

Towards an aesthetics of migration

The “Eastern turn” of German-language literature and the German cultural memory after 2015

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In recent years, writers from former communist countries have made a major impact on German literature. Writers including Katja Petrowskaja, Saša Stanišić, Melinda Nadj Abonji, Catalin Dorian Florescu, Ilija Trojanow and many others are highly respected by readers and acknowledged by critics. These writers have received important literary prizes, such as the Chamisso Prize (awarded to German-language authors whose works deal with multiple cultural heritages and are characterised by an innovative use of the German language), the prestigious Georg Büchner Prize (won by Hungarian Terézia Mora in 2018), or even the renowned German Book Prize (awarded to Hungarian-Swiss Melinda Nadj Abonji). The focus of these writers is not limited to the depiction of migration movements from Eastern Europe to Western Europe. Migration movements from Western to Eastern Europe are likewise explored in contemporary films and novels. In those cultural expressions, Eastern Europe is usually staged as either the setting of violent war crimes, criminal cases and investigations (such as in Juli Zeh: *Adler und Engel*, Gerhard Roth: *Der Berg*, Norbert Gstrein: *Das Handwerk des Tötens*), or as a surreal space where family mysteries, traumas and questionable business entanglements take place (Thomas von Steinaecker: *Das Jahr, in dem ich aufhörte, mir Sorgen zu machen, und anfang zu träumen*, Terézia Mora: *Der einzige Mann auf dem Kontinent*), or as exotic destination in adventurous road movies (Fatih Akin: *Im Juli*) and love stories (Ingo Schulze: *Adam und Evelyn*, Terézia Mora: *Das Ungeheuer*). Accordingly, the historical experiences of Eastern European states – including the regime change at the end of the Cold War, the Balkan Wars, traumas caused by terror, violence and communist dictatorships (as thematised e.g. in Herta Müller's prose works) – are now common topics in German literature and culture. Literary scholar Irmgard Ackerman speaks of an “Eastern enlargement” of German language literature (2008). German studies scholar Brigid Haines famously coined the phrase “the Eastern turn” (2008, 2015) to describe contemporary German literature, using it as an analogy to similar concepts such as “the *Turkish turn*” (Adelson

2005, original emphasis) and “the *Balkan turn*” (Previšić 2009, original emphasis) in contemporary German literature.

This exploration of an “Eastern turn” in German literature does not always imply a change in perspective, or even a change of paradigm. It often reaffirms existing binary dichotomies such as the distinction between “migrant literature” and the “German literature”, sometimes even reinforcing ethnic categories of belonging. In this chapter I propose a different reading, combining elements of what is sometimes referred to as “the ethics of memory” with aesthetic dimensions. Following cultural theorist Mieke Bal’s concept of “migratory aesthetics”, I argue that all aesthetics are always migratory, and that the ethics of memory should be expanded through research into the aesthetics of migration, to support the understanding of the complexities of the postmigrant condition. In the first part of this chapter I discuss the notion of “the Eastern turn”, including the reproduction of binary classifications in the discourse on the “Eastern enlargement”, before I turn to the construction of “Eastern Europe” and the ethical assumptions of the societies’ relation to the past. In the third part of the chapter I address the aesthetics of postmigration, as well as the migratory nature of aesthetics. This part of the chapter includes theoretical perspectives on the research on culture in postmigrant societies.

An “Eastern turn”

The concept of the “Eastern European turn” may have its achievements, yet it has limitations and ambiguities as well. The use of the term “turn” rhetorically implies a change of perspective or a shift of paradigm in literary studies. It remains, however, unclear in relation to the historical background, something that already observed in relation to the concept of a “Turkish turn”. As literary scholar Leslie Adelson has pointed out, the German-language literature being part of the Turkish turn should be regarded as conventional *Wendeliteratur* (literally: literature of the turn), that is, as a sphere for reflection on the cultural consequences of the transformation from division to unification in Germany:

Common wisdom has long held that the literature of migration, especially the “guest worker literature” that peaked modestly in the 1980s, reflects the social disorientation of hapless foreign laborers in Germany. I submit instead that the literature of Turkish migration archives an epochal sense of disorientation. Shared by Germans, Turks, and many others too, the epoch is characterized by categorical disorientation and historic reorientation. [...] [T]he Berlin Republic is one site among many where transnational labor patterns of the 1950s and 1960s contributed to a heightened sense of reorientation in the 1990s. In Germany the decade

marked, first and foremost, the multifaceted and rocky transition from national division to unification, a development to which people still refer colloquially as *die Wende*, the turn. (Adelson 2005: 15)

Furthermore, Adelson links the East-West German division with the distinction between, or, clash of, the Oriental and Occidental due to Turkish migration to Germany,¹ relating aesthetic or literary phenomena to both migration trends and the transformations of memory culture. This semantic drift of the East-West coordinates due to the German reunification on the one hand and immigration to Germany on the other can also be applied to the context of the enormous migration from Eastern Europe to Germany, which has had a considerable impact on German literature and memory culture since long before the *Wende* from 1989 and the Eastern European expansion of the EU.

Just like the “eastward enlargement” of German-language literatures had started much earlier than 1989 or the EU-extension towards the east, the scientific discourse on the Eastern turn as such can be put in a broader context. It is in particular helpful to take a look at the recent discussions on what has been called the “Chamisso literature”, that is: literature related to the Adalbert-von-Chamisso-Prize. Academic debates about the “Eastern turn” are shaped by tensions and ambivalences similar those in discussions of “Chamisso literature”. These discussions are framed by the opposition between aesthetic approaches that reject any strict classification into sharply defined normative categories, versus the homogenizing labelling of a text corpus according to a supposed thematic concern, such as the mother tongue and biography of the author, or, on the basis of binary distinctions between “migrant” and “non-migrant” writers. In a widely-cited article from 2008, Brigid Haines talks about an eastern turn of contemporary German literature, by taking note of the extraordinary number of authors writing in German and coming from countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Haines identifies a common “provisional unity” of the literature written by authors with Eastern European origins on the basis of similarities in content and form:

[...] the lived reality of communist rule during the stagnant period before the fall of communism; the alienating experience of migration westwards; the disillusionment with life during and after the economic and political liberalisation of the east

1 Cf. Adelson: “The East-West coordinates of the inner German division during the Cold War become more complicated through the East-West coordinates projecting an assumed oriental presence (‘The Turkish’) on an assumed occidental Germany” (“Die Ost-West Koordinaten der inneren deutschen Teilung des Kalten Krieges werden durch Ost-West Koordinaten, die eine vermeintlich orientalische Präsenz [‘das Türkische’] auf ein vermeintlich okzidentales Deutschland (die Berliner Republik) projizieren, kompliziert” (Adelson 2004: 53).

in the early 1990s; the shocking conflicts in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s; and the disorientation of life in post-Cold War Europe today. (Haines 2008: 139)

She immediately adds, however, that “this body of writing resists containment within historical, national or linguistic categories” (ibid). Thus, the emergence of the (German-language) literature of the Eastern turn seemed to challenge hierarchisation and exclusionary logic of the conventional distinction between “national literatures” and “divergent” literatures. Accordingly, the new classifications and categories proved to be ambiguous and unnecessary in the end, as a result of a general “literariness” or “*poeticisation*” of literature – as Haines put it:

[T]he Eastern European turn does not simply denote a wave of new immigrant writers [...] but designates also a conceptual stocktaking of the present, post-“Wende” European moment from a variety of perspectives. Perhaps it is time [...] to retreat from national or linguistic identifications and the concept of distinct cultures inherent in the term “interkulturelle Germanistik”, and to talk instead of the transnational and porous nature of writing. (Haines 2015: 147)

Similar ambiguities can also be discovered in the history of the Adalbert-von-Chamisso-Prize (1985-2017) awarded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung to honour German-language authors whose works are shaped by a change of culture and an unusual way of using the language. The prize has always been discussed as problematic – it has been accused of excluding and *ghettoising* “migrant writers” or of favouring them on the basis of a false differentiation between German literature (as a norm) and migrant writing (as an exception). The rejection of dichotomous thinking, as well as the argument of the universality of multilingualism, has contributed paradoxically to the confirmation of such problematic terms and differences as a kind of assertion in denial. The language of the literature of immigrant authors served, for example, on the one hand as the most powerful instrument of constructing a separate literary corpus based on aesthetic rather than exoticising and marginalising non-literary criteria like the author’s biography or origin. On the other hand, it was exactly the language, the aesthetic quality of a literary work, on the basis of which the authors concerned regard themselves as part of German literature, e.g. Terézia Mora (who considered herself to be “as German as Kafka” – Mora 2005: 28), or Sasa Stanišić: “For me, writing itself is a foreign language. [...] [I]t is neither impossible nor forbidden for a domestic author to experiment, to produce uncommon linguistic structures or to connect to another folklore. A language is the only country without borders” (Stanišić 2008). Aesthetic criteria were, in other words, simultaneously used as means to enforce and to reject the distinctiveness of ‘migrant literature’. In 2016, when the Robert Bosch Stiftung announced that the prize would cease, this ambiguity became visible again. In

their statement they argued that the prize had fulfilled its original objective, since the boundary between German and non-native authors has been overcome – this boundary, however, was assumed to be non-existent even at the time of the establishment of the prize, for example, when the founder of the prize, Harald Weinrich, stated that foreigners can write and speak in better German than native Germans.² The exclusive/exclusionary act of distinguishing non-native authors by means of an award led to their inclusion and to the opening of the literary canon to the Chamisso-literature, whose indistinguishability from the German literature was paradoxically assumed from the beginning. Weinrich in 1983 questioned the notion of “national literature” based on French and British models as well as on the works of canonised authors such as Canetti or Chamisso (as forerunner of later, amongst others postcolonial approaches to the transcultural or cosmopolitan German literatures or to the so-called Germanophonie – instead of Germanistik: Meyer 2012, Schmitz 2009, Sievers 2012, Amodeo 1996). Weinrich applied the dichotomisation between the own and the strange not to national or linguistic belongings, but rather he locates this difference within the (poetic) language itself and interprets strangeness – just like Sklovskij and the Russian formalists – as a precondition of aesthetic experience:

There are many signals showing that foreigners who are writing not in their mother tongue but in German, are urged by the obstructions emerging from the use of a foreign language, also in the case of its good command, to engage with the language more than others [...]. In this case, the language draws attention to itself, with an irreducible remainder of strangeness. (Weinrich 2017 [1983]: 45)³

Thus, German language literature of authors whose mother tongue is not German advanced from an exception (*Sonderfall*) to the rule (*Modellfall*), illustrating the aesthetically constitutive function of strangeness and alienation as well as the un-

2 Cf. Weinrich: “[F]oreigners [talk and write] in a better German than some Germans” (“die Ausländer [sprechen und schreiben] bisweilen sogar ein besseres Deutsch als mancher Deutsche”); “German authors coming from the outside can become, just like any author of a German origin, a master of German language and a model of the good use of German language” (“die deutschen Schriftsteller, die von außen kommen, [können] ebenso gut wie Schriftsteller binnendeutscher Herkunft Meister der deutschen Sprache und Vorbilder guten deutschen Sprachgebrauchs werden” – Weinrich 2017 [1983]: 46f.).

3 “Es gibt also viele Anzeichen dafür, dass Ausländer, die nicht in ihrer Muttersprache, sondern in deutscher Sprache schreiben, durch die Behinderungen, die ihnen die Fremdsprache auch bei guter Sprachbeherrschung noch auferlegt, angehalten werden, sich mehr als andere auf die Sprache einzulassen [...]. Mit einem irreduktiblen Rest Fremdheit macht die Sprache hier auf sich selber aufmerksam.”

tenability of any distinction between a German national literature and “migration literature”.

The theoretical and terminological debates surrounding both the Chamisso-literature and the Turkish or Eastern turn of German literature underline the primacy of aesthetic dimensions. Nevertheless, the majority of works on German-language literature of authors from Eastern Europe seek to propose a common ensemble of motifs, themes and narrative techniques and are affected by ethical rather than aesthetic considerations.⁴

The same applies not only to literary criticism on migration literature, but also to conventional research of migration: both are characterised by exclusionary binary demarcations (such as the one between the norm, that is “national literature” or “majority society” and the deviance, that is “migration literature” or “migrants”) and by settings of thematic and ethical priorities. As the academic discourse on postmigration recently pointed out, mainstream research on migration still makes use of normative and hierarchical categories, and thus treats migration narratives as exceptional or marginal phenomena and as cause for conflicts and struggles (Yildiz 2014: 22). Ethnologists Regina Römhild even refers to an exclusive “migrantology”, exclusively focussing on ‘migrants’ as the object of research (Römhild 2017: 70).⁵

Critical migration research, however, aims to explore the naturalised “centre” from the perspective of its ethnicised and racialised “margins” as being part of a post-migrant space (Römhild 2017: 69) – as a result, the presence of migrants would be regarded as a source of cultural transformation⁶ and migration research “would be cosmopolitanised and turned into a general study of cultural and social realities crossing ethnic and national boundaries” (ibid.) From the point of view of literary studies, this shift in perspective should go along with the restoration of the primacy of the aesthetic, that is with the analytic view of aesthetic negotiations of social dynamics and of the discursive construction of inclusive and ex-

4 Immacolata Amodeo explains the “silence on aesthetics” (Amodeo 1996: 22) with the fact that “migration literature” in general is received and read through the glasses of stereotypical moral categories, as an educational message, a state of moral commitment and a matter of a charitable German philology (“Wohltätigkeitsgermanistik”, ibid.).

5 Cf. Römhild: “One underlying problem here is that migration research is often understood merely as ‘research about migrants’, producing a ‘migrantology’ that is capable of little more than repeatedly illustrating and reproducing itself; a ‘migrantology’ that at the same time plays its part in constructing its supposed counterpart, the national society of immobile, white non-migrants. [...] What is lacking is not yet more research about migration, but a migration-based perspective to generate new insights into the contested arenas of ‘society’ and ‘culture.’” (Römhild 2017: 70)

6 “Migratory, in this sense, does foreground the fact that migrants (as subjects) and migration (as an act performed as well as a state to be or live in) are part of any society today, and that their presence is an incontestable source of cultural transformation.” (Bal 2007: 23)

clusive mechanisms, as recently described by Moritz Schramm. When seen from this perspective,

migration is not understood as a special case or historical exception, the consequences of which are only dealt with by a particular group in society, but rather as normality, through which current societies are shaped and which always precedes the production of literary and artistic texts. The specific view of a “postmigrant perspective” therefore aims to expand the focus on the experience of migrants and their descendants, which dominated in previous research, with the focus on the way migration and their consequences are negotiated in the society. [...] Accordingly, this perspective can be applied on the entire body of literature, and literature studies will in this way be *migrantised*: because from this perspective, all works, irrespective of their authors or their subject matter can be read anew. (Schramm 2018: 95)⁷

In this way, the aesthetics of postmigration would provide an opportunity to challenge naturalised binary categories (which are being reproduced in the discourse on migrant literature/ literature of the Eastern turn) – an opportunity that appears especially productive in the context of investigating the invention of Eastern Europe as a counterpart to Western Europe. The aesthetic dynamics of establishing categories (like ‘migrant’ and ‘non-migrant’, ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western-Europe’) has until now been somewhat unexplored, just like the discursive construction and imagination of Eastern Europe as such. Instead, East-West migrations within Europe (just like “migrant writing”) have been connected with ethical issues (concerning European values, Europe as a dialogue-based community of memory acknowledging responsibility for political crimes⁸ or human rights and their violations) and with questions of the politics of remembrance and cultural commem-

7 “Migration wird [...] nicht als Sonderfall oder historische Ausnahme aufgefasst [...], sondern als Normalität, durch die die aktuellen Gesellschaften geprägt sind und die der Herstellung von literarischen und künstlerischen Texten immer schon vorausgeht. [...] Zugleich wird der perspektivische Zugang auf die in den Texten verhandelte Migration und ihre Folgen auf den ganzen Korpus der Literatur angewandt, die Literaturwissenschaft auf diese Weise *migrantisiert*: denn aus dieser Perspektive können alle Werke, unabhängig ihrer Verfasser*innen oder ihrer thematischen Ausrichtung, neu gelesen werden.” (Schramm 2018: 95)

8 Cf. Aleida Assmann: “Two countries engage in a dialogic memory if they face a shared history of mutual violence by mutually acknowledging their own guilt and empathise with the suffering they have inflicted on others. As a rule, national memories are not dialogic but monologic. [...] In Western Europe, the national constructions of memory have become more complex through the acknowledgement of collaboration. In many Eastern states, however, the memory of the Holocaust has to compete with the memory of one’s own victimhood and suffering under communist oppression which is a hot memory that emerged only after the end of the Cold War.” (Assmann 2012: 58)

oration (concerning the historical experience and the memory of a totalitarian and violent past behind the Iron Curtain). This was the case not only after the Second World War, when the idea of the European Union was born, but also after the end of the Cold War in 1991, when the Holocaust and the Gulag were being discussed as transnational European memories, as well as during the so called ‘migrant crisis’ in 2015, when the notion of Eastern European “otherness” seemed to revive and come into conflict with Western (European) ideas and values.

Migration movements and the construction of (Eastern) Europe

Remembering and being on the move equally belong to the *condition humana*. The challenges of memory culture (such as coming to terms with historical crimes and traumatic experiences or the constitution of a transnational European community of memory) and migration (escape, displacement, deportation or freedom of movement) entangle with each other not only in special historical context but also on the basis of their moral and ethical discursive frame. The first example for this is marked by the date 1945: coping with the unprecedented crime of the Holocaust the internalisation of guilt (that is the formation of German perpetrators’ memory) led to a paradox constellation that Dan Diner called ethnicising of the own history,⁹ that is, when turning-away from the Nazi past functions as a precondition of being German, of belonging to the German nation as a community. The “negative memory” of the Germans (Koselleck) was controversially discussed in the context of Germany’s becoming a country of immigration (“Einwanderungsland”): recent studies analyse German contemporary history as migration history (Motte and Ohliger 2004), examine the relation of the youngest generation of migrants to the Holocaust (Georgi 2003), advocate the involvement of the historical experience of immigrants in the German memory culture and argue that the normative national pedagogy of memory based on guilt should be pluralised and de-ethnicised (Welzer 2012). In classic countries of immigration like the USA, the *stranger* (newcomer) was, as defined by the Austrian emigrant and sociologist Alfred Schütz in 1944, “a man without history” (Schütz 2011 [1972]: 65) and the detachment from the past insured successful naturalisation. In Germany, however, exactly the opposite is true: holding on to the past, taking on the burden of history is, as Assmann argues, a civil right of negative memory (“Bürgerrecht der negativen Erinnerung”), equally essential for immigrants and Germans (Assmann 2013: 125f). Michael Rothberg elaborates two forms of social paradoxes in this context:

9 “Those who define their belonging to the nation by turning away from the Nazi past are considered Germans” (“Als deutsch gilt, wer seine Zugehörigkeit zur Nation durch eine Abkehr von der Nazi-Vergangenheit definiert”) – Dan Diner, cited by Assmann 2013: 128.

Two dominant social logics in unified Germany regulate who inherits the past and what rights and responsibilities accompany that inheritance: a *German paradox*, in which ensuring responsibility for the crimes of the recent past seems to require preservation of an ethnically homogeneous notion of German identity, even though that very notion of ethnicity was one of the sources of those crimes; and a *migrant double bind*, in which migrants are simultaneously told that the Holocaust is not part of their history because they are not “ethnically” German and then castigated as non-integratable for their alleged indifference to Holocaust remembrance. (Rothberg 2014: 137)

Since Germany is simultaneously post-Holocaust and post-migrant (ibid.: 142), Rothberg attempts to bring together the histories of overcoming the past (*Aufarbeitung*) and labour migration, the legacies of the past and the complexities of the present by putting the question of Zafer Şenocak: “Doesn’t immigrating to Germany also mean immigrating into Germany’s recent past?” (Şenocak 1993: 16). His answer provides a way out from the paradox mentioned above: Rothberg argues for recognising the multi-directionality of collective memory and pursues “the conjunction of migration and Holocaust remembrance as a way of thinking through the emergent transnational turn in memory studies” (Rothberg 2014: 125). Accordingly, he suggests focusing on the ‘touching tales’ or ‘multi-directional memories’ of the ‘thickened places of post-migrant memory cultures’:

[C]onsidering under-explored migrant engagements with the Holocaust and the National Socialist past allows us to demonstrate that German memory cultures can open themselves to a redefinition of German identity that takes into account the fundamental demographic transformations and transnational flows of the postwar period without jeopardizing German responsibility for the Holocaust. (Rothberg 2014: 126)

Aleida Assmann provides another solution for the ethnic paradox when claiming that younger generations do not identify with the narrative of guilt and redemption, but rather tend to develop empathy with the victims of human rights abuses in general (Assmann 2013: 129). Entering an ethical (rather than ethnic) memory culture emerging after, and due to, the crimes against humanity committed in the world wars also provides a future prevention from anti-Semitism and racism, which Assmann calls “European dangers” (ibid.: 123). The universalistic discourse on human rights and responsibilities that emerged after 1945 was, according to Assmann, provided with new perspectives and impulses after the mass migration in 2015. Just like after the second World War, European societies were forced to confront indescribable and heretofore unseen suffering as well as the moral imperative of remembering and seeing them (ibid.: 208). Consequently, the foun-

datations of a transnational European community relying on human rights and solidarity were started to be discussed more often.

In both contexts – in 1945 and in 2015 – the constitution of a European community and a transnational memory culture based on universal ethical premises proceeded along with the discursive construction of Eastern Europe on the one hand and with coming to terms with the violation of human rights on the other hand. This was also the case in 1989 as well as after the Eastern European expansion of the EU in 2007. Regarding the traumatic history of Eastern European states transferring from dictatorship to democracy, a fundamental asymmetry emerged between the former Eastern European nations, and the Western European memory culture. In particular, the monologic national memories of Eastern European countries were opposed to the dialogic or European remembering of countries facing “a shared history of mutual violence and mutually acknowledging their own guilt and empathise with the suffering they have inflicted on others” (Assmann: 2010: 17). Assmann also stresses that Western European constructions of national memory rely on the acknowledgement of collaboration, as opposed to the Eastern states, where “the memory of the Holocaust has to compete with the memory of one’s own victimhood and suffering under communist oppression, which is a hot memory that emerged only after the end of the Cold War” (ibid.: 18). I cannot enter into details about debates on the Europeanisation of Holocaust memory and the significance of the *Gulag memory* of post-communist European countries, but it is important to explain that the difficulty of remembering traumatic and dictatorial memories in Eastern Europe was problematised not only after the reunification of East and West in 1989 but also during the European ‘migrant crisis’ in 2015. Whereas after 1989 post-Soviet memories were generally accused of oscillating between “self-victimisation and historical revisionism” (Assmann 2013: 142-180), following 2015 the migration politics of Eastern European states (especially their refusal to participate in the quota system) was not only interpreted as disrespect of fundamental European values and human rights, but also as ingratitude considering that Western Europe had taken Eastern refugees in large numbers, and without hesitation, after the Prague Spring of 1968 or the Hungarian revolution in 1956. Thus, the history of demarcating lines between an assumedly homogeneous, modern progressive Western Europe and its backward, corrupt and chaotic Eastern neighbours did not stop with the end of the Cold War, and has actually been much further reaching than we would assume: As Larry Wolff pointed out, the hierarchical othering of Eastern Europe as an exotic, strange and threatening counterpart of the West originates in the Age of Enlightenment (Wolff 1994) and started with a very early drawing up of a frontier between “*Europa occidentalis*” and “*Europa orientalis*” (Liebhart 2017: 30, emphasis in original). But, more relevant for our topic is the fact that this work of cultural creation (the role of the aesthetic manifestation in the representation and

deconstruction of the East-West dichotomies) has hardly ever been systematically taken into account, as opposed to the ethical issues concerning Eastern European history or European memory cultures occurring at their touching points with the complex of questions concerning migration.

Towards an aesthetics of post-migration

Remembering and migrating are not only both anthropological constants but they are also equally reliant on aesthetic representation and reflection, that is, they are narrativised, mediated by means of literary strategies and thus become parts of the cultural memory. The relation between migration and cultural product is therefore not only a thematic one, as Mieke Bal and Sam Durrant explain:

The relation between migration and aesthetics is not simply one of representation, in which the latter is simply a mode of representing the former. Beyond the question of how the multiple modern experiences of migration are represented in various art forms is the question of the impact of migration on artistic production and the category of the aesthetic. The formulation migratory aesthetics draws attention to the ways in which aesthetic practice might be constituted by and through acts of migration. (Durrant/Lord 2007: 11f.)

The migratory is not only a research subject but a significant force transforming societies (Yildiz 2014: 21) and similarly, the art of migration is to be understood in terms of its aesthetic implications and poetic construction and not on the basis of its theme, object or author. This is also due to the openness and processuality of the constitution of meaning and to the performativity implied in migrational processes.¹⁰ Transformations and bordercrossings (between the own and the strange, settledness and mobility, centre and periphery) possess an aesthetic-artistic potential: the questioning of what seems natural, obvious and unambiguous, the confusion and dissolution of normative differentiations and hegemonies, condensation or thickening and alienation, linguistic hybridisation and deterritorialization are both migratory and aesthetic practices and experience. The migrant position is po-togeneous and conversely, “aesthetics is by its very nature migratory” (Durrant;

10 “I would like to present the modifier [migratory, E.P.] as a constructive focus of an aesthetics that does not leave the viewer, spectator, or user of art aloof and shielded, autonomous and in charge of the aesthetic experience. If aesthetics is primarily an encounter in which the subject, body included, is engaged, that aesthetic encounter is migratory it takes place in the space of, on the basis of, and on the interface with, the mobility of people as a given, as central, and as at the heart of what matters in the contemporary, that is ‘globalised’ world.” (Bal 2007: 23f)

Lord 2007: 11). As Aydemir and Rotas convincingly argue concerning the “mutual implication of the aesthetic dimension of practices of migration and the migratory dimension of aesthetic processes” (Aydemir and Rotas 2008: 8), migration signifies a movement of arrival, in which both space and time equally become thickened:

Migration not only takes place between places, but also has its effects on place, in place. In brief, we suggest a view on migration in which place is neither reified nor transcended, but “thickened” as it becomes the setting of the variegated memories, imaginations, dreams, fantasies, nightmares, anticipations, and idealizations that experiences of migration, of both migrants and native inhabitants, bring into contact with each other. Migration makes place overdetermined, turning it into the *mise-en-scène* of different histories. (Aydemir/Rotas 2008: 7).

Dichotomous divisions between places (“migration as a movement from place to place” vs. “migration as installing movement *within* place”), between history or memory and migration (Rothberg’s “German paradox” and “migrant double bind”), between permanence and movement (*emplacement* vs. Migration) or between “real’ political, social, and economic” and “fictional, staged, imagined, perceived, or aesthetic [scenery, E.P.]” (Aydemir and Rotas 2008: 7) are thus suspended and overcome. Research related to the time (simultaneity) and place (spatial simultaneity) of post-migrant memory cultures can therefore not do anything else than to appeal to the aesthetics of migration, it is akin to the analysis of the linguistic or imaginative-literary thickening, as well as of the spatiotemporal relations within the diegesis.¹¹

Recent discussions on immigration let us recognise the hidden fact that mobility is a norm and all cultures are, in their genesis and at their core, polyphonic and determined by migration. Similarly, academic debates about migration literature and the aesthetics of migration only uncover the fundamentally metaphoric, that is to say migratory, nature of culture. The etymological meaning of the word metaphor (standing for transport, uncertainty, mobility and multi-temporality¹²) can be connected (and that is a telling point) to the meaning of migration:

11 “[M]igratory settings crucially indicate the spatial simultaneity of the histories and futures that various groups of natives and immigrants remember, project, and imagine. The prior anticipations of the new place of living by migrants, as well as their retrospective memories of the old place, become active parts of the new environment that they share with other inhabitants. [...] [T]hese memories are, in fact, ‘acts of imagining’ that produce cultural identifications that cannot be reduced to either place. At the same time, these actively imagined and re-imagined memories become part of the place where they take place, enhancing and transforming it.” (ibid.: 20)

12 “Metaphor exists in two realms at the same time; realms that are each enfolded in their own temporality. Hence, metaphor is able to bridge the gap between temporalities as well as spaces

Thus, migration becomes a double movement, a double metaphor: of transport, hence of instability – the first movement; and subsequent productive tensions – the second movement. Every culture has the aesthetics it deserves; contemporary culture, we contend, has therefore a “migratory aesthetics”. (Bal 2011: 12)

The imagination and cultural representation of Eastern Europe, as we have seen, provides a productive analytical frame for the study of the presence of Eastern European writers in German literature, whose position subverts East-West dichotomies and displays the axiomatic role of performativity and metaphoricity, of the permanent mobility (or instability) of meaning, of space (deterritorialisation), of time (heterochrony) and of identity narratives (pluralisation). Assuming that migration is not a topic but an aesthetic and that culture and aesthetics are fundamentally migratory, I argue that by completing the ethical terminology and approaches with research on the aesthetics of migration, one can not only adequately grasp phenomena like the Eastern turn of German-language literature, but also productively address the complex consequences of the post-migrant condition.

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or semantic units. Accordingly, metaphor is multidimensional and, specifically, multi-temporal. [...] This usefulness of metaphor resides in the concept's own materiality: its refusal to let go of its etymological past where it stood for transport and is persistent association with uncertainty, mobility, and, we insist, multi-temporality.” (Bal 2011: 13)

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