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## Title
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## Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4g5466t3

## Journal

## Author
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## Publication Date
2019

## DOI

## Copyright Information

Peer reviewed

# Migration as Textual Strategy in Barbara Honigmann's *Eine Liebe aus Nichts* (1991) *TRANSIT* vol. 12, no. 1

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## Introduction

If the past is a "foreign country," as Leslie P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between* (1953) has it, then memory must be a type of migration. The term migration comes from Latin *migrare* which means "to move or shift" (Glare 2: 1219), most immediately suggesting movements through space such as mass uprootings of people or seasonal migrations of birds (8). But in recent scholarly work, temporal aspects have begun to mix with migration's spatiality. In their edited volume, for instance, Julia Creet and Andreas Kitzmann call migration a "condition for memory" (9). In this context, memory itself has begun to take on a spatial dimension. Marianne Hirsch has argued that narratives of return rely not only on psychic movement backward through memory, but also physical movement through a space in which a traumatic experience took place (*Generation* 205). Such narratives of return often involve later generations who, with or without the witnesses who are their kin, visit places of significance to the family past. We might then also think of writing as a condition for memory, forming the last point in the triad of migration, writing, and memory.

If we grant that both migration and writing are conditions for memory, this means that first-person memory is already mediated by both physical distance and aesthetic form. This article aims to conceptualize a relationship between migration, writing, and memory that takes a generational remove into account. How does the process of memory change when an interlocutor narrates someone *else*'s traumatic experience? I refer here not to a purportedly objective, uninterested interlocutor as translator or medium. Instead, these interlocutors are affectively invested heirs to a traumatic past who engage with the past via "postmemory." Marianne Hirsch defines postmemory as the structure through which members of later generations continuously negotiate their relationships to particular, often traumatic, events before their births. These are events that they did not experience but deeply affect them nevertheless ("Generation" 5). In this article, I claim that the generational dynamics that have long played a role in German postmemory novels bear a migratory aesthetic of negotiated empathy. Memory Studies has not brought forth a textual, aesthetic concept of migration, and narrative theories from the first half of the twentieth century likewise fall short when considering generational shifts in literature. In the following, I trace a genealogy of thought on experience and narrativity and give a brief overview of post-war generational dynamics in East and West Germany before I connect these ideas to Søren Frank's expanded notion of "migration literature." Finally, I turn to passages in Barbara Honigmann's *Eine Liebe aus nichts* (1991) to

conceptualize German authors' articulations of their parents' wartime experiences as a type of migration literature.

## Storytelling, the Novel, and Memory after 1945

In his 1936 essay "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin defines storytelling as an oral transfer of wisdom (362, 364) whose foundations are radically shaken by the traumatic experiences of WWI. He tells us that oral transfer of wisdom is rendered all but obsolete by the print novel, which is created in solitude, "separate from oral tradition," and therefore devoid of counsel and wisdom (364). Benjamin attributes the end of stories to the crisis of experience after WWI and to the rise of the novel. Adorno, in the post-WWII period, likewise links war experience and narrativity in his essay on the role of narrator in the contemporary novel: "Zerfallen ist die Identität der Erfahrung, das in sich kontinuierliche und artikulierte Leben, das die Haltung des Erzählers einzig gestattet. Man braucht nur die Unmöglichkeit sich zu vergegenwärtigen, daß irgendeiner, der am Krieg teilnahm, von ihm so erzählte, wie früher einer von seinen Abenteuern erzählen möchte" (62).

Yet just because experience and narrativity have undergone a crisis does not mean that both the story as recounted experience and narration as written representation are completely lost in the second half of the twentieth century. Building on Benjamin and Adorno's theorizations, Søren Frank puts forth a theory of narrativity that is not conceived in terms of loss in an additive or subtractive model, but rather reflects qualitative permutation of storytelling that better suits the changing nature of memory. According to Frank, the story and the novel persist and coexist in new forms in post-WWII novels, challenging traditional claims to wholeness, certainty, or wisdom. Here, Frank relies on Milan Kundera's coinage, "the wisdom of uncertainty" (70).

The post-WWII, post-Holocaust storyteller is located somewhere within the novel, battered but still present, with something to say. As Frank states, "in spite of—or, rather, perhaps because of—Auschwitz, someone had to carry on writing," (69).[1] And, indeed, some did feel compelled to write. In the immediate post-war period, Siegfried Lenz and Paul Celan of Gruppe 47, Jean Amery, Horst Bienek, Thomas Mann, Hannah Arendt, and Karl Jaspers wrote about the both the war and the Holocaust, though their writing was influenced by competing political ideologies of the Cold War period. Once the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic officially became sovereign nations, differing political ideologies precipitated two distinct modes of dealing with the past through writing.

In both post-war Germanys, both direct and indirect confrontation of the past began immediately. In West Germany authors produced narrative coping strategies in order to generate a sense of national cohesion in the wake of the war.[2] However, it was not until the

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[1] Frank refers here to the ubiquitously cited phrase from Adorno's essay "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft" in which he argues the barbarity of writing poetry after Auschwitz.

[2] See Fritzsche on immediate post-war narrative coping strategies in West Germany.

1960s that survivor and perpetrator testimonies emerged under the auspices of the law,[3] triggering broader literary and public responses.[4] These key moments in post-WWII history in West Germany prompted the next generation born roughly between 1938 and 1948, the so-called 68-er generation,[5] to take up the task of confronting the past.[6]

In spite of the seemingly predominant understanding of '68 as a phenomenon of the West, film and literature of East Germany, beginning immediately after the war, provided an outlet to work through traumatic losses of WWII and the Holocaust. Though not as openly confrontational as their West German counterparts, young people in East Germany in the 1960s had developed a "critical subtext" in art and film that registered growing discontent and detachment from the GDR's foundational antifascist myth which focused on antifascist heroes of the resistance rather than on victims of fascism (Pinkert 146). As in West Germany, a generational dynamic inflected artistic engagement and confrontation with the past in East Germany. It was within prevailing antifascist orientations that young intellectuals sought to carve out a space of engagement with memories of the war and the Holocaust that they themselves did not witness (Pinkert 146).

While the 1960s saw an uptick in sharing of wartime experience,[7] even if this took place largely in West Germany, under legal obligation as well as under social pressure from the younger generation, the German reunification of 1989/1990 witnessed yet another turn to the German past. This renewed interest in the past coincided with the passing away of the war generation and the aging of 68ers, and explains the "notable discovery of private family memories" after 1989 (Fuchs and Cosgrove 2) and the more empathetic engagements that the 68er generation extended in revisiting family pasts (Fuchs and Cosgrove 6; Gwyer 141; Schaumann 148-152).[8] Second-generation family novels have productively intervened in post-1989 German memory debates,[9] capturing and questioning in writing the desire to learn more about the parent generation's wartime experiences while suspending the moral judgment that had permeated their earlier writing in the 1960s and

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[3] For instance, the Eichmann trial of 1961 and the Frankfurt trial (1963-1965).

[4] One famous example is Peter Weiss's *Die Ermittlung* based on survivors' testimonies in the Frankfurt trial. In the 1970s, the nationally broadcasted TV series *Holocaust* in 1979 further impelled Germans' reckoning with the past.

[5] Ingo Cornils defines the various meanings of the 68er/student movement, among other things, as a "'cultural revolution' that negated the nation's authoritarian past" or, as others would have it, "a loss of traditional values and German identity" (91). Notably, Cornils, like other scholars, links 68 to West Germany only.

[6] Writers were no exception, hence the emergence of the "Väterliteratur" genre from the 1960s into the 1980s, in which young protagonists questioned father figures about their complicity during National Socialism (see Fuchs).

[7] "War experience" or "wartime experience" may seem too general, and indeed Caroline Schaumann cautions against summarily placing the "first generation" of Holocaust survivors along with "the German experience of World War II" (15). However, I use those terms because Honigmann's parents were both Holocaust survivors in the sense of having escaping persecution in exile, yet they also did experience the war, namely the westward approach of Nazis into their nations of exile.

[8] Of course these are not the only two differences. Writers, especially those of the former GDR, explored memories of the East German regime in addition to parents' wartime pasts. The so-called "Germans with a migration background" also wrote about the German past as it pertained to their family pasts rooted in other contexts, for example, Turkey.

[9] Here I am thinking of Taberner's work on Hans-Ulrich Treichel's texts to illustrate the family novel's potential to add nuance to debates surrounding, in this case, the representation of Germans as victims. See Taberner "Hans" and "Literary."

1970s.[10] Previous modes of confronting the past in the 1960s and 70s - confrontational and confessional in West Germany, and alternative, subversive in East Germany - gave way to more multi-layered, self-reflexive, sometimes co-created, intergenerational texts by second-generation authors written around the turn of the twenty-first century.

It is the contention of this article that the generational dynamics in the post-war cultures of East and West Germany and the intergenerational dialogue that has long played a role in German literature have not been adequately taken into account in order to understand a migratory aesthetic of negotiated empathy involved in postmemory novels. Benjamin's storyteller and Adorno's narrator focus on the survivor and his or her ability to relay experiences from the first half of the twentieth century. However, the reality of the passing away of witnesses and survivors at the end of the twentieth century necessitates a reading of second-generation narrators' attempts to narrate *someone else*'s past.

An aesthetics of uncertainty not only drives the poetics of postmemory but also constitutes the formal element of what Frank calls "migration literature." While the work of Homi Bhaba, Edward Said, and others engages with spatial migration and its implications for hybrid identities, the category of the nation, etc., Frank builds on this corpus to expand migration literature to include texts not necessarily written by or about a migrant. Migration literature, according to Frank, is also marked by "intratextual features such as content and form" (3). Frank's idea of migration as a "textual strategy" (Frank 8) helps to think through an aesthetic migration that takes place in second-generation German family memory novels,[11] allowing us to understand them as a form of migration literature. In an attempt to bring theory up to speed with literary developments in Germany since WWII and the Holocaust, I will examine the second generation's negotiated relationship to the past as a form of migration in Barbara Honigmann's *Eine Liebe aus nichts* (1991). Honigmann is one of many second-generation writers who have played an undeniable role in shaping German cultural memory.[12] *Eine Liebe aus nichts* brings unique and, I argue, migratory aspects into view within second-generation texts. Honigmann's narration of

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[10] See chapter 2 of Fuchs in which she conducts a comparative analysis of literature of the 1970s and 1980s and of more recent texts from the second generation.

[11] By second generation, I refer to those born during or after WWII. Caroline Schaumann problematizes the concept of 'generation' in a productive way, pointing out that other categories of identity shape a group just as much, maybe more, than the time of their birth (15). However, temporality is key for my analysis. I therefore use generation, since I focus on intergenerational dialogue between those who were alive to have experienced the war and those who were born later. Timing is crucial in differentiating witness/actor from listener/interlocutor and inflects the intergenerational dialogue between parent and child. I do agree, however, that there are many other categories through which to assess one's writing about the war experience besides their generational cohort. And, in agreement with Schaumann, I certainly do not mean that all second-generation authors experience a cultural or historical event in the same way. This study sketches tentative characteristics of the second-generation narrator that proceed from previous ideas about the relationship between narratology and the sociopolitical context. I ultimately follow Schaumann's approach of "delineat[ing] the transmission of memory" (17) to explore the roles of storyteller and novelist/narrator.

[12] Monika Maron, Uwe Timm, Hans-Ulrich Treichel, Eugen Ruge, Dagmar Leupold, Thomas Medicus, to name a few examples. Though loosely related to the generational and family framework, W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* is another example in which the narrator tells the story of an acquaintance, Austerlitz, who himself had received a mediated story of his own birthplace and early childhood.

others' experiences represents empathetic engagements with the other that attempt to compensate for failed or missing discussions about the past in her native East Germany.

Barbara Honigmann was born in 1949 in East Berlin to German-Jewish emigres who had spent the war in exile as Soviet spies before returning to build the antifascist state of the GDR. Like many others born into the prevailing ideology set by the previous generation, Honigmann later became disenchanted with life under a socialist regime; this disappointment culminated in her immigration to France in the late 1980s, when she began writing prose.[13] Although she left Germany she continues to write in the German language and engage with the country of her birth on both a personal and a historical level through her semi-autobiographical texts. In her writing she often thematizes a recovery of Jewish identity after generations of assimilation. Honigmann is considered one of the forerunners of second-generation Jewish literature that has sought to articulate a Jewish identity on a European scale after the Holocaust (Nolden 150; Eshel). Scholars have called her a German writer (Bannasch), a European Jewish writer (Nolden), and even a global Jewish writer (Eshel). Honigmann's work resonates from national to global scales and with national as well as religious identities. And rightly so; after all, her own past and that of her family consist of a succession of displacements that unfold across Europe.

## The Migrancy of Memory in *Eine Liebe aus nichts*

*Eine Liebe aus nichts* is a posthumous tribute to Honigmann's father, Georg Honigmann, who passed away in 1984. The autobiographical aspects of the novel are intertwined with the biographical portrait of Honigmann's father, who was a Jewish Communist in exile during the war. Honigmann's protagonist leaves East Berlin in the 1980s to immigrate to Paris where, as it turns out, her father had spent part of his exile. Yearning to start a new life in France, the narrator ultimately recounts, among other things, her ambivalent relationship with her father in East Germany which was made up of an "Einsammeln von Begegnungen" that never culminated in "Zusammensein" or togetherness (24).[14] While *Eine Liebe aus nichts* thematizes migration and spatial encounters, it is precisely the attempted encounters in writing between the author-narrator and her father that illustrate the migrancy[15] of memory as the narrator perpetually negotiates how to tell her father's story and recalibrates her relation to it at a generational remove.

In performing the work of postmemory *Eine Liebe aus nichts* presents intratextual features of migration literature to the extent that it plays with genre, polyvocality, and temporality shifts. In the following passage the protagonist's belongings from Berlin arrive in Paris and draw her reluctantly back into the past. Letters from her father in particular thwart her attempts to start a new life in Paris:

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[13] See Kerstin Dietrich for generational dynamics in GDR society.

[14] "handful of encounters." All English translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

[15] Iain Chambers defines migrancy as perpetual movement in which "neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in languages, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming—completing the story, domesticating the detour—becomes an impossibility" (5).

> Wenn mein Blick doch auf eine Seite fiel, dann erschrak ich, so fern waren
> mir diese Schriften aus einer anderen Zeit, wie Nachrichten aus der
> Unterwelt erschienen sie mir, die mich bei längerem Hinsehen ganz
> hinunterziehen könnten.
> (22)[16]

Just a glance at the letters induces a shock in the narrator that is reminiscent of Barthes'
punctum' or 'prick' that is produced when viewing a photograph of someone deceased and
realizing the person's death, the future anterior, in spite and because of the indexical
referent in the photograph.[17] The feeling of shock affects not only the protagonist but also
the reader when a letter from her father suddenly interrupts the narrative:

> Meine liebe Tochter!
> Ich muß Dir sagen, daß ich alles nicht recht begreifen kann, obwohl wir über
> Deinen Auszug doch oft gesprochen haben. Ich denke immer an einen
> Hölderlinvers, der mir seit meinen sehr fernen Jünglingsjahren an der
> Odenwaldschule nicht aus dem Kopf gegangen ist: "Trennen wollten wir uns,
> wähnten es gut und klug. / Da wirs taten, warum schreckte wie Mord uns die Tat. /
> Ach, wir kennen uns wenig." So ungefähr heißt es wohl.
> In Liebe, Dein Vater. (22-3)[18]

Form follows content here, for not long after the *narrated* shock of seeing the letter, the
letter itself appears in the text, set off from the preceding and succeeding paragraphs with
a space. The father's voice and the epistolary genre doubly interrupt the linearity of the
narrative and introduce "a variety of discourses and styles," both of which are migratory
textual strategies (Frank 20). Not merely transcribed or constructed for historical accuracy
and factual detail, the parent's story is mediated, sometimes co-created in postmemory
novels.[19] *Eine Liebe aus nichts* incorporates the father's voice through his writings or
through direct or recasted quotes, but never in the instance of narration. In doing so, the
narrator retrospectively gathers scraps of what I call non-stories from letters and a diary in
order to construct the novel. These non-stories, because of their lacunae, require, as Cathy

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[16] "When my glance fell upon a page, then I got scared, so distant were these writings from another time,
they appeared to me like messages from the underworld that could completely pull me under if I looked at
them for too long." All translated quotes into English are from John Barrett's translation.

[17] See Barthes.

[18] "My dear daughter, I have to tell you that I really can't understand all of this, even though we've often
talked about your leaving. I think again and again about a Hölderlin verse that has never left my head since
my boyhood years at the Odenwald school, so long, long ago: "We wanted to part, held it to be good and
proper. When we did, why did the deed frighten us like a murder? Oh, we know ourselves so little..." With
love, Your father."

[19] For instance, Honigmann's 2004 novel about her mother, *Ein Kapitel aus meinem Leben*, contains
conversations between mother and daughter as well as the explicit request that the daughter, Honigmann's
autobiographical protagonist, transcribe and publish her mother's story.

Caruth might put it, an entirely different way of listening and, for our intents and purposes, of writing and reading (9).[20]

Second-generation writers face a conundrum as they attempt to grapple with a bygone era of forced wartime migration and its relevance to ongoing negotiations of German national and cultural identity in the post-unification present, namely that their desires to know and understand will always culminate in incomplete and unsuccessful attempts to do so. Frank notes that the "restless migratory form of the novel is…an aesthetic attempt to answer the questions posed by the new social and cultural condition characterized as the age of migration" (6). Form and social reality are distinct, yet linked insofar as aesthetic literary forms represent an ongoing process of making sense of the historical context within which a text is produced. The new social, political, and discursive realities after 1989 produced questions of German national identity in relation to National Socialism that authors engage with on a personal level. Furthermore, the developments after 1989 afforded, and indeed forced, new migratory patterns not thought possible before. German authors take advantage of these opportunities, if not in real life then at least by imagining and writing about travel to places to, from, or through which their parents or grandparents fled. If we recall Frank's idea that migration literature is a never-ending process of becoming (8), then the innovative, always-unsuccessful attempts to understand parents' experiences in second-generation literature must also represent a form of migration literature if we consider that, according to Erin McGlothlin, the second generation's attempt to imagine its parents' past results in a narrative crisis in which narrative voice fractures, protagonists multiply in a compulsion to repeat, temporality is suspended, and generic conventions are transgressed or radically shaped (12). McGlothlin and Frank ascribe the same features to two different types of literature (second-generation and migration literature, respectively), but it is the contention of this article that they stand in relation to one another.

The narrator's father's uses Hölderlin's voice and the medium of poetry to express sorrow over separation from his daughter, but Hölderlin's poem also seems to be the screen through which he mourns something else. The cryptic emphasis on 'murder' via its underlining easily invokes the Holocaust and represents a sort of repetition compulsion for the father who, as the letter's composer, underlined 'Mord' to draw attention to it for his daughter, the addressee. The repetition compulsion contained in the letter has the same effect on the narrator. She tries to avoid the letter altogether in her narration, but as if to foreshadow an inevitable interruption, the letter visibly intervenes on her present narration, breaking up the text on the page to imply that she re-reads it. The novelist's voice as it comes to us through Honigmann's autobiographical narrator coexists with the storyteller's voice through her father's letters, precipitating "intratextual border crossings between story and discourse" (Frank 19). The letter allows an intergenerational dialogue to emerge as it ushers in a shift in the narration.

Paradoxically, the narrator begins to engage with a time before her own by recalling her childhood in the early post-war years. She recasts the inherited story of her parents' exile in the language of her childhood: "Als Hitler meiner Mutter nach Paris folgte, ist sie nach London gezogen (32). …Nach London ist Hitler nicht gekommen (32-3)… Er hat

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[20] See Hirsch, "Generation" 109 and 112 and Eva Hoffmann 6 and 9 where they refer to embodied, non-verbal transmission of memory.

verloren und meine Eltern haben gesiegt" (33).[21] Her naïve recount of her parents' movements throughout the war singles them out in a superhero/villain scenario, and allows her to interpolate the historical into the familial. More interestingly, however, is the fact that in the *written* encounters with her father as Holocaust survivor, she likewise encounters her "past self" in childhood (Hirsch *Generation* 159). The third perspective that the narrator introduces here is an enunciatory formal feature of migration literature that involves complex play with perspective and narratorial authority (Frank 19). The simplistic vocabulary of childhood is the means for the narrator to self-consciously undermine narratorial authority in relaying historical complexities she herself did not experience firsthand. Yet, as Marianne Hirsch points out, our childhoods themselves—including our memories of them and how we use them in the present—are culturally, socially, and politically charged (*Generation* 159).[22]

The language of childhood in *Eine Liebe aus nichts* is markedly East German. The adult narrator retrospectively attempts to make sense of East German repression --what had then appeared as a mere transition into a new antifascist Germany-- self-consciously adding nuance to the comic-book storyline of her childhood. She suspects that her parents suffered from survivor's guilt; the knowledge of Jews who did not survive "muß eine schwere Last gewesen sein" (34).[23] This seems to be the narrator's own explanation, in hindsight, for the behavior she observed as a child: they behaved "als hätten sie damit gar nichts zu tun gehabt und als hätte niemand jemals zu ihnen gehört, der in einem Ghetto verreckt oder in Ausschwitz vergast worden ist" (34).[24] The narrator's recall of their apparent psychological separation from Jews who had perished in ghettos or concentration camps reflects tensions within Jewish political assimilation particular to East Germany after the war. Jews repressed, even denied, their Jewish identity in exchange for political affiliation to the prevailing Communist ideology (Fox 91). Under this ideology, the official antifascist discourses downplayed, if not erased, the particularity of Jewish victims of fascism.[25] In *Eine Liebe aus nichts* it appears that to subscribe to such an ideology goes hand in hand with a history of repression of knowledge about the Holocaust. Speculation here reveals not only a void in state memory politics, but also a generational/epistemological gap.

The disjuncture between much of the narrated content of *Eine Liebe aus nichts* and the generational stance of the narrator constitutes the work's aesthetic displacements, which work to expose and engage with epistemological gaps. Beyond narration of facts that pertain to where, when, and for how long her father remained in exile during the war (31-34), the intergenerational transfer of the unknowable necessitates a considerable "imaginative investment" on behalf of the second-generation protagonist (Hirsch "Generation" 5). The narrator imagines that her parents must have felt burdened. However,

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[21] "When Hitler followed my mother to Paris, she moved to London. … Hitler didn't come to London…And Hitler was beaten. He lost and my parents won."

[22] See chapter 6 in Hirsch for an analysis of the role of the child figure in postmemory works of photography.

[23] "must have been a heavy burden."

[24] "…they always acted as if they hadn't anything to do with all that and as if they hadn't had any relatives who died in a ghetto or were gassed at Auschwitz."

[25] See Herf for a thorough analysis of East German discourses surrounding the Jewish question.

this thought is predicated upon her adult knowledge about what occurred before her birth, knowledge that she might not have had at the time as a young girl. I argue that this discursive transition from adult narrator to childhood self and back again constitutes migration on the level of enunciation in the text. It highlights the murky edges of the known and unknown, the necessary failures of second-generation novelists to relay the stories of the previous generation. In doing so, *Eine Liebe aus nichts* contains negative spaces. It refers to the Holocaust itself as *the* trauma from which her parents were spared but, in effect, necessarily fails to give contours to the arguably traumatic experience of having escaped death. The narrator knows what others endured, indirectly referring to the growing historical archive of information about crimes the Nazis committed before and during the war. However, on a personal level, she knows nothing about what her parents endured as survivors by chance. Against the backdrop of knowledge about a time prior to herself, the narrator exposes her parents', and moreover East Germany's, repression of a trauma and, in turn, the unbridgeable gap in her own understanding of her parents' story.

As part of an attempt to reclaim her own private family story that is situated within this larger historical backdrop, the end of the novel includes excerpts from a diary her father kept in the immediate post-war years. An uninterrupted string of the father's diary entries spans pages 97-101. In their shorthand form, often lacking a grammatical subject, the entries capture snippets of conversations and scenes around occupied zones of Berlin in the wake of war. For example, her father notes the numerous euphemisms by which others identify him, such as "Italiener" (Italian, 100, 101) or "Ausländer" (foreigner, 99). These varied classifications reflect his alienation in post-war society, in which Germans avoided saying "Jew," denied that any Jews were still alive, or perhaps, according to the father, do not even remember what Jews look like (100). The entries are as close to the unmediated voice of the storyteller as the novel gets, though they depict the sights and sounds of post-war Berlin more than the inner life of a repatriated exile. Reminiscent of the literary aesthetic of the "new objectivity" in the interwar period, the content of the father's diary entries reflects sociopolitical circumstances of the time rather than the psychological, individual point of view (Becker 251-2).[26] As a result, the entries, journalistic in style, lack introspection and remain as cryptic as the letters he later writes to his daughter.

The father's epistolary form analyzed in the first passage above disrupts the text by introducing a new voice, a new genre, and a shift in narration towards the past. The father's journal entries work in a similar but more pervasive way, for shortly after his entries, the journal absorbs the narrator into the mode of journal writing:

> Weil ich den Kalendar nicht einfach nur als ein Erinnerungsstück mit nach Paris nehmen wollte und weil so viele Seiten leer geblieben waren, schrieb ich selber darin weiter...(101)[27]

The empty pages seem to invite participation, thereby bestowing the journal with more power than a mere memento. The fact that the next generation writes "weiter" not only

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[26] See "Entindividualisierung" section of Becker's third chapter "Dimensionen neusachlicher Ästhetik." Becker defines *New Objectivity* as an interwar literary aesthetic whose soberness, "Tatsachenpoetik" (138), mirrors post-WWI disillusionment (146).

[27] "Because I didn't want to take the calendar back to Paris with me just as a memento, and because there were so many empty pages, I wrote my own continuation in it…"

keeps the father-daughter relationship alive, but also establishes a delayed agency from the past. As if to mark a new beginning, the narrator writes, "Ich trug den Todestages meines Vaters und den Tag seines Begräbnisses ein und den Tag, an dem wir uns das letzte Mal gesehen hatten, und dann habe ich angefangen die leeren Seiten vollzuschreiben, so daß unsere Aufzeichnungen ineinander liefen..." (101).[28] Through the narrator's entries, the journal remains a living document that manifests a posthumous relationship to her father. The content of these entries also mirrors her father's spatial movements to the extent that she, too, writes of return to East Germany, thus mirroring his spatial movements. Her entries register a similar, albeit more explicit, sense of despair and disorientation in East Berlin:

> Jeder alte Mann, den ich auf der Straße sehe, erschreckt mich, ich sehe ihn und denke, warum lebt der und kennt mich nicht...warum kann er nicht mein Vater sein. Dann fang ich zu heulen an, aus Trauer darüber, daß jede Reise jetzt sinnlos ist, daß ich meinen Vater nicht mehr finden kann. (104)[29]

Compared to her father's entries, the narrator's contain full sentences, descriptive passages, and more introspection. If the aesthetics of New Objectivity privilege the physiologizing observer over the psychologizing subject (Becker 176-7), then the next generation supplies the pathos, albeit their own, that is missing from the sparse notations of the postwar observer. The narrator's affective introspection fills the empty pages that symbolize her father's relative muteness upon his arrival to East Berlin. This is not to say that she appropriates his story; rather, she articulates her own story in a way that blends past and present in a self-conscious manner, finding the vocabulary for her own experience, in spite of her feeling of disorientation in a place she once called home.

Yet precisely this blend of past and present overwhelms the narrator, rendering tenuous the relationship between memory and migration as movement through space. Grieving her father, hoping to find him in the faces of strangers passing by on the streets of East Berlin, she seeks out traces of the past as potential refuge. For example, when she finds the house where her mother once lived and the house of one of her father's ex-partners,

> war alle Gegenwart weggewischt, und selbst die Erinnerung, schien mir, konnte sich nicht wirklich an den Orten halten. Plötzlich, wie ich da vor den Häusern stand, ist mir aller Sinn abhanden gekommen von Weggehen und Wiederkommen und Freundschaft und den verschiedenen Orten der Welt, als ob sie sich alle auflösten oder in die Luft aufstiegen, wenn man sich ihnen nähert, und eigentlich kann man nicht wissen, ob sie sich verflüchtigen oder ob man selber flieht. (106-7)[30]

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[28] "I entered the day my father died and the day of his funeral and the day when we'd seen each other for the last time and then I started to fill up the empty pages, so that our notes ran into each other…"

[29] "Every old man I see on the street frightens me. I look at him and think, 'Why is he alive but doesn't know me and why is he walking by without looking at me, as if I don't mean a thing to him, why can't he be my father?' Then I start to blubber from grief over the fact that every journey is senseless, now that I'll never be able to find my father again…"

[30] "…every presence had been wiped away and even the memories, it seemed to me, couldn't really be associated with those places. Suddenly, as I was standing there in front of those buildings, the leaving and returning and the friendships and the different places in the world seemed robbed of any sense, as if they all

Time and space collapse, as neither the present nor memory of the past serve as points of stability. Any sense of place and directional movement from point of departure to point of arrival dissipate into thin air. Here, she once more undermines her narratorial authority by questioning whether the illusion of disappearance is external to herself or reflects her own unconscious fears in the present. The ethereal presence of people and places from the past in this passage mark the disorienting effects of memory on a body located in a place of past significance. In this scene, migration as spatial movement obfuscates memory and renders memory itself migrant, constantly escaping grasp.

Memory becomes unhinged from any one time and place, and it remains always just beyond reach. However, through the dialogic process of writing, specifically in a journal of intergenerational exile, the narrator finds a foothold in the journal. Places and human relations seem "auf[zu]lösen" and "in die Luft auf[zu]steigen," evoking imagery of smoke stacks at concentration camps, but the words proliferate and formulate on the empty pages of the journal. Writing becomes a powerful tool for the next generation to continue the story of those who experienced the war and can no longer write for themselves.


## Conclusion


In his analysis of Günter Grass's Danzig trilogy Søren Frank points out the way that layers of time tend to fuse palimpsestically, a process that Grass counteracts "by way of bringing the overwritten layers back to life and situating them side by side with the present ones" (Frank 60). Such layers are visible in the narrator's journal writing towards the end of *Eine Liebe aus nichts*, but the strategies used to separate, combine, and reawaken them in spite of (post)memory's inevitable failures are somewhat different. A delicate balance of ethical relations must be maintained in postmemory work so as not to appropriate others' stories, nor to let others' stories overwhelm one's own. The father's journal entries are unmediated, yet both father's and daughter's narrative streams are visible on the page (Bannasch 146). Their delineated discursive tracks within the private medium of a journal culminate in a written encounter between father and daughter, as their entries "ineinander verliefen" (Honigmann 101).

The narrator attempts to fill in the gaps by filling empty pages of her private family journal situated within broader historical knowledge, but she also articulates her own experience of emigration, return, and belonging. Her diary entries structurally and temporally 'come after' her father's, invoking the belated positioning of postmemory; but her entries are 'next to' her father's and thus on equal with them. Seeing the entries as lateral to the past allows a sense of agency for the second generation without erasing or overwriting the previous generation's experience. The journal bears separate markings to reveal the choppy terrain of postmemory, both the borders and the parallels between two experiences of leaving and returning.

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dissolved or flew off into the air whenever you tried to approach them and you never actually knew whether they'd just evaporated or whether you, yourself, were running away."

The narrator's own journal passages render spatial migration a deceiving condition for, even an obstacle to, memory. Instead, migratory modes absorbed into the act of writing and manifested in its resulting form are what engender memory and togetherness with the previous generation. In their explicit move into the mode of journal writing, the final pages of *Eine Liebe aus nichts* exemplify the relationship between migration, memory, and writing. When spatial migration to sites of significance to the family past proves insufficient to evoke connections to the past, self-conscious writing that explores both the desire and the failure to remember makes the migrancy of memory itself visible. Without necessarily spurring memory or leading to answers, writing nevertheless provides a place to continuously negotiate a relationship to the past. *Eine Liebe aus nichts* ends, or perhaps lingers, quite fittingly in an international train en route from Weimar to Paris and seemingly still within the mode of journal writing. This suggests that the protagonist will never return to Weimar, but will never quite leave it either, and that the story continues beyond the confines of the journal pages and of the novel itself.

Barbara Honigmann is one of many second-generation German authors who have creatively taken up the task of narrating their parents' wartime experiences while foregrounding the act of narration itself, making the postmemory novel a self-conscious and, as I have argued, migratory endeavor. Honigmann's novel demonstrates that the separate trends in literary studies and memory studies are complementary. German postmemory literature augments Frank's discussion of the storyteller and novelist in migration literature where it fails to account for intergenerational dynamics in recountings of traumatic experiences in the twentieth century. Memory studies, in contrast, has focused on spatial migration as a condition of memory, lacking theoretical tools for migratory *aesthetics* of (post)memory on the formal level. Speaking of 'gaps' (Hirsch) or 'fragmentation' (McGlothlin) implies loss, absence, debilitation and lack of agency. However, combining the oscillatory processes in migration literature with the dialogic processes in memory literature reveals qualitative changes in memory over generations. This contradicts the additive/subtractive model that underlies notions of loss or absence when speaking of intergenerational memory.

The interplay of migration and memory on the formal level of a text constitutes the second generation's efforts to maintain an ethical relationship to the past that neither appropriates nor ignores it. Shifts in voice, genre, and temporality observed in Honigmann's novel reflect the negotiation of emotional connection and critical distance to others' wartime experiences. While these features are also considered postmodern, second-generation texts nevertheless invoke the borders, movement, and evolutionary processes that are germane to Frank's conception of migration literature. Frank himself concedes that while some characteristics are specific to migration literature, others apply to a "more general development in literature" (17). Assuming that postmodern literature is one of these broader developments, migration literature and postmodern literature are not mutually exclusive; they overlap with and stand in relation to one another. As engagements with family pasts in German literature continue to take place transnationally and in an increasingly mediated fashion, this article is a preliminary attempt to develop a framework for thinking about (post)memory novels as a type of migration literature.

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