klaus Hensel, Johann Lippert, Herta Müller, Werner Söllner, William Totok the Deutscher Sprachpreis (1989); the Stipendium der Villa Massimo in Rom (1990/91), the Neuer deutscher Literaturpreis, first awarded in 2000, and the Georg Dehio Book Award in 2008.

³ Horst Schinzel describes Wagner as “einer der bemerkenswertesten Vertreter der Literatur deutscher Zunge, die ihre Ursprünge in den Randgebieten des Karpatenbogens hat.” Horst Schnitzel, “Erinnerung an die Anfänge.” Richard Wagners Erzählungen auch nach 15 Jahren faszinierend aktuell,” *Die Rumänien-Seiten* 28 Nov, 2008 <<http://rennkuckuck.de/php/buch/wagner.php>>.

⁴ Leslie A. Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

culture, and materialism on the formation of cultural identity in post-communist Eastern Europe and post-unification Germany are recurring themes in his texts.

Among the groups of recent immigrants to Germany that Wagner examines in his works, Banat Swabians occupy center stage. Wagner's interest in this ethnic group is motivated not only by his own cultural roots but also by his frustrations with what he calls the "unwahrscheinliche Ignoranz" of West Germans, who are either uninformed or misinformed about the history and culture of ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe and their intricate cultural ties with Germany.⁵ Beyond examining the history of ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe, Wagner's works provide first-hand insights into the struggles and challenges that have shaped the Banat Swabians' cultural identity both during the communist regime in Romania and after they immigrate to West Germany.

In this chapter, I will discuss Wagner's treatment of cultural identity in two stories: "Ausreiseantrag" (1991) and "Begrüßungsgeld" (1991), and two novels: *In der Hand der Frauen* (1995) and *Miss Bukarest* (2001). I have selected these four works because they introduce three different models of German cultural identity. Stirner, the protagonist of "Ausreiseantrag" and "Begrüßungsgeld" is a Banat-Swabian writer who struggles with his German identity and writing career both during the communist dictatorship and after he immigrates to West Germany. While pressured by the regime to conform to the communist ideology, Stirner's German cultural identity becomes fragmented to the point of being almost annihilated. "Begrüßungsgeld" depicts Stirner in West Germany. At the "center," he succeeds in negotiating a unique triangular cultural identity between the "periphery" and the "center" which combines elements of Banat-

⁵ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 227.

Swabian, Romanian, and Western languages and cultures. The first person narrator of *In der Hand der Frauen* is a Banat-Swabian writer who has been living and writing in Berlin for eight years. While he is quite familiar with the life and culture of the “center,” his cultural identity remains marked by the “periphery,” i.e., his experiences in the Banat and communist Romania. Like Stirner, he succeeds in negotiating a new, hybrid cultural identity which combines elements of both the “center” and the “periphery.” Klaus Richartz, one of the three protagonists in *Miss Bukarest*, is a Banat-Swabian writer who is under the illusion that he has succeeded in constructing a new life and identity outside the “center”-“periphery” polarization. When challenged by two friends from the “periphery,” Richartz is reminded that his true identity is defined by his past in communist Romania.

In the following, I will present a brief account of Wagner’s literary biography, in which I focus on the development of his cultural identity. To this end, I will examine some of Wagner’s representative interviews and essays in which he addresses the manner in which he negotiates Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German cultures and languages. I believe that the transformations of Wagner’s cultural identity offer valuable background information for his treatment of cultural identity in the texts that I will discuss. After a brief overview of male protagonists in Wagner’s works, I will present four analyses in which I discuss the ways in which the three Banat-Swabian writers negotiate Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German cultures, languages, and politics in order to construct personalized cultural identities and to reinvent themselves as writers. In his portrayal of these three characters, Wagner demonstrates that identity is not given, but individually constructed as the result of a constant process of transformation. Disrupting notions of homogenous and anti-essentialist cultural frameworks of identity,

Wagner's models of cultural identity propose cultural definitions of Germanness over biological, territorial, and state-centered concepts. In addition, they offer fresh insights into the increasingly transnational and transcultural makeup of Germanness in the twenty-first century.

An Introduction to Richard Wagner's Life and Works

Richard Wagner was born in 1952 in Lovrin, in the Banat region of Romania. Growing up in a village in which half the population was made up of ethnic Germans, Wagner had a sure sense of his German cultural identity.⁶ Moreover, in the Banat all ethnic groups (Romanians, Hungarians, and Serbs) considered and treated the Banat Swabians as "Germans." At seventeen, Wagner started to write and publish poems in German in local newspapers. Considering himself a German writer, Wagner regarded Germany as his cultural center: "Für mich war immer wichtig, was in Deutschland passiert, in der Gegenwartsliteratur, in der Moderne."⁷ Longing for the "center," Wagner distanced himself from the "periphery"—the Banat-Swabians and their culture. Although he felt "zu Hause," Wagner was never "heimisch" in this minority.⁸ His aversion towards the German minority in the Banat, whom he described as a "konservative bis reaktionäre Bevölkerungsgruppe," was owed to their unacknowledged collaboration with the Nazis and the "sinister nationalistic tendencies" of the culture they represented and practiced.⁹

⁶ Wagner notes that before 1945, the village was exclusively populated by ethnic Germans. See Rock, "A German Comes Home to Germany," 55.

⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁸ Richard Wagner, "Die Bedeutung der Ränder oder vom Inneren zum Äußersten und wieder zurück," *neue literatur: "Ideen in Not"* 1 (1994): 46.

⁹ Wagner further remarks that "die Generation meines Vaters war zu 90 Prozent in der Waffen-SS, die pseudo-intellektuelle Schicht, das waren die reaktionären Dorflehrer." Only when Banat-Swabian men got drunk did they allude to their infamous link with the Nazis while singing "Landeslieder." See Susanne Broos, "Richard Wagner: Politik ist immer eine Dimension in meinem Schreiben," 20.

Reflecting on his Banat-Swabian cultural roots, years after he resettled in West Germany, Wagner remarked that, despite his critical attitude towards the Banat-Swabians, he remained a product of a minority group. Being part of an ethnic minority also created some advantages for Wagner's intellectual and artistic development.¹⁰ Living and writing as an ethnic German writer in the dominant Romanian culture, Wagner was able to keep his distance from the majority and analyze it from the perspective of an outsider.¹¹ Moreover, in the Banat where various ethnic groups lived together, Wagner saw first-hand the example of a multicultural society whose success was based on developing and maintaining mutual respect and consensus.¹²

After moving to Timișoara, the capital of the Banat, Wagner studied *Germanistik* and Romanian language and literature. In a 2006 interview for the Romanian literary journal, *România literară*, Wagner remarked that Romanian language and culture constituted a cultural bridge that gave him access to other Romance languages and cultures, like French, Italian, and Spanish, and the history and culture of the Balkans. Wagner used this knowledge for the collections of essays and novels he published after he immigrated to Germany.

In 1972 Wagner joined the Communist Party of Romania being convinced that all “intellectual and artistic activity should have a political dimension.”¹³ He hoped that through his writing, he could contribute to a socialism that was more than “das verzehrte Gesicht der Mächtigen.”¹⁴ Despite criticizing the communist regime in their writings,

¹⁰ Rock, “A German Comes Home to Germany,” 67.

¹¹ Rodica Binder, “Richard Wagner—Vămuiala unui geamantan literar,” *România literară* 32. 8 Nov. 2006, 17 Feb. 2010 <http://www.romlit.ro/richard_wagner_-_vmuiala_unui_geamantan_literar>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Rock, “A German Comes Home to Germany,” 56.

¹⁴ Gerhard Csejka, “Richard Wagner,” in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (München: Text + Kritik, 1991), 2.

Wagner and other young ethnic German writers felt that they were at the time “under less pressure than critical ethnic Romanian writers who saw themselves as having a cultural role to play, with opposition to the dictatorship necessary for the survival of Romanian culture.”¹⁵ The same year, Wagner became a founding member of the literary group *Aktionsgruppe Banat* (1972-75), whose political *engagement* had a resounding impact on his thinking and writing to the point that it became a way of life for him. “Politik ist immer eine Dimension in meinem Schreiben,” Wagner explains, “und das ist mir sehr wichtig. [. . .] In einer Diktatur ist überall Politik. Ich stelle sie nicht ins Gedicht, sie kommt von alleine hin.”¹⁶

In 1973, Wagner published his first volume of poems titled *Klartext*, which clearly show both the influence of Bertolt Brecht as well as Wagner’s ability to exploit the poetic potential of “concrete language.” Terms like “Lakonie,” “Sachlichkeit,” “Understatement,” and “Ironie,” which Wagner uses to describe Brecht’s lyricism, apply just as well to his texts written in Romania at the time and later in Germany.¹⁷ But more than showing his admiration for Brecht, Wagner was searching in these poems for a tone to oppose the false pathos of the Banat Swabian *Dorf-* and *Heimatliteratur* and of Socialist Realism: the Soviet-imposed aesthetic consisted of an “artificial, arbitrary set of literary dictates” to which every writer in Romania was supposed to conform.¹⁸ Forced to

¹⁵ Rock, “‘A German Comes Home to Germany,’” 56.

¹⁶ Bormann, “Einspruch. Widerspruch. Zuspruch,” 18, 20.

¹⁷ Qtd. in David Rock, “‘From the Periphery to the Centre (sic!) and Back Again:’ An Introduction to the Life and Works of Richard Wagner,” in *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*, ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 134, endnote 14.

¹⁸ Rock, “‘From the Periphery to the Centre (sic!) and Back Again,’” 124 and Manolescu, “Introduction,” ix.

forsake aesthetic pluralism, writers were expected to glorify “the achievements of the workers and peasants in carrying out the Communist Revolution.”¹⁹

The *Aktionsgruppe*’s open criticism of the official ideology quickly caught the attention of the *Securitate* in the fall of 1975. As a result, Wagner, Gerhard Ortinau, William Totok—two other members of the *Aktionsgruppe*—and the critic Gerhardt Csekja were arrested and brutally interrogated. The group was dissolved shortly thereafter and Wagner subsequently joined the literary organization *Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn*, the only literary group for ethnic Germans approved by the authorities. His subsequent poems published in the volume *die invasion der uhren* (1977) clearly show his farewell to his “Frühlingshoffnungen.”²⁰ The self-ironic tone in these poems shows the influence of the *Neue Innerlichkeit* movement in West German literature at the time. Wagner records in a sober, discursive language what Csekja calls “das Ausbleiben von reeller Erfahrung.”²¹ The increasing bankruptcy of utopian thinking and the multitude of obstacles encountered when attempting to experience reality that Wagner tackled in this collection became central themes in later works such as: *Der Anfang einer Geschichte* (1980), *Anna und die Uhren. Ein Lesebuch für kleine Leute* (1981), *Hotel California I. Der Tag, der mit einer Wunde begann* (1980), *Hotel California II* (1981), *Gegenlicht* (1983), *Das Auge des Feuilletons. Geschichten und Notizen* (1984), and *Rostregen* (1986), which was published in Germany. Of these volumes, *Hotel California I* (1980) and *Hotel California II* (1981), which were specifically aimed at German-Romanian readers, distinguish themselves through their aggressively defiant and rebellious tone.²²

¹⁹ Manolescu, “Introduction,” ix.

²⁰ Csekja, “Richard Wagner,” 3.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Rock, “‘A German Comes Home to Germany,’” 58.

In 1979, following employment as a teacher of German in Hunedoara, Wagner moved back to Timișoara. Utterly disillusioned, he realized “daß mit dem System nichts mehr zu machen ist,” for what was practiced in Romania under the guise of socialism could not be reformed.²³ From 1979 to 1983 Wagner worked as the Banat’s cultural correspondent for the weekly newspaper *Karpatenrundschau*, located in Brașov (Germ. Kronstadt), Transylvania. As a result of his refusal to conform to the guidelines of Socialist Realism, Wagner was greatly pressured by the editorial office and eventually forced to leave his position with the newspaper. His repeated applications for a post with the Bucharest-based literary journal *Neue Literatur* were unsuccessful. In 1983, when the interference by the *Securitate* became unbearable, he left the literary organization *Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn* literary group. As several of his fellow German-Romanian writers had immigrated to Germany, Wagner experienced an increased sense of personal isolation.²⁴ The volume of poetry *Gegenlicht* (1983) and the collection of short stories *das auge des feuilletons* (1984) betray the author’s attitude of resignation. Depressed by the conformity around him, he conceded “daß die Menschen alles mitmachen, daß sie bereit sind, diesen ganzen Wahnsinn, dieses Absurde mitzumachen.”²⁵

In 1984, as a result of an open letter to the Romanian Communist Party and the Writers’ Union, Wagner and other German-Romanian authors were banned from publishing and seeking employment as writers. Consequently, many of these writers applied to immigrate to West Germany. Being allowed to publish only “Nebensächliches,” which would have been used to legitimize the regime, Wagner felt

²³ Rock, “From the Periphery to the Centre and Back Again,” 125.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Bormann, “Einspruch. Widerspruch. Zuspruch,” 20.

that the only option left was to apply for an exit visa.²⁶ Together with his then wife, Herta Müller, Wagner left Romania in 1987 and resettled in Berlin, where he has been living since.

Unlike the majority of the Banat-Swabian immigrants who resettled in the south and southwest of Germany, the region from which their ancestors had departed in the eighteenth century to go to the Banat, Wagner chose to live in Berlin. As a cosmopolitan meeting-point between East and West, Berlin has become for Wagner the nearest place to a cultural home.²⁷ Considered the “center” of the German cultural world, Berlin, unlike any other city in Germany, is, in his view, also a “periphery” because of its links with socialism and communism.²⁸ Since resettling in Berlin, Wagner sees himself as “Central European,” a concept which he investigates in his essay *Völker ohne Signale* (1992) and the collection of essays *Mythendämmerung* (1993).²⁹ Like many Eastern European dissidents, Central Europe, *Mitteleuropa*, is for Wagner the only concept that represents the great cultural and linguistic diversity of Eastern Europe.³⁰ When living and writing in the Banat, he yearned for Germany as a cultural “center.” Yet in Berlin, Wagner quickly became aware of the fact that the “center” can threaten both the identity and productivity of a writer: “Doch wer die Mitte erreicht, schreibt nicht mehr. Er verläßt die Sprache der Literatur und findet die Sprachregelung der Gesellschaft.”³¹ Consequently, he chose to remain on the fringe as a critical outsider producing a literature “der Rand des

²⁶ Rock, “From the Periphery to the Centre and Back Again,” 126.

²⁷ Qtd. in Rock, “A German Comes Home to Germany,” 68.

²⁸ Rock, “From the Periphery to the Centre and Back Again,” 131.

²⁹ Ibid., 129.

³⁰ Broos, “Richard Wagner: Politik ist immer eine Dimension in meinem Schreiben,” 20.

³¹ Wagner, “Die Bedeutung der Ränder oder vom Inneren zum Äußersten und wieder zurück,” 37.

Wirklichen.”³² In addition, Wagner also realized that unlike in communist Romania, in Germany he was now able to speak and write freely. As a result, Wagner decided to give shape to the intricate complexity of the relationship between past and present:

Jenseits davon schreit die Vergangenheit und ruft die Gegenwart nach vertrackter Beschreibung. Auch wenn es so aussieht, als wollte keiner etwas über die Vergangenheit und von der Gegenwart was hören. Weil jetzt kaum einer dem ganzen Desaster einen Unterhaltungswert abgewinnen mag. Die Literatur braucht einen langen Atem.³³

Since resettling in West Germany, Wagner has published over thirty volumes of essays, novels, and poetry. He is also a regular contributor to various newspapers like the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and the *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, and the political weblog *Die Achse des Guten*, where he writes commentaries on current political and social themes with a particular focus on Germany and Eastern Europe. Wagner’s works represent historical, cultural, and political incursions that oscillate back and forth between past and present, Western and Eastern Europe, or Europe and the USA. Wagner has been a resident writer in the United States. He is frequently invited to talk shows and TV programs and literary conferences and workshops.

Wagner’s “Erzählungen” “Ausreiseantrag” (1988) and “Begrüßungsgeld” (1989), published after arriving in Germany, introduce readers to the condition of the Banat-Swabian writer in communist Romania and as an *Aussiedler* in West Germany. These novels also launch the first portrait in a series of Banat-Swabian male protagonists who attempt to construct their own cultural identity. They are featured in works like: *Die Muren von Wien* (1990), *Der Mann, der Erdrutsche sammelte* (1994), *In der Hand der Frauen* (1995), *Miss Bukarest* (2001), and *Habseligkeiten* (2004).

³² Wagner, “Die Bedeutung der Ränder oder vom Inneren zum Äußersten und wieder zurück,” 49.

³³ Richard Wagner, “Kulturbrief aus Berlin,” *Literatur und Kritik* 283.4 (April 1994): 11.

In his novels: *Giancarlos Koffer* (1993) and *Im Grunde sind wir alle Sieger* (1998), Wagner explores the intricate historical and cultural links between Eastern and Western Europe. *Lisas geheimes Buch* (1996) illustrates the difficulties of former GDR-citizens in the reunified Germany. Wagner's most recent novel, *Das reiche Mädchen* (2007), investigates the effects on the second generation of German industrialists who used Roma forced laborers during the Holocaust. The profound similarities and the tight interconnectedness between the mechanisms of oppression developed by the *Securitate* in Romania and the Stasi in the GDR are central themes discussed in *Miss Bukarest* (2003).

Wagner's collections of essays offer incisive criticism and informed opinions on the same subjects that the author tackles in his fiction. The focus in his collections of essays *Völker ohne Signale. Zum Epochenbruch in Osteuropa.* (1992), *Mythendämmerung. Einwürfe eines Mitteleuropäers* (1993), and *Der leere Himmel, Reise in das Innere des Balkan* (2003) is the history of South Eastern Europe over the last one hundred years.³⁴ Wagner examines the Romanian communist dictatorship and its disastrous political, economic, and cultural effects in books like *Der Sturz des Tyrannen. Rumänien und das Ende der Diktatur* (co-edited with Helmuth Frauendorfer, 1990) and *Sonderweg Rumänien. Bericht aus einem Entwicklungsland* (1991). In his collection of essays: *Der deutsche Horizont. Vom Schicksal eines guten Landes* (2006), Wagner offers a brilliant critique of conceptualizations of "Germanness" in the twentieth century. His 2008 collection of essays: *Es reicht. Gegen den Ausverkauf unserer Werte* examines Europe's cultural roots.

As this brief overview of his works shows, Wagner is a writer with a unique voice on the German literary scene. Twenty years after he left Romania, his writing reflects a

³⁴ Rock, "'A German Comes Home to Germany,'" 60.

complex transcultural identity which he continues to explore. In a 2009 interview, Wagner talks about the different, albeit complementary, relationships he has with Germany and the Banat which reflect his two conceptualizations of “home.” Thus, while intellectually he can call Germany “mein Land,” emotionally, he is “zu Hause” in his experiences in the Banat of his childhood:

Das ist also auch mein Land, weil ich hier lebe und nicht nur hier wohne. Ich bin Teil dieses Landes, demnächst bin ich 20 Jahre hier, und als deutscher Schriftsteller in Berlin beteilige ich mich an den Debatten dieses Landes, den Problemen auf der einen Seite. Auf der anderen Seite habe ich Bezug zu den Orten hier gewonnen. Es ist aber so, dass es ein anderes Verhältnis ist als das zu den Orten in Rumänien. Die Orte, an denen man aufgewachsen ist, wo man die Kindheit verbracht hat, da hat man ein anderes Verhältnis dazu. Man spürt da, riecht und fühlt was anderes als in den Orten, in denen man später „zu hause“ ist. Das heißt, wenn es regnet und der Regen einen Geruch hat, so ist es der Geruch des Regens aus dem Dorf im Banat, in meiner Kindheit. Aber auch, wenn das damit nichts zu tun hat, in meinem Kopf mache ich die Assoziation da und nicht mit etwas von hier.³⁵

Male Protagonists in Wagner’s Novels

All the novels Wagner published so far feature men as protagonists and/or as narrators. They range from Banat Swabians to former GDR citizens and East-Central European immigrants to West Germany. All have a penchant for strolling and traveling, developing social and erotic relationships with women, and narrating their life experiences. With the exception of *Lisas geheimes Buch*, *Das reiche Mädchen*, and episodes from *Habseligkeiten*, Wagner’s male protagonists focus on their own personal stories relating, their wanderings between the languages and cultures of the “periphery” (Eastern, Southern, and Central Europe, and the Banat) and on the “center” (West Germany, particularly Berlin). As outsiders at the “center” and insiders the “periphery,” they

³⁵ Rodica Binder, “Begegnungen – Deutsche Autor(inn)en sehen die Welt. Richard Wagner in Rumänien,” *Goethe.de* Jan. 2007. Goethe Institut. 12 April 2010
<<http://www.goethe.de/KUE/lit/dos/beg/wag/de1843154.htm>>.

develop a fluctuating, fluid cultural identity, which is continually (re)invented and performed.

Wagner's Banat-Swabian protagonists distinguish themselves from other male characters through their fascinating life stories which offer detailed insights into the lives and work of various types of ethnic German writers in communist Romania and West Germany: Stirner, the protagonist of "Ausreiseantrag" and "Begrüßungsgeld" is a journalist at a German paper in a large city in the Banat; the first-person narrator of *In der Hand der Frauen* is a teacher of German and a poet who lives in a small city in Romania, and Klaus Richartz in *Miss Bukarest* is a writer who has left the Banat to work in Bucharest, Romania's capital, as a part-time editor and translator. After they arrive in Germany, they quickly discover that, as in Romania, they feel and are considered strangers and outsiders. Wagner's novels depict the protagonists' struggle with the construction of an individualized cultural identity and their attempts to reinvent themselves as writers living at the "center." Critics like David Rock and Graham Jackman suggest that these protagonists are *alter ego* figures of the author since their biographical details closely resemble those of Wagner's himself.³⁶ Nonetheless they have remarkably distinct personalities. Their language, habits, psychology, relationships, and writing interests and style present them as self-sustained individuals who have convincing, individualized life stories.

³⁶ Rock, "From the Periphery to the Centre and Back Again," 132 and Jackman, "'Alone in a Crowd,'" 157. See also Csejka, "Richard Wagner," 1-5, and Matthias Keidel, *Die Wiederkehr der Flaneure. Literarische Flanerie und flanierendes Denken zwischen Wahrnehmung und Reflexion* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 137.

“Ausreiseantrag”: The Fragmentation and Dissolution of German Cultural Identity at the “Periphery”

When Wagner arrived in Berlin in 1987, he brought with him a manuscript that he managed to smuggle over the border.³⁷ Wagner published this text as *Ausreiseantrag* in 1988.³⁸ *Ausreiseantrag* was followed by *Begrüßungsgeld* published in 1989. In 1991, the two texts, which Wagner calls “Erzählungen,”³⁹ were published in one volume.⁴⁰ Both texts feature the same central character, the Banat-Swabian journalist Stirner. Set in a large city (most likely Timișoara) in the Banat in the 1980s, “Ausreiseantrag” records the events that lead Stirner and his wife, Sabine, to file an application to immigrate to West Germany. Titled after the stipend offered by the German government to immigrants, “Begrüßungsgeld” narrates Stirner’s and Sabine’s experiences following their arrival in Germany. Given the information Stirner offers in “Ausreiseantrag” about historical events and economic and political aspects of daily life in communist Romania, the text has a documentary character. Stirner’s blunt criticism of Ceaușescu and his regime and his coded language make “Ausreiseantrag” a “text for the drawer.”⁴¹ The fact that Wagner smuggled the manuscript over the border and published it in Germany supports the interpretation of “Ausreiseantrag” as a politically subversive text.

Narrated “through the optic of a single consciousness,” “Ausreiseantrag” depicts the bleakest period of Ceaușescu’s dictatorial rule, when food rationing was introduced and heating, gas and electricity blackouts became the rule.⁴² During this time, artists and

³⁷ Wagner, “Lehrjahre eines Immigranten,” 45.

³⁸ The English translation was published in 1990 under the title *Exit*.

³⁹ “Ausreiseantrag” and “Begrüßungsgeld” are lengthier texts, not short stories.

⁴⁰ I use the 1991 edition, Richard Wagner, *Begrüßungsgeld. Ausreiseantrag*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Luchterhand, 1991). All page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to this edition.

⁴¹ Stirner refers to Ceaușescu as the “geliebte Führer” and to people by their first initials like: “der Dichter U” or “der Kollege Z.” See “Ausreiseantrag,” 36, 11, 35.

⁴² Jackman, “‘Alone in a Crowd,’” 158.

writers were forced to abide by the strict ideological prescriptions of Socialist Realism and dedicate their works to singing the praises of the “glorious” achievements of the Party and of its “beloved leader.” Stirner joins the Communist Party hoping to change something from the inside (41). Ceaușescu’s dictatorship, though, shows him that socialism is in effect working for the “‘abstract’ human being through the systematic destruction of the ‘concrete’ human being: the individual.”⁴³ As the communist regime turns him into an “opponent of the regime” and an “enemy of the State,” Stirner becomes doubly marginalized, as a writer and an ethnic German (62). Despite his self-perception as a German writer, Stirner increasingly feels like a translator of German: “Weil Stirner deutsch schrieb, war Schreiben für ihn oft Übersetzen. Er dachte deutsch, aber um ihn herum wurde rumänisch geredet” (79).

Like many artists and intellectuals in his situation, Stirner cultivates at first a split identity separating his public life from his private interests. At his day job, he produces articles that fulfill to some extent the Party’s ideological expectations, while in private he writes “für sich selbst [und] für seine Bücher”(12). Stirner’s desperate efforts to keep his job at a newspaper that subscribed to the Party’s politicized aesthetics and his futile struggle to find a language of expression and an audience for the texts and subjects that interest him are accented by the gradual fragmentation of his sense of cultural identity, which is paralleled by his loss of spatial and linguistic mobility. The structure and language of “Ausreiseantrag” masterfully reflect the fragmentation processes, disorientation, and isolation that Stirner experiences.

⁴³ Mihaela Miroiu, “From Pseudo-Power to Lack of Power,” *The European Journal of Women’s Studies* 1 (1994): 107-09.

Episodes that depict Stirner's inner agony alternate with snap-shot-like fragments that illustrate the dire material shortages that people around him have to put up with: a woman and her child gather moldy bread from a pile of garbage, people in outdated or worn-out clothes take their Sunday walks among cement apartment complexes, or, like Stirner, stand during the week in endless lines to buy eggs, salami, frozen chickens, and butter. Most of these scenes are brief. Recorded on separate pages, they interrupt the narrative that depicts Stirner's thoughts and actions. Their distinct *Verfremdungseffekt* emphasizes Stirner's growing alienation and isolation in the bleak atmosphere of the state, which parallel the increasing external social decline of the world around him.

Maintaining a split identity becomes problematic as the newspaper increasingly pressures Stirner to produce articles that disseminate the Party ideology. While his boss instructs him on how to write in a manner that would serve the interests of the regime, Stirner is shocked to learn that his texts are supposed to work like a "Pille" whose effects should become evident only after the readers swallow it (24). The image of the "pill" connotes both medicine and poison. Communist indoctrination was indeed presented to the people as a medicine or cure, yet its effect was that of poison. Stirner's personal drama is intensified by the fact that the regime had "occupied" both the Romanian and the German languages (41). He feels a deep aversion towards Romanian, because as the "Staatssprache" it has become a powerful instrument of the regime. Used for indoctrination purposes, words in both languages had become ambivalent and meaningless. The image that Stirner uses to illustrate the fact that the regime was manipulating language for its own purposes is that of a circus: "Clowns tummelten sich auf der offenen Bühne des Regimes und warfen mit den Wörtern um sich" (41).

Like Romanian, German also shows the effects of communist indoctrination. Stirner learns about the alarming extent of the contamination of the German language through several “Lektionen” that his wife, Sabine, is presented with at the school where she teaches German as a foreign language. Instead of introducing her students to patriotic poems and concepts of the communist jargon like “Planübertreibung” and “Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft,” which are direct translations in German of the Romanian expressions: *depășire de plan* (“harvest that exceeds the plan”) and *cooperativă agricolă de producție* (“cooperative agricultural enterprise”),⁴⁴ Sabine teaches words like “Salz,” “Aprikose,” and “Ente” (37).⁴⁵ Although the German language and poems that Sabine teaches are age-appropriate and help students to learn about nature, a fellow ethnic German teacher quickly denounces Sabine to the Principal complaining that she does not comply with the Party’s ideological prescriptions (37). The effect of the communist indoctrination is evident when one of Sabine’s students confronts her defiantly after she skips a patriotic poem: “Genosse Lehrerin, warum haben wir dieses Gedicht übersprungen?”(38).

Stirner tries to cultivate an ideology-free German by reaching out to the German-speaking world outside the state. His efforts are, however, unsuccessful. The books that he orders in the West are missing from the packages that friends in West Germany send him. Letters from Western friends do not arrive, or if they do, they are damaged, bearing

⁴⁴ The Romanian terms *cooperativă agricolă de producție* translated in German as “Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft,” abbreviated as “LPG,” which also used in the GDR, derives from the Russian *kolkhoz*. This was one of the many appellations for social and economic institutions established by the Soviet regime. See Richard E. Wood, “Russian Influences in the German of East Germany,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 6 (Apr. 1971): 63.

⁴⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Romanian are mine.

clear evidence that they have been intercepted and opened. The short-wave radios that enabled Stirner and Sabine to listen to Western shows in German vanish from the market.

For a while, Stirner is a “tolerated” author (57). The “Selbstzensur” that he practices has become like a virus that lives in him: “Man schreibt, und das Virus schreibt mit. Frißt sich langsam in den Text” (76). Stirner’s books are published only after the publishing house has heavily censored them. Unlike other authors whose patriotic poems are published on quality paper, one poem per page, Stirner’s poems are published on cheap paper. Each page is filled with several poems so that paper is not wasted and the prescriptions of the minister of culture are satisfied (57). The small number of volumes that Stirner is approved to publish, disappear very quickly from the bookstores, which prompts him to wonder if the rumor that the *Securitate* buys and burns the books of tolerated authors is in effect true. Even if the rumor was false, Stirner is still concerned with who his readers are, since his language and topics reflect only the interests of a small number of nonconformists within the German ethnic minority and an even smaller number of Romanian intellectuals who can read and understand German (60).

As Stirner is pressed by his boss at the newspaper to write about the achievements of factory workers and peasants, he tries to stand up for himself. His implicit opposition to the system shows him true to his name “Stirner,” which, as David Rock remarks, is a pun on the German idiom “jemanden die Stirn bieten.”⁴⁶ Attempting to come up with his own topic, Stirner leaves the ideology-infested city to go to a small town in the country, where a playwright known for his plays lives. Metaphorically, Stirner’s move from the city to the country could be seen as an attempt to move away from the center ruled by communist ideology to the periphery, where he hopes to find less indoctrination.

⁴⁶ Rock, “From the Periphery to the Centre and Back,” 126.

Stupefied, he discovers that the playwright went insane and is dying (19). Although the text does not specify what kind of plays the playwright used to produce, given the author's tragic fate and the fact that Stirner is greeted by the Party Secretary who gives him the news, it could be deduced that the playwright and his plays had become "uncomfortable" for the regime, which was most likely responsible for his insanity and imminent death.

Back in the city, Stirner is again under the heavy influence of communist ideology. As a result, he experiences a growing inner paralysis and cultural disorientation, which are illustrated by his decreased linguistic and physical mobility. He ceases to write and is shown moving minimally within confined spaces such as offices, waiting rooms, small apartment rooms, and restaurants. The only place where he still hopes to engage in vivid intellectual, critical conversations is the House of the Writers. However, when he visits this cultural center, he is struck by the isolationist attitude of his fellow writers: "Alle wollten unter sich bleiben, billig essen und ungestört über ihre Belange reden. Wie in einem Séparée" (45). The metaphor of the private room is, in Stirner's view, symptomatic of the indifference and isolationist attitude prevalent in the entire country: "Das ganze Land schien Stirner aus solchen Séparées zu bestehen. Keiner sah den anderen" (45). Stirner compares to a grand show⁴⁷ the systematic brain washing methods, which are carefully orchestrated and supervised by *Securitate* agents: "Alle sahen auf die Bühne [. . .] Sie saßen in Séparées, jeder seiner Bedeutung bewußt, und von Séparée zu Séparée gingen wie Kellner die Leute von der Staatssicherheit" (45-46).

⁴⁷ Grand, elaborate rallies, parades, and televised shows, in which poems and songs dedicated to praising the "exceptional" qualities and achievements of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, were prevalent during the last years of the communist dictatorship.

Although aware of the lie that they are presented with, people cannot object it: “alle sahen dieselbe Klamotte. Aber sie konnten es einander nicht sagen” (45).⁴⁸

Stirner’s growing alienation is perhaps best illustrated by his nightmare that is reminiscent of episodes from Kafka’s *Der Prozeß*. Here, Stirner is in a “verschachtelte” building in Bucharest (42). In his desperate efforts to find the room where he is scheduled to hold a reading, Stirner is horrified to realize that the building is located in a cemetery. In an open tomb, he discovers a naked couple having sex, and on another grave he finds parts of his lost luggage from which his manuscript is missing. After looking for a long time for the meeting room, Stirner finally arrives in a room full of people, some of whom he knows, but who do not notice his presence. Their talking is indistinguishable, like a babble and hum of voices, which Stirner cannot make any sense of (42-43). His acute linguistic alienation is paralleled by his increased spatial disorientation. Like the “Séparées” at the House of Writers, the layout of this curious room, which has many outlets but no exit, is yet another metaphor for the state in which Stirner feels increasingly as a captive.

Überall waren Ausgänge. Kaum machte man ein paar Schritte, befand man sich in einem Ausgang. Stirner versuchte es ein paarmal. Es war stets dasselbe. Er fürchtete den Raum zu verlieren. Er blieb stehen. Sofort befand er sich mitten im Raum. Er machte einen Schritt, einen einzigen Schritt, und schon stand er in einem Ausgang [...] Da merkte er, daß sich niemand bewegte. Alle redeten bloß. Auch Stirner fing an zu reden. Aber keiner antwortete ihm. Da merkte er, daß die Anwesenden nicht miteinander redeten, sondern jeder für sich. Man verstand auch nicht, was sie sagten, und wenn man versuchte, einen Schritt näher zu treten, stand man schon wieder in einem Ausgang. (45-46)

⁴⁸ One of the most abject lies devised by the regime regarded Elena Ceauşescu’s alleged outstanding scientific research. The book *Research in Chemistry and in the Technology of the Technology of Polymers* that was published in her name and translated into several languages was in effect a collection of essays by a staff of scientists. See Yosef Govrin, *Israeli-Romanian Relations at the End of the Ceauşescu Era* (Frank Cass: London, 2002), 39.

Most discouraging for Stirner is the fact that respected writers have turned into “Rädchen im System der allgemeinen Repression” (100). As “stamp-wielder” and “signature-artists” the writing activity of these authors has been reduced to the issuing of reports and denunciations.⁴⁹

Unable to produce ideologically suitable materials for the newspaper, Stirner is eventually fired. The dismissal letter issued by the editorial desk is syntactically the most fragmented text in “Ausreiseantrag.” This letter illustrates the despicable hypocrisy of Ceaușescu’s regime: dismissed employees were ordered to write their own resignation letters so that there would be no material proof that the institution, and by association the regime, was in effect responsible for the firing. Stirner is no exception; he is also ordered to write his own resignation letter: “Weil Sie. Nicht nachgekommen. Und auch. Nicht. Ihren Aufgaben. Sehen wir. Keine andere. Lösung. Als uns. Von Ihnen. Zu. Trennen. Ab ersten Dezember. Wir stellen Ihnen frei, selber zu kündigen. Wenn Sie das nicht tun, sehen wir uns genötigt. Laut Paragraph. Sie zu entlassen” (70). The numerous periods that confer a staccato tone to this passage are not arbitrarily inserted. Placed after certain words, they show the absurdity of the letter’s content.

Stirner is not too surprised by his dismissal, but is hopeful that his boss will help him find employment somewhere else. What he does not realize initially, however, is that the dismissal letter indicates not only that he is no longer wanted at the newspaper, but also that he has become “uncomfortable” for the regime. The Party representatives that he turns to in the hope of finding employment act as if they were genuinely concerned for Stirner’s well-being. They write down his concerns and promise to help, yet in the end

⁴⁹ I use Quintin Hoare’s translation of “Stempelinhaber” and “Unterschriftenmaler.” Richard Wagner, *Exit: A Romanian Story*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London, New York: Verso, 1990), 81.

they merely go through the motions. The only available position that they offer to Stirner is that of a Party activist, an offer which he declines (112). Stirner soon realizes that “eine große unsichtbare Hand” was erasing his appeals, and that the regime was actually blocking all his employment inquiries (112). He compares his futile efforts to find employment to writing without letters: “Es war als ob er schreiben würde, und auf dem Papier erschienen keine Buchstaben. Und er finge immer wieder von vorne an, und es wäre immer dasselbe” (112).

Unable to find employment, Stirner walks aimlessly through the city streets feeling increasingly alienated and isolated. For a while, he attempts to write about what he sees and hears in the streets. As he watches people and listens in on their conversations, he hopes to find “the meaning of the world” but discovers instead “the gutter in people’s heads” (75). He listens in on people’s conversations and jokes in Romanian, which he then tries to translate into German (79). Disappointed, he realizes that the German translations cannot capture the “Reiz” that the Romanian dialogues and jokes have (79). Consequently, as a writer, Stirner feels linguistically and culturally ever more like an “Ausländer”:

Und wollte er einen Dialog wiedergeben, einen aus der Straßenbahn, mußte er ihn übersetzen, und der Dialog verlor seinen Reiz. Das ist nicht zu beschreiben, hieß es in Gesprächen. Oder: Es wäre Sache der Rumänen. Aber die schreiben ja für die Ewigkeit. Das war eine Anspielung auf deren auratische Poesie. Als Schriftsteller war Stirner ein Ausländer. (79)

Stirner’s growing linguistic paralysis is further accented by his increased disorientation and decreased physical mobility. His strolls through parks, among apartment complexes, and through the city streets are aimless and monotonous. He is shown walking “like someone who has lost his rudder” (73). His alienation is further underscored by the

unusual effect that street signs and people have on him: he dreads encounters with friends and acquaintances and feels that the red stop light for cars is aimed at him (74). Young, beautiful women whom he sees in the street leave him cold instead of arousing him as they once did. (74). His walking becomes such that he cannot shake off the impression that he suffers from vertigo (104). Eventually Stirner's walking resembles the pacing of an inmate in a small prison cell: "Er ging wie ein Gefangener in jenem rundummauerten Gelaß, aus dem man nichts als den Himmel sah. Man war draußen und sah doch nichts von draußen" (104).

Cornered in his apartment, Stirner experiences his deepest personal identity crisis. While rereading love letters he wrote to Sabine years ago, he cannot recognize the handwriting or the man who wrote the letters (90). His acute linguistic paralysis and physical immobility reach a low point when he fails to use the simplest form of communication—his hands: "Er fing an, Zeichen zu machen, Scherenschnitte, wie in der Kindheit, aber er beherrschte die Spielregeln nicht mehr, und so wurde nichts Erkennbares aus dem, was der Schatten seiner Hand zeigte" (92). Due to his isolation and acute disorientation, Stirner and Sabine quarrel often and are unable to distinguish between living and surviving (105).

The nadir of Stirner's linguistic paralysis, which is also a breakthrough, occurs when Stirner is shown giving a speech that borrows phrases and the format from Ceaușescu's trademark addresses to Party congresses and meetings. Since this speech is in German and has no explanatory footnotes, readers unfamiliar with Ceaușescu's rhetoric cannot easily, if at all, recognize Stirner's scheme.

Stirner's speech opens with Ceașescu's traditional address "Liebe Genossen und Freunde" [*dragii tovarășii și prietenii*]. This phrase became a source of numerous jokes during Ceașescu's dictatorship because, ironically, Ceașescu always mispronounced (among many other terms), the word *prietenii* as *preteni*,⁵⁰ which, like many other instances, confirmed the low level of his education. Romanians took great offense at this mispronounced term, because, as the opposite of *tovarășii*, i.e., "comrades," *prietenii* or "friends" designated the vast majority of Romania's citizens who were not members of the Romanian Communist Party.

Like Ceașescu's addresses, Stirner's is an amalgam of empty phrases and slogans such as: "Mehr denn je ist es notwendig, alles zu tun, um die internationale Solidarität und Zusammenarbeit all jener zu befestigen [. . .] denen das Leben, der Frieden teuer sind" (130). Similar to Ceașescu's speeches, Stirner's presentation is interrupted by comments like "starker Beifall" or "Hochrufe und starker Beifall" that are set in parentheses (130, 131). These phrases are literal translations of comments in Romanian like: *ovații și aplauze puternice* that TV anchors and journalists used to describe the allegedly "joyous" atmosphere at the Party meetings and congresses where Ceașescu gave his speeches.

Unlike Ceașescu, however, Stirner interrupts his own speech with requests for alcoholic drinks. Stirner weaves into Ceașescu's speech, comments and observations that contradict and criticize the dictator's empty rhetoric. Thus, Stirner's speech is similar to that of an individual whom Stirner refers to as the "Redner" earlier in the text (83). After surviving the brutal beatings and tortures of *Securitate* agents, "der Redner" has supposedly gone insane, and thus enjoys a fool's or carnival license—"Narrenfreiheit"

⁵⁰ The term *preteni* was used during Ceașescu's dictatorship as a code term for Ceașescu.

(83). Considered a buffoon, the orator is a regular attendee of the House of Writers, where he drinks whatever people order for him while he utters political slogans and comments and impersonates various political figures. The orator's daring shows both the shock and delight of his audience.

Stirner's speech ends with a short summary of Ceaușescu's falsified political biography, which presents Ceaușescu as Romania's most deserving hero. Curiously though, the last phrase of this pseudo biography, "Die Beisetzung erfolgt heute, um sechzehn Uhr, auf dem Friedhof an der Lippaer Straße," is a funeral announcement for Ceaușescu, which gives poignant expression to a unanimous desire—the dictator's death (136).

The abrupt change of scene that occurs after the funeral announcement is marked by two sentences: "Plötzlich spürte Stirner die Stille. Er stand allein auf dem Bahnhof" (136). This sudden change of scene indicates that Stirner's speech was imagined (136). While his speech is a breakthrough from his previous linguistic paralysis as Stirner succeeds in mocking Ceaușescu and the regime, he cannot publicly express the thoughts he imagined, and remains caught in the cultural and linguistic paralysis caused by the state in which he feels like he is in a prison. Next, Stirner is shown walking alone through an empty train station towards the railroad.

The last scene in "Ausreiseantrag" depicts Stirner reflecting on the economic ordeal that awaits him and Sabine in the approaching winter. His bitter recognition of the "submissive lethargy" which oppression has produced in the Romanian people prompts him to type an application letter to leave "the silent country" (137). The last three sentences of the paragraph that ends "Ausreiseantrag" constitute the three opening

sentences of Stirner's letter to the passport and visa service, in which Stirner and Sabine apply for an exit visa to immigrate to West Germany: "Wir stellen hiermit den Antrag zur endgültigen Ausreise. Unsere Gründe sind" (137). Although Stirner does not list the reasons why he and Sabine want to leave Romania permanently, the text of "Ausreiseantrag" has done just that.

"Begrüßungsgeld": Negotiating "Germanness" at the "Center"

"Begrüßungsgeld" follows Stirner and Sabine to West Germany as they go through the application process for German citizenship. Named after the welcome gift of money that *Aussiedler* received, "Begrüßungsgeld" marks the protagonists' transition into a new society, in which money is one of the predominant factors that shape inter-human relationships.⁵¹ Scenes in immigration and naturalization offices and in various locations in Berlin intermingle with Stirner's flashbacks to Timișoara and his Banat village.

The loose narratives in the first and third person intermingle with poems in prose, vignettes, and scenes that have no apparent narrator. Although the first person does not identify him by name, a closer look reveals that it is Stirner. A few fragments told in the second person, which is also Stirner, further fracture the narrative in "Begrüßungsgeld." The fact that the three narrative voices stand for one person is indicative of an acute identity crisis which has caused a deep breakup of the self. The fragments that the three voices produce reflect Stirner's profound linguistic and cultural disorientation and his painstaking journey to redefine his cultural identity and rediscover himself as a writer.

Although Stirner left Romania with a clear sense that he is German, to his dismay, in Germany, society contests his claim to "German" identity. Stirner is confronted with

⁵¹ Rock, "From the Periphery to the Centre and Back Again," 126.

conflicting conceptualizations of “Germanness”: while immigration officials perceive Stirner as an *Aussiedler*, the locals treat him as a foreigner. In addition, fellow ethnic Germans who have immigrated before him present Stirner with two alternatives of cultural identity patterns: either to stick only to his Banat-Swabian and Romanian cultural roots, and thus become a professional exile, or to abandon his past and embrace West German culture in order to become fully assimilated. Stirner resists both these identity paradigms and attempts instead to construct his own individualized cultural identity by negotiating Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German cultures and languages.

The negotiating process is, however, quite challenging because Stirner is both repulsed by and attracted to these three cultures. As a result of his clashes with the communist regime, Stirner is haunted for a while by flashbacks and nightmares, and the fear of being reached by the *Securitate*: “Wir haben einen langen Arm. Wir erreichen dich überall” is the threat that he cannot easily shake off (161).⁵² Yet he is also drawn to Romania because he is interested in the fate of its people. The Banat has the same attraction-repulsion effect on Stirner. While repulsed by collaboration of the Banat Swabians with the Nazi regime, he has fond memories of his childhood in the village and yearns to re-experience the rich multicultural milieu of the region. In West Germany, the much-longed-for cultural “center” where Stirner had hoped to live as a German among Germans, he discovers that he is a foreigner and hence an outsider.

Fragments depicting scenes, reflections, and impressions from and about Romania, the Banat, and West Germany appear disconnected on the printed page. The lengths of these fragments range from one sentence to several pages. Since there are no

⁵²All page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to Richard Wagner, *Begrüßungsgeld. Ausreiseantrag* (Frankfurt a.M.: Luchterhand, 1991).

verbal transitions between them, they are further isolated from each other by white spaces. Metaphorically, this intentional textual arrangement illustrates Stirner's distancing from and closeness to the three cultures. Thus, on one hand, the fragmented text of "Begrüßungsgeld" is composed of three distinct textual layers. Yet, on the other, as Stirner starts negotiating among the three cultures, they intermingle, like in a web, as a few episodes at the end of "Begrüßungsgeld" show.

The hope that Germany would welcome and treat Stirner and Sabine as Germans is quickly shattered when, shortly after their arrival, they are ushered into a "Durchgangsstelle für Aussiedler," where they are handed the infamous "Begrüßungsgeld" and a Romanian-German dictionary (163). As soon as they enter the small room to which they are assigned—the layout and sparse furniture remind Stirner of the prison cells in Romania—Stirner realizes why the camp is nicknamed "Lager" (148). While they look out the window of their room, Stirner and Sabine discover that the admission camp stands next to the *Reichsparteitagsgeländer*, the Nazi rally grounds (142). The eerie feeling that they are on a journey back to the past is intensified when Stirner and Sabine stroll through the immigration building. The scene, the narrow hallways, and small waiting rooms filled with people waiting silently to have their number called, remind Stirner of the somber atmosphere in the buildings of the *Securitate* and the passport and visa service. But while Romanian authorities recognize Stirner's and Sabine's claims to German identity, German immigration officials do not. Consequently, they are subjected to a series of long interviews that span over several months, during which they have to prove, perform, and defend their German identity. Like other ethnic

German immigrants, Stirner quickly discovers the “Heimatlosigkeit im Deutschen,” because “das Deutsche war bloß aus der Entfernung eine Sicherheit gewesen” (177).

Fragments of their interviews with the immigration authorities intermingle with flashbacks of Stirner’s interrogations conducted by Party and *Securitate* members, revealing striking similarities. Like the *Securitate*, German immigration clerks are cold and intimidating: “Der Beamte fragte, und wenn er nicht gleich Antwort bekam, wiederholte er seine Frage sehr laut. Stirner sah ihn erstaunt an” (141). Stirner finds “Beamtendeutsch” akin to “Behördenrumänisch” because both are difficult to make sense of (143). Yet while the intimidation schemes of the Romanian authorities aimed to inspire fear and persuade Stirner to recant his criticism against the regime or withdraw his immigration application, the maneuvers of German immigration officials are designed to show Stirner and Sabine that they do not fit the identity patterns of traditional *Aussiedler*.

It is not only the immigration officers’ abrupt tone and intimidation schemes that remind Stirner of communist Romania, but also their tendency to distort information. Asked about his last place of residence, Stirner replays “Temeswar,” but the clerk defiantly snaps back at him “also Temeschburg” adding “Temeschburg liegt in einem geschlossenen deutschen Siedlungsgebiet” (141, 185).⁵³ The issue here is not necessarily which of the two names the clerk types on the forms, but rather the fact that he changed the information that Stirner gave him at all. By insisting on using the name he wants for Stirner’s birthplace and by adding the inaccurate comment that Timișoara is located in a territory that is exclusively populated by Germans, the official makes it clear who is in charge and that it is up to him to decide Stirner’s and Sabine’s “Germanness.”

⁵³ The two names stand for “Timișoara,” the capital of the Banat. “Temeswar” is the Germanized variant of the Hungarian “Temesvár;” “Temeschburg” is another lesser used variant.

Furthermore, when Stirner tries twice to explain that he lost his job and was imprisoned for political reasons, both times the clerk cuts him off, and worst, falsifies the information Stirner gives him.

Beruf?
Schriftsteller, sagte Stirner.
Als was haben Sie zuletzt gearbeitet?
Journalist, sagt Stirner.
Bis zur Ausreise?
Nein, ich verlor meinen Posten.
Wegen des Ausreiseantrags?
Nein, das war schon drei Jahre vorher. Ich —
Ohne Beschäftigung wegen Ausreise, schrieb der Beamte. (185-186)

Only later, after he is handed the registration certificate does Stirner find out what the clerk wrote in the forms which bear yet another misleading note: “Nach eigenen Angaben des Aussiedlers erstellt” (186).

The immigration officials grow increasingly frustrated and irritated with Stirner and Sabine because they do not fit the traditional profile of the *Aussiedler*: they speak and write German, left Romania for political reasons not family reunification, and they would not use the collaboration of their families with the Nazi regime as proof of their Germanness (179). After listening to Stirner’s political commentary in an interview he gave for a local radio station, the officer in charge of Stirner’s and Sabine’s file informs them that they will not get the residence permit as expellees and as such sends them to the “Ausländerpolizei”(172). While having to demonstrate, perform, and defend again their claim to German identity, Sabine and Stirner discover that everyday people are also difficult to convince of their “Germanness.”

One of the immediate challenges that Stirner faces in German society is the fact that, speaking German is not a private matter as it used to be in communist Romania. If

the German language served as a means for ethnic Germans (and the Romanians who spoke German) to distance themselves *from* the public sphere, in Germany, the German language connects people *to* the public sphere: “Plötzlich war überall nur noch die deutsche Sprache. Es war ungewöhnlich für ihn, für den das Deutsche doch etwas Privates gewesen war: die Sprache, in der man miteinander redete, in der man las. Man entfernte sich aus der Öffentlichkeit, indem man deutsch sprach” (252). While Stirner’s German does not have “die Obszönität der Losungen, der Schlagzeilen,” West German language has it all (252). Moreover, Stirner and Sabine are shocked when they discover that there is no difference between the discourse of the politicians and that of entertainers, because, being equally devoid of substance, both generate the same “Lacheffekt” (188). Thus Sabine and Stirner discover that, as in communist Romania, on television everything was reduced to “einem sinnlosen und lustlosen Kontinuum,” in which “alle was vormachten, weil eben ein Programm abzulaufen hatte” (188). Yet they keep watching television because “alles, was die Leute hier in einem Leben erfahren haben, müssen wir in ein paar Jahren lernen” (258). They watch though with a critical eye: “Wir eignen es uns an, aber wir übersetzen es” (258). The fact that there were no distinct boundaries between politics and entertainment is also evident in the latest fashion in Berlin where T-shirts designed with the much-hated Cyrillic characters “CCCP” are in vogue. But Stirner is appalled by the idea of using “CCCP” as a design: “Nein, für ihn wird das nie chick sein” (193).

But while he understands the German on TV, Stirner has trouble making sense of the language spoken in the streets, shops, trains, and restaurants. Often, the words he hears in conversations around him come across as unintelligible, as in the case of a young

man addressing a woman at the table next to Stirner (216). Although at times he figures out the sense of the few “Satzfetzen” he picks up, Stirner cannot shake off the impression that he is an outsider (167). But while the West German accent and vocabulary are unfamiliar to Stirner, so are his accent, vocabulary, and behavior to the people with whom he comes in contact. Consequently, Stirner is often taken for a foreigner or a Romanian who has learned German (205). Occasionally, he is asked if he is Swiss (184).

Since he is unfamiliar with the “Umgangsformen,” Stirner cannot relate to words like “Groschen” and does not know how to formulate simple requests that entail asking for a newspaper or ordering food (197). The harsh reactions of clerks and salespeople startle and frighten him to the point that he behaves in a manner that enforces the clichés attached to foreigners who are often thought of as uneducated and vulgar: “Ich müßte nach der Zeitung, die ich lesen will, fragen. Aber sie ist nicht aus, und ich weiß nicht so recht, wie ich danach fragen soll. Ich drehe mich um und verlasse wortlos den Laden. Hinter mir ist die scharfe Stimme des Verkäufers: Nicht einmal grüßen können die” (151). When he uses the easy recognizable “Ostformel”: “Haben Sie . . .” and the grammatically correct phrase “Pommes frites” instead of the colloquial “Pommes” Stirner is again singled out as a foreigner (170, 186). Furthermore, when confronted with new items, like the soft drink Fanta, Stirner is concerned that he does not know the correct article: “Eine Fanta, sagte Stirner und überlegte, ob es nun eine oder ein Fanta hieß” (215). But even the mere sight of unfamiliar objects confuses Stirner. For example, when he stops in a shop next to a dummy that he mistakes for an elegantly dressed lady, his first concern is how to address her and only after that does he realize that she is not real (168).

At times, Stirner tries to use familiar signifiers from the past in an effort to make sense of the present. When he is asked to choose a salad from a stock of pre-packed salads, for instance, Stirner orients himself by the color of one of the packages and orders a salad that has something red in it, because he thinks it is paprika which reminds him of the foods in the Banat (215). When another customer tells him in an intentionally broken German that the food he chose is good, Stirner immediately realizes that he is again taken for a foreigner (215). He is also often exposed to the “Steuerzahlerchauvinismus” of the locals expressing their utter disdain against three categories of “non-Germans”: foreigners, *Aussiedler*, and GDR citizens: “Die Ausländer, die Aussiedler, und die in der DDR sollten in ihrem eigenen Dreck ersticken” (183). The rejection he feels from German society is intensified by terrifying nightmares that depict him in Romania while he is interrogated, threatened, and humiliated by the *Securitate* and Party members. The terror he experiences at night extends during the day, for he cannot shake off the feeling that he is watched and followed when he walks in the streets and the hallway of his apartment. Afraid that a bomb might be hidden in his apartment, he develops the routine of first turning the door key and then hiding from the door (183). At such times, he perceives himself a target (187).

Given the hostile treatment of the immigration authorities, the terrifying feeling that he is continually followed by the *Securitate*, and the fact that he can only minimally function in the new German language and culture, Stirner experiences a deep personal and cultural identity crisis, which is paralleled by his desperate efforts to reinvent himself as a writer. While Sabine finds a job as a substitute teacher and is able to receive government aid, Stirner’s hopes to make a living as a writer are nil. The paradox of

Stirner's predicament is that although he speaks the same language as the people around him, he is taken for an outsider (59). As such, he strives for a while to become an insider by imitating the language of the "Germans" around him. Thus, he intently eavesdrops on people's conversations and then practices the sentences he hears, only to discover that in his mouth they sound as if he had memorized them (160). He starts keeping a notebook in which he records new expressions like: "Telefonummeldeantrag," "Postnachsendeantrag," or "Ich übernehme das Telefon meines Vormieters" (190). Even after using them for a long time, Stirner still sees the new words and phrases as "Gedächtnisstützen" (190). The story of the fruitless efforts of an older immigrant writer, who after trying to use "Werbetexter" in his poems gave up writing, catches Stirner's attention (160). For a while Stirner practices this language too, but with no success.

But more than trying to appropriate the accent and the vocabulary of the locals, Stirner is interested in learning about them, because, for him, writing was always connected with people. In Romania, Stirner's writing was about the people "die er ansprechen konnte, an die Anspielungen, Andeutungen gerichtet waren" and for those "von denen er wußte, daß sie auch so dachten, daß sie verstehen, was er meinte, wen er meinte" (159). In Germany, however, he discovers that writing had to do with "so few things" (159). Still, he is eager to know what people do, think, and read. While the surrealist image "in die Leute ein[zu]dringen," which connotes violence, reflects Stirner's desperate desire to interact with people, the image of looking into their heads as watching a screen suggests the impossibility of entering into a dialogue with people since he would be a mere passive viewer:

In der U-Bahn beobachtete er die Leute. Seinen neugierigen Blick suchte er zu verbergen. Es mißlang. Am liebsten wäre er in die Leute eingedrungen, hätte in

ihre Köpfe geschaut wie auf einen Bildschirm. Er wollte alles über sie wissen. Er wollte es, weil er nichts über sie wußte. Er stellte sich neben Leuten, die sich miteinander unterhielten, schnappte Satzketten auf, er schaute, was die Leute lasen. Er suchte Schlüsse zu ziehen aus dem, was er erfuhr. (167)

Yet despite his efforts, Stirner cannot shake off the impression that “everything was concealed from him” and that he is like a “hose” through which events just shoot (167, 204). As such, he feels as though he were in “Niemandland,” where the only thing that he can claim as his own is his language: “Er war jetzt mit seiner Sprache allein” (159). Since he was living in a present that has no roots for him, everything, including language, seems both mysterious and frightening. (195).

The estrangement that Stirner experiences as an outsider who tries to become an insider prompts him to see himself as a character who is expelled from a plot: “Er kam sich vor wie aus einer Handlung vertrieben. Er machte mit, aber er spielte keine Rolle” (168). For a while, he writes about himself as the protagonist in the new environment: “Neben Stirner ist immer noch eine Person. Es ist Stirner, der Protagonist. Stirner geht die Straße entlang, und er sieht sich die Straße entlanggehen. Stirner denkt nach, und er schaut sich dabei unauffällig zu” (168). But more than providing him with a protagonist, the doubling of the self, in which the self acts and the other observes and writes, is indicative of the deep identity crisis he is undergoing. This explains why he sees the face of a stranger who is walking beside him when he looks in a mirror while walking through a shop (198). Nevertheless, Stirner continues to write. Snap-shot like poems in prose are among the first results of his writing. Some of them capture people, including Sabine and himself, in various locations, others present descriptions of scenes in trains, cafés, or in the streets.

While he writes about the new country, Stirner also revisits the old one. Thus, he picks up unfinished pieces he started in Romania. Particularly interesting is a four-line story about a nameless woman who wanted for years to leave the country. Since she cannot do so, she is waiting for her death (177). In the short commentary that follows this fragment, Stirner debates with himself as to the reason he left the piece unfinished. Interestingly, this debate appears as if it takes place between two different people: Stirner and his accuser. The emergence of the accuser who addresses Stirner with “du” is signaled by the sentence: “Er hatte gerade die Faust gegen sich erhoben,” which indicates yet another doubling of the self. After Stirner realizes that “es war Feigheit gewesen, nichts als Feigheit,” and that “er hätte das alles damals schreiben müssen,” the second “self” sharply snaps at him: “Du redest von dir wie ein Besserwisser, aber es nützt dir nichts. Du hast dich aus einem Leben davongemacht, mach es wenigstens mit diesem besser” (153-154). Following this accusation, Stirner suddenly thinks he hears the woman in the story talking to him. He can now continue the story. What follows is a dialogue between him and the imaginary woman which then turns into another dialogue with himself: “Er redete mit sich. Er redete von sehr weit her. Von einem anderen Ort. Dieser Ort entfernte sich, manchmal war er sehr nah” (154).

The “du” voice appears again on several occasions when Stirner attempts to write about what he sees around him. In its interventions, this “other” self again sharply criticizes Stirner: “Du redest, und es ist nicht ersichtlich, ob jemand zuhört. Es bleibt auch unklar, wo du dich befindest und was du sagst, ist kaum zu beschreiben. Das sind die Voraussetzungen, mit denen du arbeitest” (169). At one point, while comparing Stirner with an organ-grinder who tells people about their past, the “du” voice shows Stirner

the futility of his writing efforts: “Du schreibst. Du bist dein Leierkastenmann” (173). Several of Stirner’s poems in prose feature also the “du” voice/self in various locations in Berlin, but its tone is not accusatory.

Stirner’s attempts to write about his new environment also intertwine with episodes from his life during Ceaușescu’s regime, particularly his encounters with members of the *Securitate*, the Party, and the visa and customs service. These evocations are further entangled with episodes that involve the Banat Swabians’ collaboration with the Nazi regime and their deportation to the Soviet Union. But while examining some of the darker aspects of the history of the Banat Swabians, Stirner also evokes several happier times from his childhood in the Banat village: Stirner as a young boy strolling along the river with his father telling him stories passed down by his own father, looking at old postcards and family pictures, or revisiting the story of his mother being rebuked by a nurse for singing “Lili Marleen,” one of his favorite songs, while he was lying sick in the hospital.⁵⁴

Stirner’s journey into his past prompts him to take a train ride through the Rhine Valley to visit the places he knew only from the black-and-white postcards that his uncles sent to his grandmother in the Banat. While on the train, he suddenly spots poppies in the fields, which prompt him to utter: “wie bei uns” (239). Struck by his own remark, Stirner wonders: “Was bedeutet dieses ‘Uns’?” (239). His unanswered question is immediately followed by Sabine’s comment that establishes yet another connection between the Banat

⁵⁴ “Lili Marleen” (a.k.a. “Lili Marlene,” “Lily Marlene,” “Lili Marlène,” etc.) was a popular German love song during the Second World War, which became the unofficial anthem of soldiers of both forces in the war. The lyrics, which were composed in 1915 by First World War German soldier Hans Leip (1893-1983), were set to music in 1938 by composer Norbert Schulze (1911-2002). See “Norbert Schulze: ‘Lili Marleen,’” *Jazz Professional* 4 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.jazzprofessional.com/report/Norbert%20Schulze.htm>>.

and Germany and implicitly between Stirner, Sabine and Germany: “Türkinnen kamen ihnen entgegen. Eine Frau, das Sonntagskopftuch um, schnitt im Gehen mit einem kleinen scharfen Messer einen Apfel in Scheiben. Wie die alten Schwäbinnen, sagte Sabine” (239).

While he is still dealing with the damaging effects of his experiences with the *Securitate*, Stirner is drawn back to Romania by his interest in the events that followed his immigration. Thus, during a short visit in East Berlin, he buys all the numbers he can find of the only Romanian newspapers available at a newsstand (171). He listens to the Romanian dissident radio station *Radio Free Europe*, asks for news from his friends in Bucharest, and, when he accidentally hears people speaking Romanian in various locations in Berlin, he eavesdrops on their conversations. Interestingly, unlike in “Ausreiseantrag,” where Stirner translates into German dialogues in Romanian that he hears in the street, in “Begrüßungsgeld,” he records entire sentences directly in Romanian.⁵⁵

The love-hate attitude he has for Romania is also reflected in his relationship with the Romanian language: “Es war eine ferne Sprache in ihm, gegen die er sich zu sperren suchte, die er aber insgeheim wünschte” (195). The thought that this country would somehow vanish from his memory, as many of his fellow ethnic German immigrants attempt to do, horrifies Stirner because: “Ob [Rumänien] irgendwann völlig verschwinden wird? Wer aber bin ich dann, fragte sich Stirner?” (178). Yet Stirner is sure of one thing: he is not Romanian. When a Romanian exile newspaper invites him to write an article in Romanian, Stirner refuses categorically, because, as he explains, “er [ist] ein deutscher Schriftsteller” (179). Likewise when an editor assumes that the manuscript that

⁵⁵ As if interested only in the sound of the language, Stirner does not follow at times spelling and grammatical rules: “astias sonati,” for example, meaning “these [people] are crazy” should be spelled: *ăştia-s sonaţi*. See “Begrüßungsgeld” 217.

he submitted was translated from Romanian into German, he immediately interrupts her saying: “Ach nein, es war ja deutsch geschrieben” (205). But if German society questions and refutes his claim to German identity and if he denies that he is Romanian, who is Stirner? And what and who determines his cultural identity?

As the development of Stirner’s identity as a writer shows, the answer to these questions ultimately lie with Stirner because he is the one who determines who he is. He does so by negotiating his experiences with the Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German languages and cultures. Stirner is marked but not defined by his family’s involvement with the Nazis, the oppression of the communist regime in Romania, and the hostile treatment he receives in Germany. Instead of trying to delete from his memory everything linked to Romania, he welcomes the re-emergence in his thoughts of Romanian “nackte[n], schutzlose[n] Wörter der Kindheit und der Jugend” (257). Rather than clinging only to his “mitgebrachte” German language, Stirner chooses, though not without struggling, to change it by appropriating certain aspects of West German language that further his development as a writer. The tension of this choice is evident in the following passage:

Es gab Wörter, über die er sich wunderte. Er murmelte sie öfter vor sich hin, als wollte er sie auswendig lernen. Andere Wörter fand er abstoßend, ich werde sie nie aussprechen können, dachte er. Aber nach einem halben Jahr sprach er sie trotzdem aus [. . .]. Er entfernte sich von seiner deutschen Sprache, er näherte sich einer anderen deutschen Sprache. (195)

While he struggles with West German language, Stirner is drawn to the multicultural atmosphere of the Banat: “Er brauchte fremde Sprachen um sich. Er tauchte in die fremden Sprachen wie in die Unruhe seiner Jugend [. . .] Im Banat hatte er stets mehrere Sprachen um sich gehabt. Manche verstand er, von anderen waren ihm bloß ein paar

Worte geläufig: Wörter aus der Kindheit, Wörter, die Wärme ausstrahlten” (251-52). The only way to hear again some of these languages is via a short wave radio he buys especially for this purpose (252). Interestingly, in Romania the radio was for Stirner and Sabine a means that enabled them to connect with the West, in Germany the radio reconnects them with Eastern Europe (252).

Determined to construct his own cultural identity, Stirner gives up on changing his Banat-Swabian accent: “Er mühte sich mit seiner Aussprache ab, er gab auf,” because, he concludes, “ich muß mich mit meiner Biografie abfinden” (184). He is not troubled by the idea that before too long, he will not be bothered by the term “exile” (245). The fact that he is gradually able to distinguish German dialects is further proof of Stirner’s “Sich-Zurecht-Findens” (256). But the most important sign that he is growing more at peace about the development of his cultural identity is the fact that Stirner can write again with ease about his new environment: “Er konnte wieder schreiben, er war wieder Beobachtungen fähig. Was er sah konnte er jetzt auch wieder einordnen [. . .], daß er wieder schreiben konnte, machte ihn ruhiger” (269). This is the case when he writes about an episode in which he is traveling on a train from West to East Berlin with a GDR couple and two West Germans, an older man and a young woman. At this rare meeting between three types of “Germans,” Stirner offers several remarkable insights. First, he quickly realizes that the West German man was evaluating the other’s “Germanness”: “der alte Herr betrachtete die beiden DDR-Bürger mal als Repräsentanten ihres Staates, mal als Innländer, als Deutsche” (263). Unlike on previous occasions, Stirner does not seem to be bothered by the fact that neither the West nor the East Germans talk with him: “Stirner war Ausländer. Stirner war Luft” (263). Yet, he is an insider to the conversation

that he is not asked to be part of. Having lived in a communist state, Stirner, unlike the two West Germans, can easily decode the information that the GDR couple is purposefully leaving out from their conversation in order to hide, among other compromising aspects, their involvement with the Free German Youth (260-64). Stirner's detailed description of the scene and the dialogue are accompanied by sharp criticism and sarcastic comments unveiling the truth behind the carefully orchestrated pretense of innocence that the GDR couple puts up. The remarkable aspect about Stirner as the "silent" participant/witness is that even though he cannot orally demonstrate that he is an insider, he can do so in writing.

When people start showing interest in his past, Stirner realizes reluctantly that his experiences make good material for stories (269). Yet while his audience is captivated by the "Schluchten und Engpässe, Schurken und Opfer" of his stories, many forget to ask about their protagonist, i.e. Stirner (269). Feeling pushed to the edge of his stories, Stirner remarks with a trace of bitterness that: "Der Rand meiner Erlebnisse ist keine Erzählung, der Rand meiner Erlebnisse bin ich" (269). Thus, although Stirner has succeeded in constructing a personalized German cultural identity without isolating himself from or assimilating into mainstream West German culture, society still places him at the "periphery."

The final scene of "Begrüßungsgeld" depicting Stirner and Sabine at a citizenship ceremony is "shot through with irony."⁵⁶ It confirms again their peripheral position: "Ich beglückwünsche Sie [. . .] Sie haben sich entschieden, Deutsche zu werden," says an official, who then asks the new citizens to help protect the delicate "Pflänzchen" of democracy and not to give in to any totalitarian ideas (271). Citing the example of his

⁵⁶ Jackman, "'Alone in a Crowd,'" 161.

Indian-born wife who took nine years to settle in Germany, the official concludes his speech by warning the new citizens about the “große Schwierigkeiten” they too may have adjusting in Germany (271). Both Sabine and Stirner receive their citizenship certificates without any sign of enthusiasm which makes the event rather anticlimactic.

In der Hand der Frauen: A Berlin Identity Between the “Center” and the “Periphery”

A cross between an intimate diary and a literary workbook, *In der Hand der Frauen* introduces a Banat-Swabian immigrant writer, who, after escaping communist Romania, has been living in Berlin for eight years. Unlike Stirner, the first person narrator in *In der Hand der Frauen* does not struggle with Western German language. On the contrary, he has a “sharp ear for the latest big-city jargon and holds up its extravagancies and his own inventive formulations” and is quite familiar with the cultures of pre- and post-*Wende* Berlin.⁵⁷ But like Stirner, he struggles with his identity as a writer. Motivated by the income he receives, the narrator agrees to play the double role that German society expects of him: that of a dissident writer and an expert on Romania and Eastern European matters. Yet while he performs these roles by writing books and giving lectures on Romania, Eastern Europe, and East-West topics, his interest is in Berlin’s post-*Wende* cultural and political life. While his cultural identity at the “center” is largely influenced and shaped by the cultural fluidity that defines post-communist Berlin, the narrator is also pulled to and ultimately defined by the “periphery,” particularly his experiences in the Banat and communist Romania.

⁵⁷ Jackman, “‘Alone in a Crowd,’” 162.

Although he does not identify himself as a *flâneur* per se, the narrator's aimless strolling through Berlin's streets, locals and cinemas, social and erotic interest in women, and his pleasure in being a detached though perceptive observer of the life of the city, introduce him as a *flâneur* who bears a decided resemblance to Walter Benjamin's stroller.⁵⁸ His reflections on and interactions with urban culture map out post-Wende Berlin and introduce *In der Hand der Frauen* as a postmodern *Berlinroman*.⁵⁹ The two roles he plays for German society as a dissident and expert intertwine with his self-made Berlin-identity resulting in a fascinating hybrid, triangular identity which oscillates between the "center" and the "periphery." The fluid character of this identity is reflected both in the narrator's movements through the city, opinions, and relationships with his friends, particularly women, which, however, are also marked by immobility.

The narrator's lack of direction while walking through the city is evident in the manner in which he introduces himself on the opening page of the novel: "Ich gehe schnell den Boulevard entlang. Als hätte ich ein Ziel," he remarks, "Aber ich habe keines" (7).⁶⁰ "Meine Welt," he adds, starts at eleven, when he strolls through Berlin (7). With the exception of the mornings, when he presumably writes for his day-job as a dissident-expert, his afternoons are also unstructured: he reads, goes to cafés or to the movies, or simply "brushes" ("streift") through the city (66). Like Benjamin's *flâneur*, he shares the pleasure of naming and mapping out the city by listing the names of the pubs, cafés, streets, and cinemas he strolls through "as a way of creating the flattering romantic

⁵⁸ For extended discussion on the similarities between Wagner's stroller and Benjamin's *flâneur* see Matthias Keidel, *Die Wiederkehr der Flaneure. Literarische Flanerie und flanierendes Denken zwischen Wahrnehmung und Reflexion* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 126-48.

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion of the emergence of the postmodern *Berlinroman* see Matthias Keidel, "Asphalt-Denker. Flaneure auf den Spuren des Zeitgeistes bei Joachim Schimmang und Richard Wagner," 224-35.

⁶⁰ All page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to Richard Wagner, *In der Hand der Frauen* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1995).

myth of Berlin which originated in the 1920s.”⁶¹ The detailed descriptions of the ambiance in pubs and cafés such as: *Café Einstein*, *Wiener Blut*, *Madonna*, *York*, *Rote Harfe*, *Milagio*, *Atlantik*, *Quasimodo*, *Montevideo*, *Arsenal*, *Capri*, *Student von Prag*, *Briefe an Felice*, *Estoril*, *Tati*, *Pasternak*, and *Romantic* intermingle with his informed comments on German, Italian, French, American, and Russian films, actors, politics, and news he is exposed to in post-*Wende* Berlin, introducing the city as “a repertoire of allusions and styles” that continually shape the narrator’s life and cultural identity at the “center.”⁶²

Paralleling his movements through the city, his thoughts are also unstructured and fluid, moving randomly from one topic or place to another. At times, he records only the change of scenes that follow his movements, which being devoid of transitions, resemble camera snapshots: “vor mir sind die Schaukästen der Läden [. . .] aber dann bin ich nicht mehr da. Dann bin ich in meiner Kneipe” (7). However, most of his strolling is accompanied by his amused, sarcastic, or witty comments that show his air of self-assurance and self-mocking irony. Notable in *In der Hand der Frauen* is its complex stream-of-consciousness that reflects the intermingling of the narrator’s random movements and thoughts which render the text as an elaborate, obscure web, through which the narrator (and the reader) gets lost and disoriented at times. A representative example that reflects the web-like structure of the text is the episode that depicts the narrator’s movements and thoughts from the time he enters the subway train station until he arrives at his favorite café.

⁶¹ Jackman, “‘Alone in the Crowd,’” 162-163.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 163

After he pictures himself walking towards the subway station where he sees a man wearing a T-shirt with the provocative sign printed on it: “Ich bin Scheiße,” the narrator immediately turns his attention to someone behind him, who, while complaining to his companion about a female’s (identified as “sie”) lack of enthusiasm to his advances, also seems to excuse her behavior.⁶³ The next sentence in which the “sie” is identified as the speaker’s new girlfriend, who likes to knit pullovers in the evenings and desires to be treated gently, could be viewed as a summary of the rest of the dialogue between the two strangers. Yet, given the shift to the present tense, the sentence is rather the narrator’s comment, which the phrase “äußerst sanft,” the last one in the passage, sarcastically punctuates.

The following sentence “Zeit für Kneipe,” which has no subject or verb, signals that the narrator is refocusing his thoughts. However, in the next sentence, in his mind he is back at the subway entrance, where he recalls the sight of various activist groups handing out brochures and tracts. In several stenogram-like sentences, he lists and comments on these brochures, which he has at home. His brief, sarcastic comment about the fact that he did not read these brochures triggers an involuntary memory of a scene between him and several children who have shown up at his apartment with tracts against animal testing. The rift between what the narrator thinks and what he says and the difficulty he has connecting the two is remarkably well captured in the fragmented structure of the following passage, which is marked by repetition and an unconventional use of punctuation:

Eine Zehnjährige stellt sich vor mich und sagt: Sind Sie auch gegen Tierversuche?
Ich verstehe zuerst nicht, denn in meinem Kopf ist gerade der Satz: alle

⁶³ The use of Subjunctive I “gebe” and “sei” in two sentences is indicative of the fact that the narrator provides a direct transcription of the dialogue between the two strangers.

Beziehungen sind Dreierbeziehungen, und so frage ich, wie bitte?, und die Kleine wiederholt den Satz: Sind Sie auch gegen Tierversuche? Und jetzt ist der Satz: Sind Sie auch gegen Tierversuche? in meinem Kopf, und dann denke ich nur noch: auch auch auch, Warum? (9-10)

The uncertainty that builds up on the face of the ten-year girl who has approached the narrator recalls to his mind images from the world of cinema. The narrator is trying to figure out if the girl's behavior resembles Mathilda's in Luc Besson's film of the same title, or if she looks like Natalie Portman, the actress who played Mathilda. Concluding that the girl in front of him does not resemble Mathilda or Natalie Portman, the narrator refocuses on the children's presence and their requests and repeats his question: "Warum?" Unable to answer his question, the ten-year old girl leaves muttering "Nur so" (10). It is only after several other passages that include an angered monologue about several news stories and an imaginary dialogue with a woman on the subway that the narrator is pictured on the subway platform refocusing his thoughts and intentions: "Ich bin schon auf dem Bahnsteig. Ich verlasse bereits den U-Bahnhof. Um die Ecke ist die Kneipe, in die ich will. Mein Ziel" (12). In the café, he starts musing why he and his friends go to this particular café. Remembering that the choice of the café is linked to the death of his friend, Franz, the narrator briefly recalls events about Franz's death.

Oscillating between Berlin and the Banat, this story is followed by a string of involuntary memories recalled by the sight of people in the café or the information he exchanged with them. The scene seems to conclude with the narrator's announcing to his friends that, since it is late, he needs to go home because in the morning he wants to write, a gesture which indicates a break in his otherwise fluid movements and thoughts (26-27). Yet, despite his announcement, in the next sentence, the narrator is shown strolling on the Grunewaldstraße and eyeing several places: *Tropical Inn*, *Mystische*

Buchhandlung, Weine und Kohlen, which, as the last word “unbetretbar” in the list of names indicate, do not excite him (27). The phrase “ich gehe nach Hause” ends the list (27).

The same oscillation between fluidity and immobility characterizes his relationships with his friends, particularly with women. Hubert, a fellow Banat-Swabian immigrant, is the narrator’s most constant friend, because he represents a type of mirror and scale against whom he can measure his behavior and relationships with women. Since he and Hubert have experienced life under Ceaușescu’s dictatorship, they both “flirt with the West” and with women, indulging themselves in making “politically incorrect” statements and displaying “einiges mehr ungestraft” in their relationships with women (56-57). Both men also maintain simultaneous relationships with several women. But while Hubert and Ines, one of the narrator’s long-time female friends eventually commit to binary relationships, the narrator would not. Part of his attitude is based on his two failed marriages with Banat-Swabian women, which have made him decide not to get stuck with a woman again (153).

But there is more to his desire of maintaining multiple relationships with different women: each of his female friends fulfills a specific need or pleasure he has. With Ines he goes to avant-garde films and with Marie to casinos and mainstream and *Kultfilme*. With Margit he discusses art, with Marion politics, and with Gitta his book about a West-East love story. The only sex scene in the novel pictures him with a strip-club dancer, named Kathy.⁶⁴ Yet for all the intellectual and physical pleasures they offer, there is also a

⁶⁴ While this manner of catalogizing women can be interpreted as an objectification of women, as critics like Helen L. Jones and Petra Meurer argue, I would contend that the narrator’s attitude towards women is much more complex. Since a comprehensive discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this study, I will briefly make several remarks. With the exception of the strip-club dancer, the narrator only sketchingly

setback to his multiple relationships: the narrator often confuses women especially when he talks with them on the phone. Attempting to figure out a way to distinguish his friends' voices and avoid embarrassment, he has developed a technique: "Manchmal entsteht dabei eine künstliche Pause, während ich den Namen, der mir gerade eingefallen ist, überprüfe" (15). Despite his precautions, however, he still pronounces the wrong name at times: "Es ist vorgekommen, daß es wirklich der falsche [Name] war, und ich habe ihn noch rechtzeitig gestoppt," but, as he adds amused, "das bleibt mein Geheimnis" (15).

The closest to an orderly format that the narrator is willing to develop in his relationships is that of the "Dreierbeziehungen" or the "Dreieck," which are usually composed either of the narrator and two women or the narrator, Hubert, and a woman. At first, he struggles with this format because, as the opening lines of the novel suggest, when he looks around in pubs, he sees that "an allen Tischen sitzen nur zwei. Immer nur zwei. Oder zwei und zwei" (7). Yet encouraged by the fact that both Hubert and Ines continue their "three-way relationship" with him despite being committed to binary relationships, the narrator settles for "Dreierbeziehungen." While he categorically refuses

describes the bodies of his female-friends. Yet based on his conversations with them, it is evident that they are intelligent and that the narrator enjoys talking with them. Most of these women are also very independent; they challenge and stand up to the narrator. Except for Maja and Marion, who, suffering from depression, cling to the narrator and demand of him, the former, a declaration of love, and the latter, a binary relationship, all other women do not seem to be bothered by the narrator's many relationships with women. On the contrary, some of them, like Ines for example, continue to meet with the narrator even after they commit to a binary relationship. In fact, Ines is the one who suggests to the narrator that "alle Beziehungen sind Dreierbeziehungen" (7). Unless women want to offer more, the narrator does not ask for more. This is particularly evident in the manner in which he ends up having sex with the strip-club dancer. One aspect though in the narrator's behavior that could be interpreted as objectifying women is his habit of giving nick-names to women he has only briefly observed, like: "die Schwache," "die Brutale," or "die Blickkontakt-Frau." The name "Fidelistinnen" (it derives from Fidel Castro's name) that he and Hubert give to Marie and Margit should be seen as an expression of frustration with the two women's disapproval of the American blockade against Cuba, not an attempt to objectify them (55). For more detailed discussions that argue the thesis of the objectification of women in *In der Hand der Frauen*, see Helen L. Jones, "'Real Existing Socialism' and Its Misogynistic Consequences," 137-38 and Petra Meurer, "Rasende Flaneure," 186-95.

to enter into a binary relationship with Marion, for example, he is excited about maintaining and establishing new “three-way” relationships with old and new friends. In the last scene of the novel, for example, he approaches a table at which Marie, an old-time friend of his, and Tina, her new friend, sit. Because he is curious to meet Tina whom he does not know, the protagonist approaches the two women (190). The “Dreierbeziehung” that may become established echoes the opening lines of *In der Hand der Frauen*: “An allen Tischen sind Dreierbeziehungen,” conferring on both the text of the novel and the narrator’s relationships a sense of circularity (190). But while the circle, the image of the triangle, and the title of the novel *In der Hand der Frauen* may suggest entrapment and immobility, given that the female friends continually change, the “three-way” relationships also offer fluidity.

However, this fluidity is periodically interrupted when the narrator feels the urge to be alone, “ganz Single,” as he puts it (15). The type of loneliness he yearns for brings him almost to a complete standstill: “ich will niemanden kennenlernen, ich will nicht reden, nicht klagen, nicht fröhlich sein” (15). Even though he blames it on the “Melancholie des Alleinseins,” adding with his characteristic self-mocking irony, “ich liebe den Kitsch der Melancholie des Alleinseins,” his desire to be alone should be attributed to what Rosi Braidotti calls the “nostalgia for fixity,” which could be traced, at least in part, to his Eastern European cultural roots and experiences (15).⁶⁵ Most of the time he is drawn back to the “periphery” because of the comfort and familiarity that it offers. For example, many of his friends, including most women, come from Eastern Europe. He feels at ease with them not only because of their shared cultural origins, but

⁶⁵ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), 22.

also because, like him, they are newcomers in Berlin (24). In addition, most of his memories of the past are about his adventures with various women, which for the most part, amuse him.

However, there are also difficult, unresolved experiences of his life at the “periphery” that still haunt him at the “center.” For example, the mere sight of a man in a trench coat walking through the subway station in Berlin instantly brings to his mind the word *Securitate*, which perplexes him: “Nach so vielen Jahren. Es war nur ein winziger Augenblick, und er bedeutete so gut wie nichts. Und doch” (144). His friendships, especially that with Ines, one of his long-time friends and her partner Daniel are tainted by his past encounters with the *Securitate* and a declaration he signed under pressure. Bertram, a fellow Banat-Swabian immigrant uses a copy of this declaration to justify his prolonged sentence in prison and thus frame the protagonist as a collaborator with the infamous Romanian Secret Police (165). Although he explains to his friends that he signed the compromising declaration after he was brutally interrogated and incarcerated, the narrator realizes that they may not fully trust his side of the story since they cannot grasp the thin line between being an “Opfer” and a “Täter” (165). A strong pull to the periphery is also his categorical refusal to talk about his second wife. The phrase “über die ich in diesem Buch kein Wort sagen werde” referring to his second wife, becomes a leitmotif in the novel that reflects an obsession he cannot shake off (20, 89, 94, 162).

A marked influence of the “periphery” is also evident in the narrator’s opinions. While he is willing to change his mind about any of his opinions, he does not retract his comments about communism: “Ich nehme alles leidenschaftlich zurück außer der Behauptungen, die ich über den Kommunismus mache,” he insists, adding firmly,

“Davon nehme ich nichts zurück” (130). Often his opinions and behavior are dictated by what he calls “meine osteuropäische Paranoia” (13). For example, the sudden death in America of his friend Franz prompts him to suspect that Franz was murdered (13). Moreover, when he drinks beer, he automatically wipes the neck of the beer bottle before drinking—a habit he developed in the Banat, where, due to malfunctioning bottle lids, he would often find glass splinter around the neck of the bottle (145).

As a writer, he is also pulled to the “periphery” and thus defined by his Eastern European origins. Since he is considered an Eastern European dissident, he is expected always to talk primarily about politics: “Mit mir redet man immer über Politik, und man erwartet von mir, daß ich über Politik rede” (47-48). The subjects he writes about and lectures on are invariably related to Eastern Europe. Opposed to other fellow ethnic German immigrant writers, whose “altbackenen siebenbürgischen Stil” and “Ackerkrumen-Zillich-Sound” writing style land them no publication contracts, the narrator’s approach to Eastern European topics seems to please his audience, as the frequent invitations to hold readings and give lectures both inside and outside of Germany indicate (68).⁶⁶

Discussions of Eastern Europe, the Banat, and communist Romania carry over even into his book projects in which he intends to explore his personal interests. In his abandoned book project, *Die Einsamkeitsforscherin*, for example, he would have explored the years following his divorce to his second Banat-Swabian wife (89). Although it remains unclear if he will write the book he considers titling: *Der Orgasmus*

⁶⁶ The narrator’s sarcastic description of the writing style of these silenced writers is a direct allusion to the Transylvanian German writer Heinrich Zillich (1898-1988), whose texts were characterized by anti-Semitic, nationalistic, and heroic tendencies both while he lived in Transylvania and after he immigrated to Germany. For more on Heinrich Zillich, see Chapter 2, pp. 47 and 49 of this study.

von Klausenburg und andere Geschichten, this project is again about Romania because it is inspired by his fascination with a woman named Gitta, a German-Hungarian immigrant from “Klausenburg” (Romanian: “Cluj-Napoca”), which is a major city in Transylvania (157).

The narrator’s ambiguous relationship with Berlin as “der einzige Ort an dem die Vereinigung wirklich ist,” as he describes the city, is perhaps the strongest indicator of the fact that he is not at home at the “center” (41). Although he has carved out “a niche for himself in Berlin and has become familiar with, and is a keen observer of, many of its facets,” the narrator “still cannot take the city for granted.”⁶⁷ On the one hand, he loves Berlin, “ich liebe Berlin,” he confesses, because it is the haven for his rebelliousness, yet, as his ironic comments show, he does not feel quite at home in the city: “Ich fahre durch die Stadt, in der ich seit acht Jahren lebe. Es ist die Stadt, in der ich zu Hause bin, wie ich sage. Ja, ich sage das. Ich rede wie ein Heimatist [. . .] wie diese Schwachköpfe, die herumlaufen und rufen: Berlin ist Hauptstadt, Berlin ist Weltstadt. Als müßten sie es sich einreden” (46, 139). Despite his ambiguous relationship with Berlin, the narrator of *In der Hand der Frauen* can relate to and identify with the city’s fluid cultural identity, which, however, like his, remains profoundly marked by its Eastern past.

***Miss Bukarest: The Illusion of Living and Writing Outside the
“Center”—“Periphery” Polarization***

Of all Wagner’s novels, *Miss Bukarest* best illustrates the complex intricacy of the triangulation formed by Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and Western German cultures, languages, and politics that shape the transcultural identity of the protagonists.

⁶⁷ Jackman, “‘Alone in the Crowd,’” 164.

Triangulation is present at various levels in *Miss Bukarest*: the three parts of the novel, the cultural and political background of the protagonists, and the relationships they develop.

The novel is comprised of three parts, each authored by three men living in West Germany who are caught in a complicated web of cultures, languages, and politics. Dinu Matache is a Romanian and a former *Securitate* officer, who becomes a private detective in West Germany. Klaus Richartz is a Banat-Swabian immigrant writer in West Germany, and Christian Schullerus is Dinu's son, whose mother, Lotte, is a Transylvanian Saxon. The underlying text in *Miss Bukarest* is Dinu's report on his investigations following the sudden death of Erika, a Banat-Swabian-Hungarian immigrant from Romania, with whom he and Richartz had an affair. Erika was married to Dieter Osthoff, a West German, former Stasi collaborator who was involved in a network of money laundering with the *Securitate*. Dieter used Erika as a cover and deposited all the money in her name. After Osthoff and Onescu, the Romanian *Securitate* agent who was sent to Germany to recover the money, revealed to Erika that she was a mere pawn in their schemes, she made a surprising move: she transferred the money to an orphanage in Romania. Enraged by Erika's action, Osthoff pushed her against a wall where she hit a stone vase and died instantly. Osthoff and Onescu dumped the body into the Spree where Dinu's detective agency discovers her. Since she comes from Romania, Dinu is put in charge of the case.

The complex interlinking of cultures, languages, and politics is reflected in the web-like structure of *Miss Bukarest*, which is the result of the collaboration among the three men. Dinu's report is incomplete in the first part of the novel. The sequels are found

intermeshed among the comments and questions in the second and third parts of the novel, which are authored by Richartz and Christian respectively. The shuffling of the three texts among the three men reveals the convoluted interconnectedness of the lives of the three protagonists. After he writes his report, Dinu mails it anonymously to Richartz, who mails it together with his commentaries also anonymously to Christian. After he reads it, Christian sends it back to Richartz along with his comments and reflections.

In addition to reporting on his findings about the circumstances that led to Erika's death, Dinu also records his intimate thoughts and reflections that include detailed information on Romanian history, politics, culture, and religion as well as aspects of his Romanian-German mixed marriage and family life both during Ceaușescu's regime and in West Germany. He also reveals chilling insights into the mentality and operational and organizational schemes of the *Securitate*. His interactions with Onescu demonstrate that despite Ceaușescu's demise, the *Securitate*, the dictator's much-dreaded watchdog, is still in power in Romania. Dinu's text is a combination of a surveillance report, intimate diary, and historical metafiction.

While commenting on Dinu's report, Richartz offers insights into his life as an ethnic German writer in Bucharest during the communist dictatorship and after immigration to West Germany. He also gives information about the condition of *Aussiedler* and the cultural and political life in post-*Wende* Germany. Like Dinu's text, Richard's is a cross between an intimate diary and historical metafiction. In addition to the questions and comments he has on receiving and reading his father's report, Christian presents in his text aspects of his life as a schoolboy in communist Romania and as a

twenty-year-old aspiring writer in Frankfurt, which he renders as an intimate diary in which his reflections and memories intermingle with fragments from Dinu's report.

In his portrayal of Dinu, Richartz, and Christian, Wagner creates three convincing characters with distinct voices, personalities, and life stories. All three protagonists ignore and/or try to escape their past at the "periphery," i.e., their past in communist Romania by fleeing to the "center," i.e., West Germany, where they attempt to construct new lives and identities. Yet Erika pulls them back to the "periphery" where they are confronted in new ways with their pasts and their real identities. In an effort to blend in and sound more "German," Dinu drops his Romanian last name, "Matache," and adopts "Schullerus," his wife's maiden name and changes his first name "Dinu"—a common Romanian name—to "Dino" because it sounds more Western. Because his wife is a Transylvanian Saxon, Dinu is entitled to and receives the *Aussiedler* status. After working as a translator, he is hired by a West German detective agency where he makes a name for himself as a skilled detective. However, despite his *Aussiedler* status and German name, Dinu remains, in his words, "ein verdammter Ausländer," whom the locals esteem only because he is a capable detective (25).⁶⁸ He continues to live in fear that his *Securitate* past will be revealed. Investigating Erika's murder, he realizes that he, Richartz, and Osthoff are responsible for Erika's death. As such, he perceives himself and the other two men as murderers who will always be haunted and punished by their past: "Wir waren ängstliche Männer, Gefangene der Vorteile unserer Zeit. [Erika], die einzige uneingeschränkt Menschliche, ist unser Opfer geworden, sie ist tot. Und wir leben und haben diese Vergangenheit vor Augen, mächtig und grauenvoll, denn Strafe muß sein [. . .] wir haben

⁶⁸ All page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to Richard Wagner, *Miss Bukarest* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2001).

getötet” (186). Thus, despite his efforts to construct a new life and identity for himself in Germany, Dinu’s true identity will always be marked by his past in communist Romania.

Like Dinu, Richartz is also hit hard by Erika’s death because it forces him to re-evaluate his relationship with her, his past and present life in Romania and in Germany, as well as his relationship with Kerstin, his West German girlfriend. In the process, Richartz realizes that his “new” identity and life “jenseits von Ost und West,” in whose construction Kerstin is instrumental, is only a self-delusion that he has devised in order to escape his past at the “periphery.” Disillusioned by the fact that the communism practiced in Romania was “unreformierbar,” Richartz can only fight *against* but not *for* something (137). Like Stirner, he maintains for a while a split identity: at his day job at a publishing house in Bucharest, he writes and translates texts for art albums, while in private, he writes poems. The monotony of his dull existence is interrupted by his affair with Erika. She is not only a *femme fatale* “mit der sich ein Mann damals gerne schmückte,” but also a means that enables Richartz to take refuge into “jenen vertrauten Raum” of his childhood in the Banat: “Zwischen uns beiden war ein kleiner geheimnisvoller Ton. Ich sagte manchmal etwas auf ungarisch zu ihr, in jener Sprache, die ich bruchstückhaft von den Nachbarskindern gelernt hatte und die für mich bis heute ein Signal meiner Kindheitsgeborgenheit ist” (112). The past becomes a fantasy that enables both Erika and Richartz to escape temporarily the ideologically suffocating atmosphere of the capital and to feel connected to each other (113). However, after he is granted permission to immigrate to Germany, Richartz abandons Erika.

Soon after he arrives in Germany, Richartz sets out to re-invent himself as a writer. Like many immigrant writers, he busies himself at first with the “Zustand der

Welt,” because “als Emigrant besitzt man so wenig, daß man sich an der Welterklärung festhalten muß” (123). As a result, he writes essays in which he talks about the numerous anti-regime discussions he had in Bucharest and his experiences in the Banat. Yet, following several death-threat letters, he shifts his focus to Germany. Criticized for his “fremder Blick,” which categorizes him as an “Ausländer,” Richartz shifts his focus again and starts writing essays about Eastern European and Balkan themes, which indicate that he has settled for yet another “periphery” (106). But because he avoids scrutinizing his past in Romania and present in Germany, Richartz is under the illusion that he is living and writing outside the “center”-“periphery” polarization. Kerstin, his West German girlfriend, plays a decisive role in feeding and maintaining his illusion.

Although Kerstin does not know where Bucharest and the Banat are on the map, Richartz is attracted to her because: “Das Leben mit Kerstin war von Anfang ohne Anstrengungen. Sein Zweck war, schön zu sein, und das machte es zum Gegenteil meines Ostlebens” (130). Helped by Kerstin’s disinterest in his political past, his “terrible experiences” and the *Securitate*, Richartz is able to distance himself from his “Romanian problems” (115). He becomes interested instead in the “relativity of meanings” and the idea of existence as an aesthetic phenomenon, to which Kerstin introduces him (129-30). Having this perspective on the world and existence, Richartz sees his circumstances, efforts, and his entire “Kampf” in Romania as a mere “air bubble” (115). As a result, he turns into a “stiller Beobachter der nervösen Menschen,” who, he thinks, has become immune to the “Leidenschaften des Ostens” (129).

In his efforts to live “jenseits von Ost und West,” Richartz distances himself from Martin, his only friend in Germany, a German-Jewish immigrant from Romania who sent

Richartz the invitation to a literature symposium that prompted Richartz to apply for an exit visa. In addition, he avoids contact with fellow Banat-Swabian immigrants who are stark reminders of his past and cultural roots (130). His definition of what makes a writer is also affected: “Erst wenn weiß, daß man selber völlig bedeutungslos ist, sollte man mit dem Schreiben anfangen” (107). This is why he rejects the manuscripts he occasionally receives from ethnic German immigrants who hope that he would help them publish their personal stories of persecution and oppression during the communist regime. Kerstin and the distance he has succeeded in putting between himself and his past in Romania are also reasons why Richartz forgets about Erika and deems her existence “insignificant” until he reads Dinu’s report (131).

However, Dinu’s account offers Richartz a deep look into his own past. To his dismay and contrary to his beliefs of what makes a writer, Richartz realizes that Dinu’s account provides “die ganze Wahrheit” that both he (and Martin) have avoided in their essays:

Und jetzt schreibt [Dinu]. Was ich nicht geschrieben habe, schreibt der Securist. Und ich bin der Leser. Wir haben all diese Essays geschrieben, Martin und ich, aber nichts über uns. Alles was wir geschrieben haben, ist wahr, nur, es ist nicht unsere persönliche Wahrheit, und so ist es auch nicht die ganze Wahrheit. Nun schreibt Dinu. Und seine Geschichte ist die Geschichte zu unseren Essays. (143)

The chilling details about Erika’s abuse by the *Securitate* and the Stasi shatters Richartz’s view of the false image he had about his former lover. Although he loved her and had no proof that she was a collaborator of the *Securitate*, Richartz did not fully trust her (144). He blames his suspicious attitude on the dictatorship, which had supposedly poisoned the relationships of *all* people:

Jetzt kommt das alles wieder. Der komplette Wahnsinn meiner Jugend nimmt Platz auf dem Sofa meines Hirns. Wir haben versucht, unsere Jugend zu leben,

und wir sind abgestürzt in Mißtrauen und Verzweiflung, weil das System die Beziehung zwischen den Menschen vergiftet hat. Dieses Gift, das große Mißtrauen, war das schlimmste. Unser Innerstes ist davon bis heute gezeichnet. [. . .] Alle haben allen mißtraut. Es war ein schleichendes Gift. (147)

The realization that Erika was an exception leads Richartz to see his entire life in Romania in a new light. Instead of opposing the dictatorship, he now understands that he, like many others, were mere broken people: “Wir sind Gescheiterte. Als wir unser Elend erkannt haben, sind wir geflohen. Auf und davon [. . .] Wir haben aufgegeben. Sind auseinandergestoben” (147). It was not so much the few “regimekritische Reden” he uttered in public when he was drunk that expedited his application to travel to Germany, but the “Kopfgeld” that the German state paid to the Romanian government in exchange of granting him the exit visa (136-37).

Richartz’s most painful discovery is that, like the *Securitate*, he also used Erika. While she was his temporary escape, he failed to offer her an escape. Suddenly, the scene in which Erika tells him that she is going to marry Dieter Osthoff takes on a completely different meaning, because her wedding announcement could have been a cry for help: “Ich heirate Dieter, hat sie gesagt und mich dabei angesehen. Vielleicht hat sie erwartet, daß ich mich dagegen ausspreche” (135). Yet blinded by suspicion and concerned only for his own safety, Richartz does not react to her announcement: “wenn ich etwas gesagt hätte, hätte ich ihr auch eine Alternative anbieten müssen. Die hatte ich aber nicht. Nein, die hatte ich nicht” (135). Although he equates himself with Erika in that they were both “Objekte des Ostwestkonflikts,” unlike him, Erika succeeded in overcoming her “object” status and thwarting the plans of the *Securitate* (133).

As one who lived and died because she confronted the cruel socio-political realities of her life, Erika is Kerstin’s opposite: “Erika und Kerstin schließen einander

aus” (134). This discovery prompts Richartz to comprehend that all his efforts to construct a new life and identity in Germany are only a means to escape his past. Struck with remorse, Richartz recognizes not only that Erika was the ticket that paid his way to West Germany, but more, that he was also responsible for her death: “Jetzt aber war sie tot, alles war endgültig und geschehen und lag in meiner Verantwortung [. . .] ich hatte das westliche Ufer nicht nur ohne sie, sondern auf ihre Kosten erreicht. Erika war ein Opfer” (133).

Unimpressed by Erika and her destiny, Kerstin urges Richartz to regard his past as “Trasch” and to stick to the identity that they have been constructing together: “Dein Name ist Klaus Richartz. Du bist Schriftsteller und deutscher Staatsbürger” (143). Convinced that he has earned the right to be happy with Kerstin because of the “damage” of his “terrible past,” Richartz decides to dispose of the manuscript hoping that by doing so “the lost life” with Erika would not hinder “the true life” with Kerstin (149). He decides to mail both Dinu’s account and his commentaries to Christian, after he discovers that Dinu’s son is a participant in his current writing workshop.

Unlike Dinu and Richartz, Erika does not have a strong impact on Christian because he did not know her. Yet he is shocked by the discovery that his father was a *Securitate* agent and by its implications on his own identity and life. His first reaction is to renounce Dinu as his father hoping that in this way he will also be able to distance himself from his past in communist Romania: “Ich will nicht Sohn sein. [. . .] Ich will frei sein [. . .] Frei von diesem großen Osten” (165). Yet based on his father’s and Richartz’s accounts, Christian realizes that, like his father and Richartz, he has also been running

way from his past in Romania, which renders their alleged new life and identity in Germany “unvollständig” (177).

In an effort to share his discoveries with someone who could relate to them, Christian talks to his sister, Lena. But unlike him, she is not impressed by the new light on her life and cultural identity that Dinu’s and Richartz’s revelations shed; she is only touched by Erika’s story. As such, Christian decides to mail Dinu’s and Richartz’s texts back to Richartz along with his comments in which he includes a challenge to Richartz, the writer: “Er ist der Schriftsteller. Soll er sehen wie er mit der Sache fertig wird. Richartz ist zuständig. Mal sehen, ob er seiner Balkan-Analyse gerecht wird, wenn es sich um sein eigenes Leben handelt” (190). There is no indication in Wagner’s novel whether Richartz receives Christian’s package and how he reacts to it. However, given the profound impact that Dinu’s and Richartz’s revelations have on Christian’s identity and life, Richartz may have responded to his student’s challenge by publishing all three texts as *Miss Bukarest*, thereby acknowledging that his life and the identity he has been trying to construct “jenseits von Ost und West” are a mere illusion.

CHAPTER 5

INTERROGATING “*DEUTSCHTUM*” IN HERTA MÜLLER’S FICTION

*Ich versuche mich immer an den Rand des Geschehens zu denken, das ich wahrnehme. Ich sehe die Menschen, wie sie angeblich frei handeln und dabei nicht wissen, daß sie es unter bestimmten Zwängen tun, daß sie in einem Mechanismus drin stecken, daß sie mit der Freiheit der Marionetten handeln. Ich versuche dann, diesen Mechanismus darzustellen.*¹

Even before she was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize in Literature, Herta Müller was arguably considered the most important German-Romanian writer since Paul Celan.² She received numerous prestigious literary prizes, including the 1998 Dublin-IMPAC prize for literature in translation for *The Land of Green Plums* (1996), the translation of her novel *Herztier* (1994).³ Among the German-Romanian writers who succeeded in developing a writing career in Germany, Müller is the most successful but also the most controversial.⁴ She is highly acclaimed for her distinct *Bildlichkeit*, analytical sharpness, precision with words, the lyrical quality of her prose, which is often described as “poetic

¹ Annemarie Schuller, “‘Und ist der Ort wo wir leben.’” Interview mit Herta Müller,” in *Reflexe II. Kritische Beiträge zur rumäniendeutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. Emmerich Reichrath (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1977), 122.

² White, “A Romanian German in Germany,” 171.

³ Some of the prizes Müller has received include: the 1987 *Ricarda Huch* Prize, the 1992 *Deutscher Kritiker Preis*, the 1994 *Kleist* Prize, the 1999 *Franz Kafka* Prize, the 2005 the *Berliner Literaturpreis*, the 2006 *Würth* Prize for European Literature, the 2009 Franz Werfel Human Rights Award, and the 2010 Great Order of Merit with Star of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Großes Verdienstkreuz mit Stern des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*).

⁴ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 115.

prose,” and the capacity of conveying traumatic experiences in a poetic style.⁵ However, due to her insistence on revisiting themes linked to totalitarianism and oppression, Müller has been criticized for being unable to break free from her past.⁶

An extremely outspoken critic of all forms of totalitarianism, Müller focuses on exploring her traumatic experience in her Banat-Swabian village and the persecution she was subjected to under Ceaușescu’s political terror. She interrogates and denounces the paradigm of German cultural identity practiced in her native village that was based on ethnocentrism, denial of the Nazi past, an oppressive conformism, and general intolerance. Terror and political persecution during the Ceaușescu dictatorial regime are major themes in Müller’s works as are the tyrannical schemes of the *Securitate*.

In addition to examining her past in communist Romania, Müller concentrates on critically observing German society and politics. In her works, she exposes the hostile reception of *Aussiedler*, foreigners, and immigrants in West Germany, who are often marginalized based on biological descent, language, or race. Like Richard Wagner, Müller is interested in the effects of migration, displacement, consumerism, the commodification of culture, and materialism on the formation of cultural identity in post-unification Germany.

Displaced, alienated, and traumatized figures who, like her, question and distrust language and political and cultural oppression, are central characters in Müller’s works. As outsiders and critics of the village community, the communist regime, and West

⁵ Friedmar Apel, “Schreiben, Trennen. Zur Poetik des eigensinnigen Blicks bei Herta Müller, in *Die erfundene Wahrnehmung*, ed. Norbert Otto Ecke (Paderborn: Igel, 1991), 103; Thomas Roberg, “Bildlichkeit und verschwiegener Sinn in Herta Müllers Erzählung *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt*,” in *Der Druck der Erfahrung treibt die Sprache in die Dichtung. Bildlichkeit in Texten Herta Müllers*, ed. Ralf Köhnen (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1997), 29.

⁶ See Lev Grossman, “German Writer Herta Müller: Another Nobel Surprise,” n. pag. and Apel, “Schreiben, Trennen. Zur Poetik des eigensinnigen Blicks bei Herta Müller,” 103.

German society, Müller's protagonists reveal the complexity of the term "German" in relation to language, culture, identity, nation, and citizenship. Being oppressed in both the Banat-Swabian village and under Ceaușescu's regime, Müller's characters refute any territorial or cultural notions of *Heimat*, a refusal owed to Müller's own experiences. In her village, "Dorfheimat" was equated with "Deuschtümelei," which connoted uncritical obedience and blind fear of repression.⁷ Müller had a similar experience in the communist state, where *patria* (Romanian for "homeland") became tantamount to Ceaușescu's totalitarian regime.⁸

Like the village community, the communist state demanded unconditional obedience and submission to its ideology, which, when questioned and resisted, led to brutal suppression through fear and force. Consequently, Müller criticizes and rejects conceptualizations of "homeland" on the local and national level as provincial, arrogant, and xenophobic.⁹ As was the case with other German-Romanian immigrant writers, resettling in Germany was for Müller a mere change of locations ("Orstwechsel") and not a return to the *Heimat*. As such, she has always resisted the use of emotional terms like *Heimat* and "Heimweh" that many ethnic German immigrants draw on.¹⁰ For Müller, Germany is another "fremder Ort." As a result, she argues that she is neither able to belong to Germany nor leave it and go somewhere else.¹¹

The only notion that comes close to the idea of *Heimat* for Müller is illustrated in a quote she borrows from Jorge Semprún: "Nicht Sprache ist Heimat, sondern das was

⁷ Herta Müller, "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen," in *Der König verneigt sich und tötet* (München: Carl Hanser), 29.

⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Romanian are mine.

⁹ Müller, "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen," 29.

¹⁰ Herta Müller, "Das Land am Nebentisch," in *Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1991), 122-23.

¹¹ Müller, "Und noch erschrickt unser Herz," 30.

gesprochen wird,” which, in her case, are her unique, transcultural language and images through which she interrogates her surroundings.¹² Müller’s language and literary strategies of resistance are always marked by her strong political *engagement* because, as her texts show, resistance to totalitarianism has to be a political, if not an ideological, activity.¹³

In this chapter, I will discuss Müller’s treatment of conceptualizations of “*Deutschtum*” in three stories: “Niederungen” (1984), “Die Grabrede” (1984), “Dorfchronik” (1984) and two novels, *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989) and *Herztier* (1994). I have selected these texts because they are representative examples of Müller’s creative use of language and diverse writing techniques. In these works, I will examine the narrative strategies that five characters, four Banat Swabians and one ethnic German, employ to interrogate conceptualizations of “*Deutschtum*” in the aftermath of the Second World War, under the communist regime, and after immigration to West Germany.

In “Niederungen,” which is told from the perspective of a young child, I will discuss the German identity of a community of Banat Swabians, whose members are unable or unwilling to confront both their collaboration with the Nazi regime and the violence of their social practices through which they enforce conformity. In “Die Grabrede,” I will explore the ways in which a Banat-Swabian community ostracizes an adult Banat-Swabian woman who rejects the German identity of her father and village community, which are marked by violence. In the short story “Dorfchronik,” I will look

¹² Herta Müller, “In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen,” in *Der König verneigt sich und tötet* (München: Carl Hanser, 2003), 30. See also Semprún’s quote which reads: “Im Grunde ist meine Heimat nicht die Sprache [. . .], sondern das, was gesprochen wird.” Jorge Semprún, *Frederico Sánchez verabschiedet sich*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1994), 13.

¹³ John J. White, “‘Die Einzelheiten und das Ganze’: Herta Müller and Totalitarianism,” in *Herta Müller*, ed. Brigid Haines (Cardiff: U of Wales P, 1998), 93.

at how the first-person narrator uncovers and criticizes the fragmenting effects of nationalization, collectivization, and massive immigration to West Germany on the “*Deutschtum*” of a Banat-Swabian community. In *Herztier*, I will examine how the knowledge of her father’s Nazi past reshapes the childhood memories of a Banat-Swabian university student and her rapport with her father before his death. I will also discuss the manner in which the revelation of her father’s true German identity prompts her to rethink her own “*Deutschtum*” and become an opponent of the Romanian totalitarian regime.

Through the figure of Irene, the protagonist of *Reisende auf einem Bein*, I will discuss the conflicting paradigms of “*Deutschtum*” that Irene, an ethnic German and political exile faces in West German society and culture; and I will briefly compare and contrast Irene with Stirner, Richard Wagner’s protagonist in “Ausreiseantrag” and “Begrüßungsgeld.” While Stirner constructs an individualized cultural identity, critically selecting and combining elements of the Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German languages and cultures, Irene experiences an acute fragmentation of her personal and cultural identity as a result of the growing alienation she experiences in West Germany. However, fragmentation is a means rather than an obstacle through which Irene maintains her freedom and is able to construct an individualized cultural identity, albeit scarred by her traumatic experiences in the communist dictatorship. Situated in opposition to three competing narratives of belonging, the “*Deuschtümelei*” of their native village, the communist utopia of the dictatorship, and paradigms of “*Germanness*” practiced in reunified Germany, the characters and texts I discuss in this chapter discredit concepts of a homogeneous German language, culture, nation, and identity, and expose the

deceptions and processes of exclusion through which these conceptualizations are articulated.¹⁴

An Introduction to Herta Müller's Life and Works

Herta Müller was born in 1953 in Nitzkydorf, a village in the Banat. The community in which she grew up used German songs, sayings, and traditions to convey antiquated notions of morality and ethnic identity and a conceptualization of “*Deutschtum*” that was divorced from the social and political reality in post-war Germany:¹⁵ “Es war eine Minderheit,” Müller writes, “die irgendwo in der Geschichte [. . .] steckengeblieben war.”¹⁶ Her father, a Waffen-SS soldier, who, after being a prisoner of war, returned to the Banat, became an alcoholic and never talked about his Nazi past. Müller’s mother spent five years in a Ukrainian labor camp. Deeply traumatized by and ashamed of her experience, she never spoke of her time there. Müller often talks and writes about her father’s brutality—particularly fueled by his alcoholism—tracing it directly to his service in the SS and is unsparing about his legacy: “Er ist in der SS gewesen, nach dem Krieg ins Dorf zurückgekehrt, hat geheiratet und mich gezeugt [. . .]. Der Tod meines Vaters war der Tod einer Krankheit.”¹⁷ Her insistence on exposing the legacy of National Socialism and its influence on the cultural identity of her Banat-Swabian community won Müller as many critics as admirers.

¹⁴ Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” 494.

¹⁵ Karin Bauer, “Patterns of Consciousness and Cycles of Self-Destruction: Nation, Ethnicity, and Gender in Herta Müller’s Prose,” in *Gender and Germanness: Cultural Productions of Nation*, ed. Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997), 264.

¹⁶ Klaus Hansel, “Alles was ich tat, daß hieß jetzt: warten. Die ausgewanderte rumäniendeutsche Schriftstellerin Herta Müller im Gespräch mit Klaus Hansel,” *Frankfurter Rundschau* (8 Aug. 1987): Zeit und Bild 2.

¹⁷ Herta Müller, “Überall wo man den Tod gesehen hat. Eine Sommerreise in die Maramuresch,” in *Barfußiger Februar* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1990), 105.

Having “Europe’s agonizing political history already in her DNA,” as one critic put it, Müller grew up with a strong feeling that something was terribly wrong in her family and community.¹⁸ She learned to speak Romanian only at age fifteen, as in her village almost everybody spoke only Banat-Swabian dialect or *Hochdeutsch*. The paradoxical sense that even in her homeland, she was in exile had a profound effect on her life and writing.¹⁹ In 1973 Müller began to study German and Romanian literature at the University of Timișoara, from which she graduated in 1976. During this time, she became associated with the *Aktionsgruppe Banat*. In the group’s meetings, she met Richard Wagner, whom she later married. She also befriended writers Rolf Bossert (1952-86) and Roland Kirsch (1960-89), whose violent and mysterious deaths shook her deeply. Following her studies, she worked as a translator at a tractor factory from 1977 to 1979. Müller was dismissed when she refused to be an informant for the *Securitate*. As a further consequence, she was subjected to brutal interrogations and intimidation schemes. She tried to work as a teacher of German and private tutor, but the *Securitate* caused Müller to lose every one of her jobs.

In Timișoara, Müller started to reflect on the experiences of her childhood, which, she discovered, had been “sprachlos” because she was neither allowed to question the strict rules in her family nor express her inner feelings and fears: “Ich wuchs nicht auf. Ich wurde erzogen. Nichts durfte man, man mußte alles. Und ich litt schrecklich unter der kaputten Ehe meiner Eltern.”²⁰ The language that her family spoke at home was a “Gebrauchssprache,” a utilitarian jargon used for day-to-day activities. Except for the few books that she received as prizes at school, there were no other books in the house. As a

¹⁸ Lev Grossman, “German Writer Herta Müller: Another Nobel Surprise,” n. pag.

¹⁹ Schuller, “Und ist der Ort wo wir leben,” 123.

²⁰ Ibid.

result, for a time, she was “entirely thrown back on her own devices” (“ich war lange Zeit völlig auf mich bezogen”).²¹ Thus, she started to write poems in order to reassure herself that she had a language. In the process, she began to dismantle her childhood systematically.²²

Müller started to write the stories in *Niederungen* when she encountered a personal crisis: “Mein Vater starb, meine erste Ehe war dahin, ich begann, um zu begreifen, wer ich bin, die *Niederungen* zu schreiben.”²³ Through the process of dismantling her childhood, she came to realize that beneath the customs and practices of her community lay repressed collective memories of the two wars, especially of the Second World War, in which the majority of the men had fought as members of the SS. Furthermore, she noticed the recurrence of the word “Heimat” in her father’s drinking songs, and began to grasp that beyond the drunkenness there lay another yearning, not for another place, but rather for another time: the memory of the war.²⁴ She made the same discovery about her mother’s songs, through which the mother evoked the Führer and the men of her age who went to war.²⁵ With this knowledge of her parents also came “an altered understanding both of the culture of the village itself, which increasingly came to seem a community living in denial of its own past, and of her own identity as a Banat Swabian.”²⁶ She wrote *Niederungen* as a response to this Banat-Swabian identity and her

²¹ Schuller, ““Und ist der Ort wo wir leben,”” 124. I use Thomas Cooper’s translation of Müller’s quote. See Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” 477.

²² Schuller, ““Und ist der Ort wo wir leben,””, 123.

²³ Herta Müller, “Antrittsrede,” in *Wie sie sich selber sehen. Antrittsreden der Mitglieder vor dem Kollegium der deutschen Akademie*, ed. Hans-Martin Gauger and Michael Assmann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999), 431.

²⁴ Herta Müller, “Heimat oder der Betrug der Dinge,” in *Dichtung und Heimat. Sieben Autoren unterlaufen ein Thema*, ed. Wilhelm Solms (Marburg: Hitzeroth 1990), 69.

²⁵ Herta Müller, “Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet,” in *Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1991), 22-24. See also Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” 477.

²⁶ Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” 477.

childhood deprived of language: “Ich wollte mir durch Sprache meine Kindheit zurückerobern.”²⁷

Müller made her literary debut in 1982 with *Niederungen*. The stories in this collection represent Müller’s deliberate gesture of separation and attack against her harsh childhood and the Banat-Swabian identity. All her protagonists are characters who situate themselves on the margins of the Banat-Swabian community. They interrogate and expose the hypocrisy, the rigid norms and traditions, and strict conformism that they are subjected to. In sparse, poetic language the stories in this volume describe the cruelty and repression in a German-speaking village in Romania, much like the one Müller grew up in. The publication of the book was much delayed and finally appeared in 1982, in an extensively censored version. However, the original manuscript was smuggled to West Germany and published in 1984 under the same title, where it received rapturous praise. The same year, Müller was awarded the *Aspekte* Literary Award.²⁸ Müller’s unsparingly negative representation of the Banat-Swabian community offended all received notions of the rural idyll traditionally upheld by the *Dorf-* and *Heimatliteratur* which other Banat Swabians wrote, in an attempt to construct a positive image of the German minority whose cultural identity had been tainted by its overwhelming support of the Nazi regime. While Romanian critics dismissed the book, fellow Banat Swabians in Romania and Germany denounced *Niederungen* as a “Ketzerei oder totale Verantwortungslosigkeit,” and Müller as a “Nestbesmutzerin,” who has damaged the reputation of the “Auslandsdeutsche im Mutterland.”²⁹ Critics in the West, however, praised Müller’s

²⁷ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 303.

²⁸ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 122.

²⁹ Franz Heinz, “Kosmos und Banater Provinz. Herta Müller und der unliterarische Streit über ein literarisches Debüt,” in *Beiträge zur deutschen Literatur in Rumänien seit 1918*, ed. Anton Schwob

collection for its exceptional poetic quality, calling the author “an urgently important literary voice.”³⁰

In 1984 Müller published her second book, *Drückender Tango*, in Romania. This collection of short prose provided some of the material for the 1987 Rotbuch edition, *Barfußiger Februar*. Like the stories in *Niederungen* and *Drückender Tango*, the short pieces included in *Barfußiger Februar* portray the oppressive way of life and values of Banat-Swabian rural communities, frequently told from a child’s perspective.³¹ Müller was banned from publication in 1985 and was again subjected to brutal interrogations, ill-treatment, death threats, and false accusations. Her apartment was frequently ransacked by the *Securitate*, who prohibited her neighbors from having contact with her. While waiting for permission to emigrate, she wrote *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt*, which was published in Germany in 1986. This short novel depicts the gradual decay of a village community, as a family of ethnic Germans waits for its permission to immigrate to West Germany. In 1987, Müller finally received permission to immigrate to Germany with Richard Wagner, her husband at the time. Since then, she has been living in Berlin and has emerged not only as one of the most remarkable contemporary writers but also as an outspoken critic of all forms of totalitarianism.

After resettling in West Germany, Müller’s literary output has been divided fairly evenly between vivid evocations of life in Romania under Ceaușescu and fictional accounts of the intolerable *Aussiedler* predicament in West Germany, which invariably

(München: Verlag des Südost-deutschen Kulturwerks, 1985), 108-109. The Organization of Banat Swabians in Germany (*Banater Schwaben Landsmannschaft*) is particularly critical of Müller and her works.

³⁰ Leora Skolkin-Smith, “Herta Müller’s The Passport,” *Quarterly Conversation* March 1 2010, Sept. 10 2010 <<http://quarterlyconversation.com/herta-millers-the-passport>>.

³¹ Lyn Marvin, “Introduction,” *Body and Narratives in Contemporary Literatures in German*, 12.

shows that there can be no absolute Year Zero, even for those who have left the totalitarian regime long ago.³² Since then, Müller has published over twenty works including novels, poetological essays on literature and the politics of oppression, short stories, collage poems, and journalistic pieces.

Müller's fiction is inspired by personal experiences. She borrows Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt's term to designate her poetics as *autofiktional*, i.e., autobiographical and fictional.³³ Her protagonists and narrators are close to her own experiences, details of which are documented in many of her essays. Yet, Müller's life brings to her writing much more than raw material.³⁴ She emphasizes that her own experiences are only the background to her work and that she does not invent her life from the past, but filters it through the experiences of the past. Consistently criticizing the corruption of language and memory, she reworks in her texts her own memories and experiences in innovative, lyrical, and evocative prose.³⁵ In addition to writing about her own suffering, Müller also focuses on uncovering and criticizing the injustices and prejudices that she sees in contemporary Germany and around the world.

Reisende auf einem Bein (1989) is Müller's first work written and published in West Germany. It focuses on the experiences of an ethnic German political exile from Romania in West German society. The novel, which was pre-published in serialized form in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, was extremely well received in the West.³⁶ It was followed by three other novels that were also received high critical acclaim: *Herztier*

³² White, "A Romanian German in Germany," 171.

³³ Herta Müller, *In der Falle. Bonner Poetik-Vorlesungen* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1996), 21.

³⁴ Lyn Marven, "An Alien Gaze," *Red Pepper*, 14 Feb. 2010, 3 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.redpper.org.uk/An-alien-gaze>>.

³⁵ Tess Lewis, "World Books: Herta Müller, Memory, and the Nobel," *The World* 23 Oct. 2009, 5 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.theworld.org/2009/10/23/world-books-herta-muller-memory-and-the-nobel/>>.

³⁶ White, "A Romanian German in Germany," 171.

(1994), *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* (1992), and *Heute wäre ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* (1997). These novels present episodes from the life of women in an urban setting in communist Romania. They are Müller's bleakest depictions of the mutilating effects of political repression.³⁷ The central characters, who are loosely modeled on the author herself, experience "the paranoid terror of being followed, held in suspicion, persecuted, and having to fight a pervasive and incomprehensible enemy, which is bent on defacing and annihilating them."³⁸ The deportation of ethnic Germans from Romania to forced labor camps in the Soviet Union—a part of the larger topic of German suffering in the aftermath of the Second World War that had barely been addressed before—is the subject of Müller's latest novel *Atemschaukel* (2009).³⁹ The first text for Müller in which she departs from autobiographically tinged topics, *Atemschaukel* presents the fictionalized story of the German-Romanian writer Oskar Pastior.⁴⁰ It received high critical acclaim and was awarded the 2009 *Franz Werfel Human Rights Award*. In *Atemschaukel*, Müller shows how language is all that is left when the protagonist's body is broken and his spirit is almost silenced. The tone and structure of the novel resemble Tadeusz Borowski's and Varlam Shalamov's camp narratives, though without their depths of cynicism, as well as Fred Wander's *The Seventh Well* and the short stories in *October Eight O'Clock* by the Romanian-American writer Norman Manea.⁴¹ The

³⁷ Brigid Haines, "'Leben wir im Detail:' Herta Müller's Micro-Politics of Resistance," in *Herta Müller*, ed. Brigid Haines (Cardiff: U of Wales P, 1998), 144.

³⁸ Mircea Cărtărescu, "Ode to Herta Müller," *Signandsight* 13 Oct. 2009, 10 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.signandsight.com/service/1946.html>>.

³⁹ "Herta Müller," *The Literary Encyclopedia* 4 Jan. 2010, 10 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=12545>>.

⁴⁰ The novel draws on Müller's conversations with Pastior who spent five years in a forced labor camp in Ukraine and on interviews with survivors that Müller and Pastior had collected.

⁴¹ Lewis, "World Books: Herta Müller, Memory, and the Nobel." n. pag.

outstanding poetic beauty of Müller's language is particularly evident in the prose poems dedicated to hunger and loneliness and in the odes to nature.

Immigration to West Germany under the pressure of the *Securitate* and the challenges of political exiles and ethnic German immigrants are discussed in many of her collections of poetological essays such as: *Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel* (1991), *Eine warme Kartoffel ist ein warmes Bett* (1992); *Hunger und Seide* (1995), and *Der König verneigt sich und tötet* (2003). These collections of essays in which she comments and reflects on her own texts and literary techniques, asserting her aesthetic and theoretical positions, constitute a new genre in Müller's work.⁴² In other non-fiction writings, Müller's focus is on political and social issues. These essays are polemically, self-assured, and often have an underlying moral message.⁴³ While she charts abuses of human rights, remembers political victims, and champions those who had the courage to resist, Müller condemns those who collaborated with totalitarian regimes and urges readers not to shy away from difficult moral judgments.⁴⁴

In her 2009 essay *Cristina und ihre Attrappe oder Was (nicht) in den Akten der Securitate steht*, Müller comments on her *Securitate* file that she has recently gained access to. Perusing her file, Müller gained a clearer picture of the diabolic spying and persecution schemes of the *Securitate*. In addition to finding evidence about several friends that she had suspected of reporting for the *Securitate*, Müller was happily surprised to discover that her best friend, Jenny, was blackmailed to become an informant *after* they had been best friends for a long time. When Jenny visited Müller in Germany,

⁴² Monika Andrea Moyrer, "Unheimisch in Deutschland: Fragmentation, Collage, and Performative Aesthetics in Herta Müller's Writings," diss., U. of Minnesota, 67.

⁴³ Haines, "'Leben wir im Detail:' Herta Müller's Micro-Politics of Resistance," 110.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 111.

she confessed that she was allowed to see her on the condition that she sign an agreement with the *Securitate* to report everything about her encounter with Müller. As a result, Müller thought that Jenny had always been a spy of the *Securitate*, and not her best friend. Several characters in Müller's novels, like Tereza in *Herztier* and Clara in *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, are loosely based on Jenny.

Müller has also published several collections of collage postcards and poems including: *Der Wächter nimmt seinen Kamm* (1993), *Im Haarknoten wohnt eine Dame* (2000), *Die blassen Herren mit den Mokkatassen* (2005), and *Este sau nu este Ion* (2005), which is her first piece written in Romanian. The collection of collages makes visible the Romanian that is always present in her writing and shows Müller taking artistic control of the language in which she was interrogated.⁴⁵ Initially approached as a game, the cutting-and-pasting of cut-out words from print texts, particularly newspapers and magazines, gave Müller a sense of pleasure in creating sentences that went very much against the grain of common meaning.⁴⁶ Accompanied by images presenting silhouettes of human forms, often disproportionate or maimed, the poems of Müller's collages afford her new means to depict traumas of rupture and dislocation visually.⁴⁷ The shifts in color, size, and font "dramatize stark semantic incongruities, revealing a poem as a whole to be a brutal assembly of divergent parts torn from different contexts."⁴⁸ As a result, the collages can be viewed as expressions of the author's resistance to any unifying vision of national communism and ethnic nationalism.⁴⁹ Acknowledging the influence of authors

⁴⁵ Marven, "An Alien Gaze," n. pag.

⁴⁶ Beverley Driver Eddy, "'Die Schule der Angst': Gespräch mit Herta Müller. 14. April 1998," *The German Quarterly* 72.4 (1999): 338.

⁴⁷ Cooper, "Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging," 491.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

like Thomas Bernhard, Franz Innerhofer, Franz Holder, Johannes Bobrowski, Emil Cioran, Alexandru Voina, Eugène Ionesco, and Thomas Kramer, Müller places her works in the tradition of writers, such as Primo Levi, Paul Celan, Imre Kertész, Jorge Semprún, Ruth Klüger, Inge Müller, Jean Améry, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whom she frequently cites in her essays as writers, “die in ihrer Biographie keine Wahl hatten.”⁵⁰

In her nonfictional work, Müller has consistently played the role of an expert on Ceaușescu’s dictatorship, Romanian post-1989 politics, and Eastern Europe.⁵¹ She frequently gives radio and TV interviews and participates in panels, conferences, and workshops and lectures worldwide. Müller also co-wrote with Harry Merkle the screenplay for the 1993 Romanian film *Vulpe—Vânător* (*Fox—Hunter*), which is based on her 1992 novel *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*. She has been a member of the German Academy for Writing and Poetry since 1995. Müller is a contributor to such newspapers like as *Die Zeit* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

Müller’s accomplishments, however, cannot hide the fact that some of her political actions and statements have bewildered and angered her peers. For example, she has protested against the unification of the West and East German writers’ guilds (PEN), because she refused to be a member of the same organization as former East German writers who had supported the communist regime in the GDR. Among German intellectuals, Müller had acquired the reputation of a “Kriegsgurgel” (“warmonger”) because she was among the few who defended the post-9/11 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan to end what she perceived to be the most totalitarian regime in the world. In

⁵⁰Brigid Haines and Margaret Litter, “Gespräch mit Herta Müller,” in *Herta Müller*, ed. Brigid Haines (Cardiff: U of Wales, 1998), 14.

⁵¹ White, “A Romanian in Germany,” 179.

Romania, Müller has caused a public uproar over the unwillingness of the post-communist regime to provide her with full access to her *Securitate* file.⁵²

Herta Müller's Language and Literary Techniques: An Overview

For Müller, the poetic represents a form of resistance through which she exposes and criticizes oppressiveness and totalitarianism and attempts to cope with her own fear caused by intimidation, slander, and death threats. Müller's "personal poetic and political manifesto" is encapsulated in an exhortation she borrowed from Eugène Ionesco: "Leben wir also. Aber man läßt uns nicht leben. Leben wir also im Detail."⁵³ Focusing on detail functions for Müller both as "an aesthetic strategy and a basic survival mechanism in the face of the life-denying master plots of totalitarianism."⁵⁴ As an abiding feature of her politics and aesthetics, the attention she pays to the innocuous provides a "crucial link between her essays and her literary works."⁵⁵ The construction and tone of Müller's essays are reminiscent of Adorno's 1951 collections of essays *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*. Like Adorno, Müller employs ironic inversion and a dialectical, aphoristic style, which is evanescent and deliberately contradictory, as exemplified in the titles of essays, such as: "Ang gekommen wie nicht da" or "Lügen haben kurze Beine—die Wahrheit hat keine."

Müller's distinct aesthetics is also owed to her acute "alien gaze": "the precise observation that tips into defamiliarisation and is mirrored in surreal, poetic language."⁵⁶

⁵² Moyrer, "Unheimisch in Deutschland, 4-5.

⁵³ Herta Müller, "Zehnfinger werden keine Utopie," in *Hunger und Seide* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1995), 61. See also Haines, "'Leben wir im Detail: Herta Müller's Micro-Politics of Resistance,'" 116.

⁵⁴ Haines, "'Leben wir im Detail: Herta Müller's Micro-Politics of Resistance,'" 109.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Marven, "An Alien Gaze," n. pag.

Müller's "alien gaze" is the product not only of the minority and outsider's view but also of the surveillance and the "repressive conditions, embodying and reproducing the alienation from her surroundings," which were continually tampered with and controlled by the *Securitate*.⁵⁷ As a result, Müller became estranged from familiar and personal objects. Such is the case with her bicycle, for example. Four days after she bought a bicycle, Müller was hit by a truck while biking. She immediately remembered the sudden remark of the *Securitate* officer who interrogated her a few days prior to the accident: "traffic accidents can happen."⁵⁸ Convinced that the "accident" she survived was staged by the *Securitate*, Müller immediately got rid of her bicycle.⁵⁹

In addition to the "alien gaze" that she developed in communist Romania, Müller scrutinizes Germany from the perspective of a member of the minority and an outsider. Thus, her portrayal of Germany is often qualified as "falsch" since it does not concur with the "familiar image" of the country: "Das Fremde daran irritiert," Müller remarks, "man wittert die illegitime Einmischung."⁶⁰ Müller's "alien gaze" irritates because she often draws on her traumatic experiences in communist Romania, a gesture which she attributes to the constraint ("Zwang") "auf mich hier [in Deutschland] und auf mich in einem zurückgelassenen Land *gleichzeitig* zu stoßen."⁶¹

Beyond her distinct "alien gaze," Müller is praised for her unique language which enables her to create distinct, ingenious literary effects. As Müller explains, her precision with language was the result, on one hand, of her efforts to distance herself from the

⁵⁷ Marven, *Body and Narrative in Contemporary Literatures in German*, 54.

⁵⁸ Herta Müller, *Der fremde Blick oder Das Leben ist ein Furz in der Laterne* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999), 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Müller, "Und noch erschrickt unser Herz," 30.

⁶¹ Ibid.

dialect of the village, which she experienced as an “imposed” (“verordnete”) language, and from the *Hochdeutsch* used in the media and in schools, which was “monopolized” (“vereinnahmt”) by the regime.⁶² On the other hand, Müller’s use of language is indebted to her exposure to Romanian and the German she read in West German and GDR books, with which she tried “möglichst genau und präzise anzueignen, um in der eigenen Situation damit umgehen zu können.”⁶³

Because she started to learn systematically Romanian only when she was fifteen, in high school in Timișoara, Müller says that she experienced the world anew: “Das Rumänische sah die Welt so anders an, wie seine Worte anders waren.”⁶⁴ After two years of living in the city, her Romanian was barely good enough to buy her what she wanted. Reflecting over her struggles with Romanian, Müller explains that she was amazed to witness the transformation of objects through the Romanian language.⁶⁵ In time, German was not the only measure of things for her anymore.⁶⁶ Müller became increasingly attracted to Romanian because of its sensorial (“sinnliche”) terms and phrases that corresponded better to her feelings than those offered by her mother tongue.⁶⁷ Romanian had an appeal for her also because of its blunt (“schonungslos”) images and audacious (“waghalsigen”) analogies.⁶⁸ Much of the poetic resonance of Müller’s work comes from Romanian, which echoes through her German. For her, Romanian is a language of threat

⁶² Herta Müller, *Heimat ist das was gesprochen wird* (Blieskastel: Gollenstein, 2001), 28

⁶³ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 300.

⁶⁴ Müller, “In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen,” 25.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Herta Müller, “Und noch erschrickt unser Herz,” 37.

⁶⁸ Müller, *Heimat ist das was gesprochen wird*, 39.

and oppression, but at the same time “it is a second mother tongue and source of poetic imagery.”⁶⁹

Müller’s bilingual existence played a decisive role in helping her establish a critical distance between experience and language.⁷⁰ In her essay *Heimat ist das was gesprochen wird*, Müller shows the tension she felt between different manners of perceiving the world. For example, in the village, she grew up with the phrase “der Wind geht,” while she learned in school the High German expression “der Wind weht.”⁷¹ To the seven-year old child the verb “wehen” sounded as if the wind was hurting itself because of the similarity she established with the noun “Weh” or pain. When she was later exposed to Romanian, she learned the expression *vântul bate*, i.e., the “wind blows,” which to her mind meant that the wind is blowing or beating others.⁷² Such tensions “undermine the complacency of language calling attention to the metaphorical nature of figuration, and the modalities through which language establishes systems of value as apparently self-evident.”⁷³

Reflecting on the influence that Romanian language and culture have on her writing, Müller states that in all her texts: “das Rumänische schreibt immer mit, weil es mir in den Blick hineingewachsen ist.”⁷⁴ In her works, Müller frequently draws from Romanian folk songs, legends, and sayings. In *Herztier*, for instance, she inserts translated quotes in German from Romanian folk songs sung by Maria Tănase, one of Romania’s iconic folk singers, and from songs by renowned folk and rock band *Phoenix*,

⁶⁹ Marven, “An Alien Gaze,” n. pag.

⁷⁰ Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” 480.

⁷¹ Müller, *Heimat ist das was gesprochen wird*, 26.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷³ Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” 480.

⁷⁴ Müller, *Heimat ist das was gesprochen wird*, 27.

whose members were harassed by the *Securitate* because their songs contained thinly-veiled anti-regime allusions. In this novel, a poem by celebrated Romanian poet Gellu Naum becomes the life motto for the four protagonists.⁷⁵

Müller also plays on contrasting connotations in German and Romanian of the same word and the new image(s) that result from the intertwining of the two languages. For example, in the title of her novel *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt* [Humans are Big Pheasants in the World] (1986), the term “pheasant” connotes a “braggart” in German and a “loser” in Romanian, which derives from the saying: *a cădea de fazan*, meaning, to be tricked or fooled by people or situations. The saying is used by Windisch, the protagonist in the novel, who is both a braggart and a loser. The English title of the novel, *The Passport* (1989), misses the opportunity to create in English an effect of estrangement and ambiguity similar to that of the German title.⁷⁶

Müller’s unique language is also the result of her reaction against the use of West German language. Müller often comments on its lack of reflection (“Unreflektiertheit”) and simplification (“Vereinfachung”), especially in the media and on TV: “ich [kriege] manchmal Angst vor der Unreflektiertheit und vor der Vereinfachung, die in dieser Sprache läuft [. . .] Es kann nicht der Sinn sein, die Sprache, die ich hier höre, die mir so

⁷⁵ Gellu Naum (1915-2001) is a Romanian poet, dramatist, and novelist, the founder of the Romanian Surrealist Group. He was part of Romania’s avant-garde was a group of artists and writers who were very influential to the broader European avant-garde movement at the beginning of the 20th century. Prominent Romanians included: playwright Eugène Ionesco, composer George Enescu, writer Urmuz (pen name of Demetru Dem. Demetrescu-Buzău), and author-performer Tristan Tzara.

⁷⁶ Other titles in English that miss rendering Müller’s poetic language are: *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* [Today I would have rather not encountered myself] (1997), which was published as *The Appointment* (2001), while *Herztier* (1994) [Heart-Beast] became *The Land of Green Plums* (1996). Her new novel *Atemschaudel* [breath-swing] (2009) is due to be published under the title: *Everything I Possess I Carry with Me*. However, two English translations stay close to the original German titles: *Niederungen* [Low/Flat Lands] (1984) was translated as *Nadirs* (1999) and *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989) is published as *Traveling on One Leg* (1989). Opposed to English translations, French, Spanish, and Romanian translations remain faithful to Müller’s original titles. Lyn Marven, “Lifewriting: Herta Müller’s Journey,” *Open Democracy*, 15 Oct. 2009, 3 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/germany/lifewriting-herta-muller-s-journey>>.

sinnentleert und oberflächlich und unreflektiert vorkommt, übernehmen zu wollen.”⁷⁷ As a result of her critical and careful use of language, Gerhardt Csejka, one of the founding members of the *Aktionsgruppe Banat*, a renowned translator and critic, evaluates Müller’s language as: “eine äußerst intensive, präzise, hochpoetische [Sprache] und deshalb literarisch wirksam.”⁷⁸

Müller’s trademark literary technique is “die erfundene Wahrnehmung” (“imagined awareness or perception”), a phrase turned concept that she coined, which accounts for a subjective, poetically deviated view of reality and her biography.⁷⁹ For Müller and her characters, imagined perceptions are a coping mechanism in response to fear. For example, as a child, Müller was scared of the big rocks she saw in an icon in her parents’ house because she perceived them as poisonous cucumbers that will pop at night and poison the entire family.⁸⁰ The fear that the child experienced living under the strict rules of the family, she transposed in the image of the rocks.

In the novel *Heute wäre ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*, the narrator tries to cope with her terrifying fear while she is on her way to be interrogated by the *Securitate*. Thus she focuses on the white berries in the bushes along the way, which she imagines as different objects. At first, she imagines the berries as pearl buttons, but this image causes her more fear because, while she is interrogated, one way to calm herself self is to twist with her fingers the pearl button of her blouse that she always wears for good luck. Next, she imagines the berries as bread balls, but this image is also threatening because she

⁷⁷ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 301.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ For more detailed discussions on Müller’s “invented perception” see Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 123 and Bauer, “Patterns of Consciousness and Cycles of Self-Destruction: Nation, Ethnicity, and Gender in Herta Müller’s Prose,” 265.

⁸⁰ Müller, “Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet,” 12.

associates it with birds that would eat them—an idea that makes her dizzy. Then, she decides to imagine the berries as snow spots on the grass, but this image reminds her of white chalk, which, when ingested makes one sleepy.⁸¹ Thus, in an effort to distance herself from her consuming fear, the protagonist becomes more and more seized by fear.

As a child, Müller was unable to communicate her “imagined perceptions” to her family because she would have been considered “crazy” (“verrückt”). As a result, she kept her “imagined perceptions” to herself so that she would not deviate from the community norms and be marginalized.⁸² Wanting to be part of the community, she came up with another coping mechanism, the “work on deception” (“Arbeit an der Täuschung”), through which she often succeeded in creating the impression that she was no different than other community members.⁸³ However, when Müller reflected as an adult over her “work on deception” during her childhood, she realized that all in the village were actually deceiving each other in order to keep up appearances.⁸⁴

Both the “imagined perceptions” and the “work on deception” became a creative means for Müller, the writer, to disagree with and intervene in the reality and image construction of the Banat-Swabian community and the communist state, because imagined reality was the only one she could control.⁸⁵ Yet, far from being “a withdrawal into the realm of the imagination or an attempt to capture some form of authenticity behind the deceptive and hypocritical façade of norms,” Müller’s prose is firmly

⁸¹ Herta Müller, *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1997), 7.

⁸² Müller, “Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet,” 13.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Bauer, “Patterns of Consciousness and Cycles of Self-Destruction,” 265.

grounded in reality and “deeply enmeshed in the social, political, and subjective context of delusion.”⁸⁶

Müller is also renowned for investing objects with meaning and juxtaposing them to surreal effect. In *Herztier*, for example, when the narrator writes enigmatically at the opening of the novel: “ich kann mir noch heute kein Grab vorstellen. Nur einen Gürtel, ein Fenster, eine Nuß und einen Strick,” she refers indirectly to the deaths associated with trauma of four friends: two die hanged, another is pushed or throws himself out a window, and a fourth dies of a nut-like cancerous tumor.⁸⁷ When the narrator and her friend, Edgar, the two survivors, discuss these tragedies from the relative safety of the West, they find themselves in a bind with regard to the task of bearing witness.⁸⁸ Müller renders their dilemma by using a poetically coded language: “wenn wir schweigen werden wir unangenehm, [. . .], wenn wir reden, werden wir lächerlich.”⁸⁹ This reflection expresses “the unsolved dilemma of the protagonists who survive the trauma but must bear witness to those who did not.”⁹⁰

Perhaps the literary technique that Müller is most famous for is the invention of neologisms, which are usually compound nouns. A representative example is “Herztier” [heart-beast], which combines two defining characteristics of human existence: the heart (or the soul) and the instincts. There is no one final, decisive interpretation of this term in the novel with the same name, because its uses are determined and conditioned by specific episodes and images in the text. However, Philipp Müller argues that the

⁸⁶ Bauer, “Patterns of Consciousness and Cycles of Self-Destruction,” 265-66.

⁸⁷ Herta Müller, *Herztier* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1994), 7.

⁸⁸ Brigid Haines, “Writing from Eastern and Central Europe,” in *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic* ed. Stuart Taberner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 222.

⁸⁹ Müller, *Herztier*, 7.

⁹⁰ Brigid Haines, “The Unforgettable Forgotten: The Traces of Trauma in Herta Müller’s *Reisende auf einem Bein*,” 270.

term/image “Herztier” suggests: “‘die Sehnsucht nach Neuem,’ die als ein utopisches Moment nur leere *Form*, nicht gefüllte *Gestalt* des Neuen werden darf, denn alles Neue ist fürchterlich [. . .] Herztier, das noch ausstehende dritte, kann derart als ein Medium der Kritik am Falschen, ‘am Schein von Versöhnung [. . .] inmitten des Unversöhnten’ verstanden werden.”⁹¹

Müller’s invented terms achieve remarkable lyrical intensity and poetic sensibility in her last novel, *Atemschaukel*. As in her previous works, her invented compound nouns carry a distinct poetic ring: “Kalkfrauen” (chalk women), “Hungerengel” (hunger angel), “Mondsichelmadonna” (crescent madonna), “Wangenbrot” (cheeks bread), “Blechkuss” (tin kiss), “Tageslichtvergiftung” (poisoning with daylight) or “Herzschaufel” (heart shovel). Each of them encapsulates an experience and becomes a manifestation of memories and linguistic artistry. Of all, “Atemschaukel,” literally translated as “breath-swing” or “breath-seesaw,” is perhaps the most outstanding because it illustrates the protagonist’s hunger at its lowest point and how it affects his sense of identity. Fascinating in its construction are the hunger angel and the heart shovel—the protagonist’s best friends and worst enemies.⁹²

⁹¹ For a comprehensive analysis of the term, see Philipp Müller, “*Herztier*. Ein Titel/Bild inmitten von Bildern,” in *Der Druck der Erfahrung treibt die Sprache in die Dichtung. Bildlichkeit in Texten Herta Müllers*, ed. Ralf Köhnen (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1997), 116 and footnotes 14 and 15.

⁹² Herta Müller, *Atemschaukel* (München: Carl Hanser, 2009), 42, 86, 115, 120, 227, 164, 86-87.

“Die erste Diktatur, die ich kannte, war das banatschwäbische Dorf”:⁹³
The “*Deutschtum*” of the Banat Swabians in “Niederungen” and “Die Grabrede”

“Niederungen”

Müller’s negative representation of the Banat-Swabian community in “Niederungen,” which is the longest story in her volume of the same title, destroys all illusions about the naiveté of country life, nostalgic sense of community, and the solidarity among its members traditionally upheld by the *Dorf-* and *Heimatliteratur*. The family and community introduced in this *Erzählung* live with the regret and nostalgia of the German nation, culture, and identity that the Nazi regime promised, but failed to establish in the Banat. Feeling betrayed both by Nazi Germany and communist Romania, which subjected them to forced deportation, nationalization, and assimilation, these Banat Swabians try to preserve their “*Deutschtum*” by strict adherence to order, cleanliness, industriousness, and piety. There is also ethnocentrism, nationalism, and chauvinism present, which are used to control everyone and everything in the village under the pretext of preserving the identity and cultural heritage of the community.⁹⁴

“Niederungen” uncovers the hypocrisy, brutality, and intolerance of a family who is unwilling or unable to confront their recent past and the violence of the social practices through which they enforce conformity. The family’s behavior can be directly traced to the participation in the First and Second World Wars of the grandfather and father respectively, the physical abuse that the mother and grandmother were subjected to by their fathers and husbands as well as the harsh conditions that the mother endured in deportation camps in the Soviet Union.

⁹³ Brigid Haines and Margaret Littler, “Gespräch mit Herta Müller,” in *Herta Müller*, ed. Brigid Haines (Cardiff: U of Wales, 1998), 17.

⁹⁴ Friedrich Christian Delius, “Jeden Monat einen neuen Besen,” *Der Spiegel*, 30 July 1984.

Told from the perspective of a young child, “Niederungen” also introduces the critical voice of an adult narrator who comments and reflects on the episodes that the child recounts. The adult’s comments are intertwined with the episodes presented from the perspective of the child. Although the adult narrator does not identify herself in the text, the phrase: “Später, als ich in die Stadt kam,” indicates that she has left the village and is now revisiting her childhood (27).⁹⁵ Thus, Müller employs both the language that is at the child’s disposal which is taken from the natural world and from her elders (grandparents and parents) as well as a highly metaphorical language which offers the adult narrator as a means critically to revisit her memories.⁹⁶

The absence in the text of words, expressions, images, or references that originate beyond the confinements of the village’s immediate vicinity, demonstrates the linguistic, cultural, and social isolation of the community in which the young girl lives. The oppression and tyranny she experiences in her family and the terror of being constantly watched and having to conform to the community’s rules and norms makes life in the community similar to that in a ghetto.⁹⁷ This is why Müller often argues that: “Die erste Diktatur, die ich kannte war das banatschwäbische Dorf” and that the totalitarian state was “die Ausdehnung dessen, was ein abgelegenes, überschaubares Dorf ist.”⁹⁸ The image that encapsulates the dictatorial essence of the “*Deutschtum*” in the village in this story is that of the frog. Müller chose this image in an effort to find a way to express the

⁹⁵ All page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to Herta Müller, “Niederungen,” in *Niederungen* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1984), 17-94.

⁹⁶ Morwenna Symons, *Room for Manoeuvre: The Role of Intertext in Elfriede Jelinek’s Die Klavierspielerin, Günter Grass’s Ein weites Feld, and Herta Müller’s Niederungen and Reisende auf einem Bein* (Leeds: Maney, 2005), 116.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Haines and Littler, “Gespräch mit Herta Müller,” 17 and Herta Müller, “Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet,” 20.

feeling of being constantly under the surveillance of the village community who controlled and enforced the preservation and perpetuation of the Banat-Swabian identity:

Der deutsche Frosch aus den Niederungen ist der Versuch, eine Formulierung zu finden, für ein Gefühl—das Gefühl, überwacht zu werden. Auf dem Land war der deutsche Frosch der Aufpasser, der Ethnozentrismus, die öffentliche Meinung. Der deutsche Frosch legitimierte diese Kontrolle des einzelnen mit einem Vorwand. Der Vorwand hieß: Bewahren der Identität. Im Sprachgebrauch der Minderheit hieß das ‘Deutschtum.’⁹⁹

As an only child, the young girl in the family depicted in “Niederungen” is constantly under the influence of her immediate family: the mother, father, grandfather, and grandmother. They try to make her thinking and behavior conform to the “*Deutschtum*” of the Banat Swabian cultural identity. Her attempts to question and resist both the normative expectations of her family and community and the rigid structures that characterize the community’s relationship with nature are harshly dismissed and often punished. Despite her innovative and daring strategies, the child succeeds only in part to resist and escape the influence of her family and the rigid structures that characterize the community’s relationship with nature. At times, her defense mechanisms emulate the behavior of the adults: she uses deceit and imagines violent acts of revenge.

The child’s attempts to interact with nature are promptly countered by the grandfather’s superstitious beliefs that prevailed in the village community. Although she wants to join other children in the village to play and eat fruit and plants with them, the grandfather prohibits her from doing so:

Der Großvater, der sagte, vom Ringelgras wird man dumm, das darf man nicht essen. Und du willst doch nicht dumm werden [. . .] Die Akazienblüten darf man nicht essen, sagte Großvater, es sitzen kleine schwarze Fliegen drin, und wenn die dir in den Hals kriechen, dann wirst du stumm. Und du willst doch nicht stumm werden. (17)

⁹⁹ Herta Müller, “Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet,” 20-21.

The grandfather's distorted perceptions of nature are deemed to install fear in the child that she will be physically mutilated if she fails to follow his views. The repetition of his rhetorical question: "und du willst doch nicht dumm (stumm) werden" subtly shifts the responsibility on the child: if she ends up "dumm" or "stumm," it is her fault not his. However, the child succeeds in uncovering the deceit behind the grandfather's interdictions, because she makes it a habit of eating: "Malvenfrüchte, von denen man dumm wird" (88). The fact that she does not mention the grandfather when she eats these fruit shows that she has dismissed his advice.

The grandfather's predilection to kill animals that the child plays with or admires reveals his violent past, which is an abiding feature of the behavior and identity of most villagers. After the child plays with the newly-born kittens which she has bundled up in doll's clothes, cradled, and sang lullabies to, the grandfather hangs them in front of her (18). In lieu of an explanation for his action, the grandfather remarks: "Nur die Schwalben muß man leben lassen, es sind nützliche Tiere, sagte er. Und das Wort Schädlinge für Kohlweißlinge und Luder für die vielen toten Hunde" (19). Dividing animals into "useful" and "useless" is reminiscent of the atmosphere of the war and the categorization of people into allies and enemies. This inherited, distorted view of nature which the grandfather strives to pass on his granddaughter reveals his inability to break rigid norms, and to experience nature and life in ways that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable to him.

While the child follows her grandfather's example and kills "useless" animals, when she chases and pins cabbage butterflies, she cannot call them "Luder." Her resistance to this term is equally poetic and sobering for a young child who is constantly

exposed to violence and death: “Im Schwäbischen nennt man eine Tierleiche Luder. Ein Schmetterling kann kein Luder sein. Er zerfällt, ohne zu verwesen” (18). Her refusal to use the Banat-Swabian term demonstrates her distrust and resistance to the Banat-Swabian cultural heritage, which she is supposed to appropriate and perpetuate. In her essay “In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen,” Müller offers additional examples of herself as a child distrusting language and of the discrepancy she discovered between language and experience. As a child, she noticed that the name “Milchdistel” does not fit the plant because there is no milk in its stem.¹⁰⁰ As a result, she invented names based on the plant’s shape and characteristics: “Stachelrippe” or “Nadelhals.”¹⁰¹ The urge: “Es sagen können” continues to drive Müller to find and invent words and images that describe as close as possible her thoughts and experiences, especially those linked to persecution and terror: “Ich befinde mich [. . .] immer vor dem Problem, wie beschreibt man Diktatur?,” she often remarks.¹⁰²

The grandfather’s violent past is further revealed when the child accidentally discovers him acting in an unusual manner in the stable, away from the rest of the family. The scene is powerfully staged through the apparently non-judgmental, observing eyes of the child who is at liberty to focus closely to the monstrous proportions and implications of the grandfather’s act:

Großvater weiß manchmal, daß er nicht weiß, was er weiß. Er geht dann allein durch das Haus und durch den Hof und redet mit sich selbst. Einmal, als er im Stall Rüben hackte, sah ich ihn, und er sah mich nicht. Er redete laut vor sich hin, bewegte die Arme, ohne die Axt aus der Hand zu legen. Er hackte in der Luft herum, stand auf und ging rund um den Rübenkorb, und sein Gesicht wurde immer verzerrter. Und er sah einen Augenblick so jung aus, wie schon lange nicht mehr. (42)

¹⁰⁰ Müller, “In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen,” 11.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Haines and Margaret Littler, “Gespräch mit Herta Müller,” 18.

Although the child cannot figure out what the grandfather is doing, what she has witnessed is a war scene that shows his yearning for his violent past. The vivid re-enacting of the battle scene, in which the grandfather's face becomes transfigured to the point of looking young again, demonstrates how deep his experience as a soldier is engrained in his identity. Although it is not specified in the text, it is reasonable to deduce that the child can recognize the young face of her grandfather only because she has seen photos of him as a young soldier.

The play on words in the cryptic phrase "Großvater weiß manchmal, daß er nicht weiß, was er weiß" reflects the observation of the adult narrator, who, while exposing and criticizing the grandfather, does not want to gain distance from the figure of the child, and hence encapsulates her criticism in a riddle that is more fit for the language of children. In addition to reliving his past war experiences, the child notices that the grandfather is also keenly interested in Germany's development after the Second World War. In the evenings, he listens to news about Konrad Adenauer on German radio stations, which were forbidden during communist Romania (68). Thus the grandfather is shown living with the regret of not being able to be part of the Germany that he fought for or the one that Adenauer was rebuilding.

In addition to reliving in private his true identity as a violent, unconsolated, and defeated soldier, the grandfather finds ways to express it in public. His hobby of collecting and hammering nails, which he carries in his clothes (including his night clothes), points again to his violent past and his inability to break free from it. The manner in which the child describes her fascination with nails and hammers make these tools look in his hands more like weapons: "Großvaters Nägel sind neu und spitz und

glänzend. Und seine Hämmer sind plump und schwer und rostig und haben viel zu dicke Stiele” (87). The grandfather not only likes to work with his nails and hammers, but he also enjoys talking about them: “Großvater spricht gerne von seinen Hämmern und Nägeln und sagt auch von manchen Leuten, daß sie vernagelt sind.” (87). The unsettling correlation that the grandfather makes between “nails” and “people” escapes the child who does not know the double-meaning of “vernagelt,” i.e., to be “nailed up” or “narrow-minded,” which demonstrates his prejudiced attitude. The grandfather’s view of people, prompts the adult narrator, however, to view the village as: “eine riesengroße Kiste aus Zaun und Mauer. Großvater klopft seine Nägel hinein” (87). The metaphor of the village envisioned as a gigantic box, which could also stand for that of a casket, presents the village as an isolated community that is unwilling and/or unable to confront its violent past. The image of the village as a sealed box is a recurrent theme in Müller’s writings. Following the revelation of the Nazi past her family and community they never talked about, Müller describes the village in her essay “Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet” as: “eine weggelegte, unberührte Akte [des] Krieges” and “eine geschlossene Schublade voll mit Vorstellungen von damals.”¹⁰³

Through the figure of the grandmother, Müller reveals disturbing aspects of the social and religious traditions of the Banat Swabians. The grandmother physically brutalizes the child: slaps her in the face, pulls her by the earlobes, and throws slippers at her. Unlike the grandfather, who warns the child against ingesting bugs that might be in the plants and fruits she would like to eat, the grandmother serves her tea sweetened with sugar from a jar that had ants in it (46). Motivated perhaps by the fact that in the years following the Second World War sugar was difficult to obtain in Romania, the

¹⁰³ Müller, “Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet,” 23-24.

grandmother assures the child that she can drink the tea because the ants are neither dirty nor poisonous. Yet, after the grandmother leaves the room, the child pours the tea into the bucket with the drinking water of the entire family (47). Thus, by disobeying her grandmother, she takes revenge on the entire family.

It is not so much the ants that the child seems to fear. Rather she distrusts her grandmother. When the grandmother opens the jar and discovers the ants, to the child they seem like poppy seeds (46). The child's "imagined perception" ("erfundene Wahrnehmung") is prompted by the grandmother's story in which she tells about her mother's habit of forcing her and her brother to swallow large quantities of poppy seeds and crow dung when they were toddlers so they would sleep for many hours during which the family and the servants could work undisturbed in the fields (84). Following an overdose on crow dung, Franz, the grandmother's brother, dies. The grandmother's nonchalant remark that, since there were plenty of children in the house, nobody either in the family or in the village noticed his death, underscores the violent treatment of children by their families which the rest of the community does not question, but approves and perpetuates. This is evident from the fact that the grandmother passed on the story to the entire family and that the portrait of her mother hangs in a frame over her own bed, which represents the place of honor in the room (84).

The grandmother's approval and perpetuation of her mother's tradition of growing and using poppy seeds is illustrated in the great care she shows to her patch of poppies, which is considered the most beautiful in the village. Although the child witnesses the grandmother boiling the poppy seeds, she cannot grasp that, in the process, she gets intoxicated. The child only notices that, when the grandmother cooks poppy

seeds, she drops and breaks a lot of dishes and that the cats doze off in the kitchen (83). The grandmother's drug abuse is, however, poetically illustrated in the highly metaphorical passages composed by the adult narrator. The poetic beauty of the passage tends to overshadow the disconcerting reality it conveys:

Großmutter trug die großen breiten Blütenblätter in den Augen [. . .] Und sie hat hundert Beete voller Mohn im Gedächtnis, und alle weißen Blüten, die es je im Garten gab, welken auf ihren Gesicht und fallen zur Erde in ihrem Gang. Und alle schwarzen Mohnkörner rieseln herab aus ihren Röcken, die so schwer sind, daß sie vor lauter Mohn kaum noch gehen kann. (83, 85)¹⁰⁴

Given that her grandmother grows and consumes poppy seeds, the child believes that, when she calls her to nap, she actually wants to kill her, as her mother killed Franz: “Der Schlaf drückt mir seinen Muff ins Gesicht. Er riecht wie Großmutter's Röcke, nach Mohn und Tod. Der Schlaf ist Großmutter's Schlaf, Großmutter's Gift. Der Schlaf ist Tod” (90). In her efforts to resist and escape death, the child imagines a dialogue with death in which she pleads for her life because “ich [habe] mich an mich gewöhnt und kann mich nicht verlieren” (90). The child's desperate appeal shows that the only one she trusts in the family is herself.

Banat Swabians took great pride in their Catholic religion because it reminded them of the privileged status they once had in the Habsburg Empire, where the official religion was Catholicism. It also distinguished them from and showed their superiority over Transylvanian Saxons, who were Protestants, and over Romanians, who were Romanian Orthodox—both the Protestant and Orthodox Churches were considered inferior because they had branched off or rebelled against the Catholic Church, which they believed to be the *true* church. As such, the Catholic faith was considered a

¹⁰⁴ The phrase “Mohn im Gedächtnis” echoes the title of Paul Celan's 1952 volume of poetry *Mohn und Gedächtnis*.

distinctive mark of Banat-Swabian cultural identity. In “Niederungen,” Müller exposes the hypocrisy and brutality of this religion. The pious attitude that the grandmother tries to display in church stands in sharp contrast to her brutal behavior at home. Instead of being a refuge from the strict and violent atmosphere in her family, the child discovers that church rules and the clergy are also defined by brutality and hypocrisy.

While trying to observe all the traditions of the mass and the rules set up by the priest, the grandmother is interrupted by the child which cannot relate to the cold, impersonal setting of the church, in which, as at home, she feels trapped: “In der Kirche ist auch der Himmel eine Mauer” (53). When she innocently asks her grandmother, which of the stars painted on the church ceiling is “der Abendstern,” the grandmother snaps at her “Dummkopf” and immediately resumes her prayer (53). Frightened by the sight of “die lange Leni,” next to whom she sits, who, being the tallest woman in the village is marginalized because she deviates from the norm, the child moves away from her and closer to her grandmother’s apron (52-53). The simple touch of the apron, prompts the grandmother to give the child an angry look (53). When the child joins the grandmother in the spoken prayer of confession, the grandmother kicks her in the leg with her knee because she prays too loudly (55). It is not only the grandmother who is a religious hypocrite, but also the priest. During a religion class, in which he explains to the children that lipstick is made from the blood of fleas and other disgusting animals, the child asks the priest after looking at the statue of the Madonna’s red painted lips, why Mary was using lipstick. In response, the priest beats her hands so hard that she cannot bend them for several days (79).

While the other people in the church go through the motions and recite rote prayers, the child offers a personal prayer asking God for forgiveness because she feels culpable for being unable to expose the father's deceit, which she has just witnessed just as she has every year in the past. Although it was against the law in communist Romania to distill Schnapps and slaughter calves, most villagers built hiding places in their yards where they distilled Schnapps, but no one talked about it, not even with their neighbors. Authorities were also lured into this conspiracy of silence with bribes of money and goods. In the case of the calves, people were allowed to slaughter them only after the veterinarian had ruled that the animal had injured itself.

Consequently, like the father in "Niederungen," people first crippled the animals, then called and bribed the veterinarian, who issued the needed official document to proceed with the "emergency slaughter." All involved were aware of the deceit, but all acted as if they were not. Although she is enraged by her father's deceit, the child cannot stop it. Yet she imagines a scene in which she punishes him: she envisions herself grabbing his hand as he calmly caresses the back of the injured calf and pushing it on the ground into the yard and crushing it (56). She also wishes for all his teeth to fall out of his mouth (56). Unable to prevent the calf's slaughter, the child is then seized by an urge to scratch and choke someone (57). When the mother places the calf's skin in front of the child's bed as a bedside rug, her gesture is an attempt to make her daughter an accomplice to the slaughter. Yet, at night, after everyone goes to bed, the child resorts to one of her "work on deception" schemes and takes the bedside rug out of her room. However, every morning the mother brings it back into the room, which shows her insistence to make her daughter part of the deceitful scheme (58).

In the figure of the mother, Müller exposes and criticizes the strict norms by which children were raised. They asked for an exaggerated cleanliness, hard work, and obedience—traits that the villagers considered distinctive features of their Banat-Swabian cultural identity. In addition to conforming to the community norms that give her the appearance of a good wife and housekeeper, excessive work and exaggerated cleanliness are the mother's ways of concealing her misery, being married to an alcoholic and abusive husband. Unable to control her husband's alcohol abuse and evade his brutal behavior, the mother tries to deal with her frustration by keeping an ordered household and demanding strict obedience from her daughter. She punishes her daughter for the smallest deviation from or questioning of her rules: she slaps the child in the face and then determines how long she is allowed to cry; then, she forces her to ask for forgiveness and to admit that she deserved the punishment (59).

The mother's cruel treatment of her daughter is paralleled by the strict order according to which she cleans the house. Due to daily scrubbing and washing, the floor planks have rotted (69). The house symbolizes the mother's and, implicitly the family's damaged lives: from the outside they appear normal, yet on the inside, they are falling apart. Keeping up appearances was, however, one of the norms that were strictly enforced in the community. The mother's obsession with cleanliness is illustrated in her collection of brooms: "Brotkrümelbesen," "Zimmerbesen," "Küchenbesen," "Gassenbesen," "Teppichklopfbesen," "Hühnerstallbesen," "Möbelabstaubbesen," etc. (73). The particular force of the repetition of "Besen" in German is meant to ridicule the mother's zeal and to underscore the tight control that she holds over the house. Yet despite her exceptional efforts, none of the villagers praise the mother for her industriousness,

because excessive dedication to housework is part of the normative expectation of the community.¹⁰⁵ An exception is the neighbor, whom the mother often criticizes because, instead of cleaning her house, she indulges in reading books all day (69). The neighbor's bad example provides the necessary contrast to the mother's role as a conscientious housewife. The scene that the child imagines, however, in which the mother is kneeling in the middle of the sand pile washing pathways through and through, ridicules the mother and her efforts. Yet the child discovers that the mother's obsession with excessive cleanliness is a mere coping mechanism. Busying herself with cleaning and keeping the house in order, the mother does not resolve her problems, she only avoids them.¹⁰⁶

In her essay "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen" Müller says that, as a child, she discovered the discrepancy between her mother's actions and thoughts. While the mother followed the grandmother's advice: "Den Kopf still stellen durchs Hin- und Herräumen von Wäsche," the child noticed that the mother could not rid herself of the fear and unhappiness caused by the brutal behavior of her alcoholic husband.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the child noticed that it was not only the mother, but the entire family and community that did not verbalize their true thoughts and feelings in an effort to keep the appearance that everything was in order in their lives and households. The enforced silence practiced by the adults made them seem as if they were part of a "Schule des Schweigens," in which "talking" ("Sprechen") would be soon forgotten.¹⁰⁸

The mother's obsession with order and cleanliness is also evident in her relationship to nature. Like the grandfather, she exterminates the "useless" animals in and

¹⁰⁵ Symons, *Room for Manoeuvre*, 118.

¹⁰⁶ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 129.

¹⁰⁷ Müller, "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen," 7-8.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

around the house. The enjoyment the child finds, watching newly-born mice huddling in their nests, is abruptly cut short by the appearance of the mother who points out to her the damage that the mice have done to the corn. At the unexpected appearance of a mouse, the mother picks up a corn cob and swats the animal over the head. After this quick execution, the child watches as the cat bites off the dead mouse's head (28). The mother is not concerned that her daughter witnesses her cruelty when she brutalizes and kills animals. On the contrary, she views these incidents as teaching moments through which she enforces the norms and rules of the Banat-Swabian culture.

While the mother continues to hunt and kill mice, her daughter tries, albeit in a childish way, to thwart her mother's killing rampage: "Ich nehme die Kolben von unten. Ich baue einen Gang für die Flucht der Mäuse. Ich habe dabei einen dicken Knoten Angst in der Kehle, einen dicken Knoten Atem" (29). The daughter's device is quite daring given the harsh treatment that she usually receives when she questions or happens to break her mother's rules. Yet despite the child's resistance, the mother prevails in her efforts to dispose of the "useless" animals around the house. When the mother discovers a nest of sparrows with newly hatched chicks, the voice of the adult narrator sarcastically comments that: "Mutter lernt wieder sehen" (74). Armed with a broom, she climbs up a ladder and destroys the nest. While the child watches the scene, the cat eats the baby birds, which are still squeaking in her throat (75).

The mother's forceful attempt to make her daughter "see" the birds, and implicitly the world as she does, is depicted through a remarkable surrealist image: "Mutter steht noch immer auf der langen Leiter. [. . .] Mutter steht mit den Fußsohlen über mir. Sie zerquetscht mir das Gesicht. Mutter stellt sich auf meine Augen und drückt sie ein.

Mutter tritt mir die Puppillen ins Weiße der Augen. Mutter hat dunkelblaue Maulbeerflecken an den Fußsohlen” (75). The mother’s brutal motion of pressing her stained shoes that represent the guilt of her violent acts is indicative of the fact that she wants to make the child her accomplice. When the mother turns her head sideways to look at the child from the top of the ladder, it seems as if she is asking for her daughter’s approval. Yet the grotesque portrayal of the mother’s face reveals the unassailable distance and alienation that exist between her and her daughter: “Mutter blickt seitlich zu mir her. Ihr halbes Gesicht ist groß und kalt wie ein halber Mond. Mutter hat nur noch diese eine Gesichtshälfte, und darin ist das Auge so schmal wie ein Riß” (75). The loaded metaphors of these images represent the adult narrator’s way of showing her repulsion at and distance from the mother.

The behavior of the father figure in “Niederungen” illustrates the damaging effects of the Nazi past on the personal and cultural identity of male Banat Swabians. In addition to being a liar, the father has two other traits that he is known and feared for: he drinks heavily and is brutal. When he is drunk, which happens quite frequently, he sings Nazi songs, which he vividly acts out. The child cannot make sense of the content of the songs and what significance they have for the father. Yet her detailed, though unreflective account of the changes that occur in the father’s voice and body posture while he sings, show the deep effect that the songs have on him: “[Vater] beginnt ein Lied zu singen, das Lied von den *Drei Kameraden, die zogen ins Leben hinaus*. Bei *hinaus* wird Vaters Stimme sehr laut, und er zeigt durchs Fenster auf die Straße hin” (85). Following her father’s gesture, the child looks out the window, where she sees the pavement full of goose droppings, which, metaphorically, illustrate the futility of the war.

When the father sings the line: “*Wo sind sie denn geblieben, in der großen, großen weiten Welt,*” his voice gets softer, as if he is asking himself this question (85). The next sentence has an interesting structure because there are two different fonts used: “der Wind hat sie vertrieben, *weil kein Mensch, kein Mensch zu ihnen hält*” (85). The regular font used for the phrase “der Wind hat sie vertrieben” indicates that this line represents the critical response of the adult narrator (85).

Like the grandfather, the father also likes to re-enact war scenes. But unlike the grandfather, he uses the largest knife in the house to threaten the mother and the daughter. At such moments, the daughter is seized by a terrorizing fear: “ich kriege Angst vor seinen Augen, und das Messer zerschneidet alles, was ich denken will” (86). When the father eventually falls under the table, he is still “voll mit seinem eigenen rauhen Lied” (85). Reflecting on the scene, the adult narrator makes a comment that shows the deep oppression of the family: “Wir schauen weg von unserer Einsamkeit, von uns selbst und ertragen die anderen und uns selber nicht, und die anderen neben uns ertragen uns auch nicht” (86). Since no one in the family can or would shield the child from the father’s violence, she imagines finding protection and comfort in her in objects, like her grandmother’s slippers: “Mein Gesicht fällt in die klaffenden Filzschuhe der Großmutter. Dort ist es dunkel, dort ist die große Geborgenheit, in der man nicht atmen muß, dort ist der Ort, wo man ersticken kann, an sich selbst” (86).

On rare occasions, when he is sober, the father allows the child to play with him: she combs his hair and ties a red bow in it, ties scarves on his head, drapes scarves around his shoulders, and hangs necklaces around his neck. She is even encouraged to pull out his gray hairs. Yet, when she accidentally touches his face, he becomes aggressive: “[er]

stieß mich mit dem Ellbogen weg und schrie: Jetzt weg von da” (66). This curious game looks more like an act of worship or adulation that the father indulges in, in which the pins, red bow, and the scarves could be seen as decorations and distinctions. The fact that he wants his daughter to pull out his gray hairs shows the vanity and self-centeredness of a man, who, while concerned about his physical appearance, is indifferent when it comes to his brutal behavior towards his family and to his criminal past. His unusual angered reaction when the child accidentally touches his face with her hands could be a reminiscence of one of his war experiences when his eyes or face may have been forcefully covered. Although she cannot escape the father’s brutal treatment, the child takes revenge against him by imagining a grotesque, surrealist image: “Ich wünschte [dem Vater], daß aus seiner Nase eine Hand wachse, oder aus seiner Wange, die er immer im Gesicht haben, die er nicht von sich stoßen sollte” (67).

Despite being repeatedly brutalized, the child continues to play the ritual-game with the father’s hair, which shows her desperate need for belonging and acceptance. Although he is brutal to her and the game she is allowed to play with him focuses primarily on him, of all family members, the father is the only one who plays with his daughter. At times, when she cannot endure the miserable atmosphere in the family, however, she wants to run away from home to go to another village and be with another family. Yet, she realizes that in other families she would not be treated differently, because all families conform to the same strict and harsh norms and rules as her family does (67). Thus, save for her imagination and a few actions that offer her some escape from the tyranny of her family, the child remains under the influence of her family and community, which continually impose on her its conception of “*Deutschtum*,” which

translates into: ethnocentrism, having to be subject to public opinion, intolerance to difference, vanity, hatred, hypocrisy, and obsolete norms and traditions.

“Die Grabrede”

Unlike any other story in *Niederungen*, “Die Grabrede” depicts most vividly the dictatorial spirit and the violence that characterize the “*Deutschtum*” of the Banat-Swabians’. As in most of Müller’s works, the father figure is prominently featured in this story. Although in most stories in *Niederungen*, he is depicted as a violent father and husband and/or an adulterer, it is only in “Niederungen” and “Die Grabrede” that his past in the war is highlighted. In “Niederungen” nobody in the family or community talks about the father’s collaboration with the Nazi regime. The family is forced to suffer the habits (heavy drinking and brutal behavior) that he acquired in the war. By comparison, in “Die Grabrede” the father’s participation in the war and the lead he took in violent acts both during and after the war are praised by the village community. Moreover, the father is eulogized as the villagers’ hero whose life and actions honor the “*Deutschtum*” of the community.

In contrast to other stories in *Niederungen*, in “Die Grabrede” the father is dead and the first-person narrator is an adult. In an eerie dream sequence of nightmarish visions, the narrator recounts the events at her father’s funeral. Episodes from the father’s life that underscore his violent past are evoked by both the daughter and members of the village community who come to his funeral. If in “Niederungen” the family imposes its conceptualization of “*Deutschtum*” through strict rules and physical punishment, in the

“Die Grabrede,” excommunication by death is the extreme to which the community goes to preserve it.

“Die Grabrede” is divided into four parts depicting episodes that take place at a train station, in the room where the coffin with the father’s body lies, at the graveside in the village cemetery, and back in the room where the casket was laid out. All episodes contain images and scenes that are connected with war, death, and violence. The opening episode told in the third person shows a family at a train station sending off a young man who is clutching a bunch of tattered white flowers to his chest. The sentence “Der Zug fuhr in den Krieg” explains the rigid face of the young man and connects the first with the second episode in the story, which features the narrator alone in the room where her father’s body is in an open casket (7).¹⁰⁹ The transition to the second episode is signaled by the sudden appearance of the narrator: “Ich knipste den Fernseher aus,” who abruptly ends the scene at the train station. Although it is unclear if the narrator has watched, imagined, or evoked the farewell scene at the train station, several objects and images in this episode reappear in the other parts and connect it with rest of the story, such as the tattered white flowers and the reference to the war.

The prominent role that the father had in the family is illustrated by the position of the casket, which is placed in the middle of the room (7). Of all the pictures that cover the walls of the room, the narrator focuses on five photos depicting the father in various stages of his life: as a chubby baby sitting on a chair, as groom whose chest is half covered by the bride holding a bunch of tattered white flowers, as an SS officer standing upright with his hand raised over his head in salute, as a farmer with a hoe on his

¹⁰⁹ All page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to Herta Müller, “Die Grabrede,” in *Niederungen* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1984), 7-12.

shoulders and his face hidden by the shadow of his hat, and as a driver behind the steering wheel of a truck full of cows, which, as the narrator explains, he would drive once a week to the slaughterhouse (7-8).

Presenting the sequence of the pictures, the narrator introduces each new photo with variations to the phrase “Auf einem Bild:” “Auf einem anderen Bild,” “Auf dem Bild, das daneben hing” (7-8). These syntactic constructions imbue the sequence of the photo descriptions with the monotony of a litany.¹¹⁰ Only after she finishes describing each snapshot does the narrator comment on what the pictures have in common: “Auf allen Bildern war Vater mitten in einer Geste erstarrt. Auf allen Bildern sah Vater so aus, also ob er nicht mehr weiter wußte” (8). Yet since in her experience, the father was never at a loss and always knew what to do next, the narrator dispels the father’s helplessness as a false appearance: “Aber Vater wußte immer weiter. Deshalb waren alle diese Bilder falsch” (8). With the exception of his baby picture, the rest of the photos hide his true identity, which is marked by violence: the tattered flowers that the mother clutches foreshadow her unhappy marriage to a brutal man, the picture of him as a soldier in uniform alludes to his violent acts during the war, the hoe, that in his hands looks more like a weapon rather than a tool, points to death, as does the truck full of cows on its way to the slaughterhouse.

Contemplating her father’s pictures, the narrator suddenly remarks that: “Von den vielen falschen Bildern, von all seinen falschen Gesichtern war es kalt geworden im Zimmer” (8). The inward, emotional chill that she feels at the realization of the pictures’ false appearance transmits itself also at a physical, sensorial level. Not only does the

¹¹⁰ Maria S. Grewe, “Estranging Poetic: On the Poetic of the Foreign in Select Works by Herta Müller and Yoko Tawada,” diss., Columbia U, 2009, 124.

room feel cold, but her dress has also frozen to the chair on which she is sitting (8). Yet she gets up from the chair and approaches the coffin and touches her father's face, which, she remarks, is colder than the objects in the room (8). Her gesture of touching her father's face is ambiguous because the narrator does not comment on it. On one hand, it could indicate her farewell to the father, since touching the face or hands of the dead is a common practice at funerals in Romania, especially in rural communities. Yet on the other hand, the narrator's remark about the father's unusually cold face could illustrate how deeply estranged his daughter feels from him. The coldness in the room is contrasted by the hot summer day, illustrated by the sentence: "Draußen war es Sommer," which provides the transition to the funeral episode (8).

Different in tone and narration, the funeral episode takes a turn towards the fantastic and the surreal.¹¹¹ Four villagers who have come to her father's funeral reveal unknown details about the father's violent behavior both during and after the war. When one of the two pallbearers tells the narrator: "Dein Vater hat viele Tote auf dem Gewissen," she immediately replies: "Er war im Krieg" (8-9). Through her quick reply the narrator seems to indicate that killing as a soldier while in combat is not a crime. She provides additional information about how many people her father killed because he brought home several medals: for each twenty-five killed, he got a medal (9). Yet when the pallbearer informs her that it was her father, who, after raping a Russian woman along with four other soldiers, stuck a turnip between her legs, the narrator remains silent. Her attitude could indicate that she is stunned by this information because raping women, as opposed to killing soldiers in battle, is a criminal act. While the father's figure and

¹¹¹ Grewe, "Estranging Poetic: On the Poetic of the Foreign in Select Works by Herta Müller and Yoko Tawada," 128.

actions stand out in this episode, the fact that the pallbearer was one of the participants in the rape is illustrated only in the subtle switch he makes from the third person singular to the plural pronoun “wir” (9). The fact that all five soldiers call their guns “turnips” weeks after the rape connects violence and sexuality. The pallbearer ends his story by putting a big rock on the coffin—a gesture which seems to indicate that he is paying his respects to his former war comrade (9).

The second pallbearer, who also participated in the rape, relates to the daughter the story of another incident linked to it. In this episode, the narrator’s father is again prominently featured. On New Year’s Eve, the father and his comrades went to the opera in a small German town where the piercing voice of the opera singer reminds them of the Russian woman’s screams (9). While his comrades leave the opera hall one by one, only the father stays until the end of the show. This incident indicates that the father relishes the memory of the rape, which seems to be confirmed by the fact that weeks after hearing the opera singer, he calls “alle Lieder Rübe und alle Frauen Rübe” (9). Like his colleague, the second pallbearer ends his report by laying a big rock on the coffin and thus seems to eulogize him. Upon hearing this report-eulogy, the narrator is again silent.

Although it is unclear from his comment: “Mit den Landsleuten versteht man sich nicht im Krieg [. . .] Die lassen sich nicht befehlen,” whether the “Grabredner,” who is in charge of the funeral sermon, was also one of her father’s war comrades, like the two pallbearers, he also sets a big rock on the coffin (9). The narrator does not react to the comment and gesture of the “Grabredner,” nor to the revelation of the man who informs her that her father has slept for years with his wife and that he has also blackmailed and stolen his money when he was drunk (10). When the “Grabredner” signals with his hand

to the narrator that it is her turn to give her eulogy, she is again silent: “Es fiel mir kein Wort ein” (10). Instead, her body goes through a series of bizarre motions and transformations: “Die Augen stiegen mir durch die Kehle in den Kopf. Ich führte die Hand zum Mund und zerbiß meine Finger. Auf meinem Handrücken sah man die Male meiner Zähne. Meine Zähne waren heiß. Aus den Mundwinkeln rann mir Blut auf die Schultern” (10). Although these self-mutilation acts are quite violent and as such underscore the violence in the father’s life that the community eulogizes, the villagers are unsatisfied with his daughter’s performance because she does not focus on the father but on herself. The community expects and demands of the narrator that she approves and embraces her father’s violent life as part of her inherited “*Deutschtum*” and cultural identity.

That violence is a defining part of the “*Deutschtum*” of the entire community is evident in the makeup of the funeral gathering: men carry guns over their shoulders and women rattle their rosaries, which makes the crowd resemble both an army and a religious assembly. In this community, violence and religion are identity traits that complement each other. Offended by the narrator’s refusal or inability to eulogize her father’s life and implicitly the community’s “*Deutschtum*,” the villagers react through violence. One of the villagers, an elderly man, most likely a former participant in the war, is quick to demonstrate his disapproval. After he sets his cane aside, he shoots with his gun one of her sleeves that had torn off her dress, a gesture which foreshadows her execution. The enthusiastic applause of the funeral gathering that follows the shot illustrates the solidarity and agreement among the community members, who view the narrator as an outsider that needs to be eliminated. His authoritarian hand-sign that

suddenly ends the applause and his subsequent speech, in which he accuses and sentences the narrator to death, portray the “Grabredner” as a dictator. He delivers the eulogy that everyone was expecting the daughter to present: “Wir sind stolz auf unsere Gemeinde. Unsere Tüchtigkeit bewahrt uns vor dem Untergang” (10). His praise of the community is immediately followed by the accusation and death sentence of the narrator: “Wir lassen uns nicht beschimpfen [. . .] Wir lassen uns nicht leumden. Im Namen unserer deutschen Gemeinde wirst du zum Tode verurteilt” (10-11). The applause, the trial scene, the bombastic tone and nationalistic arguments of the funeral speaker and his dictatorial pose are reminiscent of the hundreds of mock trials staged by the Romanian Communist Party against those who openly opposed the communist regime.

Although all the men in the funeral gathering shoot their guns at her, the narrator does not die, but lies suspended in the air above their heads—a position that underscores her status as an outsider. The next sentence shows her entering her parents’ house, where she notices that all rooms have been cleared. In the room where her father’s coffin was laid out, the narrator discovers her mother performing a curious ritual. After she cuts off her heavy gray braid with a big knife, the mother sets it on a plate on a large butcher’s table which stands on the same spot previously occupied by the casket. While she sets the braid on fire, the mother starts telling the daughter about her years in deportation camps in the Soviet Union, where hairless and staggered with hunger, she would crawl late in the fall through frozen fields to eat turnips.

The fact that the mother has cleared all the rooms in the house and is now performing this peculiar ritual in the room in which her husband’s body was laid out, indicates that she has taken over the role of the head of the household. Furthermore, the

fact that the mother accompanies the ritual with her experiences in the deportation camps, demonstrates that she is taking charge of her life story. The story of her abuse and violence that she passes on to her daughter is missing from the “*Deutschtum*” of the Banat-Swabian heritage and cultural identity for which the community wants to be known and praised. Unlike the father who was a hero in the war for killing many of the enemy, the mother was a victim of the war who has suffered at the hands of the enemy. Because the community chooses to praise and appropriate only one side of the war story, i.e., stories like her husband’s, the mother comes up with her own eulogy in which she commemorates her story, which the community ignores.

What is striking about the mother’s ritual is the fact that for her it is not enough to verbalize her story, but that she also wants to reenact it. By cutting her braid off, which could be seen as a type of self-mutilation, the mother reverts to her image as a forced laborer. Following this line of argument, one might argue that the daughter’s self-mutilation is also a means through which she tries, albeit nonverbally, to communicate the violence that she suffered in her family and community. Although the village community will not eulogize the two women for the violence they suffered, the mother and the daughter want their stories to be known because if they do not tell them, nobody else will.

As in the case of the father and the village community, violence remains engrained in the mother’s identity and behavior long after the war ends. This is obvious in her behavior towards her daughter. While the room fills with smoke from the burning braid, the mother abruptly ends her story about her experiences in the labor camp and tells the daughter: “They killed you,” a statement that reveals her lack of compassion and

concern towards her (11). When the room fills with smoke to the point that the two women cannot see each other, the narrator gropes for the mother with outstretched arms. She is shocked though to feel the mother's bony hand hooked into her hair and shaking it violently, which causes her daughter to scream (11). When compared to the daughter's gesture through which she seems to look for her mother's help, the mother's brutal shake looks like an attempt to kill the daughter. Thus, like the rest of the village community, the mother rejects the narrator by using violence.

The last two sentences in the story: "Der Wecker läutete. Es war Samstagmorgen, halb sechs," put an end to the narrator's nightmarish visions. However, the succession of surrealist scenes which precede her waking up in her apartment in the city points again to violence and death. In these scenes, the narrator is shown trapped in a ball or bullet, as the German term "Kugel" suggests and in an apartment building that is tipping over and emptying itself into the ground (12). These uncanny scenes demonstrate the depth of the traumatic effects on the narrator of the ostracization and hatred of the community whose "*Deutschtum*" shaped by violence she cannot escape.

The Fragmentation of "*Deutschtum*" in "*Dorfchronik*"

One of the short stories published in *Niederungen*, "*Dorfchronik*," is a satire of a Banat-Swabian community.¹¹² Told from the perspective of an adult Banat-Swabian, the story depicts the fragmenting effects of nationalization, collectivization, and massive immigration to West Germany on the "*Deutschtum*" of the community. Despite the fact

¹¹² "*Dorfchronik*" is also published in Müller's collection of short stories *Drückender Tango*, (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1996): 28-47. I use the version published in *Niederungen*. All page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to Herta Müller, "Die Grabrede," in *Niederungen* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1984), 116-28.

that the communist jargon and mentality have invaded many sectors of their public and private life and have also affected the architecture of the village, the villagers believe that they have a distinctive German cultural identity. Müller shows this to be a delusion.

Creating analogies between the German spoken in the village and that used in the newspapers, which consist of Germanized Soviet and Romanian terms and concepts, the story offers an excellent example of what Müller's calls the "monopolization" ("Vereinnahmung") by the communist regime of the German village language. "Dorfchronik" demonstrates Müller's remarkable talent in using wit and sarcasm to poke fun at the Banat-Swabian community, which she reduces to a mere caricature. The narrator appears in the last section of the story, which is distinct in tone, structure, and content from the rest of the text. Although she does not talk about her personal experience with the fragmented Banat-Swabian culture that she reports on, the narrator's tone and language depicts her as a detached yet subtle critic of the village culture and identity, which she disapproves of.

The communist regime had devastating effects on the entire population in Romania. Ethnic minorities were more affected than Romanians because their language and cultural identity were altered and fragmented. Forced nationalization and collectivization were two measures that in addition to depriving villagers of their fields and properties (windmills, shops), introduced new terms, mentalities, and a noticeable Romanian presence into the Banat-Swabian villages. For example, "Die Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft" (LPG), ("the cooperative agricultural

enterprise”) and “die Staatsfarm” (“the state farm”) were led by Romanian engineers and technicians.¹¹³

The inefficiency of these units and the nepotism that characterized them are vividly depicted in “Dorfchronik.” As in Ceaușescu’s state apparatus, in which many of his relatives, including his wife, son, daughter, and siblings, held high posts in the government and the Communist Party, the members of the LPG leadership and the state farm are all related to each other. The president of the LPG is the brother of the mayor, the director of the state farm is the mayor’s son-in-law who is the brother of the LPG director (126). Since the nationalization—the villagers’ term “Enteignung” (“expropriation”) describes it more accurately—all harvests have been bad because, unlike the villagers, the engineers do not know how to cultivate the soil (125). Yet, in a fashion typical of the socialized agriculture, the bad harvests are blamed on the soil and not on the inefficiency of the LPGs and state farms.

The communist order also changed existing institutions in the village like the “Gemeindehaus,” which was renamed “Volksrat” (119). The literal translation of the Romanian *sfatul popular*, the “Volksrat” (“People’s Council”) is supposed to indicate that the people are in charge of the administration of the village. In reality, however, the village, like the rest of the country, is under the tight command of Ceaușescu’s highly centralized government. The curious architecture of the People’s Council, which is a combination of a farmhouse and a village church, demonstrates the government’s efforts to “renew” the village while preserving its architectural characteristics. The result,

¹¹³ Both names are direct translations in German of the Romanian: *cooperativă agricolă de producție* and *fermă de stat* respectively, which are modeled after the collective farming and state farms in the Soviet Union known as *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz* respectively. See also Wood, “Russian Influences in the German of East Germany,” 63.

however, is a grotesque building, which is rarely used and whose attic is infested with owls and bats. This building metaphorically illustrates the fragmentation and hybridization of the Banat-Swabian cultural identity. It could also be an allusion to Ceaușescu's monstrous "renewal" projects that he undertook throughout Romania, which caused hundreds of houses, churches, synagogues, and historic districts and villages to be demolished in order to make room for buildings that randomly combined a variety of tasteless and extravagant architectural styles.¹¹⁴

As representatives of the state power, the building of the People's Council, "der Bürgermeister" (whom the villagers still call "der Richter," like in the old order) and the activities that take place there are supposed to command respect and obedience. Yet, the attitude of the participants at the major's meetings reveals the contrary. The narrator's ingenious play on words depicts with wit the utter disinterest and defiance of the participants at these meetings:

Unter den Anwesenden gibt es Raucher, die abwesend rauchen, Nichtraucher, die nicht rauchen und schlafen, Alkoholiker, die im Dorf Säufer genannt werden und Flaschen unter den Stühlen stehen haben, sowie Nichtalkoholiker und Nichtraucher, die schwachsinning sind, was im Dorf anständig genannt wird, die so tun, als würden sie zuhören, die aber an etwas ganz anders denken, falls es ihnen überhaupt gelingt, zu denken. (119)

The sarcasm in the narrator's remark about the ultimate importance of the People's Council is hard to miss: "Auch die Fremden, die ins Dorf kommen, suchen den Volksrat auf, weil sie, wenn es sie bedrängt, in den Hinterhof gehen und pissen, was im

¹¹⁴ The most representative of Ceaușescu's "renewal" projects is the "People's House." Under the guise of being the "People's House," (Romanian: *Casa Poporului*), Ceaușescu had an enormous, extravagant palace built which was supposed to be both the dictator's personal residence and the seat of political and administrative power. It is considered the world's largest civilian administrative building, a most expensive and extravagant administrative building which combines a variety of architectural styles.

Dorf das Wasser abschlagen genannt wird. Das Klo, das im Hinterhof des Volksrats, steht, ist ein öffentliches Klo, da es weder eine Tür noch ein Dach besitzt” (119).

Another institution created in the village by the communist state is “die Miliz,” i.e. the police station, which is a Germanized term of the Romanian: *miliția*. Like the mayor, “der Milizman” is a mere pawn who just goes through the motions to maintain the impression that he is in charge. However, all villagers know that he only rarely goes to his office, where he smokes a foreign cigarette, which had to be either smuggled into Romania or bought with hard currency at the dollar shops. Officially, only foreigners, and, unofficially, also members of the communist elite (the *Securitate* or the Communist Party) could purchase goods in these shops. After he airs the room, closes and locks the office door, the “Milizman” spends hours talking to the postman’s wife at the post office (122). Lack of productivity, carelessness, and missing days of work were rampant in the high administrative office during the communist regime.

The single store in the village has also been renamed to conform to communist precepts of trading. Instead of the “Geschäft,” which is reminiscent of the bourgeois times when people had private property, it is now called “Konsumgenossenschaft,” i.e. “cooperative association” (124). Like the title “People’s Council,” the new name of the store is deemed to show people that in the communist economy as producers they are also the owners of the goods—one of the biggest lies of communist ideology.

But more than bringing new institutions that had new names and changing existing ones in the village, the political, social, economic, and cultural changes pushed forth by the new communist order imposed new terms, phrases, and meanings on everyday language. The “new” German language, which had very few or no equivalents

in German, was primarily used in the media, newspaper, and in schools. Although Müller remarks that since this *Hochdeutsch* was corrupted and monopolized by the communist regime, she was very careful as to how she used it in her writing, in “Dorfchronik” it becomes an excellent means for her to satirize and ridicule both the regime and the villagers: the former for their efforts to impose the “new order,” and the latter, for their attempts to maintain the “old order” in the village.¹¹⁵ The narrator’s dry, objective tone coupled with the particular, almost exaggerated care in consistently using both the newspaper and the village German, lend the short story humorous and critical effects.

Most of the terms and phrases of newspaper and media German exist in the vocabulary of the German language, like, “blutjung” versus “sehr jung” or “Körperbau” versus “Statur,” for example. Other terms have no equivalents in German since they are direct translations of Romanian phrases. For example, “Elternsitzung,” which derives from the Romanian phrase: *ședință cu părinții* was invented to reflect new forms of organization of the schools in the village (117). Even the “Banat” has a new name in the newspapers: “Banater Land” has replaced “Inland” as the villagers use to call their region (123). The Western countries are carefully masked in the media with the expression “andere Länder” although the villagers continue to refer to them as “Ausland” or “der Westen” (123).

Migration to the city and/or immigration to West Germany have considerably decreased the number of villagers, which affects the traditions and social activities in the community. Moving to the city was yet another negative consequence of nationalization and expropriation. The narrator only subtly hints at “West Germany” with the term “woandershin” (120). Although it was well-known during Ceaușescu’s regime that an

¹¹⁵ Solms, ed., *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*, 300.

increasing number of people were trying to escape or immigrate to the West, the government did not publically address this issue, but instead promoted the official policy which maintained that life under communism was prosperous and fulfilling. In fact, those who fled or immigrated were publically denounced as traitors because they refused to help build and further communist ideals. Family members of those who immigrated or fled the country were also punished: they lost their jobs or were moved to lower positions. They were under strict surveillance: their correspondence with the West was intercepted, read, or simply lost, and their phones were tapped. In addition, they were denied requests to travel to Eastern Bloc countries, which were the only destinations that anyone was officially allowed to travel to for pleasure or to attend conferences during the communist regime.

The small numbers of people in the village affect the enrollment in the village school, which is reduced to eleven students who are put in one classroom. The lack of teachers causes the school director to have to teach several subjects, including music, history, German, physical education, and agriculture. The fact that one teacher has to teach several subjects indicates the acute hybridization and fragmentation of the once distinct order in the village school. The prevailing hatred toward the Soviet Union in the country is evident even among the eleven children who refuse to be divided into “Russians” and “Germans” when they play “Völkerball.” Exasperated, the teacher suggests that they all should be “Deutsche.” But since the children do not grasp why as “Deutsche” they should fight against each other, the teacher divides them then into “Sachsen” and “Schwaben” (116). The new division seems to please the children who do not have other objections and play the game. While humorous, the children’s attitude

demonstrates their pronounced ethnocentricity, and the fact that they see themselves as superior to Transylvanian Saxons.

While emigration affects the school activities negatively, the decrease in the village population has the opposite effect on the traditions in the village: the country fairs are growing bigger and the folk costumes are becoming more festive (120). Yet this unprecedented flourishing of culture is deceptive. Since in every village the country fair is held on a different Sunday, all villagers go to all the country fairs in all villages. As a result, the fair participants are the same audience, the same dancers, and the same band (121). The newspapers' reports, however, create the impression that the ethnic minority is thriving and prosperous. Like the newspapers, the thirty-minute German TV-show that was broadcasted once a week during Ceaușescu's regime always focused on folk festivals. In contrast, the day-to-day life conditions of the minorities in Romania were never reported.

As a result of the many folk festivals, the isolation among villages is gradually disappearing. In fact, as young people all over the Banat get to know each other, marriages between villages are formed (121). Only some parents give their approval, however, consoling themselves, that even if the bride and the groom are not from the same village, they are at least "Deutsche" (124). While the parents' attitude is indicative of the fact that they are willing to accept only some change in their established traditions and customs, they would not accept interethnic marriages.

Although their language and village architecture bear the marks of the influence of the regime, villagers hold on to old traditions and norms that they believe define their distinct Banat-Swabian identity: cleanliness, order, and conformity to established

traditions and norms are strictly observed. Women, whom the villagers call not “Frauen,” but “Hausfrauen” are responsible for all the housework and are subjected to a strict patriarchal order (123). Even if they have a trade or a vocation of their own, they are always identified by the professions of their husbands. Thus, although the butcher’s wife is by trade a seamstress, the villagers call her “die Metzgerin” (126-27). The wife of the postman who is a telephone operator is not called “die Telefonistin” but “die Postfrau” (122). Men continue to go regularly to the barber even those who do not have hair anymore (120). Those over seventy continue to have their faces rubbed with alcohol instead of perfume, “weil es sich nicht schickt, was im Dorf sich nicht steht gennant wird, daß ein alter Mann nach Parfüm riecht, was im Dorf nach Parfüm stinken genannt wird” (120).

Conformity is also evident in the manner in which the houses in the village are decorated. All houses are painted in the same colors: pink, green and brown. The only difference between them is the house number. Each house has a “Paradezimmer” filled with the same type of furniture and knickknacks (123). All villagers continue to live and eat according to the established principle: “Gutes Essen macht Sorgen vergessen” (124). They eat the same foods on the same days: “die Dorfleute teilen die Woche nach dem Kochprogram in Fleischtage und Mehltage ein. Die Dorfleute essen gefettet, gesalzen und gepfeffert” (124). Yet the housewives welcome some Western influence in their Banat-Swabian houses, namely, nylon curtains which relatives from “foreign countries,” bring them as gifts. In exchange for these presents, the Banat-Swabian women offer their relatives a few kilos of homemade sausage or smoked ham (124). These exchanges of West-East goods reveal, on one hand, the nostalgia for the Banat of the Banat-Swabian

immigrants and, on the other, a degree of openness to change in the Banat Swabians who still live in the Banat. Moreover, the nylon curtains seem to have become part of the Banat-Swabian cultural heritage: “Die Vorhänge sind es schon wert, sagen [die Hausfrauen], da sie, weil die Zimmer nicht bewohnt sind, was in Dorf geschont werden genannt wird, auch noch für ihre Kinder und Enkelkinder, die im Dorf Kindeskindern genannt werden, erhalten bleiben” (124).

Open to some change, the villagers are still intolerant of difference. For example, the sales clerk who works in the “Konsumgenossenschaft” is assumed to be from the neighboring village because her name is “Franziska,” which is not a typical name for women in the village described in “Dorfchronik.” The fact that she is diabetic reinforces the villagers’ assumption that she is from the neighboring village where there is a pastry shop, which, in their view, is the cause for her diabetes (121). This warped way of evaluating and marginalizing difference reveals the villagers’ rigid norms and prejudice.

One villager in “Dorfchronik” who stands out as particularly eager to preserve the original culture of the Banat Swabians is the village elder. In addition to surviving the two World Wars, the narrator sarcastically remarks that he has also endured “noch manches andere und manchen anderen” (118). Yet, it was not the fact that he survived two wars nor that he is the wisest person in the village that earned him the position as the village elder, but, ironically, his revulsion at the snakes, moles, and worms he has been hunting for years under the village chapel (127). Due to his petty occupation, he is a mere caricature of a village leader, which is yet another proof of the breakdown of the original order in the village.

His obsession with maintaining a certain type of order in the village prompts him to slaughter his female rabbit, which has the unusual habit of breeding with tomcats and crosses between dogs and tomcats. Although cats and dogs have bred with each other for decades in the village, the village elder is eager to set a good example by eradicating the incest of his rabbit, because, as he emphatically explains: “ein schwäbisches Dorf [liege] ja gottseidank, [. . .], nicht in Italien” (118). Only one neighbor follows suit and hangs his tomcat, with which the female rabbit bred, the rest of the villagers are, however, suspicious of the village elder and his clean-up activities, because it is a known fact in the village that while he was a prisoner in Italy, the village elder ate cat meat. Since he has been back in the Banat, he is often under the impression that their Banat-Swabian village could just as well be located in Sardinia (119). Appalled by his remark, which the villagers consider an attack on the distinct German character of their village, they dismiss it by attributing it to the elder’s arterial sclerosis and the thick blood that runs through his head (119). In addition to the changes brought by the communist regime, the grotesque hybridization of the animals and the caricature of the village elder illustrate the irreversible fragmentation of the old order in the village and implicitly of the Banat-Swabian identity.

The only structure in the village that seems to reflect the original order of the village is the cemetery. Yet, the detailed and objective descriptions of the narrator reveal the incongruities behind this apparent order. In the village, all who died have officially worked themselves to death, which would be in accordance with the strong work ethic the villagers want to be known for. The narrator shows, however, that the real causes of death are quite different: “Die Tote des Dorfes haben sich zu Tode gegessen und

getrunken, was im Dorf zu Tode gearbeitet genannt wird" (127). The exceptions are the heroes, of which, the narrator sarcastically remarks, it is supposed: "daß sie sich zu Tode gekämpft haben" (127). She is careful to indicate that none of the dead have committed suicide, since all villagers have good common sense that they do not lose even in their older age (127).

The type and size of the crosses indicate the social classes and wealth status that existed in the village before the communists came to power. The simplest crosses belong to the unmarried servant girls, who were at the bottom of the social ladder, and the most expensive ones are on the tombs of those who were once masters and the landowners in the village (127). However, the largest and most imposing cross is the cross for the heroes, "das Heldenkreuz," which is higher even than the chapel donated by the village elder. This cross lists the names of all heroes from all fronts of the wars, even those missing in action, called "deported" in the village (128). The fact that regardless of the fronts in which they fought all these dead are considered heroes reveals the villagers' inability and unwillingness to differentiate between the sides that people fought for. At the same time, this monument could also stand as a memento to the fact that ethnic Germans ended up as victims under both the Nazi and communist regimes. This may explain why, in addition to the fallen soldiers, the names of the deported are also engraved on the "Heldenkreuz." Unlike in the Banat-Swabian communities described in "Niederungen" and "Die Grabrede," in which the two World Wars are defining aspects of both the personal and cultural identity of the villagers, in the case of the villagers in "Dorfchronik" war memories are only referred to in connection with monuments.

The last two paragraphs in “Dorfchronik” introduce the narrator, whose presence is signaled by the switch to the first-person pronoun. The gesture of closing the cemetery gate indicates both the end of the narrative and the distance that she takes from the village. Surprisingly, her next statement makes her at first appear to be an unreliable narrator: “Ich kletterte auf einen Baum, der am Rand der Wiese steht, der aber ebensogut in der Dorfmitte stehen könnte, falls er nicht gar nicht in der Dorfmitte steht” (128). The ambiguous location of the tree is metaphorically indicative of the gradual dissolution of the “Mitte-Rand” or “inclusion-exclusion” paradigms on which the village maintained and perpetuated its original culture and identity.

The concluding sentence in “Dorfchronik” which depicts the narrator perched in the tree from which one can see the church of the neighboring village, which on the third step a ladybug is cleaning its right wing, is rather surprising. Not only is this gaze highly subjective and unrealistic (it seems as if the narrator looks through a telescope) but the sentence is exquisitely poetic, which stands in stark contrast to the dry, sarcastic, and ironic tone of the village chronicle. Turning her back to the village and switching the tone and the focus of her narration, the narrator indicates her complete detachment from the community and culture which she has just finished reporting about.

National Socialism, the Communist Regime, and “*Deutschtum*” in *Herztier*

A complex intermeshing of the protagonist’s childhood memories, her experiences as a university student in Timișoara under Ceaușescu’s dictatorship, and as an immigrant in Germany, *Herztier* is perhaps the most autobiographical of Müller’s fiction.¹¹⁶ *Herztier* presents episodes from the lives of several people of different ethnic and social

¹¹⁶ Copper, “Herta Müller: Between Myths of Belonging,” 484.

backgrounds who become victims of Ceaușescu's regime. The structure of the novel reflects the complex ways in which their stories become interwoven: episodes from the present describing life at the university and in the city intermingle with scenes from the protagonist's childhood in a Banat-Swabian village.

Given its ingenious structure and poetic language, *Herztier* has received a lot of critical attention. John J. White, Valentina Glajar, Ricarda Schmidt, and Philip Müller, among others, examine Müller's narrative strategies that depict the consequences of people living in fear and oppression under Ceaușescu's totalitarian regime. In her analysis of testimony and trauma in the novel, Beverley Driver Eddy investigates the responses to trauma of three characters: the narrator, Lola, her Romanian roommate, and Tereza, the narrator's work colleague and best friend, who is eventually blackmailed by the *Securitate* into spying on the narrator. Eddy argues that in *Herztier*, Müller "offers her reflections on the impact of personal testimony as well as on the impossibility of testifying adequately to the trauma of others."¹¹⁷ Müller's treatment of the Banat-Swabian Nazi past and its implications for the cultural identity of the narrator are investigated in studies by Valentina Glajar and John J. White. Both critics concentrate on the father's role as a former SS-soldier who would not confront his Nazi past.

"The recurring figure of the father in Müller's works is a trope," which, as Glajar remarks, "seems repetitive and overemphasized, as if entailing overlapping approaches to the same story."¹¹⁸ I would argue that Müller's persistence in invoking the figure of her father reveals the paradox of her rapport with him. On one hand, it illustrates the deep repulsion she feels towards him in light of his Nazi past and lack of remorse for his

¹¹⁷ Beverley Driver Eddy, "Testimony and Trauma in Herta Müller's *Herztier*," *German Life and Letters* 53:1 (January 2000), 57.

¹¹⁸ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 127.

participation in the war. On the other, it demonstrates the emotional effect the father has on her, as an indelible part of her inherited Banat-Swabian cultural identity. In my analysis, I will compare and contrast the narrator's repulsion towards her father as a war criminal with her childhood memories that show her attraction to him. These episodes have not been previously analyzed either in connection to the father-daughter relationship or their significance for the formation of the narrator's cultural identity. In addition to the father figure, I will also discuss the role that Lola, the narrator's Romanian roommate, and Edgar, Kurt, and Georg, her three Banat-Swabian friends, play in the development of the narrator's cultural identity.

Although the narrator succeeds in constructing a personalized identity by becoming an opponent of the communist regime, denouncing her father's Nazi past, and refusing to follow Banat-Swabian traditions, her "*Deutschtum*" remains marked by her father's image and his past in the war. Memories of her as a child playing with the father, who caused her to both fear and be attracted to him, as well as the burden of the knowledge of his criminal past, weighing heavily on her, continue to haunt her long after the father's death.

Lola is one of the narrator's five roommates whose curious habits distinguish her from other students: she wears her roommates' clothes without asking for permission, sneaks out of the dorm at night and disappears for hours in the city, cleans the glass display of the dormitory and tacks up the dictator's latest speeches, and keeps organs of slaughtered animals in the refrigerator. While intrigued by Lola, the narrator, like her other four roommates, keeps her at a distance. After Lola is found hanged with the narrator's belt, the narrator discovers Lola's diary in her suitcase that reveals the

tormented life of her deceased roommate. Attempting to escape poverty and her father's authority in her native village, Lola tried to improve her life by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the communist system. She decided to study Russian at the university because it was the major that had the easiest entrance exam and the most places. Hoping to obtain power and connections, Lola joined the Romanian Communist Party—a gesture that alienated her from her roommates.

The diary reveals the key to her mysterious nightly disappearances: Lola lures factory workers into parks and has sex with them. Yet none of these men can fulfill her search for love, which she never fully experienced as the sixth, unwanted child in a poor family.¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, her ambition is to transcend her class with the help of an educated man with “clean fingernails” and “white shirts” whom she could take back to her village (11, 13). When Lola meets the gym instructor, a political activist, who in addition to wearing white shirts also has his own car and a chauffeur, she thinks that she has found the right man for her (29). After she shows that she is interested in him, he calls her into the gym where he has sex with her behind locked doors. The next day, he reports her to the department head (31). In the last entry in her diary, Lola indicates, using coded language that because she is pregnant, she decided to commit suicide (31). However, the quick manner in which her body and things are disposed of and the mysterious disappearance of her diary from the protagonist's locked suitcase two days after Lola's death seem to suggest that Lola was murdered.

Lola's story of a neglected and unloved child in a poor Romanian village bears an eerie similarity to the tyranny under which the narrator lived as a child in her Banat-Swabian village. Episodes evoking Lola's life and death intermingle with snapshots and

¹¹⁹ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 139.

fragments depicting the suffering inflicted by her family on a young child living in a Banat-Swabian village. When the narration switches from the third to the first person it becomes clear that the child in the village is the adult narrator. Lola's story and her own experiences in the city, prompt the narrator to view the totalitarian state as an extension of the oppressive, tyrannical atmosphere of the village.¹²⁰

Intrigued by the similarities between Lola and herself and her sudden death, the narrator feels connected to Lola and decides to preserve her story: "Ich wollte Lolas Heft im Kopf behalten" (42). Before reading Lola's diary, the narrator was part of the group formed by her four nameless and faceless roommates. They are always referred to as "jemand" and are shown only in the small dorm room nicknamed "das Viereck" (11, 18, 19, 25, 26). These roommates represent the majority of people during Ceaușescu's dictatorship, who, although afraid of the regime, would not resist it, but remained confined in the state that operated like a prison. When she decides to preserve Lola's story, the narrator distances herself from her roommates and becomes a distinctive "ich."¹²¹

Like the narrator, Edgar, Georg, and Kurt, also suspect that Lola was murdered.¹²² Consequently, they approach her to talk about Lola. When she starts showing them Lola's diary, which is forbidden material, the narrator becomes a dissident. In addition to trying to clarify Lola's death, the narrator joins her three Banat-Swabian friends in their subversive activities against the regime: they read and discuss smuggled books by West

¹²⁰ For a comprehensive analysis of Lola's figure in the novel, see Valentina Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, pp. 137-41.

¹²¹ Eddy, "Testimony and Trauma in Herta Müller's *Herztier*," 59.

¹²² The three friends are loosely based on: Edgar, who could be identified with Richard Wagner, Georg with Rolf Bossert, who, like the character in the novel was found dead beneath the window of his apartment shortly after arriving in Germany, and Kurt with Roland Kirsch, who died in Romania in 1989 in mysterious circumstances. See Cooper, "Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging," 485.

German philosophers, write poems, take pictures of vans carrying prisoners, sing forbidden Romanian songs, and recite in public a poem by Romanian poet Gellu Naum. Participating in these activities with her three friends, the narrator becomes part of a dissident circle of “wir.”¹²³

It is through the smuggled Western German books that the narrator learns about the history of the Third Reich, when her father was a Waffen-SS soldier. The crimes of the Nazis open her eyes to “the possibility of her father being a murderer.”¹²⁴ This change of perspective sheds new light on her father’s “*Deutschtum*” and has implications for her own cultural identity as well. As a result, the narrator begins to re-evaluate childhood memories of her father, in which she exposes and condemns his actions and interactions with her. Similar to the technique Müller used in “Niederungen,” the adult narrator critically analyzes her childhood memories, while maintaining distance from the figure of the child. The adult’s comments intertwine with episodes presented from the perspective of the child, offering two layers of perceptions and interpretations of the father’s image and his actions.

The adult narrator filters several childhood memories of her father through images of death. Even the simplest field activities, like cutting grass, look like murderous acts when performed by the father: “Ein Vater hackt den Sommer im Garten. Ein Kind steht neben dem Beet und denkt sich: Der Vater weiß was vom Leben. Denn der Vater steckt sein schlechtes Gewissen in die dümmsten Pflanzen und hackt sie ab” (21). The distance between the adult and the father is marked by the indefinite article “ein” that accompanies the noun “Vater” (21). The superlative adjective “dümmsten” that the

¹²³ Eddy, “Testimony and Trauma in Herta Müller’s *Herztier*,” 59.

¹²⁴ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 126.

narrator uses to describe the plants reveals her utter frustration with the plants for being a repository for the father's guilty conscience. The narrator thinks that instead of acknowledging his past, the father suppresses his feelings by objectifying them.¹²⁵ The child, however, is upset with the plants because they cannot escape the father's deadly hoe: "Kurz davor hat das Kind sich gewünscht, daß die dümmsten Pflanzen vor der Hacke fliehen und den Sommer überleben. Doch sie können nicht fliehen, weil sie erst im Herbst weiße Federn bekommen. Erst dann können sie fliegen [. . .] Die dümmsten Pflanzen waren Milchdisteln" (21, 22).

The scene depicting the child watching the father hoeing in the fields shifts to a stenogram-like presentation by the adult narrator that introduces the father as a young SS-soldier going fearlessly and joyfully to war and returning from it without guilt: "Der Vater mußte nie fliehen. Er war singend in die Welt marschiert. Er hatte Friedhöfe gemacht und die Orte schnell verlassen" (21). The father's inability or unwillingness to admit his guilt is suggested in *Herztier* through the image of the graveyards which are kept locked up under the his pointed larynx, which functions like "a lock keeping the information of confession" from coming into the open:¹²⁶ "Die Friedhöfe hält der Vater unten im Hals, wo zwischen Hemdkragen und Kinn der Kehlkopf steht. Der Kehlkopf ist spitz und verriegelt. So können die Friedhöfe nie hinauf über seine Lippen gehen" (21). Instead of confessing, the father uses his mouth to drink Schnaps and sing heavy, drunken songs to the Führer (21).

The narrator's choice of describing the father as a "maker of graveyards" is the result of a chain of association that she establishes between the father and the crimes of

¹²⁵ Marven, *Body and Narrative*, 74.

¹²⁶ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 127.

the Nazis: the father was an SS-soldier in the Nazi regime that was responsible for deporting and killing Jews. As such, he may possibly have been involved in concentration camps and the operation of mass shootings.¹²⁷ Valentina Glajar argues that “since certain information is missing, every association with the Nazis and specifically the SS is a possible and probable association with the father’s activity during his SS time.”¹²⁸ Consequently, “maker of graveyards” encompasses “all the consequences of the atrocities committed during the Second World War.”¹²⁹ The image of the father as a “maker of graveyards” that the adult narrator constructs may explain the interpretation she gives to one of her childhood memories. Despite the father’s violent description of the agony leading to death of those who eat green plums, the child eats up all the plums in her pocket (22). Her behavior is dictated by the father’s blurry eyes, in which the adult narrator sees an obsessive, deadly love for the child. This makes the narrator conclude, “daß [der Vater], der Friedhöfe gemacht hat, dem Kind den Tod wünscht” (22).

Despite fighting in the unjust war, the father is well received back home in the Banat: “Ein verlorener Krieg, ein heimgekehrter SS-Soldat, ein frischgebügeltes Sommerhemd lag im Schrank” (21). The freshly-pressed shirt that awaits the father in the wardrobe metaphorically illustrates the fact that the Banat-Swabian community took pride in the villagers’ participation in the war. Yet, the narrator depicts him in scenes in which nature calls out his bloody, murderous past as the terms “rot,” “rötlich” and “zerreißen” suggest: “Der Vater stand frühmorgens auf, er legte sich gerne ins Gras. Er sah sich im Liegen die rötlichen Wolken an, die den Tag brachten. Und weil der Morgen noch so kalt war wie die Nacht, mußten die rötlichen Wolken den Himmel zerreißen”

¹²⁷ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 127.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

(21). Still, the father's only concern after his return is his loneliness. This is why he quickly seeks the warm skin of a woman (21). The juxtaposition of death/war and life in the sentence: "Er hatte Friedhöfe gemacht und machte der Frau schnell ein Kind" is striking because it suggests that the father's criminal past has been transmitted to the child (21).

In contrast to the childhood image of her father as a young and healthy man, stands the picture of the dying father, whose body is deformed by alcohol, disease, and old age. The images and language that the narrator uses to describe the father's body and suffering demonstrate the disdain and repulsion she feels towards him as well as her efforts to distance and detach herself from him. The scorn and lack of compassion reach an apex when she compares him to a goose: "Sein Zahnfleisch war geschrumpft. Er ließ sein Gebiß in die Rocktasche fallen, weil es nicht mehr in den Mund paßte. Der Vater war dürr wie eine Bohnenstange. Nur seine Leber war gewachsen, seine Augen und seine Nase. Und die Nase des Vaters war ein Schnabel, wie bei einer Gans" (71-72). Interestingly, the doctor employs the image of a force-fed goose to describe the father's alcohol-enlarged liver (71). The daughter, however, connects the liver with his songs to the Führer, as she associates the father's heavy drinking with his years in the Waffen-SS: "Ich sagte: Seine Leber ist so groß wie die Lieder für den Führer" (71). The term "Führer" prompts the doctor to think of the dictator, i.e., Ceaușescu, often referred to as the *conducător*, which translates as "Führer" in German. The doctor thinks of Ceaușescu because the narrator must have used the Romanian term *conducător*, while she was referring to Hitler. Thus, without realizing, the doctor and the narrator conflate the two dictators.

If in the childhood scenes the plants were called “stupid” because they could not flee the father’s deadly hoe, her repeated use of the term “dumm” to describe the father’s attitude in his last days of life, shows his daughter’s utter disrespect. Although he is released from the hospital because he is dying, the father ignores the diagnosis and is counting on staying alive (73). His attitude prompts his daughter to call him “stupid”: “Er war so dumm, daß er sich freute” (71). When he suddenly decides to go to the barber after he exits the hospital, his daughter calls him again “dumm”: “So dumm war er, daß der Frisör wichtig war, drei Tage vor seinem Tod” (72).

The narrator announces the father’s death through the short sentence: “Dann starb der Vater” (71). Her pressing need to detach herself as much as possible from her father is evident in her desire to put in the coffin all his belongings that the undertaker gives her: his wristwatch, dentures, and brown-and-white checked slippers (72). But beyond wanting to see her father and his things buried and out of her life, the narrator feels the urge, the day before the funeral, to tell someone about her father’s true identity and his death—an initiative that she qualifies as “dumm” because it is contrary to the confinement of silence that most if not all in her place would adhere to: “So dumm war ich, [. . .], [daß ich] das Richtige mit mir anfangen mußte” (73-74). Her urgent need to share her father’s life with someone represents her public denouncement and condemnation of his crimes: “Ich blieb so lange wie möglich bei meinem Frisör und erzählte ihm alles, was ich vom Leben des Vaters wußte” (74).

Yet, while trying to distance herself from her father and his Nazi past, the narrator is reminded of childhood scenes in which he was tender with her. The brown-and-white checkered slippers that the undertaker hands her prompt her to recall the evenings in

which she used to play with them after her mother was already asleep. The child enjoys caressing the slippers' tassels, which metaphorically represent her longing for her father's attention and love. At the same time, the child's act of caressing could also carry erotic undertones because the tassels could function as an extension of the father. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the child caresses the tassels at night when the mother is already asleep, while the father sits on the edge of the bed, and she sits on the floor playing at his feet.

At times, when the father puts his slippers on, while the child is playing with the tassels, he steps on her hand. Although she is hurting, the child does not or is unable to verbalize her pain. After he lifts his foot, the father grows annoyed and dismisses the child: "Laß mich in Ruhe, sonst . . ." (73). However, when he sees the child's crushed hand, he stops midway through his threat and takes her hand between his hands: "Dann nimmt er die gequetschte Hand zwischen seine Hände und sagt: Sonst nichts" (73). Although brutalized by her father, his gesture of tenderness attracts her to him because, like the young girl in "Niederungen," the child in *Herztier* continues to seek the father's presence and play with the tassels of his slippers.

In another childhood memory, the narrator and the father play a game of death and survival with nuts. Pretending that nuts represent the heads of various people such as the father, mother, the child, the grandfather, the barber, etc., the child places a nut in the father's hands. After he closes his hands and cracks one of the nuts, the child is eager to see whose head has survived and whose has been crushed (205). Beverly Driver Eddy argues that this game of death is "clearly a parable not only of an SS soldier but of the

Ceaușescu state as well.”¹³⁰ Just as German soldiers played arbitrary games of destruction and murder with their Russian enemies, so did the *Securitate* with those believed to be enemies of the state.¹³¹ The child’s fascination with the game, and implicitly with the father, is evident in the fact that when the grandmother, who also plays along at times, complains of the noise that the cracked nuts make, the child immediately leaves her out of the game and eagerly resumes the game with the father. Notwithstanding the brutality of the game, it is important to note that, as in “Niederungen,” the father is the only member of the family who plays with the young girl.

Yet, despite her childhood fascination with the father and the games they play together, the burden of the knowledge of the father’s criminal past continues to weigh heavily on the narrator long after his death. This is evident in the fact that she feels uncomfortable in the presence of Herr Feyerabend, a Jewish neighbor. Fearing that someone like her was staring at a Jew, the narrator avoids him for a while. Unable to bear the weight of her father’s crimes, she eventually decides to tell Herr Feyerabend that her father was an SS-soldier (143). Herr Feyerabend’s response surprises her through the correlation he makes between the Nazi and the communist regime: “Sie hören es ja,” he tells the narrator, “die Kinder grüßen wie damals bei Hitler” (144). Her friend Kurt goes a step further by showing her how former Nazi collaborators, like his father who was also in the SS, are now helping Ceaușescu to make graveyards without fear of retribution (183).

In the forbidden West German books that introduced the narrator to her father’s Nazi past, the narrator discovers new ideas as well as a different use of German. Here it is

¹³⁰ Eddy, “Testimony and Trauma in Herta Müller’s *Herztier*,” 68.

¹³¹ Ibid.

a language of inquiry and not the language of oppression she had been used to in her childhood: “Geschrieben waren [die Bücher] in der Muttersprache, in der sich der Wind legte. Keine Staatssprache wie hier im Land. Aber auch keine Kinderbettsprache aus den Dörfern. In den Büchern stand die Muttersprache, aber die dörfliche Stille, die das Denken verbietet, stand in den Büchern nicht” (55). This new use of German expands the understanding of the “*Deutschtum*” of the four friends. The fact that in the West, people can think freely startles them.

Because of the knowledge they acquire from these books, the four friends think that they are different than other villagers, who like them, have moved to the city: “Wir gehörten zu denen, die Maulbeerbäume mitbrachten und zählten uns in den Gesprächen nur halb dazu. Wir suchten Unterschiede, weil wir die Bücher lasen” (54-55). The metaphor of the mulberry tree symbolizes the inherited identity of the people, who like the four students, came from the villages to the city. Furthermore, it illustrates their in-between identities: physically they live in the city, but mentally, they are still villagers.¹³² While the four students discover in the West German books some “haarfeine Unterschiede” between them and other villagers, they learn that these books are not doors behind which they can hide their problematic, inherited cultural heritage: “Was wir anlehnen, aufreißen oder zuschlagen konnten, war nur die Stirn. Dahinter waren wir selber mit Müttern, die uns ihre Krankheiten in Briefen schickten und Vätern, die ihr schlechtes Gewissen in die dümmsten Pflanzen steckten” (55).

Like the narrator, Edgar, Kurt, and Georg have fathers and uncles who were SS-soldiers and mothers who try to keep them under their tight control. Sending them letters in which they mention their illnesses, the mothers hope to hold the four friends attached

¹³² Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 132.

to their families and implicitly to their Banat-Swabian cultural identity: “Die Krankheiten, dachten sich die Mütter sind eine Schlinge für die Kinder” (54). Yet for the four students “Losbinden” from their families and the Banat-Swabian traditions is their goal (54). Thus, despite her family’s admonishment to “clap along with everyone else,” i.e., not question the regime, the narrator continues her anti-regime activities with her three friends (77). They make their motto a poem by Gellu Naum, which they find in one of the forbidden books:¹³³

Jeder hatte einen Freund in jedem Stückchen Wolke
so ist das halt mit Freunden wo die Welt voll
Schrecken ist
auch meine Mutter sagte das ist ganz normal
Freunde kommen nicht in Frage
denk an seriösere Dinge. (81-82)

The four friends use the poem as a means of survival because “clouds are the only trustworthy friends” to whom they can entrust the knowledge and experience of the persecution that the *Securitate* subjects them to.¹³⁴ Except for the narrator, all recite it aloud in public places. Since he considers the poem subversive, the infamous *Securitate* captain Pjele¹³⁵ launches a series of brutal interrogations, harassments, and false accusations against the four students. Kurt is forced to eat the paper on which the poem is written while Pjele’s dog, which ironically is also named “Pjele,” tears his pants and scratches his legs. Edgar has to stay on his feet for one hour without moving while the dog watches him. Georg must lie on his belly on the floor with his arms over his back for many hours. Pjele demands that the narrator take her clothes off and sing or recite the poem after he dictates it to her. Because of her three male friends, Pjele often insinuates

¹³³ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 142.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ *Pjele* is the German phonetic transcription of the Romanian term *piele* and it means “skin” in English.

that she is a prostitute. He also threatens to drown her in the river. While harassed and threatened by the *Securitate*, the protagonists stop their investigations of Lola's death. Like Lola, they are now victims of the regime.

Despite the terror and oppression of Pjele, the four protagonists succeed in resisting his schemes. Instead of divulging Naum's name, they claim that the poem is an old Romanian folksong (104). Concerned that that the poem is widely used in communist Romania where the songs and poems of the new regime should have replaced those of the old, i.e., the bourgeois order, Pjele continues to persecute the four friends long after they graduate from the university and take up jobs in various parts of the country (89). His brutal schemes stand in stark contrast with the relatively minor misdemeanors of the four students, revealing the disproportionate persecution of the communist regime of those who openly questioned and resisted it.

As ethnic Germans, the narrator, Edgar, Kurt, and Georg are entitled to emigrate, and yet they do not apply for exit visas for a while. Like most people in Romania, they hope that the rumors about Ceaușescu's terminal illnesses are true and that after his death the country will be liberated from oppression. Yet Pjele's persistent persecution schemes and death threats eventually drive them to emigrate. Their decision is prompted by political not ethnic reasons. However, only Edgar, Georg, and the narrator arrive in Germany. Kurt is found hanged in his apartment. Six weeks after his arrival in Germany, Georg is also found dead on a street in Frankfurt.

The few episodes that depict Edgar and the narrator in West Germany show them not as "Deutsche unter [die] Deutschen leben," but as victims of the communist dictatorship, who continue to be harassed and threatened by the *Securitate*. As ethnic

Germans, while the four Banat-Swabian friends were in communist Romania, they had access to information that was denied to Romanians owing to censorship and language barriers.¹³⁶ Yet, like members of other ethnicities during the dictatorship, once they opposed the regime, the four become political victims. Although their actions do not bring about any immediate change in the communist regime, their stories are “documents of political persecution” that show the courage of those who have succeeded in exposing the tyranny of a political system that terrorized and oppressed people for decades.¹³⁷

**“Ausländerin im Ausland”: Conflicting Conceptualizations of “Germanness” in
*Reisende auf einem Bein***

Narrated from Irene’s perspective, *Reisende auf einem Bein* introduces a Romania-born ethnic German who has immigrated to West Germany for political reasons. The novel is divided into nineteen chapters: the first two chapters depict Irene in a Romanian coastal village located between radar screens that are used to mark the border of the neighboring country. The other seventeen chapters show Irene in Berlin, Marburg, and other cities in West Germany. The episodes set in Romania echo the desolate atmosphere during Ceaușescu’s regime and the disorientation and isolation of Stirner that Richard Wagner depicts in “Ausreiseantrag.” The remainder of the novel bears several other similarities to Stirner’s experiences as depicted in “Begrüßungsgeld.”

While Stirner appears to be modeled after Wagner, Müller, in the figure of Irene, wanted to distance herself from the autobiographical dimension that characterizes her previous novels: “Ich wollte mit der Person Irene von mir selber weggehen und

¹³⁶ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 143.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 133.

verallgemeinern,” Müller notes.¹³⁸ This is also why she never uses the term “Romania” in the novel, which Irene refers to only as “das andere Land.” But while she hoped to present through Irene experiences that were common to many Eastern European immigrants in West Germany, Müller realized: “daß ich ohne diese politische Dimension nicht auskomme.”¹³⁹

In West Germany, Irene is, like Stirner, confronted with two different conceptualizations of “Germanness”: the immigration officials perceive her as an *Aussiedler* and the locals treat her as a foreigner. But what is different in Irene’s case is her insistence on being perceived as a German *and* a political exile. Although the memories of his experiences with the *Securitate* drive him away at first from Romania, Stirner succeeds in reconnecting with Romanian culture and language, which become part of his individualized, triangular cultural identity that combines Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German languages and cultures. In contrast, Irene’s rapport with Romania reveals two mutually exclusive feelings and experiences: fear and familiarity. Even though at times, she resorts to familiar Romanian sayings and terms when interacting with West Germans and is looking forward to news from her Romanian friend, Dana, her traumatic memories from “the other country” overshadow and ultimately dominate her experiences in the new country from which she feels increasingly alienated.

Her refusal to adopt the Western use of German language and life, which she considers unreflective and superficial, further estranges Irene from West German society and her three West German male friends. Irene’s growing alienation is also reflected in

¹³⁸ Bruno Preisendörfer, “Die Weigerung, sich verfügbar zu machen. Herta Müller und Richard Wagner im Gespräch,” *Zitty* 26 (1989): 68.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

her inability to settle down in a city and in a long-term relationship with either of her three male friends. Instead, she is shown constantly in transition: walking through streets and railroad stations, riding trains and subways, and maintaining simultaneous relationships with three male friends. The only people in society with whom she feels somewhat at ease are marginals: foreigners, construction workers, and beggars, who like her, have experienced suffering, isolation, and alienation.

In addition to being a politically persecuted ethnic German immigrant, Irene is a traveler in the new country, and she cannot make West Germany her “homeland.” She perceives her move to Germany as a change of locations, i.e., an “Ortswechsel.” Consequently, Germany cannot become Irene’s *Heimat* that offers her the “possibility of a community in the face of fragmentation and alienation.”¹⁴⁰ Instead, Germany is a foreign environment in which she is a foreign German,¹⁴¹ or as she puts it: “[eine] Ausländerin im Ausland” (60).¹⁴² However, the fragmentation that her cultural identity undergoes as a result of the growing alienation she experiences becomes a means through which Irene maintains her freedom to construct an individualized identity rather than an obstacle that prevents her from doing so. In this way, she differs from the traditional immigrant/exile/refugee figure that tends to participate in the struggle against fragmentation in the country of adoption.¹⁴³ Irene’s strategy of developing an individualized identity encompasses a reflective use of language, critical observation of her environment in which she questions and tests cultural, political, and social norms and

¹⁴⁰ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1990), 19.

¹⁴¹ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 148.

¹⁴² All page numbers in parentheses in the text refer to Herta Müller, *Reisende auf einem Bein* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1989).

¹⁴³ Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” 494.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

limits, and an engagement in critical dialogue and interactions with her three male friends.

The structure and the language of *Reisende auf einem Bein* illustrate the isolation, and alienation that Irene experiences both in Romania and in West Germany in exemplary fashion. Like Wagner's "Begrüßungsgeld" and "Ausreiseantrag," Müller's novel is narrated through the lens of a single consciousness. Episodes depicting Irene in various locations alternate with her reflections, observations, fragments of nightmares and memories. Like objects in a collage, estranged images, locations, and characters become connected via juxtaposition, thus revealing unexpected similarities between communist Romania and West Germany. The text is rendered in simple sentences in parataxis, sensory and surrealist images, and metaphors.¹⁴⁴ It contains no quotation, question, or exclamation marks. Questions and statements are marked by verbs like "sagen" and "rufen." On a few occasions, white spaces on the printed page signal the transition between scenes. Although Stirner is haunted by his scenes and nightmares depicting his encounters with the *Securitate* and Party officials, he eventually succeeds in distancing himself from these memories. Irene, however, remains obsessed with the image of the dictator, whose name, Ceaușescu, she never pronounces. At the end of the novel, even the image of the "Diktatorin," the dictator's wife, appears, when Irene sees a picture of Rosa Luxemburg who she thinks resembles Elena Ceaușescu (159).

The two chapters set in Romania powerfully convey the bleak atmosphere of the communist state: soldiers, poverty, alcohol abuse, barefooted children running around late at night by the village pub, and an exhibitionist looking for young women who can

¹⁴⁴ Antje Harnisch, "'Ausländerin im Ausland:' Herta Müllers *Reisende auf einem Bein*," *Monatshefte*, 89.4 (1997): 516.

look at him while he masturbates are part of the everyday life of the village. Even nature is ominous and restless in this village, in which people are constantly watched by soldiers from both sides of the border: “Der Himmel glimmte vor sich hin, unruhig mit verstreuten Sternen, getrieben von Ebbe und Flut. Er blieb schwarz und still. Und das Wasser tobte” (8).

Three episodes involving Irene, who is primarily shown strolling aimlessly on the coast, are representative of the state of her personal and cultural identity. The scene in which she reads the notice “Erdrutschgefahr,” which, as the narrator remarks, for the first time had more to do with Irene and less with the shore; her repeated encounters with the exhibitionist hiding in a bush, who begs her to look at him; and her meeting with Franz, a West German tourist (7). These scenes reflect the emptiness in Irene’s life, her desire to question and probe the limits and restrictions of the prison-state. They also show her deep longing for love that remains unfulfilled. In her room, Irene has two other signs that she stole from construction sites. The warning on one that reads: “Gefahr ins Leere zu stürzen,” which she hung for many years over her bed, Irene connects not only to her traumatized life but also to the lives of everyone she knows (84). On the second sign, which pictures a man with a shovel, Irene wrote: “Graben ist immer am Rande der Legalität”—a sentence she found in a book, which she also connects to her life (84). These signs are Irene’s life mottos, which indicate her struggles and traumatic experiences following her attempts to question and resist the regime.

After several encounters with the exhibitionist, which, Irene thinks, could have turned into a love story, she discovers that she meets with him only because she had nothing else to do while she waits for her passport and permission to emigrate (10).

However, her brief meeting with Franz fills her with an unprecedented sense of intimacy and connection. Irene meets Franz at a bar where he lies drunk on the floor. Except for the children who giggle around Franz while trying to reproduce words and phrases in German he mutters to himself, nobody in the bar interacts with him because the regime prohibits any contact with foreigners. Even the children look anxiously around when they address him. Because Irene talks to Franz, lifts him up, and also takes him to the hotel, where she spends the night in the same room with him, she exposes herself to the risk of being arrested and interrogated by the *Securitate*. This could lead to the delay or denial of her application for a passport. Yet, her humane attitude is stronger than the fear and consequences of breaking the state rules. In this way, she is an exception in a community, where, because they are afraid of the *Securitate*, people choose to ignore instead of help Franz. The villagers' attitude of self-preservation was prevalent in communist Romania, which had one of the highest numbers of *Securitate* collaborators and informers in the Eastern Bloc countries.

The next morning, when Franz is sober and Irene is able to talk with him, she is touched when she sees his compassion for the people of Romania and she cries (14). This is the only time in the novel when she shows her emotions by crying. The connection she feels to Franz deepens when they have sex: "Sie spürte Franz, seine Knochen, als gehörten sie zu ihr. Der Körper war heiß und fand die richtigen Worte. Der ganze Körper dachte mit, dachte nach, wenn Irene was sagte" (14). When Franz leaves Romania, he hands Irene his home address promising her that he will wait for her at the airport when she arrives in West Germany.

Although brief, her encounter with Franz gives her some hope and purpose in life: she writes and mails him a postcard and tries to call him, but is unsuccessful because the operator cannot find Marburg on her list of German cities approved by the authorities.¹⁴⁵ This procedure illustrates not only the isolation in which people lived in Romania but also the tight control that the state had on their lives. Concomitant with the new excitement in her life, Irene's old obsession with the image of the dictator continues to haunt her. While she is getting ready to leave Romania, she has a nightmare in which the dictator comes to her room, and, after stepping over her summer blouses, which she is about to pack, he tells her that it is colder "there," i.e. in West Germany (19).

Her disappointment with West Germany already starts at the airport, where, instead of Franz, Irene is greeted by Stefan, Franz's friend. When Irene looks in his eyes, she is immediately reminded of "the other country": "Diese Blicke auf der Flucht kannte Irene aus dem anderen Land. Diese Scheu" (25). When she sees two men embracing in the waiting area at the airport, Irene has the impression that one of them has the face of the dictator:

Es war das Gesicht des Diktators, der sie vertrieben hatte aus dem anderen Land. Kurz hob der Diktator den Blick. Er schaute Irene an. Irene entfernte sich mit dem Rücken voraus, um das Gesicht des Diktators nicht aus den Augen zu verlieren. Je weiter sich Irene entfernte, je näher zog der Diktator den Unbekannten an sich. (25)

The dictator's image and images and memories that remind her of her traumatic experiences in communist Romania continue to haunt Irene in Germany. For example,

¹⁴⁵ During Ceaușescu's regime, people's home phones were not wired for international calls. All international calls had to be made through an operator, who would often listen and report on the conversation or even interrupt it. Tapping phone lines was one of the many methods through which the regime controlled and terrorized the population.

months after she has been in Berlin, when her landlord asks if she has anybody left in Romania, she gives the dictator's name (38).

Like Stirner, Irene discovers that Western "Germanness" is dictated and determined by the immigration officials, language, consumerism, materialism, and xenophobia. Since there is no room for her in the Admission Facility when she arrives in Berlin, Irene is assigned to the refugee hostel which has the railway embankment on one side and barracks on the other (28). The barracks building, which houses both the police and a refugee hostel, gives her the feeling of being around a prison—an image that Stirner also evokes in "Begrüßungsgeld." The austerity in Irene's room, which contains "ein Bett, ein Tisch, ein Stuhl. Ein Wasserkessel und ein Kühlschrank," parallels the eerie atmosphere outside the refugee hostel: "Auf dem Bahndamm rosteten die stillgelegten Gleise. Knotige Bäume trieben Äste auf dem Boden unten, um den Stamm. Oben dürr und unten dicht belaubt. Es waren keine Bäume, keine Sträucher" (29). On the street lie boxes of donated clothes, through which families of asylum seekers dig incessantly. Irene recognizes a familiar distance in their eyes and behavior that distinguishes them from the locals (31).

Close to the barracks, Irene discovers the Berlin Wall, which is a poignant reminder that she cannot escape the West-East divide. The ensemble formed by the railway embankment, "die Kaserne," and the Wall create in Irene's view "ein Bühnenbild für das Verbrechen," in which the man in the uniform she sees walking by the wall and herself are characters: "Der Mann in Uniform war die erste Person des Stücks. Und Irene, sie zögerte sich mitzuzählen, war die zweite Person. Das Stück hieß wie die Haltestelle: Wilhelmsruh" (30). However, the "crime" in this "play" does not take place because,

under the watchful eyes of the border guards, no one passes from East to West Berlin (30). The desolation and estrangement that surround Irene in and outside the refugee hostel are augmented by the hostile treatment of the immigration officials who expect her to demonstrate and defend both the ethnic and ideological components of her “Germanness”

As in Stirner’s case, the tone, gestures, attitude, and even the clothing of the official at the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*¹⁴⁶ remind Irene of the clerks and the bureaucracy in the totalitarian state (26-27). Because Irene informs the immigration official that she was politically persecuted in Romania, she is asked: “Hatten Sie vor Ihrer Übersiedlung jemals mit dem dortigen Geheimdienst zu tun?” (26). Her blunt reply, “Nicht ich mit ihm, er mit mir. Das ist ein Unterschied,” shows her obvious desire to establish that she was a victim of the Romanian totalitarian regime and not an informer or a collaborator of the *Securitate*, a remark, which the official does not take well (26).¹⁴⁷ Irritated, he snaps at her by saying: “Lassen Sie das Differenzieren vorläufig meine Sorge sein. Dafür werde ich schließlich bezahlt” (26-27). His annoyed reply is very similar to the one Stirner receives when he is interviewed.

In a society which welcomes ethnic Germans only as *Aussiedler*, Irene’s insistence on being regarded as a political refugee reveals her resistance to being placed into the same category with fellow ethnic German immigrants who are granted citizenship regardless of their political ties and crimes during the Nazi regime or

¹⁴⁶ The *Bundesnachrichtendienst* is the agency in West Germany in charge of gathering intelligence about foreign countries, especially those behind the Iron Curtain. Founded in 1946 under the name “Operation Gehlen,” after Richard Gehlen, who at the end of the Second World War transferred his *Wehrmacht* counter-intelligence group *en bloc* to the Americans, the “Bundesnachrichtendienst” became part of the “Bundesverfassungsschutz” in 1955. See White, “A Romanian German in Germany,” 184, endnote 18.

¹⁴⁷ White, “A Romanian German in Germany,” 175.

collaboration with Ceaușescu's dictatorship. Insisting on the truth is "less crucial as an ethical category *per se* than as an acknowledgment of the moral stance" that Irene had taken.¹⁴⁸ When asked about the *Securitate* agents that she had contact with in Romania, Irene describes and names five people. But when the official insists that she give more details about their physical appearance, Irene looks at the official and says: "Fliehende Stirn, fleischige Hände, Kleidung wie Sie" (27). Without reacting to her daring remark, the official continues undisturbed the interview: "Wollten Sie die Regierung stürzen?" (28). His ludicrous suggestion is "clearly an inappropriate version of her dissident role *vis-à-vis* the Romanian regime" and Irene rejects it as a "deliberate misrepresentation meant to trap her."¹⁴⁹ Concluding that "Keine Rubrik hätte mich beschreiben können," Irene resorts to a Romanian idiom to describe the official who lacks the "requisite experience to comprehend Irene's circumstances."¹⁵⁰ "Der Herr vom Dienst irrt über Felder. Das war eine Redewendung aus dem anderen Land. Sie meinte auf etwas beharren, ohne zu verstehen" (28). "Über die Felder irren" is the German translation of the Romanian idiom: *a bate câmpii*. The literal translates of this idiom is "to go astray over the fields," and its figurative meaning is to insist on something without understanding it. John J. White suggests that Irene's use of a Romanian phrase seems to indicate that, "she can only measure her German experiences with a Romanian yardstick."¹⁵¹ Still unconvinced that Irene is not a *Securitate* collaborator, the clerk shows his unequivocal suspicion when he sees Irene to the door: "Falls Sie dennoch einen Auftrag haben. Ich meine es gut" (28).

¹⁴⁸ White, "A Romanian German in Germany," 177.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 176.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

In addition to being suspected as a collaborator of the *Securitate*, Irene is also belittled for being a foreigner and a woman. When she goes back to the Admission Facility to receive instructions how to get to her new apartment, a clerk asks her: “Da, wo Sie herkommen, gabs da eine U-Bahn” (35). When she answers “nein,” his remark “Das hab ich mir gedacht,” reveals his prejudiced and condescending attitude (36). After she informs him that she does not have furniture, the clerk laughingly suggests: “Na, dann kaufen Sie sich bald ein Bett. Die beste Erfindung der Menschheit ist das Bett” (36). Through the clerk’s lewd comment Irene experiences one of the stereotypes associated with single Eastern European immigrant or refugee women who are often perceived as prostitutes.

During another interview, when she is summoned to receive her “Kleidergeld,” the clerk asks Irene if she is homesick. When she explains that despite the fact that she often thinks about Romania she is not homesick, the clerk, who is unable to relate to her experience in a totalitarian regime, reproaches her by saying: “Sie sind so empfindlich, sagte der Sachbearbeiter, so empfindlich. Man könnte meinen, daß unser Land alles aufwiegen soll, was ihr Land verbrochen hat” (51). The clerk’s inability to comprehend Irene’s circumstances causes him to misinterpret her distinction between being homesick and thinking about Romania. Moreover, his presumptuous comment that Germany has to make up for everything that Romania did wrong, reveals his arrogant attitude. His inability to understand life in a totalitarian regime is evident when he argues that “a life story cannot be wrong,” which Irene contradicts by saying that she knows only life stories that are wrong (51). Dumfounded by her remark, the clerk remains silent. Irene illustrates his reaction through a grotesque surrealist image through which she mocks and

criticizes him: “Der Sachbearbeiter öffnete den Mund. Er sagte nichts. Seine Zunge stand im Mund, als hätte sie keinen Platz gehabt. Als wäre unter seiner Zunge noch etwas gewesen. Etwas anderes als seine Zunge. Ein trockener Finger im Mund” (52).

Irene keeps her composure and does not show that she is intimidated during her encounters with the immigration officials. However, in a nightmare sequence, reminiscent to scenes from Kafka’s *Der Prozeß*, she is depicted as horrified for not being able to prove her “Germanness” in front of an immigration clerk. In the first episode of her nightmare, Irene is shown into a waiting room of the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* holding a ticket with the number 501, even though there is nobody else waiting besides her. In the office where a secretary waves her in, Irene sees an official drinking coffee and looking out the window. Without paying any attention to Irene, he starts describing the scene he sees outside: a truck driving by, whose driver, he thinks, is a Pole. The phrase “noch immer” in his remarks to the secretary, “Wie Sie sehen, ist er noch immer da,” indicates that the Pole is illegally in the country (95).

Although her presence is still ignored, Irene cuts into the dialogue remarking: “Vielleicht verwechseln Sie ihn” (96). Annoyed by her suggestion, the clerk snaps at her: “Zum Verwechseln braucht es zwei Männer. Was glauben Sie, wie ich mir die Gesichter merke. Sie können sicher sein, ich werde in Rente gehn, und ich werde sie alle noch kennen. Verwechseln mit wem” (96). While the secretary answers his rhetorical question with “Mit einem anderen Polen,” Irene dares to contradict her proposing: “Mit einem Deutschen, [. . .], mit einem Deutschen Fahrer vielleicht” (96). Putting a Pole at the same level with a German does not go down well with either the official or the secretary, both of whom, in a gesture of defiance, ignore Irene’s remark.

After the secretary announces that the Pole was politically persecuted, she makes the same comment with which Irene was confronted in her first interview: “Politisch verfolgt. Ja, wissen Sie, wenn jemand die Regierung stürzen will. Wo kämen wir da hin, was meinen Sie, wo kämen wir da hin” (96). Like Irene’s interviewer, the secretary demonstrates her lack of understanding of what is happening in the communist regimes and why people want to escape to the West. When the official informs her that “Die Dame kommt auch aus den Osten,” subtly hinting that, like the Pole, she was also politically persecuted, the secretary is unimpressed. She leafs through Irene’s file while mockingly remarking “Daß ich nicht lache” (96). The next sentence, “Sie lachte nicht,” which indicates that the secretary did not laugh, marks the end of the first nightmare, from which Irene wakes up sweaty as if she had to run out of the dream (96).

In the second nightmare, the immigration official follows her in the subway. After he finds a seat next to her, he asks a question that Irene answers in Romanian, which prompts him to grab her by the elbow and to remark mockingly: “So hab ich es mir gedacht. Deutsch sprechen Sie nur, wenn Sie zu mir ins Büro kommen” (97). Horrified, Irene realizes that she had forgotten to speak German, which is tantamount with not being a German (97). When she wakes up from her nightmare, the sentence in German that comes to her mind as a proof that she speaks German is ironically the one that Thomas, one of her three West German male friends, uses to question the Romanian dimension of her “Germanness”: “Weshalb vergleichst du immer, es ist doch nicht deine Muttersprache” (97, 103). Although it is a grammatically complex phrase that could easily prove that she speaks German well, Irene realizes that it would have done more harm than good had she used it with the official (97).

Irene is again confronted with the same curt and mocking tone that the German officials in her nightmares showed her when she asks a secretary about the status of her application for German citizenship. The secretary coldly dismisses her by saying: “Es hat keinen Sinn, daß Sie fragen. Sie können nichts beschleunigen” (121). The similarities between the German and Romanian bureaucracy alienate her further from the new country which appears as Romania’s reflection instead of its opposite.¹⁵² Thus, the hostility of the immigration authorities who not only question her claims to “*Deutschtum*,” but also suspect her of being a collaborator of the *Securitate*, destroys all illusions of West Germany as a welcoming place for ethnic German political exiles.

Like Stirner, Irene evinces a peripheral perspective that uncovers unflattering aspects of the “center,” that expose the effects of migration, displacement, xenophobia, consumerism, and the commodification of culture on West German society. Irene is particularly struck by the intense commercialization of objects, human bodies, and relationships.¹⁵³ Overwhelmed by the abundance of goods in the supermarket, she tries to categorize them randomly by color not utility: “Dann suchte Irene im Laden, alles was weiß war: Toilettenpapier, Windeln, Slipeinlagen, Watte Tampons” (107). The sight of the large variety of stylish clothes makes Irene wish she had “mehrere Körper, um die Kleider aus den Schaufenster zu tragen” (75). But the fact, that she does not have the money to buy them, embitters her (75). Moreover, when she sees many women wearing the latest barrettes in fashion, Irene feels her disappointment on the skin between her nose and mouth that twitches like an insect, prompting her to conclude that: “Die Mode verkürzte das Leben” (76). This realization could be an allusion to common superstitions

¹⁵² Harnisch, “‘Ausländerin im Ausland:’ Herta Müllers *Reisende auf einem Bein*,” 509.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 514.

in Romanian culture which interpret the itching and twitching of the human body as signs announcing future events in a person's life.

Irene's "fremder Blick" scrutinizing the rampant commercialization in West German society uncovers the absurdity of the texts used in ads. For example, the ad for bread she reads in a grocery store, "Beim Ja-Wort schweigt die weiße Braut, weil sie noch rasch ein Paech Brot kaut," Irene transforms into: "Beim Ja-Wort schweigt die weiße Braut, weil sich die Erregung staut" (107). When she discovers an ad in her mailbox for "Das Parfum, das Gefühle provoziert. Jeder Tropfen eine Verführung," Irene exposes the ad's false promise by comparing it to a letter that she received on the same day from her Romanian friend, Dana. Unlike the perfume, the letter evokes and provokes feelings: "Ich hab Sehnsucht, fast eine körperliche Sehnsucht nach dir," Dana writes (78).

In her essay "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen" Müller explains that since she takes pictures seriously and words literally, she is often shocked by pictures and texts in advertisements she sees in Germany. For example, the ad of a moving company promising "Wir machen ihren Möbeln Beine," she finds repulsive because it reminds her of the ransacking of her apartment in Timișoara by the *Securitate*.¹⁵⁴ The two ads for the internet Müller saw in a bus station in Berlin that featured a woman's neck that bears the marks of two gunshots, and a stiletto heel shoe stepping over a man's hand, she qualifies as "unnötige und daher gemeinste Verletzung, grundloser Übergriff. Ein schnippisches Spiel mit Folter und Mord."¹⁵⁵ These ads are particularly disturbing to her because they

¹⁵⁴ Müller, "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen," 34.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 35.

remind her of specific people, who were tortured and killed during Ceaușescu's dictatorship.¹⁵⁶

Irene discovers that not only goods are commercialized based on the manipulation of people's desires and longings, but also sexuality. On the front page of newspapers, she sees women who are smiling "naked" (31-32). On certain streets, she encounters young men and women selling both their bodies and drugs (72). She is also struck by the alienated, reduced, and empty interpersonal relationships she sees. On a subway, for example, she witnesses a scene in which an elderly woman is trying to communicate with a child who sits across from her. As soon as the child realizes that the lady is going to smile, he immediately turns his face away: "So rasch drehte das Kind sich weg, daß eine Flucht in der kurzen Bewegung war" (33). But more perplexing than the child's unexpected reaction is the woman's in whose eyes Irene sees astonishment changing to hatred (33).

On another occasion, when Irene is on a train, she watches the exchange of roles between a son and a father: the son treats his elderly father like a child, who, as Irene concludes, is a nuisance to him (83). By contrast, people are gentler to animals than to each other. Irene is surprised to see a dog responding to the endearing words of a woman "Komm mein Schatz," and is shocked when a young boy calls her "Nutte" (37, 153). Irene's immediate reaction to the boy is to shout back "Lieber eine Nutte als ein Faschist" startles her, because the boy, who was no older than five, repeats after her the word: fascist (153). Irene's "emotional hitting" depicts her as someone who "remains deeply damaged by past experiences and for whom Nazi Germany (and even present-day

¹⁵⁶ Müller, "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen," 35.

Germany) and Ceaușescu's Romania have become impossible to keep separate."¹⁵⁷ This explains why while walking along a Berlin street, she suddenly "questions the façade that post-war West Germany reality presents her with":¹⁵⁸

Dann fing Irene das Gefühl ein, es könnte alles anders werden in der Stadt. Die alten Frauen mit den weißen Dauerwellen, polierten Gehstöcken und Gesundheitschuhen könnten plötzlich wieder jung sein und in den Bund deutscher Mädchen marschieren. Es würden lange, fensterlose Wagen vor die Ladentüren fahren. Männer in Uniformen würden die Waren aus den Regalen beschlagnahmen. Und in den Zeitungen würden Gesetze erscheinen wie in dem anderen Land. (49)

Irene's foreign gaze on the materialism of West Germany as a prosperous and attractive consumer society reveals also the poverty, loneliness, indifference, and the hostility of the locals towards foreigners and people at the periphery. On two occasions, Irene sees people stealing food and shoes in shops (53, 107). Like Stirner, she is often taken for a foreigner. Because she wears the exact same shoes that a woman has stolen and run away with, Irene panics, thinking that she would not be able to deny having stolen the shoes she is wearing, since her accent would give her away as a foreigner:¹⁵⁹

Irene ging auf die Tür zu. Ging langsam, um nicht aufzufallen. Sie wollte nicht weggehen. Sie wollte verschwinden, wie die Frau verschwunden war. Irene wartete auf die Stimme der Verkäuferin. Die haben Sie gestohlen, würde die Stimme sagen. Und auf Irenes Schuhe zeigen. Irene schwitzte. Sie wußte, Sie würde diesen Satz nicht leugnen. Sie würde die Beschuldigung nicht zurückweisen. Sie würde schweigen. (54)

In another shop, the eyes of the sales clerk follow Irene's movements, but fail to spot an older woman who steals perfume (77). When she realizes that Irene has seen her, the face of the older woman suddenly hardens in a grimace of dismay, which Irene sees reflected even in the movement of the woman's hand: "Ein von Falten durchbrochener Hochmut

¹⁵⁷ White, "A Romanian German in Germany," 178.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe*, 149.

stand in ihren Gesicht. Als sie die Handtasche den Ärmel runter, in die Hand schob, war es von Falten durchbrochene Verachtung” (77). When Irene gives money to a beggar who is also an alcoholic, Franz scolds her: “Franz zog Irene am Ärmel. Du hast ihm was gegeben, du hast ihm geglaubt, sagte er. Franz beugte sich zu ihr. Sein Gesicht war kalt” (87). The sight of several men sitting for hours on benches in a park feeding the birds without talking to each other is agonizing for Irene (140). The only connection that she is able to establish while she sits in the park is with a bird that comes three times to eat breadcrumbs near her bench (141).

Perhaps the most representative example of Irene’s loneliness and estrangement that parallels the experience of many of the people in the city is reflected in the graffiti and the telephone number that she discovers on the wall of a house: “KALTES LAND KALTE HERZEN RUF DOCH MAL AN JENS” (91). Although none of the passersby looks at the run-down inscription, Irene sees through their apparent indifference, the chilling effect that the writing has on them: “Passanten gingen über den Platz, spürten, ohne die Köpfe zu heben, den Hauch dieser Schrift. Sie steckten beim Gehen ein paar Schritte lang die Hände in die Taschen. Sie froren ein bißchen, ohne zu wissen weshalb” (91). When she decides to call the number, a child answers, who announces his/her mother: “Mama, rief das Kind, die Frau von gestern” (92). The child’s voice is immediately followed by a click and an empty humming (92). This brief scene speaks to the prevailing cold and indifferent attitude that Irene experiences in German society. The fact that she is not the only one who called the number indicates that, like her, another woman has bought into the false promise of the graffiti.

Reflecting on her experience, Irene sees herself as one of the many travelers in the city: “Reisende, dachte Irene, Reisende mit dem erregten Blick auf die schlafenden Städte. Auf Wünsche, die nicht mehr gültig sind. Hinter den Bewohnern her. Reisende auf einem Bein und auf den anderen Verlorene. Reisende kommen zu spät” (92). Her self-perception as a traveler as opposed to an inhabitant demonstrates that, as in Romania, in the new country she is again in transit. Her dissonant journey takes her to strange yet familiar territory: estrangement, fear, and the difficulty in articulating and communicating her inner emotions and experiences. Feeling neither longing for Romania nor any comfort in her newly adopted country, Irene remains suspended between two worlds: communist Romania and West Germany.¹⁶⁰ This explains her inability to settle down in a city and in long-term relationship with any of her three male friends.

Franz, Stefan, and Thomas are Irene’s three friends, who are connected with each other: Stefan used to date Franz’s sister and Thomas is Stefan’s friend. Like Irene, they are lonely: Thomas, a homosexual, is the owner of a book store who has just broken up with his boyfriend; due to his job as a sociologist, Stefan is often on the road where he has casual sex with women; and Franz, who is a student, feels more distance than closeness to Irene although he visits her from time to time and has sex with her. While each of the three men exposes Irene to different aspects of West German language and culture, her memories and experiences from the “other country” cause her to take issue and/or reject the information the three friends give her. As a result, she becomes alienated from them.

¹⁶⁰ David Vickery, Review: Herta Müller’s *Herztier*, in *Dialog International*, November 2, 2009 <http://www.dialoginternational.com/dialog_international/2009/11/review-herta-m%C3%BCllers-herztier.html>.

Since Franz hesitates to meet Irene at the airport, he sends Stefan to pick her up. Like Irene, Stefan enjoys being in transit. This is evident not only in his job, which requires him to be on the road a lot, but also in the only object that connects him to his parents and his birth place: a model train, which, metaphorically, illustrates his life in transit. Since his father is deceased and his mother is demented, Stefan goes home only occasionally to play with the model train (80-81). Irene learns from him how to use an answering machine, and he introduces her to West German idioms and the latest jargon (115-16). Irene, unlike Stirner, does not adopt West German phrases and terms. Instead, she takes words and phrases literally. For example, when Stefan tells her not to answer the phone if she receives a phone call from somebody that she would rather drop dead than talk to, Irene's answer perplexes him: "I'll fight back. Not this way. It has nothing to do with dropping dead."¹⁶¹

After a short stay in Israel, where Stefan is watched and people are afraid to talk to him, Stefan and Irene seem to grow closer to each other. Because of his experiences in Israel, Stefan thinks that he can understand and relate to Irene's experiences in the "other country," where, as Irene told him, even the air has eyes when everything is under surveillance (149). Yet, when he jokingly uses the idiom "das isn Ei" to describe the rubber bullet he brought from his trip, Irene reproaches him for his *faux pas* (149). Intrigued, Stefan cannot grasp why she is so meticulous with words. Thus, distance sets in between the two.

¹⁶¹ I use Valentina Glajar's and André Lefevere's translation of the phrases: "Wenn jemand dran ist, mit dem du ums Verrecken nicht reden willst, dann gehst du nicht dran" and "Ich werde mich wehren. Nicht so. Mit Verrecken hat das nichts zu tun." Herta Müller, *The Land of Green Plums*, trans. Valentina Glajar and André Lefevere (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1998), 102.

The apex of the estrangement between them is illustrated in a scene in a restaurant where Stefan is trying to read and explain the menu to Irene. What is supposed to be a dialogue between the two turns into a disjointed, parallel talk, which shows that Stefan cannot relate to Irene's experiences and her perception and use of language. In this random collage of words and images, the phrase "das andere Land" offers the clue to Irene's absentminded attitude and Stefan's inability to comprehend her experiences:

Stefan las die Speisekarte laut vor:
Seeteufel.
Was ist Seeteufel, fragte Irene.
Ein Tier.
Ich hab nicht an Seerose gedacht.
Ein Tier aus dem Meer.
Nichts aus dem Meer.
Forelle, sagte Stefan.
Nein.
Aus den Bergen im Bach.
Ich weiß. Ich hab nicht an Libellen gedacht.
Schmeckt gut.
Eine Weile.
Heute abend.
Jahrelang. Die sind vorbei.
Was hast du gegen Forellen.
Das andere Land.
Was hat das mit Fisch zu tun.
Es muß nicht sein, sagte Irene, daß du wenn du Fisch ißt, an mich denkst.
Das will ich doch.
Das weißt du nicht, sagte Irene. (151)

With Thomas, a tormented homosexual, Irene feels more connected than with Stefan. When she first sees him, Irene instantly feels close to him because of the color of the shirt he is wearing, which reminds her of nettles from "the other country" (65). In Irene, Thomas finds a caring listener to his painful experiences as a homosexual, who, after suppressing for a long time his true identity and being married to a woman for a few years, has found the courage to live as a gay man only to discover that all the partners he

has had so far seek him out only for sex but not love. Given his sexual identity, Thomas has a marginal position in society, which is suggested by the fact that the Berlin Wall is visible from his apartment (66).¹⁶² Therefore he can relate to a degree to Irene and her marginal position in German society. Although their relationship deepens and they even have sex together, Thomas's inability to comprehend that Irene's cultural identity has also a Romanian component eventually distances them: he is intrigued and even reproaches her when Irene compares German with the Romanian language since Romanian is not her mother tongue (103). Overwhelmed that he cannot feel at home anywhere and with anybody, Thomas is under the impression that Irene has found a home in Germany, which shows his failure to grasp that she also cannot be at home anywhere (104).

Of all her male friends, Irene longs the most for Franz because she wants to re-establish the closeness and connection she had with him in Romania. Although Franz hesitates to see her after she arrives in Germany, Irene calls him and writes him postcards. When he eventually calls her, he introduces himself by saying, "Ich bin ein Zauderer" (39). Irene is confused both by the term "Zauderer," which she does not know, and by his voice, which she does not recognize over the phone (39). After he explains what a "waverer" is, Irene devises her own definition of a "waverer" based on a term that she is familiar with: "Zauderer, sagte Irene. Ein seltenes Wort. Man denkt an Zauberer, aber an einen, ders nicht mehr kann" (39).

Associating unrelated words based on aural effects and creating new meanings are earmarks of Müller's writing, which speaks for her remarkable ingenuity in dealing with language. In her essay "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen," Müller argues that the

¹⁶² Harnisch, "'Ausländerin im Ausland:' Herta Müllers *Reisende auf einem Bein*," 513.

word “Aprikosen” is affectionate because it sounds like “lieb-kosen.”¹⁶³ In the same essay, she takes issue, however, with people’s superficial and unreflective use of language. She tells the story of a man who after the Second World War, when people around him would say the word: “Judenfürze” (New Year’s Eve firecrackers), would understand “Judofürze,” thinking that the firecrackers had something to do with the judo sport.¹⁶⁴ Neither his father nor his mother corrected him when he would use “Judofürze,” not even the sales clerks when he would buy the firecrackers. When he was seventeen, he discovered, to his great embarrassment, that behind “Judofürze” was an anti-Semitic joke, which, like everybody around him, he was also using and perpetuating.¹⁶⁵ This episode supports Müller’s belief that language: “war und ist nirgends und zu keiner Zeit ein unpolitisches Gehege, denn sie läßt sich von dem, was Einer mit dem Anderen tut, nicht trennen.”¹⁶⁶

For a while, Irene is obsessed with re-establishing the connection she thought she had with Franz in Romania. On one of the postcards, she writes the following reproachful note: “Franz, ich habe dich angerufen. Einen Tag am Morgen, einen Tag am Mittag, einen Tag am Abend. Wozu. Stefan hat gesagt, daß du nicht da bist. Auch in der Nacht habe ich angerufen. Ich bin zu früh angekommen. Oder zu spät” (126). Although Franz and Irene rekindle their relationship, Irene soon realizes that her image of Franz is a mere illusion and that only the longing for him is real: “Franz, wenn ich mich auf dich beziehe, ist alles schon erfunden,” she writes on a postcard (126).¹⁶⁷ Reflecting on her longing for Franz while she was still in Romania, she remarks that: “Ich war allein abgereist und

¹⁶³ Müller, “In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen,” 17.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 38.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁶⁷ See also Harnisch, “‘Ausländerin im Ausland:’ Herta Müllers *Reisende auf einem Bein*,” 511.

wollte zu zweit ankommen. Alles war umgekehrt. Ich war zu zweit abgereist. Angekommen bin ich allein” (126).

As in her relationships with Stefan and Thomas, experiences and memories from “the other country” estrange Irene and Franz, too. While the sight of cars parked on the street looks like tombs because they remind Irene of *Securitate* cars that would make people disappear for years or for good, to Franz they seem decorated (85-86). Irene’s curt comment, “Das eine ist mein Bild, das andere ist dein Bild, sagte Irene. Dazwischen gibt es nichts,” frightens Franz, who does not dare to contradict her (86). Yet what determines Irene to abandon pursuing her relationship with Franz is the fact that he comes across to her as being settled in his ways, gestures, and opinions, something that lends him a self-assurance that Irene cannot relate to:

Irene, sah wieder, daß Franz zu viele Gesten hatte, die sich nie mehr ändern. Es waren wie bei alten Leuten, verbissene, für immer festgelegte Gesten. Sie waren verhärtet und machten ihn alt. Franz war zehn Jahre jünger als Irene. Doch seine äußeren Regungen waren so präzise, daß sie alles überschritten, was er tat. Es waren Gesten wie hingeschleudert. In so kurzer Zeit, mit gespenstischer Genauigkeit liefen sie ab, daß sie wie Details vor den Augen stehen blieben. Und sie blieben stehen, denn sie blieben ganz. Jede einzelne Geste getrennt von den anderen. Das war es, was Franz älter machte als Irene. Fertig bis in die Gesten, dachte Irene, und so sicher, daß er mit fünfundzwanzig mitten im Leben steht. (125)

The precision of Franz’s gestures and opinions indicates that his identity is static and immobile, not fluid like hers, which leads Irene to distance herself from him. Exasperated by the estrangement she shows him, Franz equates Irene’s longing to that of a child who has wishes whose meaning she does not know (142). His observation makes her bitter and alienates her even further from Franz. Thus, Irene starts avoiding the places in the city she and Franz used to walk through. To her, these places seem so full of Franz’s presence and the conversations they had that she sees them as occupied by him (143). Yet

she longs for space for her own thoughts: “Die besetzten Orte mischten sich so sehr in ihre Gedanken ein, daß kein Freiraum für neue Gedanken blieb” (143).

Irene’s desire for space, new thoughts, and ultimately for a fluid identity needs to be viewed in the context of a person who had lived in a family and a regime designed to make her identity fit into predetermined, static paradigms. When she was a child, Irene’s parents expected her to play and grow, but not change (152). In Romania, she was supposed to become an enthusiastic supporter of the communist regime and a submissive follower of the dictator. No wonder that in Germany she feels alienated from the people who adopt society’s habits and customs instead of questioning or critiquing them. This explains why Irene avoids the cities in which her friends, who are set and secure in their habits and identities, live:

Sie wußten genau, was sie an jedem Ort tun sollten. Sie kauften sehr rasch ein. Bestellten sofort einen Kaffee. Berührten im Vorbeigehen Schaufenster, Wände und Zäune. In den Parks rissen sie vom ersten Strauch ein Blatt ab. Auf Brücken ließen sie Steine ins Wasser fallen. Auf Plätzen setzten sie sich auf die erste Bank. Schauten sich nicht um. Fingen sofort an zu reden. In den großen Straßen, wo es vor Menschen wimmelte, konnten sie den Passanten geschickt ausweichen. Irene blieb einen Schritt hinter ihnen zurück. (138-39)

The novel ends by depicting Irene’s ambiguous feelings about staying in Berlin or traveling to another city. The letter she receives from the Senate for the Interior announcing that she has been granted German citizenship does not excite her. Yet, another letter from Dana that arrives on the same day excites her exceedingly: “Der Magen schwebte zwischen Kehle und Knie. Sie setzte sich, um ihn aufzufangen, an den Küchentisch. Sie spürte den Stuhl nicht, sah an sich herab, um zu wissen, ob sie wirklich saß. Sie öffnete Danas Brief” (157). Dana’s report that one of their friends has hanged himself disturbs Irene because he was her age. The news causes her to remember several

other friends who have also died young. The vivid memories of her dead friends prompt Irene to be afraid of the living in the city because, to her, they look like her deceased friends.

As Irene is shown strolling aimlessly in the streets, she has a vision of walking through the dictator's mansion looking for a place to sleep.¹⁶⁸ The image of Irene walking on a street in Germany on which the vision of her strolling through the dictator's mansion in Romania is superimposed, illustrates both her acute alienation and her condition as a perpetual traveler journeying between Romania and Germany, the past and the present. Back in her apartment, Irene has a strong desire to go far away, but she is also reluctant to take her leave of the city (166). Unlike Stirner, who succeeds in carving a niche for himself in Berlin's cultural life, Irene does not resolve her ambivalent desire to leave and to stay. That unresolved desire is at once a symptom of trauma and a survival strategy through which she tries to find both refuge and distance from the rigid concepts of identity imposed from the outside. Irene's story of alienation stands in contrast to the traditional narrative of exile: it is not a break with something whole, but rather another in a series of displacements caused by a traumatic past that keeps haunting her.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ The reference here is to Ceaușescu's *Casa Poporului*.

¹⁶⁹ Cooper, "Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging," 488. See also Haines, "The Unforgettable Forgotten: The Traces of Trauma in Herta Müller's *Reisende auf einem Bein*," 266-81.

CONCLUSION

In my dissertation, I have examined selected works by Richard Wagner and Herta Müller, two German-Romanian authors, whose literature calls for a re-evaluation and redefinition of “Germanness” in contemporary German literature and cultural identity. My analyses have focused on the impact of the Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and West German cultures, languages, and politics on the formation and fragmentation or dissolution of the cultural identity of ethnic Germans during Ceaușescu’s regime and after immigration to West Germany.

As members of the Banat-Swabian German minority that had a long history, rich traditions, and strong cultural ties with German-speaking cultures, both Wagner and Müller had a clear sense of their German identity when they lived in Romania. As authors who wrote and published in German and were inspired by West German authors and ideas, they considered themselves German authors and their works part of the German literature that was written in German-speaking countries. However, their interaction with Romanian culture and language and their suffering under the Ceaușescu regime shaped their “Germanness” and approaches to writing in unique ways that distinguish them from other immigrant writers in Germany.

During communism in Romania, both Wagner and Müller were culturally and politically associated with the literary circle *Aktionsgruppe Banat*, “a minority within the minority” that criticized and resisted preconceived cultural identity patterns—specifically those of assimilation into the Romanian dominant culture, or those of conformity to the

Banat-Swabian cultural identity whose “*Deutschtum*” was based on ethnocentrism, denial of the Nazi past, and intolerance of difference. Resisting both cultural identity models, Wagner and Müller constructed instead individualized cultural identities, which are reflected in their writing. Opposing the pathos of the Banat-Swabian *Dorf-* and *Heimatliteratur* and the prescriptions of Socialist Realism that expected writers and artists to glorify the goals and achievements of communist ideology, Wagner and Müller practiced writing that emphasized precise observation of everyday reality, in which the perspective of the collective was replaced with that of the individual. *Niederungen*, Müller’s debut collection of short prose, is a representative example of this literature, which, as I have shown in my analysis, destroys all illusions about the innocence of country life, the nostalgic sense of community, and the solidarity among its members traditionally upheld by the *Dorf-* and *Heimatliteratur*.

Embracing Marxist principles, Wagner thought at first that his writing could contribute towards a form of “socialism with a human face.” However, after the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* was brutally dissolved by the *Securitate*, Wagner realized that the political system in Romania could not be reformed. In my analysis of Stirner, the protagonist in Wagner’s “Ausreiseantrag,” I discussed Wagner’s vivid depiction of the inner struggles of a disillusioned ethnic German writer in communist Romania, who, being marginalized both politically and culturally, loses his sense of cultural identity.

Although Müller was an acclaimed writer before she immigrated to West Germany, she had to demonstrate, argue, and perform her “German” identity after she resettled in West Germany. Wagner went through the same experience. Wagner’s and Müller’s claims to German identity were further complicated by the fact that, unlike

many ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe, they had immigrated as political exiles, not as *Aussiedler*. Both Wagner and Müller examine the tension between the West German conceptualization of “Germanness” and their status as ethnic Germans and political exiles in the first works they published after resettling in Germany: “Begrüßungsgeld” and *Reisende auf einem Bein*, respectively.

Because of his accent and antiquated vocabulary, Stirner, the protagonist of “Begrüßungsgeld,” is quickly categorized as a foreigner. His fellow ethnic German immigrants present Stirner with two alternatives: to cling only to the Banat-Swabian “*Deutschum*” and experiences in Romania or to abandon his past and embrace West German culture. He does not follow either model. Instead, as I have demonstrated in my analysis of “Begrüßungsgeld,” Stirner comes up with a third alternative: he negotiates between Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and Western languages and cultures and thus constructs a personalized, transcultural identity that helps him re-inventing himself as a writer. Nonetheless, society still often treats him as an outsider.

In contrast to Stirner, Irene, Müller’s protagonist, feels increasingly alienated in West Germany as she continues to be haunted by her traumatic memories from communist Romania, which overshadow and ultimately dominate her experiences in the new country. Germany is a foreign environment in which she is a foreign German, “[eine] Ausländerin im Ausland” (*Reisende auf einem Bein* 60). Unlike Stirner, Irene does not adopt West German language but is critical of its unreflective use that she sees around her. Even though she draws on Romanian sayings and mentalities, she does not long for Romania because of her traumatic experiences under Ceaușescu’s regime. Opposed to the traditional immigrant/exile figure who tends to participate in the struggle

against fragmentation in the country of adoption, Irene feels increasingly alienated and isolated from the life, culture, and language of West Germany.¹ As a consequence, her cultural identity becomes increasingly fragmented. Feeling neither longing for Romania nor any comfort in her newly adopted country, Irene remains a perpetual traveler between the past and the present, communist Romania and West Germany.

Following the publication of *Ausreiseantrag* and *Begrüßungsgeld*, Wagner published several collections of essays in which he discussed Ceaușescu's dictatorship. However, in his fiction, his focus remained on the struggles and challenges that shape the cultural identity of East-Central European immigrants, especially Banat Swabians, in West Germany. In addition to Stirner, I analyzed two other portraits of Banat-Swabian immigrant writers in *In der Hand der Frauen* and *Miss Bukarest*. Like Stirner, these characters construct individualized transcultural identities and try to re-invent themselves as writers. Even though the protagonist of *In der Hand der Frauen* has lived in Germany for several years and is quite familiar with West German culture and language, the fluid cultural identity he develops in Berlin is also defined by immobility and stagnation that result from his past experiences in communist Romania, some of which he tries to deal with and some of which he ignores. He plays the roles that German society expects of him as a dissident writer and an expert on issues linked to Romania and East-Central Europe. Wagner depicts the illusion of living and writing outside the “center”-“periphery” polarization in *Miss Bukarest*. Because Klaus Richartz avoids examining in his writing his past in Romania and engaging with the challenges of living in Germany, he is under the impression that he lives outside the “East-West” divide. Instead, he has created another “periphery” and writes about subjects linked to the Balkans. However,

¹ Cooper, “Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging,” 494.

when he is suddenly confronted by two friends from Romania, Richartz sees his past and present in their true light and admits that he has been living under an illusion.

While Wagner largely refrained from discussing the communist dictatorship in his fiction, Müller, in her fiction and essays, has focused almost exclusively on the oppression and persecution of the totalitarian state and the tyrannical atmosphere of the Banat-Swabian village during communism. Müller identifies the profound psychological and emotional damage she suffered both while living in the dictatorial atmosphere of her native Banat-Swabian village and under Ceaușescu's regime as the motive for her insistent concentration on these themes: "Ich muß das schreiben, was mich am meisten beschäftigt [. . .] Ich suche mir mein Thema nicht aus, ich werde von ihm abgeholt, sonst müßte ich doch nicht schreiben."² In my analyses of "Niederungen" and "Die Grabrede," I discussed two protagonists who interrogate, denounce, and resist the Banat-Swabian conceptualization of "*Deutschtum*," which is defined by violence, ethnocentrism, hypocrisy, and oppressive conformism. In "Dorfchronik," I have shown Müller's use of satire as a means of interrogating and criticizing the "*Deutschtum*" of a Banat-Swabian community, which claims to have a distinct cultural identity even though nationalization, collectivization, and immigration continue to fragment it. In *Herztier*, I examined the development of the narrator's cultural identity following the information she acquires about the Third Reich, which reconfigures her father's "*Deutschtum*" as that of a former SS-soldier. As I have shown in my analysis, although the narrator succeeds in constructing a personalized identity by becoming an opponent of the communist regime, by denouncing her father's Nazi past, and by refusing to follow Banat-Swabian traditions,

² Haines and Margaret Littler, "Gespräch mit Herta Müller," 23-24.

her “*Deutschtum*” remains profoundly marked by her father’s image and his past in the war.

Nearly thirty years after her debut with *Niederungen*, Müller’s themes revolve tirelessly around forms of totalitarianism. Critics like John J. White see Müller as “an unfortunate prisoner” caught in “totalitarianism’s trap,” someone who is unable to break free from her past.³ I would argue, though, that Müller’s persistent focus on totalitarianism should be seen as a systematic dismantling of the mechanisms of oppression and terror. While Müller is “fetched” (“abgeholt”) by her themes, the fact that she interrogates, uncovers, and denounces them, shows that she is able to put a distance between herself and her traumatic past.⁴ Her ingenious ways of extracting and creating new meanings using Banat-Swabian German and Romanian, for example, illustrate her ability to take artistic control of two languages, in which she was denigrated and brutalized.

Although most of her texts are largely based on her own traumatic experiences in communist Romania, Müller’s force of imagination succeeds in exposing the suffering of different characters (men, women, and children) of various ethnic and social backgrounds, which offers a larger view of life under dictatorial systems. Examining the effects of terror and persecution on various characters, Müller shows that her suffering was not unique. In this way, she gives a voice to numerous silenced victims and uncovers little or unknown aspects of the oppressive atmosphere in Banat-Swabian villages and persecution under Ceaușescu’s totalitarian regime. Despite the severity of her motifs and

³ White, “A Romanian in Germany,” 182, and White, ““Die Einzelheiten und das Ganze,”” 93. See also Hannes Krauss “Innenansichten,” *Freitag* 10 Oct. 1997, 42, and Ernest Ostercamp, “Das verkehrte Glück. Herta Müllers Roman aus der Diktatur,” *die tageszeitung* 15 Oct. 1997, 9.

⁴ Haines and Littler, “Gespräch mit Herta Müller,” 24.

the sobriety of her themes, Müller continues to fascinate through the exceptional poetic images she creates out of the spiritual and material ugliness of terror and death. Through her invented neologisms like “Herztier,” “Atemschaukel” or phrases and expressions like “der deutsche Frosch,” “Friedhöfe machen” or “aus der Angst in die sichere Angst fallen,” Müller creates memorable poetic images that capture the essence of experiences of persecution, violence, and terror.

While Germany remains “ein fremder Ort” for Müller, and her transcultural, poetic language is the only medium in which she has a sense of being “at home,” Wagner remarked in a 2009 interview that he can call Germany “mein Land” intellectually. Emotionally, however, he is “zu Hause” in his experiences in the Banat of his childhood. The incisive criticism and informed opinions he offers in his most recent collections of essays, *Der deutsche Horizont. Vom Schicksal eines guten Landes* (2006) and *Es reicht. Gegen den Ausverkauf unserer Werte* (2008), which address current debates on political, cultural, and social issues, demonstrate Wagner’s deep involvement in contemporary German society. Given Müller’s latest novel *Atemschaukel* (2009), in which she explores yet another aspect of totalitarianism and the direction that Wagner exhibits in his latest works, it will be interesting to see how the two authors will explore these themes in their future works.

WORKS CITED

PRIMARY LITERATURE

HERTA MÜLLER

Novels, Short Prose

“Niederungen.” *Niederungen*. Berlin: Rotbuch, 1984. 17-94.

“Die Grabrede.” 7-12.

“Dorfchronik.” 116-28.

Reisende auf einem Bein. Berlin: Rotbuch, 1989.

Herztier. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1994.

Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1997.

Atemschaukel. München: Carl Hanser, 2009.

Essays

Barfußiger Februar. Berlin: Rotbuch, 1990.

“Überall wo man den Tod gesehen hat. Eine Sommerreise in die Maramuresch.” 101-121.

“Mein Schlagabtausch, mein Minderheitendeutsch.” 123-24.

“Heimat oder der Betrug der Dinge.” *Dichtung und Heimat. Sieben Autoren unterlaufen ein Thema*. Ed. Wilhelm Solms. Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990. 69-83.

Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel. Berlin: Rotbuch, 1991.

“Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet.” 9-31.

“Das Land am Nebentisch.” 121-24.

Hunger und Seide. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1995.

“Und noch erschrickt unser Herz.” 19-38.

“Zehnfinger werden keine Utopie.” 50-61.

In der Falle. Bonner Poetik-Vorlesungen. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1996.

“Antrittsrede.” *Wie sie sich selber sehen. Antrittsreden der Mitglieder vor dem Kollegium der deutschen Akademie.* Ed. Hans-Martin Gauger and Michael Assmann. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999. 429-32.

Der fremde Blick oder Das Leben ist ein Furz in der Laterne. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999.

Heimat ist das, was gesprochen wird. Blieskastel: Gollenstein, 2001.

Der König verneigt sich und tötet. München: Carl Hanser, 2003.

“In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen.” 7-39.

Cristina und ihre Attrappe: Oder was (nicht) in den Akten der Securitate steht. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009.

Translation

Traveling on One Leg. Trans. Valentina Glajar and André Lefevere. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1998.

Interviews

Eddy, Beverley Driver, “‘Die Schule der Angst’: Gespräch mit Herta Müller. 14. April 1998.” *The German Quarterly* 72.4 (1999): 329-39.

Haines, Brigid and Margaret Littler, “Gespräch mit Herta Müller.” *Herta Müller*. Ed. Brigid Haines. Cardiff: U of Wales, 1998. 14-24.

Hansel, Klaus. “Alles was ich tat, daß hieß jetzt: warten. Die ausgewanderte rumäniendeutsche Schriftstellerin Herta Müller im Gespräch mit Klaus Hansel.” *Frankfurter Rundschau* (8 Aug. 1987): Zeit und Bild 2.

Schuller, Annemarie. “‘Und ist der Ort wo wir leben: Interview mit Herta Müller.’” *Reflexe II. Kritische Beiträge zur rumäniendeutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*. Ed. Emmerich Reichrath. Bukarest: Kriterion, 1977. 121-25.

RICHARD WAGNER

Novels, Short Prose

Begrüßungsgeld. Ausreiseantrag. Frankfurt a.M.: Luchterhand, 1991.

In der Hand der Frauen. Stuttgart: DVA, 1995.

Miss Bukarest. Berlin: Aufbau, 2001.

Translation

Exit: A Romanian Story, trans. Quintin Hoare. London, New York: Verso, 1990.

Essays

“Die Aktionsgruppe Banat.” *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*. Ed. Wilhelm Solms. Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990. 121-29.

“Der Spiegel der Identität einer Minderheit ist ihre Sprache.” *Mythendämmerung*. Berlin: Rotbuch, 1993. 108-109.

“Kulturbrief aus Berlin.” *Literatur und Kritik* 283.4 (April 1994): 11-12.

“Die Bedeutung der Ränder oder vom Inneren zum Äußersten und wieder zurück.” *neue literature: “Ideen in Not.”* 1 (1994): 33-49.

“Sprachdesaster und Identitätsfalle. Der Schriftsteller als Rumäniendeutscher.” *Orbis Linguarum* 26 (2004): 345-51.

“Lehrjahre eines Immigranten. Über den Versuch, in einem anderen Land anzukommen.” *Neue Züricher Zeitung* 11 Dec. 2004, 45.

Interviews

Binder, Rodica. “Begegnungen – Deutsche Autor(inn)en sehen die Welt. Richard Wagner in Rumänien.” *Goethe.de* Jan. 2007. Goethe Institut. 12 April 2010.

< <http://www.goethe.de/KUE/lit/dos/beg/wag/de1843154.htm> >.

---. “Richard Wagner—Vămuiala unui geamantan literar.” *România literară* 32. 8 Nov. 2006. 17 Feb. 2010.

<http://www.romlit.ro/richard_wagner_-_vmuiala_unui_geamantan_literar>.

Broos, Susanne. “Richard Wagner: Politik ist immer eine Dimension in meinem Schreiben.” *Börsenblatt* 87.2 (November 1993): 18-20.

Rock, David and Stefan Wolff. “...a form of literature which was intentionally political.” Richard Wagner in Conversation with David Rock and Stefan Wolff.” *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*. Ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002. 139-44.

SECONDARY LITERATURE

- Abel, Julia. “Positionslichter. Die neue Generation von Anthologien der ‘Migrationsliteratur.’” *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006): 233-45.
- Abraham, David. “Constitutional Patriotism, Citizenship, and Belonging.” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 6.1 (2008): 137-52.
- Adatepe, Sabine. “Significance of Language Preference in Turkish-German Migration Literature.” Working paper. March 2008. 20 Jan. 2010.
<<http://www.sabineadatepe.de/MigrationLiterature.htm>>.
- Adelson, Leslie A. “Migrants’ Literature or German Literature? Torkan’s *Turfan: Brief an einen islamischen Bruder*.” *Writing New Identities*. Ed. Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Sidonie Smith. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. 216-29.
- . “The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature and Memory Work.” *The Germanic Review* 77.4 (2000): 326-38.
- . “Against Between: A Manifesto.” *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading*. Ed. Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi. Rotterdam: Nai, 2001. 244-55.

- . *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Anderson, Benedict. "Census, Maps, Museum," *Becoming National*. Ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny. New York: Oxford UP, 1996. 243-58.
- Andras, Carmen. "Romania and Its Images in British Travel Writing: In-between Peripherality and Cultural Interference." *TRANS. Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*.
14. April 2003. 30 Sept. 2005. <<http://www.inst.at/trans/14Nr/andras14.htm>>.
- Apel, Friedmar. "Schreiben, Trennen. Zur Poetik des eigensinnigen Blicks bei Herta Müller. *Die erfundene Wahrnehmung*. Ed. Norbert Otto Ecke. Paderborn: Igel, 1991. 22-31.
- Applegate, Celia. *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*. Berkley: U of California P, 1990.
- Arens, Katherine. "Why Austrian Studies Isn't German Studies: Germanophone Culture(s) – A Once and Future Tale." *Modern Austrian Literature* 36.1/2. (2003): 53-68.
- . "For Want of a Word...: The Case for *Germanophone*." *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* 32.2 (Fall 1999): 130-42.
- . "Central Europe and the Nationalist Paradigm." Center for Austrian Studies, working paper (March 1996): 1-36.
- Bammer, Angelika. "Interrogating Germanness: What's Literature Got to Do with It?" *A User's Guide to German Cultural Studies*. Ed. Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. 31-44.

- Bauer, Karin. "Patterns of Consciousness and Cycles of Self-Destruction: Nation, Ethnicity, and Gender in Herta Müller's Prose." *Gender and Germanness: Cultural Productions of Nation*. Ed. Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997. 263-75.
- Beck, Erich. *Bukowina. Land zwischen Orient und Okzident*. Freilassing: Pannonia, 1963.
- Beer, Mathias. "Österreichische Protestanten ('Landler') in Siebenbürgen seit dem 18. Jahrhundert." *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa. Vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. Ed. Klaus J. Bade, Pieter C. Emmer, Leo Lucassen and Jochen Oltmer. Paderborn: Fink Wilhelm, 2007. 818–20.
- Beilschmidt, Theresa. "Feridun Zaimoğlu's Book *Liebesbrand* – German Literature of its Own Right?" 17 May 2009. 20 Jan. 2010.
<<http://www.euroculturemaster.org/pdf/IpPapers0809/group6/2-Beilschmidt-Theresa-GO-GR.pdf>>.
- Bergen, Doris. "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45." *Journal of Contemporary History* 29.4. (Oct. 1994): 569-82.
- Berner, Helmut and Doru Radosav. *Und keiner weiß warum: Eine deportierte Geschichte*. Ravensburg: Landsmannschaft der Sathmarer Schwaben, 1996.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bogue, Ronald. "The Minor." *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*. Ed. Charles J. Stivale. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2005. 110-20.

- Bormann, Alexander von. "Einspruch. Widerspruch. Zuspruch. Zur Rhetorik des zeitgenössischen Gedichts. Am Beispiel der rumäniendeutschen Lyrik, insbesondere Richard Wagners." *Wespennest* 82 (1991): 24-32.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.
- Bukovina Handbook*. London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1919.
- Chaliand, Gérard and Jean Pierre Rageau. *The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas*. Trans. A.M. Barrett. New York: Viking, 1995.
- Chastain, James. "Transylvanian Saxons." *Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions*. 12 Sept. 2004. 19 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.ohiou.edu/~chastain/rz/transax.htm>>.
- Cheesman, Tom. "Juggling Burdens of Representation: Black, Red, Gold and Turquoise." *German Life and Letters* 59.4 (October 2006): 472-87.
- Chiellino, Carmine. "Interkulturalität und Literaturwissenschaft." *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland*. Ed. Carmine Chiellino. Stuttgart: J.B Metzler, 2000. 387-98.
- Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London: U College London P, 1997.
- Cooper, Thomas. "Herta Müller: Beneath Myths of Belonging." *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe*. Ed. John Neubauer and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 475-96.
- Coury, David N. "Beyond the National: Sarah Khan and the Globalization of German Literature." *German Studies Review* 3.2 (May 2007): 243-58.
- Csejka, Gerhardt. "Über den Anfang. Betrachtungen die neuere deutsche Lyrik in Rumänien betreffend." *Neue Litratutur* 5 (1970): 16-19.

- . "Richard Wagner." *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. München: Edition Text + Kritik. 1991. 1-5.
- . "Der Weg zu den Rändern, der Weg der Minderheitenliteratur zu sich selbst. Siebenbürgisch-sächsische Vergangenheit und rumäniendeutsche Gegenwartsliteratur." *Die siebenbürgisch-deutsche Literatur als Beispiel einer Regionalliteratur*. Ed. Anton Schwob and Brigitte Tontsch. Köln: Böhlau, 1993. 51-70.
- . "Bedingtheiten der rumäniendeutschen Literatur." *Reflexe*. Ed. Emmerich Reichrath. Bukarest: Kriterion, 1997. 45-54.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. "What is a Minor Literature?" *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986. 16-27.
- Delius, Friedrich Christian. "Jeden Monat einen neuen Besen." *Der Spiegel* (30 July 1984): 119-23.
- Eberl, Immo and Fassel Horst, eds. *Die Donauschwaben. Deutsche Siedlung in Südosteuropa. Ausstellungskatalog*. 2nd ed. Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1989.
- Eddy, Beverley Driver. "Testimony and Trauma in Herta Müller's *Herztier*." *German Life and Letters* 53.1 (2000): 56-72.
- Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions*. 12 Sept. 2004. 19 Nov. 2008.
<<http://www.ohiou.edu/~chastain/rz/transax.htm>>.

- Esselborn, Karl. "Neue Zugänge zur inter/transkulturellen deutschsprachigen Literatur." *Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur im Zeitalter globaler Migration*. Ed. Helmut Schmitz. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2009. 43-58.
- Ezli, Özkan. "Von der Identitätskrise zu einer ethnografischen Poetic." *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006): 61-73.
- Feridun, Zaimoğlu and Julia Abel, "Migrationsliteratur ist ein toter Kadaver. Ein Gespräch." *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006): 159-66.
- Florstedt, Renate, ed., *Wortreiche Landschaft. Deutsche Literatur aus Rumänien – Siebenbürgen, Banat, Bukowina. Ein Überblick vom 12. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. Leipzig: BlickPunktBuch, 1998.
- Franzos, Karl Emil. *Deutsche Dichtung*. Vol. 35. Berlin, 1904.
- Fromm, Walter. "Vom Gebrauchtswert zur Besinnlichkeit." *Die Woche* (26 January 1979): 3.
- Garner, Dwight. "A Prize that Shies from Predictability." *The New York Times* 8 Oct. 2009. 10 Nov. 2009. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/books/09prize.html>>.
- GenealogyRo. Group. *Group Probate and Investigations*. "Colonization of Banat." n.d. 12 Aug. 2007. <<http://www.genealogy.ro/cont/2.htm>>.
- Glad, John. *Literature and Exile*. Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1990.
- Glajar, Valentina. *The German Legacy in East Central Europe as Recorded in Recent German-Language Literature*. New York: Camden House, 2004.

- . "Herta Müller." *The Literary Encyclopedia*. 4 Jan. 2010. 10 Jan. 2010.
<<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=12545>>.
- Göktürk, Deniz. "Turkish Delight—German Fright." *Mapping the Margins*. Ed. Karen Ross and Deniz Derman. Cresskill: Hampton P, 2003. 177-92.
- . David Gramling and Anton Kaes, eds., *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration 1955-2005*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2007.
- Govrin, Yosef. *Israeli-Romanian Relations at the End of the Ceaușescu Era*. Frank Cass: London, 2002.
- Grewe, Maria S. "Estranging Poetic: On the Poetic of the Foreign in Select Works by Herta Müller and Yoko Tawada." Diss. of Columbia U, 2009.
- Grossman, Lev. "German Writer Herta Müller: Another Nobel Surprise." *Time* 8 Oct. 2009. 5 Nov. 2009.
<<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1929145,00.html>>.
- Gutjahr, Ortrud. "Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft als europäische Kulturwissenschaft." *Germanistik, eine europäische Wissenschaft? Der Bologna-Prozess als Herausforderung*. Ed. Nicole Colin, Joachim Umlauf, and Alain Lattard. München: Iudicium, 2006. 110-45.
- Guțu, George. "Rumäniendeutsche Literatur—Hauptaspekte ihrer Entwicklung: Ein Überblick." *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*. Stuttgart: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen. 36.4 (1987): 598-610.
- Haines, Brigid. "'Leben wir im Detail:' Herta Müller's Micro-Politics of Resistance." *Herta Müller*. Ed. Brigid Haines. Cardiff: U of Wales P, 1998. 109-25.

- . "The Unforgettable Forgotten: The Traces of Trauma in Herta Müller's *Reisende auf einem Bein*." *German Life and Letters* 55.3 (July 2002): 265-81.
- . "Writing from Eastern and Central Europe." *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic*. Ed. Stuart Taberner. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. 215-29.
- Harnisch, Antje. "'Ausländerin im Ausland:' Herta Müllers *Reisende auf einem Bein*." *Monatshefte* 89.4 (1997): 507-20.
- Heinelt, Hubert and Anne Lohmann. *Immigranten im Wohlfahrtsstaat am Beispiel der Rechtspositionen und Lebensverhältnisse von Aussiedlern*. Opladen: Leske+Buderich, 1992.
- Heinz, Franz. "Ein Dichter sagt nein. Zum Tode von Rolf Bossert." *Kulturpolitische Korrespondenz* 610.5 (March 1986): n.pag.
- . "Kosmos und Banater Provinz. Herta Müller und der unliterarische Streit über ein literarisches Debüt." *Beiträge zur deutschen Literatur in Rumänien seit 1918*. Ed. Anton Schwob München: Verlag des Südost-deutschen Kulturwerks, 1985. 103-12.
- . "Eingeständnisse über eine Ankunftsliteratur. Die Aussiedler-Autoren und ihre westliche Ernüchterung." *Die seibenbürgisch-deutsche Literatur als Beispiel einer Regionalliteratur*. Ed. Anton Schwob and Brigitte Tontsch. Köln: Böhlau, 1993. 71-88.
- "Herta Müller? Who is She? World Literature Broadens the Horizons of Monoglot Tunnel-Visioned Readers." *The Times* 9 Oct. 2009, 10 Nov. 2009.
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article6866999.ece>.

- Herzog, Andreas. "'Transkulturalität' als Perspektive der Geschichtsschreibung deutschsprachiger Literatur." *Kakanien Revisited* (5 May 2003): 1-6. 6 May 2007. <<http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/AHerzog1.pdf>>.
- Hestermann, Sandra. "The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity." *Diaspora and Multiculturalism*. Ed. Monika Fludernik. New York: Rodopi, 2003. 329-70.
- Hofbauer, Hannes and Viorel Roman. *Bukowina, Bessarabien, Moldawien: Vergessenes Land zwischen Westeuropa, Rußland und der Türkei*. Vienna: Promedia, 1997.
- Hofmann, Michael. *Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft. Eine Einführung*. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2006.
- Hoffman, Eva. "The New Nomads." *Letters of Transit. Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss*. Ed. André Aciman. New York: New Press, 1999. 35-63.
- Holden, Anca L. "Liminality, Hybridity, and the Aesthetic of Experimentation with Language in the Works of Carmen-Francesca Banciu." *Bodies and Representations. Women's Voices in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. Ed. Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru, Madalina Nicolaescu, and Helen Smith. *Women's Voices in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*. vol. 2. Bucureşti: Editura Universităţii, 2006. 91-115.
- Hübner, Klaus. "An Unmistakable Intercultural Diversity: Migrant Literature in Germany." Trans. Moira Davidson-Seger. *Goethe.de* March 2008. Goethe Institut. 12 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.goethe.de/kue/lit/aug/en3151492.htm>>.

- Iljassova-Morger, Olga. "Transkulturalität als Herausforderung für die Literaturwissenschaft und Literaturdidaktik." *Das Wort. Germanistisches Jahrbuch Russland* (2009): 37-57.
- Italie, Hillel. "Nobel Prize Winner: Herta Müller." *The Huffington Post* 8 Oct. 2009. 27 Sept. 2010. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/08/nobel-prize-winner-herta_n_313577.html>.
- Jackman, Graham. "'Alone in a Crowd:' The Figure of the 'Aussiedler' in the Work of Richard Wagner." *Coming Home to Germany*. Ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002. 157-70.
- Jankowsky, Karen. "'German' Literature Contested: The 1999 Ingeborg-Bachmann-Prize Debate, 'Cultural Diversity,' and Emine Sevgi Özdamar." *The German Quarterly* 70.3 (Summer 1997): 261-76.
- Jazz Professional*. "Norbert Schulze: 'Lili Marleen.'" 4 Oct. 2010. <<http://www.jazzprofessional.com/report/Norbert%20Schultze.htm>>
- Jones, Helen L. "'Real Existing Socialism' and Its Misogynistic Consequences. The Male Protagonist in Literary Texts by Christoph Hein, Milan Kundera (sic!) and Richard Wagner." *Christoph Hein in Perspective*. Ed. Graham Jackman. The German Monitor. 51. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2000. 137-38.
- Jordan, Jim. "More than a Metaphor: The Passing of the Two Worlds Paradigm in German-Language Diasporic Literature." *German Life and Letters* 59.4 (October 2006): 488-99.
- Jordan, Mary. "Author's Nobel Stirrs Shock-and-'Bah.'" *The Washington Post* Oct. 9 2009. 30 Sept. 2010.

<<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/10/08/AR2009100800965.html>>.

Judson, Pieter. "When is a Diaspora not a Diaspora?: Rethinking Nation-Centered Narratives about Germans in Habsburg East Central Europe." *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*. Ed. Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005. 219-47.

Keidel, Matthias. *Die Wiederkehr der Flaneure. Literarische Flanerie und flanierendes Denken zwischen Wahrnehmung und Reflexion*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006.

---. "Asphalt-Denker. Flaneure auf den Spuren des Zeitgeistes bei Jochen Schimmang und Richard Wagner." *Straße als kultureller Aktionsraum*. Ed. Sandra Maria Geschke. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2009. 224-35.

Klein, Karl Kurt. *Literaturgeschichte des Deutschtums im Ausland*. Ed. Alexander Ritter. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1979.

Kotzian, Ortfried. *Die Umsiedler. Die Deutschen aus West-Wolhynien, Galizien, der Bukowina, Bessarabien, der Dobrudscha und in der Karpatenukraine*. München: Langen Müller, 2005.

Krause, Thomas. "Literatur der deutschsprachigen Minderheit Rumäniens." *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland*. Ed. Carmine Chiellino. Stuttgart: J.B Metzler, 2000. 177-88.

Krauss, Hannes. "Innenansichten." *Freitag* (10 Oct. 1997): 42.

Larson, Kevin Marc. "Germans as Victims? The Discourse on the *Vertriebene* Diaspora, 1945-2005." Master Thesis of Georgia State U, 2006.

- Lefort, Claude. *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*. Ed. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Polity P, 1986.
- Lefter, Ion Bogdan. "O 'provocare': Grupul de Acțiune Banat." *Observator cultural* Feb. 2009. 24 July 2010. <http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Ernest-Wichner-poet-german-din-Romania*articleID_10283-articles_details.html>.
- Lehrer, Helmut. "Der Mut zur Unfertigkeit. Interview mit Gerhardt Csejka." *Reflexe II*. Ed. Emmerich Reichrath. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1984. 20-24.
- Linke, Uli. "Ethnolinguistic Racism: The Predicament of Sovereignty and Nationhood under Global Capitalism." *Anthropological Thought* 4.2 (2004): 205-28.
- Loyen, Ulrich van. "Richard Wagners *Habseligkeiten* und der Abschied von der postkommunistischen Moderne." *Minderheitenliteraturen. Grenzerfahrung und Reterritorialisierung*. Ed. George Guțu, Ioana Crăciun-Fischer, and Iulia-Karin Pătruț. București: Paideia, 2008. 255-71.
- Manolescu, Florin. "Introduction." *The Phantom Church and Other Stories from Romania*. Ed. and trans. Georgiana Farnoaga and Sharon King. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1996. vii-xiv.
- Markel, Michael. "'Ich wohne in Europa/Ecke Nummer vier.'" Identitätsprobleme einer Minderheitenliteratur im Spiegel der siebenbürgen-deutschen Literaturgeschichte." *Die deutsche Literaturgeschichte Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis heute*. Ed. Anton Schwob. München: Südostdeutscheskulturwerk, 1992. 163-75.
- Marven, Lyn. *Body and Narrative in Contemporary Literatures in German: Herta Müller, Libuše Moníková, and Kerstin Hensel*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 2005.

---. "Lifewriting: Herta Müller's Journey." *Open Democracy* 15 Oct. 2009. 3 Oct. 2010. <<http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/germany/lifewriting-herta-muller-s-journey>>.

---. "An Alien Gaze." *Red Pepper* 14 Feb. 2010. 3 Oct. 2010. <<http://www.redpepper.org.uk/An-alien-gaze>>.

McGowan, Moray. "Brücken und Brücken-Köpfe: Wandlungen einer Metapher in der türkisch-deutschen Literatur." *Die andere deutsche Literatur: Instanbuler Vorträge*. Ed. Manfred Durzak and Nilüfer Kuruyazici. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004. 31-40.

Mecklenburg, Norbert. "Rettung des Besonderen. Konzepte für die Analyse und Bewertung regionaler Literatur." *Kolloquium zur literarischen Kultur der deutschsprachigen Bevölkerungsgruppen im Ausland*. Ed. Alexander Ritter. Flensburg: Institut für deutsche Forschung und Information im Deutschen Grenzverein, 1984. 179-99.

Meschendörfer, Adolf. *Vorträge über Kultur und Kunst*. Kronstadt, 1906.

Meurer, Petra. "Rasende Flaneure. Kulturelle Identität und Gender in den Texten Richard Wagners und anderer rumäniendeutschen Autoren." *Text+Kritik. Zeitschrift für Literatur*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Special Issue on *Literatur und Migration* ix (2006): 186-95.

Miroiu, Mihaela. "From Pseudo-Power to Lack of Power." *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 1 (1994): 107-10.

Moníková, Libuše. "Ortsbestimmung: Dankrede zum Chamisso-Preis." *Prager Fenster. Essays*. München, Wien: n.p. 1994. 40-44.

- Motzan, Peter. "Überlegungen zu einer Geschichte der rumäniendeutschen Lyrik nach 1945." *Neue Literatur* 3 (1973): 73-86.
- . *Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik nach 1944. Problemaufriß und historischer Überblick*. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1980.
- . "Die vielen Wege in den Abschied." *Wortreiche Landschaft*. Ed. Renate Florestdt. Leipzig: BlickPunktBuch, 1998. 108-16.
- . "Rumäniendeutsche Lyrik der siebziger bis neunziger Jahre." *Deutschsprachige Lyrik des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Ed. Ursula Heukenkamp and Peter Geist. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2007. 732-47.
- . "'Denn Bleiben ist nirgends.' Der Lyriker Werner Söllner im Kontext seiner Generation." *Gesellschaft der Germanisten Rumäniens* 16 January 2008. 10 March 2008. <<http://www.e-scoala.ro/germana/petermotzan26.html>>.
- Moyrer, Monika Andrea. "Unheimisch in Deutschland: Fragmentation, Collage, and Performative Aesthetics in Herta Müller's Writings." Diss. U. of Minnesota, 2007.
- Müller, Philipp. "Herztier. Ein Titel/Bild inmitten von Bildern." *Der Druck der Erfahrung treibt die Sprache in die Dichtung. Bildlichkeit in Texten Herta Müllers*. Ed. Ralf Köhnen. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1997. 109-21.
- Münz, Rainer. "Ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe and their Return to Germany." *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel (sic!) and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*. Ed. Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger. London: Frank Cass, 2003. 261-71.

- Neau, Patrice. "Von Auszug der Dichter. Zur Problematik des 'Ortswechsels' bei den rumäniendeutschen Autoren." *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne*. Ed. Klaus Schenk, Almut Todorow, and Milan Tvrđík. Tübingen: Francke, 2005. 129-41.
- Negrice, Eugen. *Literature and Propaganda in Communist Romania*. Trans. Mihai Codreanu. Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1999.
- Nubert, Roxana. "Rumäniendeutsche Literatur in der Zeit der Diktatur. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der frühen 70er Jahre." *TRANS. Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*. 13 May 2002. 13 August 2006. <<http://www.inst.at/trans/13Nr/nubert13.htm>>.
- O'Donnell, Krista, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagan. "Introduction." *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2005. 1-14.
- Ohliger, Rainer, and Rainer Münz, eds. *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel (sic!) and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*. London: Frank Cass, 2003.
- Ohliger, Rainer, and Rainer Münz. "Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants in Twentieth-Century Europe: A Comparative Perspective." Münz and Ohliger. 3-17.
- Ohliger, Rainer. "Minority Existence in Twentieth-Century Central and Eastern Europe: Between Self and Other?" Münz and Ohliger. 37-55.
- O'Reilly, William. "Divide et impera: Race, Ethnicity and Administration in Early 18th-Century Habsburg Hungary." *Racial Discrimination and Ethnicity in European History*. Ed. Gudmundur Halfdanarson. Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2003. 77-99.

- “Oskar Pastior.” *literaturfestival.com*. Internationales Literaturfestival Berlin. 13 Nov. 2009. <http://www.literaturfestival.com/bios1_3_6_1013.html>.
- Ostercamp, Ernest. “Das verkehrte Glück. Herta Müllers Roman aus der Diktatur.” *die tageszeitung* (15 Oct. 1997): 9.
- Pop, Mircea M. “Din nou despre ‘Grupa de acțiune Banat’ și despre Herta Müller.” *Poesis* (16 January 2010): 111-112. 1 March 2009.
<<http://www.informatia-zilei.ro/new/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/poesis.pdf>>.
- Popescu, Monica. “Cultural Liminality and Hybridity: The Romanian Transition.” *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 86 (Fall 2001): 47-67.
- Preisendörfer, Bruno. “Die Weigerung, sich verfügbar zu machen. Herta Müller und Richard Wagner im Gespräch.” *Zitty* 26 (1989): 68.
- Protze, Helmut. “Wie die deutschen Siedler nach Siebenbürgen kamen.” *Wortreiche Landschaft. Deutsche Literatur aus Rumänien – Siebenbürgen, Banat, Bukowina. Ein Überblick vom 12. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. Ed. Renate Florstedt. Leipzig: BlickPunktBuch, 1998. 12-14.
- Ritter, Alexander. “Von der Güte des Dichterwortes. Über deutschsprachige Literatur des Auslands und des Literaturwissenschaftlers Not mit der Bewertung. Bemerkungen zur einer Theorie der Kritik.” *Die siebenbürgisch-deutsche Literatur als Beispiel einer Regionalliteratur*. Ed. Anton Schwob and Brigitte Tontsch. Köln: Böhlau, 1993. 3-32.
- Roßberg, Thomas. “Bildlichkeit und verschwiegener Sinn in Herta Müllers Erzählung *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt*.” *Der Druck der Erfahrung treibt die*

- Sprache in die Dichtung. Bildlichkeit in Texten Herta Müllers*. Ed. Ralf Köhnen. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1997. 25-42.
- Rock, David. "‘From the Periphery to the Center and Back Again:’ An Introduction to the Life and Works of Richard Wagner." *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*. Ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002. 121-38.
- . "‘A German Comes Home to Germany:’ Richard Wagner’s Journey from the Banat to Berlin, from the Periphery to the Centre (sic!)." *Neighbors and Strangers*. Ed. Ian Foster and Juliet Wigmore. The German Monitor. 59. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 55-71.
- Șandru, Dumitru. "Emigrarea germanilor din România în Reich (1940-1944)." *Romania and Western Civilization: România și civilizația occidentală*. Ed. Kurt W. Treptow. Iași: The Center for Romanian Studies, 1997. 419-40.
- Schlattner, Eginald. "Die Sprache der Glocken. Mein Sibiu, mein Hermannstadt: eine Hommage an Europas Kulturhauptstadt 2007." *Tagesspiegel* (12 Feb. 2007): 29.
- Schenk, Klaus, Almut Todorow, and Milan Tvrdík., eds. "Vorwort." *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne*. Tübingen: Francke, 2004.
- Schinkel, Horst. "‘Erinnerung an die Anfänge.’ Richard Wagners Erzählungen auch nach 15 Jahren faszinierend aktuell." *Die Rumänien-Seiten* Nov. 2008. <<http://rennkuckuck.de/php/buch/wagner.php>>.

- Schlesak, Dieter and Wolf Peter Schnetz, eds. *Grenzgänge. Deutsche Dichtung aus Rumänien*. Regensburg: Mittelbayerische Druckerei- und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1969.
- Schmitt, Axel. "Eine Dichtung aus Asche, eine Dichtung der Asche. Paul Celan und die Bukowiner 'littérature mineure.'" *Literaturkritik.de* 7 July 2003. 14 Jan. 2010.
<http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=6158&ausgabe=200307>.
- Schneider, Rolf. *Die problematische Wirklichkeit. Leben und Werk Robert Musils. Versuch einer Interpretation*. Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1975.
- Schuster, Diana. *Die Banater Autorengruppe: Selbstdarstellung und Rezeption in Rumänien und Deutschland*. Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre, 2004.
- Scurtu, Ioan. *The Ethnic Minorities in Romania. Documents*. 3 vols. Vol. I, 1918-1925. București: Arhivele Naționale, 1994-1999.
- Segelcke, Elke. "Experiences of 'Otherness.' Writing National and Multicultural Identities in Postunification Germany." *Critical Essays on Contemporary European Culture and Society*. Ed. Ursula E. Beitter. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. 165-71.
- Semprún, Jorge. *Frederico Sánchez verabschiedet sich*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1994.
- Senders, Stefan. "*Jus Sanguinis* or *Jus Mimesis*? Rethinking 'Ethnic German' Repatriation." *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants*. Ed. Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger. London: Frank Cass, 2003. 87-101.
- Seyhan, Azade. *Writing Outside the Nation*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.

Shanes, Joshua. "Yiddish and Jewish Diaspora Nationalism." *Monatshefte* 90.2 (1998): 178-88.

Sienerth, Stefan. *Dass ich in diesen Raum hineingeboren wurde. Gespräche mit deutschen Schriftstellern aus Südosteuropa*. München: Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1997.

---. "Die deutsche Literatur Siebenbürgens, des Banats und der Bukowina." *Wortreiche Landschaft*. Ed. Renate Florstedt. Leipzig: Fördervereien BlickPunktBuch, 1998. 26-34.

Simiginowicz-Stauffe, Ludwig Adolf. *Die Völkergruppen der Bukowina: Ethnographische kulturhistorische Skizzen*. Czernowitz, 1884.

Skolkin-Smith, Leora. "Herta Müller's The Passport," *Quarterly Conversation* March 1 2010. Sept. 10 2010. <<http://quarterlyconversation.com/herta-millers-the-passport>>.

Solms, Wilhelm, ed. *Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur*. Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1990.

Stiehler, Heinrich. *Paul Celan, Oscar Walter Cisek und die deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur Rumäniens*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1979.

Sultănoiu, Marian. "Este Nobelul Hertei Müller și al României? Cum răspund Manolescu, Goma, Pleșu, CTP și Cărtărescu." *Gândul* 8 Oct. 2009. 29 Sept. 2010. <<http://www.gandul.info/news/este-nobelul-hertei-m-ller-si-al-romaniei-cum-raspund-manolescu-goma-plesu-ctp-si-cartarescu-4972220>>.

Sulzberger, A. G. "Herta Who? Nobel Winner Not on Booksellers Radar." *The New York Times* 8 Oct. 2009. 10 Nov. 2009.

<<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/10/08/herta-who-nobel-winner-not-on-booksellers-radar/>>.

Symons, Morwenna. *Room for Manœuvre: The Role of Intertext in Elfriede Jelinek's Die Klavierspielerin, Günter Grass's Ein weites Feld, and Herta Müller's Niederungen and Reisende auf einem Bein*. Leeds: Maney, 2005.

Todorow, Almut. "‘Das Streuen der gelebten Zeit’: Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Herta Müller, Yoko Tawada." *Migrationsliteratur. Schreibweise einer interkulturellen Moderne*. Ed. Klaus Schenk, Almut Todorow, and Milan Tvrđík. Tübingen: Francke, 2005. 25-50.

Totok, William. *Die Zwänge der Erinnerung. Aufzeichnungen aus Rumänien*. Hamburg: Junius, 1988.

Veteto-Conrad, Marilya. "‘Innere Unruhe’? Zehra Çirak and Minority Literature Today." *Rocky Mountain Review* (Fall 1999): 59-74.

---. *Finding a Voice: Identity and the Works of German-Language Turkish Writers in the Federal Republic of Germany to 1990*. New York: Peter Lang, 1996.

Vickery, David. Review: Herta Müller's *Herztier*. *Dialog International* 2 Nov. 2009. 10 Nov. 2009.

<http://www.dialoginternational.com/dialog_international/2009/11/review-herta-m%C3%BCllers-herztier.html>.

Weber, Georg, Renate Weber-Schlenther, and Armin Nassei, eds. *Die Deportation der Siebenbürger Sachsen in die Sowjetunion 1945-1949*. 3 vols. Köln: Böhlau, 1996.

- Weigel, Sigrid. "Literatur der Fremde—Literatur in der Fremde." *Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1968*. Ed. Klaus Briegleb and Sigrid Weigel. München: Carl Hanser, 1992. 182-229.
- Welisch, Sophie. "The Bukovina-Germans During the Habsburg Period: Settlement, Ethnic Interactions, Contributions." *FEFHS Journal* x (2002): 81-98.
- Welsch, Wolfgang. "Transculturality: The Changing Forms of Cultures Today." *The Internationality of National Literature in Either America: Transfer and Transformation*. Vol. 1. Ed. Armin Paul Frank and Helga Eßmann. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999. 287-307.
- White, John J. "'Die Einzelheiten und das Ganze': Herta Müller and Totalitarianism." *Herta Müller*. Ed. Brigid Haines. Cardiff: U of Wales P, 1998. 75-95.
- . "A Romanian German in Germany: The Challenge of Ethnic and Ideological Identity in Herta Müller's Literary Work." *Coming Home to Germany?* Ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002. 171-87.
- Wichner, Ernest. *Ein Pronomen ist verhaftet worden*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992.
- Wolf, Johann. "Zu den sprachlichen Voraussetzungen der deutschsprachigen Literatur im rumänischen Sprachraum." *Neuer Weg* (1977): 8892 -98; (1978): 8908-15.
- Wolff, Stefan. "From Colonists to Emigrants: Explaining the 'Return-Migration' of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe." *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*. Ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002. 1-15.
- . "Conclusion." *Coming Home to Germany?* Rock and Wolff. 221-27.

Wood, Richard E. "Russian Influences in the German of East Germany." *Pacific Coast Philology* 6 (Apr. 1971): 60-64.