

THE POLITICAL, THE URBAN, AND THE COSMOPOLITAN:
THE 1970S GENERATION IN ROMANIAN-GERMAN POETRY

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Abstract

This study is an introduction to the body of work produced by the German poets who were born during or after World War II in Romania and whose almost simultaneous debut lies in the relatively liberal period 1965 – 1971. Helped onto the Romanian-German literary scene by a propitious environment and informed by the socialist ideology they were born “into,” the poets born between 1942 and 1955 formed a remarkable generation unit which sought to significantly renew German-language literature in Romania. Rejecting identification with the insular Romanian-German communities, the young poets strove to create a socially and politically relevant verse expressing an urban and cosmopolitan attitude. The growing nationalist rhetoric and isolationist stance of Romania's regime and the material and psychological hardships endured by its population through the 1970s and 80s forced the generation to revise its incipient enthusiasm for Romanian socialism. Increasingly, the poets' work came to depict the threatened existence of the German minority and the harsh general living conditions in Romania and to provide an alternative to the absurd official proclamations of a “golden age” under Ceaușescu, despite the poetry's growing reliance on obscuring literary techniques. The emigration of most of the generation members in the mid to late 1980s brought about the eventual unravelling of the generation unit and marks the end of my study.

By following the evolution of three themes – social and political engagement, the German minority, and the urban environment – which define the poets as a generation throughout their literary careers in Romania, the analysis illuminates not only the generation's development from identification with Romanian socialism and rejection of the German minority to criticism of the country's policies and a renewed interest in the fate of the German community but also the

changing possibilities and limits of literary expression under communism. In addition to providing an introduction to the body of work created by the 1970s generation in Romania, the study also expands the understanding of German literature in the 20th century by providing new material on literature written under totalitarianism and of intercultural German literature.

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Dedication

To Jakub, who, having gone first, was my inspiration

Introduction

This study is an introduction to a facet of German literature which is little known in North America: the literary production of a generation of German writers born during or after World War II in Romania. The existence of this literature has come to the attention of the general public only recently with the awarding of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Literature to Herta Müller, who is a member of this generation, although, as a writer of prose during the period on which this study focuses, she figures little in it. Amid my elation at the Swedish Academy's decision to spotlight in Müller the complexities of what we so simply call “German” literature, I realized that, at least in North America, these complexities continue to lie hidden beneath the surface. The solitary nature of the prize, which is bestowed yearly on an individual who is deemed to have “produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction,” is reflected in the Anglo-American reception of the Nobel laureate as an isolated and unique individual, who has unexpectedly and – in some versions – unaccountably risen to the pinnacles of literary fame.

If I argue for an understanding of the generation from which Müller hails, it is not to take away from her undoubtedly extraordinary accomplishments, but in order to provide a context that may help understand her work and that of other Romanian-born German-language writers more fully. Mine is certainly not the first attempt to provide such a context, though it is the first to take generational belonging as its starting point. Since their appearance on the West-German literary scene in the mid 1980s, the German-language writers born in Romania in the 1940s and 50s have been steadily absorbed into the German literary market and canon, both of which underwent a de-homogenization process, as the German-speaking countries became home to more and more authors of different ethnicities and provenances. By the early 2000s, Romanian-

born German-language writers were beginning to be recognized in German scholarship alongside other “multicultural” or “intercultural” authors, with backgrounds as diverse as Turkish, Russian, Polish, Italian, Czech, Croatian, or Japanese.¹

If the interest in the diversity of German literature was at first stimulated by writers who came to Germany as part of the waves of guest workers invited to help rebuild the country's economy after World War II and hailing mainly from Italy, Greece, Portugal, and, of course, Turkey, since 1989, this literature has taken what Brigid Haines has termed an “Eastern turn,” with writers from former Eastern bloc and Yugoslav countries ascending in the public spotlight.² Yet while the increased interest in and promotion of writers of Eastern and Central European descent – many of them non-native speakers of German – is understandable as the European Union has expanded eastward, the idea of the “turn,” with its association of a sudden change of course, tends to obscure the continuities in cultural interference which have made these writers possible.

This is particularly true in the case of Romanian-German literature, which had flourished for decades as a German-language literature under Romanian communism before it was absorbed into the German mainstream. With roots going back to the pre-war regional literatures of Transylvania, Bukovina, and the Banat, Romanian-German literature came into its own after the upheavals of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath. Although it grew gingerly at first, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, German literature in Romania was thriving both with the aid of and in opposition to the country's communist government. Far from appearing out of nowhere, the Romanian-born writers who made their German debuts in the mid to late 1980s

1 For the most comprehensive overview of the diversity of German-speaking literature, see the handbook edited by Carmine Chiellino, *Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland*.

2 For a list of prizes and other honours garnered the Eastern writers, see Haines 136-7.

and who have continued to advance the “Eastern turn” of literature written in German are a product of the confluences and contradictions of this period.

The literature produced in these formative decades – roughly from the late 1960s to the late 1980s – is all but unknown to scholars of German literature. This is due, in part, to the difficult access to Romanian publications, both before and after 1989.³ The biggest hurdle to the scholarly reception of this literature lies, however, in its little-known socio-historical context. As the Romanian-German poet Günther Schulz argued as early as 1971 in the preface to his first volume of verse published in West Berlin, *Rezensierte Gedichte* [*Reviewed Poems*], understanding the context of this literature is crucial. Speaking of his own poems, Schulz points out how the time and place of publication influence the poems' reception:

Diese Gedichte wurden 1968 – 69 deutsch in Rumänien geschrieben. Sollen sie 1971 in West-Berlin erscheinen, so nicht unreflektiert als seien sie unbedingt und also bruchlos verlegbar.

Herausgelöst aus dem spezifischen Produktions-Rezeptions-Zusammenhang, der sie nach Beweggrund und Zielrichtung bestimmte, werden sie in einen anderen verlagert, mit dem sie wenig bis gar nichts gemeinsam haben. Daß anstelle ihrer Publikation als Gedichte ihre kritische Untersuchung als Dokumente, ihre reflexive Dekomposition den Mittelpunkt dieser Veröffentlichung ausmachen muß, scheint mir eine Konsequenz ihrer Deplacierung. Würden sie an dieser Stelle ohne Kommentar als Gedichte verlegt, als prätendierten sie an und für sich Authentizität, rezeptiven Nachvollzug, adäquate Wirkung, so wären sie unbedacht zwangsläufigen Mißverständnissen ausgeliefert. (7)

These poems were written between 1968 – 69 in German in Romania. If they are to appear in 1971 in West Berlin then not without reflection, as if their publication could happen implicitly and seamlessly.

Taken out of the specific context of production and reception which had determined their *raison d'être* and tendency, they are put into another with which they have little or nothing in common. That they have to be critically examined as documents rather than as poems and that their reflexive deconstruction should take centre stage seems to me to be the consequence of their displacement. If they were published here as poems without any commentary, as if they laid claim to authenticity, unmediated comprehension, and adequate impact, they would be imprudently surrendered to unavoidable

3 First-hand materials are available today only through specialized second-hand booksellers, in Romanian university libraries, or in a handful of archives, such as the ones belonging to the Institut für Kultur und Geschichte Südosteuropas (München) and the Siebenbürgen-Institut (Gundelsheim).

misunderstandings.

In Schulz's argument, the temporal and geographical shift (from the late 1960s to the early 1970s and from Romania to West Germany) is only the outer frame of a much larger dislocation: that of the social and political context in which the poems were initially written, published, and received. The context of the poems' creation, Schulz argues, has affected both their form and their content. Taken out of this context, they threaten to become unintelligible or, what he considers worse, misunderstood. For the sake of their intelligibility, Schulz is prepared to sacrifice their reception as works of art and willing to have them read primarily as socio-political documents.

While Schulz's strict differentiation between a literary and a socio-political reading may be neither necessary nor entirely feasible, our even greater temporal and geographical displacement from the German literary production in Romania between the late 1960s and late 1980s increases the need for contextualization. However, with the exception of Claire de Oliveira's study of post-war Romanian-German poetry, *La poésie allemande de Roumanie: Entre hétéronomie et dissidence (1944 – 1990)* [*The German Poetry of Romania: Between Heteronomy and Dissidence (1944 – 1990)*], the contextualisation so far has been fragmentary. While a number of dissertations on different aspects of post-war Romanian-German literature have appeared in Germany and Romania in recent years, there is still no comprehensive study of the generation of writers that made this literature possible. No analyses of this generation have ever been written in English.

The present study cannot completely fill this gap, of course, but aims to provide an overview of the literature of what I have come to call – borrowing from the Romanian-German critic Peter Motzan – the 1970s generation: German-language writers born during or after World War II and come of age during a time of liberalisation in the late 1960s and early 1970s in

Romania. Despite being popularised outside of Romania through the prose narratives of Herta Müller, Richard Wagner, and others, the main output of this generation was mostly written in verse. This disproportion was caused by the relative ease with which the shorter, yet more condensed form of poetry lent itself to the voicing of oppositional statements without exposing the poets to danger in a state which severely curtailed freedom of speech.

While a large number of poets contributed to Romanian-German poetry during this period of literary renewal, only a handful of names can be credited with true poetic innovation. Some of them have since achieved a certain measure of critical success: the names of Richard Wagner, Werner Söllner, Rolf Bossert, Klaus Hensel, and Franz Hodjak often stand in for the entire generation of poets, if not for Romanian-German poetry itself. Others, like Anemone Latzina and Johann Lippet, have undeservedly received less critical attention. Of course, no study of the poetry of the period can do equal justice to all poets who have contributed to it. Point of view, frame of reference, personal preference, and accessibility of materials all influence the selection and treatment of the literature. While not exempt from any of these limitations, the present study seeks to give both a fuller and a more detailed account of the poetry of the 1970s generation by treating a wider range of poets and by employing a closer reading of their texts, which are read not as transparent documents of a certain reality but as personal and artistic responses to and (re)creations of a historical time and place

Chapter 1

The 1970s Generation – Context, Scholarship, Methodology

Socio-Historical Premises of German Literature in Post-World War II Romania

The roots of the German minority of post-World War II Romania go back to the Middle Ages, when German settlers populated the region now known as Transylvania at the invitation of a succession of Hungarian kings. These “*hospites Saxones*” became known as the Transylvanian Saxons, the oldest group of ethnic Germans to establish itself on the territory of today's Romania. In the 18th century, waves of German colonists also settled in the Banat (in southwestern Romania, then part of the Habsburg and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and, a century later, in the northern region of Bukovina (today part of Ukraine).⁴

The different times of settlement created different beginnings for the German literatures of each region: while the German literature of Transylvania goes back to the 15th century, those of the Banat and Bukovina date from the 19th century.⁵ Although the three provinces were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, between the two World Wars, of the Kingdom of Romania, together, their German literatures remained largely confined to each region. Only at the end of World War II, when Bukovina was no longer part of Romania, were the literatures of the remaining two provinces with a sizeable German population, Transylvania and the Banat,

4 For a detailed history of the German settlement of Transylvania and the Banat see the volume *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Land an der Donau*, edited by Günter Schödl. The German settlement of the Bukovina is discussed in the volume *Galizien, Bukowina, Moldau* of the same series, edited by Isabel Röskau-Rydel.

5 The volume *Wortreiche Landschaft: Deutsche Literatur aus Rumänien – Siebenbürgen, Banat, Bukowina. Ein Überblick vom 12. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, edited by Renate Florstedt, remains the most complete and useful introduction to the literatures of the three regions. For a succinct overview, see especially Stefan Sienerth's article “Die deutsche Literatur Siebenbürgens, des Banats und der Bukowina: Von ihren Anfängen bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts,” pp. 26-34.

forced to merge into what became known as Romanian-German literature.⁶ The centre of this literature was located in Bucharest, Romania's capital, with smaller regional support centres in Klausenburg/Cluj, Hermannstadt/Sibiu, Kronstadt/Braşov (in Transylvania), and Temeswar/Timişoara (in the Banat).

When Transylvania, Bukovina, and the Banat were incorporated into Greater Romania at the end of World War I, the 700 000 Germans living there became an ethnic and political minority of the Romanian state.⁷ By 1940, their number had shrunk by roughly 250 000 persons, who had either followed Germany's call of returning "heim ins Reich" ("home to the Reich") or had perished in the war (Oschlies, *Rumäniendeutsches Schicksal* 78). The deportations of ethnic Germans to the Soviet Union to help with "war reparations" in the wake of Germany's defeat at the end of World War II resulted in additional losses.⁸ Less than 350 000 Germans (Weber et al., *Emigration* 460) resumed life in the young socialist state, and, under the euphemism of "cohabiting nationality" ("naţionalitate conlocuitoare") shared the privileges and, increasingly, the hardships of the majority population. Unlike the majority population, however, Romania's ethnic Germans had the – certainly difficult – option of leaving the country, which they did in ever-growing numbers throughout the 1970s and 80s, with the biggest loss occurring after the

6 There are two ways of defining the term "Romanian-German literature," belonging to two schools of thought: the first – and by far the largest – applies the term to any German-language writing to have originated within the past and present territory of the Romanian state, including Bukovina, the Banat, and Transylvania. The second reserves the term for the centralised German literature of post-World War II Romania. My use of the term reflects my belief in a continuity between the pre-war regional literatures and the post-war centralised one but acknowledges the historical specificity of the term, which was coined only in the 1970s. For an overview of the different definitions, see Cotârlea 23-30.

7 Cf. Motzan, "Die vielen Wege in den Abschied" 108 and Oschlies, *Rumäniendeutsches Schicksal* 6. Paul Milata puts the pre-war number at 800 000 (19).

8 According to *Die Deportation von Siebenbürger Sachsen in die Sowjetunion 1945 – 1949*, the most complete study of the deportations to date, edited by Georg Weber et al, about 80 000 Romanian-Germans were handed over to the Soviet authorities beginning in 1945 (9). Although no exact numbers exist for those who perished as a result of the deportations, the Romanian-German losses are estimated at 15 percent (89).

fall of Romania's communist dictatorship in 1989. The 1992 census counted 119 436 Germans in Romania (Florstedt 197); less than 60 000 remain today (Weber et al., *Emigration* 460).

If the history of the Romanian-German minority cannot be comprehended from statistics alone, the numbers above are important when trying to understand the bases of post-war Romanian-German literature. For a potential reading public of less than 350 000 and declining rapidly, the Romanian-German literary network was extensive: a German-language newspaper and two journals⁹ were called into life already in 1949, and by the early 1970s, the network included four publishing houses with German-language programmes (Kriterion and Albatros in Bucharest, Dacia in Klausenburg/Cluj, and Facla in Temeswar/Timişoara), four German-language newspapers (*Neuer Weg* in Bucharest, *Die Woche* in Hermannstadt/Sibiu, *Karpathenrundschau* in Kronstadt/Braşov, and *Neue Banater Zeitung* in Temeswar/Timişoara), and the literary journals *Neue Literatur* (Bucharest) and *Volk und Kultur* (Temeswar/Timişoara).¹⁰ In addition to these, the German minority was constitutionally guaranteed the use of the German language in schools and universities, as well as in other aspects of cultural life, such as television, radio, and theatre, although cultural opportunities diminished in the 1980s.¹¹

The disproportion between the small reading public and the comparatively large literary infrastructure of the early 1970s encouraged a paradoxical literary life. On the one hand, the

9 The newspaper *Neuer Weg* and the journal *Kultureller Wegweiser*, later called *Volk und Kultur*, located in Bucharest, and the journal *Banater Schrifttum*, located in Temeswar/Timişoara, later moved to Bucharest and renamed *Neue Literatur*.

10 The most comprehensive account to date of the Romanian-German publishing network can be found in Annemarie Weber, Petra Josting, and Norbert Hopster's bibliography, *Rumäniendeutsche Kinder- und Jugendliteratur 1944-1989*, pp. 33-47.

11 German-language schools existed in the traditional centres of the minority and in Bucharest, while German instruction at the university level was restricted to the study of German language and literature and theology. Cf. Born and Dickgießer 178-81.

number of publishing venues meant printing opportunities for a large number of writers, particularly those of poetry, whose short form was easily accommodated by newspapers and magazines. Around 30 poets born during and immediately after the war were in print in different periodicals and anthologies in the early 1970s (Motzan, “Rumäniendeutsche Lyrik” 732-3). Twenty-two of these eventually debuted with their own volumes. In the 1970s, poetry editions were averaging an astounding 700 copies, or one copy for every 500 readers.¹² The high number of copies for each volume reflected neither popularity with the public nor, in the case of particularly high numbers, the quality of the poetry, but was determined by quotas, such as the centrally manipulated availability of paper (Marino 2046). On the other hand, the centralisation of both publishing and education through the government meant that the Romanian-German literary network was tightly knit. The small actual size of the literary market required close cooperation between individual writers, who were often each other's colleagues, editors, and even critics.¹³ Personal friendships and animosities thus shaped Romanian-German literary life to a large extent and readily allowed for its generational stratification.

Another paradox conditioning post-war Romanian-German literature was its position in the Romanian literary network. As a subsystem of the latter, Romanian-German literature was tied up in similar ways to the socio-political climate of the country. However, as a literature

12 This average is based on the publication information given in 12 volumes of poetry which appeared between 1973 and 1979; starting in 1980, the edition information ceased to be reported.

13 Most poets discussed here also held positions in the Romanian-German or Romanian literary network. Among them, Frieder Schuller, Bernd Kolf, and Richard Wagner were contributors to *Karpathenrundschau*, Eduard Schneider, William Totok, and Horst Samson worked for *Neue Banater Zeitung*, Gerhard Eike and Anemone Latzina worked as editors for *Neuer Weg* and *Neue Literatur* respectively, Rolf Frieder Marmont, Klaus Hensel, and Rolf Bossert were editors at the Kriterion publishing house, while Franz Hodjak was the German-language editor at Dacia. Werner Söllner and Klaus Hensel worked in the Romanian-language publishing houses Ion Creangă (specialising in children's literature) and Meridiane respectively. Although such positions generally helped strengthen the literary network, the recent exposure of Werner Söllner's work as an informant for the Securitate, Romania's secret police, during his tenure as the German-language editor of the student magazine *Echinox*, illustrates the shadow side of this ramification.

written in a language foreign to most of those in charge of directing Romanian cultural life, it was allowed to function largely independently of the Romanian-language network.

The biggest constraint on both Romanian and Romanian-German literature was censorship, which had been instituted in Romania under Soviet occupation in 1944 (Marino 2046). Censorship was officially abolished in 1977, but continued to be unofficially enforced by the Council for Socialist Culture and Education, with the responsibility now shifted from a dedicated institution to individuals in what Bianca Bican has termed “personalisierte Zensur” (“personalized censorship”; 12). Although there are no studies about the functioning of German-language censorship in Romania,¹⁴ the anecdotal evidence suggests that the censorship process for German-language texts was less rigorous than the one for texts written in the majority language.¹⁵ Despite this relative leniency, the process of publishing a text in the Romanian-German literary network has been likened by the poet and editor Franz Hodjak with a “grotesker Eiertanz” (“grotesque maneuvering”; “Von der Suche” 283), which involved writers, editors, Party functionaries, and critics. The techniques of circumventing censorship included self-censoring, submitting texts accompanied by benign interpretations (“Von der Suche” 283-4; “Jede Definition” 85), presenting texts to the censor at the last moment before a scheduled printing, when they could not be altered any more (Frauendorfer 131-2), or even publishing texts on the editor's own responsibility (Oschlies, “Deutsche Buchkultur” 6). The personal interplay

14 Bianca Bican's study of the reception of Paul Celan in Romania offers a good general overview (pp. 5-17) of censorship in Romania and its implications for the different media. In English, Adrian Marino's entry on Romanian censorship in *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia* furnishes valuable details from the research and personal experience of the author, while Lidia Vianu's collection of interviews *Censorship in Romania* offers a more private look into the workings of censorship as experienced by Romanian writers. Dennis Deletant's recent article “Cheating the Censor: Romanian Writers under Communism” follows the development of Romanian censorship and its changing relationship to Romanian writers.

15 Richard Wagner has ascribed this fortune in misfortune to the relative lack of importance of a minority literature to Romania's cultural policies (“Die Aktionsgruppe Banat” 126), while Franz Hodjak has more cynically suggested that Ceaușescu used the relative freedom of Romanian-German writers to gain “bonus points” with Western governments (“Jede Definition” 86).

between individual actors, although meant to curtail the freedom of expression more efficiently, paradoxically created publishing opportunities that may surprise from today's vantage point:

Dank der Trägheit, mit der sich selbst im totalitären Staat Diskursveränderungen vollzogen . . . dank der von Chaos und Beziehungspraktiken bewirkten Lücken im Netz, aber in einigen Fällen auch dank der augenzwinkernden Verständigung selbst mit einigen Zensoren, ließen sich Nischen der Narrenfreiheit und unverdächtige Spielräume erhalten. (Schuller Anger 167)

Thanks to the sluggishness with which discourses change even in a totalitarian state . . . thanks to the holes in the net created by chaos and connections, and, in some cases, even thanks to the winking agreement of some of the censors, little spaces of freedom and unsuspected leeways could be created.

Whether institutionalised or “personal,” censorship was backed at all times by a host of directives, interdictions, and threats to the physical and moral well-being of writers, critics, and editors. Horst Schuller Anger emphasises the often-forgotten but very real danger to the lives and livelihoods of Romanian-German writers under communism (“Im Spielraum der Narrenfreiheit”). Harassment by the Securitate, Romania's secret police, for instance, was all too frequent for those whose views were deemed damaging to the official image of Romanian socialism, as were writing and working bans.¹⁶ While the limits of what could be said and in what form varied with the political climate, all texts had to observe the current restrictions in order to be published. This built-in limitation of Romanian-German literature was often supplanted by a more direct form of self-censorship, as writers made their own pre-emptive cuts and substitutions or abandoned projects altogether.

The pervasiveness of this last form of censorship is nowhere more visible than in the formal appearance of post-war Romanian-German literature, which is dominated by poetry

16 For very detailed and personal accounts of the damage inflicted by the Securitate on Romanian-German intellectuals, see William Totok, *Die Zwänge der Erinnerung*, Herta Müller, “Die Securitate ist noch im Dienst,” and Johann Lippet, *Das Leben einer Akte*. For opposite reactions to Werner Söllner's admitted collaboration with the Securitate, see Hubert Spiegel's summary of an interview with the author, “Securitate-IM 'Walter,’” and Richard Wagner, “IM-Affäre Werner Söllner.”

despite the young writers' manifest interest in other genres (as reflected both in early forays into prose and drama and in their development of these genres after emigration). As Peter Motzan has argued, poetry was felt to be the “safest” mode of literary self-expression and was thus favoured over all other genres:

Als Lyriker war man im geringeren Maße abhängig von dem Neben- und Ineinander von Muttersprache und Staatssprache, Mundart, Umgangs- und Hochsprache, die den rumäniendeutschen Alltag und die Bewußtseinsrealität der Schreibenden mitbestimmten. . . . Entscheidend kam noch hinzu, daß die gattungsspezifische Konstitution des Gedichts sich dazu eignete, unter Zensurdruck kumulative Aussagefunktionen zu übernehmen, nicht-konforme Botschaften in verschlüsselter Weise zu übermitteln und dem lange gedrosselten Drang nach Selbstaufklärung und ich-zentrierter Aussage nachzugeben. (“Sieben schillernde Jahre” 187)

As a poet one was less dependent on the parallel and intertwined existences of mother tongue and official language, dialect, colloquial and formal speech, which co-determined the daily life and the consciousness of writers. . . . More importantly, the genre-specific constitution of poems was especially well suited to make consistent declarations under the pressure of censorship, to communicate hidden non-conformist messages, and to provide an outlet for the long curbed impulse for self-reflection and self-assertion.

While censorship and self-censorship limited both the topics and forms of literary expression, the post-war Romanian-German writers experimented with and refined a host of literary techniques with which to expand these limits. As in other literatures produced under the strictures of totalitarianism, the use of obscuring macro and micro structures, such as parables, allegories, metaphors, rhetorical questions, antithesis, paradoxes, and irony, was intensified (Kory, “Lyrik im Zeichen” 97), as the writers sought to subvert state-mandated discourses and maintain creative independence. Their defection to West Germany in the mid to late 1980s speaks, however, of a final personal and creative limit which could not be overcome except by emigration.

Defining the Post-War Generation of Romanian-German Poets

In a recent article included in an overview of the major German poets of the 20th century, the Romanian-born German critic Peter Motzan provides the following definition of the post-World War II generation of Romanian-German poets:

Aufgrund weitgehend übereinstimmender politischer Orientierungen und poetologischer Konzeptionen bilden die zwischen 1942 und 1954 Geborenen eine *literarische* Generation, eine Alterskohorte, deren wichtigste Repräsentanten im Laufe weniger Jahre einer kleinen Randliteratur, die sich auf einem zerklüfteten und abschüssigen Gelände entfaltete, einen unverwechselbaren Glanz verliehen. (“Rumäniendeutsche Lyrik” 735)

The common political orientation and poetological concepts of those [writers] born between 1942 and 1945 created a *literary* generation, an age cohort, whose most important representatives gave a small marginal literature, located on craggy and precipitous terrain, an unmistakable aura within a few short years.

Motzan's definition of this literary generation is based on age (all the members were born between 1942 and 1954), common attitudes and poetic features, and place (all the members were part of the “small marginal” German literature of Romania). What is more, the members had come of age under the same socio-political circumstances and even followed similar education and career paths:

Ihre Denk- und Empfindungsweisen formten sich in einer Phase relativer Liberalisierung der Produktionsmöglichkeiten aus, die meisten hatten sich für ein Studium der Germanistik entschieden, das Freiräume für Lesestunden und Schreibübungen bot, und danach im Literaturbetrieb Fuß gefasst – als Kulturredakteure und Verlagslektoren. (735)

Their modes of thinking and feeling were formed in a phase of relative liberalisation of production possibilities. Most had opted for German Studies, which freed space for reading and writing, after which they had gained a foothold in the literary establishment as editors for journals and publishing houses.

Despite this seemingly inclusive definition, which applies to at least 30 poets by Motzan's own count (732-3), the critic only discusses a handful of poets – “the most important representatives” of the generation, who appear in the subtitle of his article: Richard Wagner, Franz Hodjak, Werner Söllner, Rolf Bossert, Klaus Hensel, and the members of the literary

circle Aktionsgruppe Banat, founded in 1972 by students at the university of Temeswar/Timișoara and disbanded by the Securitate in 1975. Other names summarily mentioned are Frieder Schuller, Rolf Frieder Marmont, Bernd Kolf, Anemone Latzina, Hellmut Seiler, and Horst Samson.

Although this reduction is warranted by the limited scope of the article, it also helps the critic over the thornier issues of his definition of the generation. The first issue in any definition of a generation, whether literary or otherwise, is that of age. The range of birth years given by Motzan, 1942 to 1954, allows for a disparity of 12 years between the youngest and the oldest members of the generation.¹⁷ The disparity means, however, that the members of the generation experienced the formative liberalisation of the late 1960s and early 1970s from different vantage points, ranging from high school students for the youngest to emerging professionals for the oldest.¹⁸ It is difficult for this reason to argue, as Motzan does, that they are all part of the same age cohort, which is defined as “the aggregate of individuals (within some population definition) who experienced the same event within the same time interval” (Ryder 12). But are they part of the same generation?

In his groundbreaking essay “The Problem of Generations” from 1927 – the basis for all subsequent generation studies – the sociologist Karl Mannheim distinguished between three types of generational belonging: “generation location” (“Generationslagerung”), “generation as an actuality” (“Generationszusammenhang”), and “generation unit” (“Generationseinheit”). The

17 Other critics have encompassed the generation differently: for Eduard Schneider, the cut-off dates are 1941 and 1955 (“Die Meldung des Herausgebers” 7), while Claus Stephani extended them even further, from 1939 to 1957 (“Vorbemerkung” 5). Membership in the generation has also been contested from inside, for instance in Wagner's rejection of affinity between the members of the Aktionsgruppe Banat and the somewhat older Franz Hodjak (Solms, “Nachruf” 126-7).

18 The 1954 cut-off date also splits at least one full-fledged member of the Aktionsgruppe Banat, Albert Bohn (b. 1955), away from the group without further justification.

widest of the terms, generation location, is similar to the definition of cohort given above. It refers to the position of a group of people in time, but also – and more importantly – in social space. To be “similarly located,” a group of people must not only be born at the same time, but also in a socio-historic space in which they have a chance to “experience the same events and data” in a similar way (297). The generation location contains the potential for the generation as an actuality, in which a concrete bond is created between members of a generation who are exposed to the same “social and intellectual symptoms” of socio-historic change (303). An actual generation, according to Mannheim, is one whose members have experienced the same socio-historic change or upheaval from a similar socio-historic location. Differing responses to this defining moment, however, can break up the generation into discrete generation units (304). Within each unit, an “identity of responses” is created by “mutual stimulation” between individuals belonging to concrete groups (306-7).

Mannheim's preoccupation with the problem of generations was part of a larger quest to understand social and cultural change, an overriding interest which allowed him to conceptualise generations beyond the strict limits of age. He observed that the “impulses particular to a generation” may also attract individuals who belong to a different age group, who may then become part of the generation unit (306). This is certainly the case for the post-war generation of Romanian-German poets, whose members are drawn from two distinct age cohorts. The first cohort debuted in Romanian-German periodicals in the mid to late 1960s. Already in 1970, Gerhardt Csejka, who was to become one of the most prominent Romanian-German literary critics, heralded the beginning of a new stage in Romanian-German poetry with the debut in the previous years of a number of poets, ranging from Joachim Wittstock (b. 1939) over Frieder Schuller (b. 1942), Bernd Kolf, Rolf Frieder Marmont, and Franz Hodjak (all b. 1944) to Gerhard Eike (b. 1945). For Csejka, these poets, born during World War II and come of age in

the relatively liberal mid to late 1960s, embodied the promise of a Romanian-German poetry free of the “Minderwertigkeitskomplex” (“inferiority complex”) of a minority literature caught between two major ones that had been plaguing it before and immediately after the war. In a special edition of *Neue Literatur* dedicated to Romanian-German poetry, Csejka identified these poets as belonging to one generation, heavily qualifying, however, his use of the term:

Generation natürlich nicht im Sinne von Altersgenossenschaft, ja selbst als Stilgemeinschaft kaum, sondern lediglich als ungefähr gleichzeitig hervorgetretene Gruppe mit annähernd den gleichen Grundfragen (“Über den Anfang” 19).

Generation, of course, not in the sense of an age cohort, not even perhaps as a stylistic community, but only as a group to emerge almost concurrently and with approximately the same basic questions.

Although the simultaneity of debut meant a common location for this group of poets, an actual generation – marked by a common response to its location – wasn't yet formed, as Csejka's double negation (“nicht im Sinne . . . , . . . kaum”) implies. That a change was afoot in Romanian-German poetry was clear, however, and Csejka was able to refine his tentative description of the generation responsible for it two years later, when he noted the debut of an even younger set of writers, including Johann Lippet, Werner Söllner, William Totok (all b. 1951), Richard Wagner, Rolf Bossert (both b. 1952), Gerhard Ortinau, Anton Sterbling, Hellmut Seiler (all b. 1953), and Albert Bohn (b. 1955). Except for Hellmut Seiler, all writers named here were born in the Banat, had been regular contributors to the student supplements of the *Neue Banater Zeitung*, “Wir über uns” and “Universitas,” since their introduction in the fall of 1969,¹⁹ and had earlier that year founded the literary circle Aktionsgruppe Banat. However, as Csejka immediately noted, similar developments were also visible in the literature of

19 The role of the *Neue Banater Zeitung* in promoting the young generation of writers is described in Eduard Schneider's article “Literatur und Literaturreflexion in der rumäniendeutschen Presse der Nachkriegszeit: Die *Neue Banater Zeitung* (Temeswar) und ihr Beitrag zur Förderung der literarischen Nachwuchsgeneration (1969 – 1975).”

Transylvania (“Als ob” 66).

In addition to the coincidence of their debut (their common location), these writers also had similar poetic styles and concerns. Among the shared characteristics that hold these young poets together in a generation, Csejka identifies their directness, their mastery of language, and the simplicity of their poetic diction and imagery:

[S]ie steuern im Gedicht unbeirrt auf ihr Ziel zu, lassen sich verblüffend selten von der Sprache, von den Worten verführen und manipulieren, sie haben etwas zu sagen und sie sagen genau das, was sie zu sagen haben. Und sie tun das meist in einfachen, klaren Bildern und Sätzen. (66)

They steer determinedly towards their goal in their poetry; they seldom let themselves get entrapped or manipulated by the language, by words; they have something to say, and say precisely what they have to say. And they do it mostly in simple, clear images and sentences.

These stylistic characteristics form such a strong link for Csejka that they even overshadow the individual identity of the poets: “Eindeutig und hervorstechend sind augenblicklich eher die Züge, die sie gemeinsam haben, die sie als Generation charakterisieren” (“Distinct and outstanding are at the moment those features which they have in common and which characterise them as a generation”; 66).

A poetry that seeks to engage with its environment and its audience directly was indeed a new development in post-war Romanian-German literature, even if its identifying features – clearness and directness – are relative to the literature of the time and less obvious from today's perspective. The tone set by this new poetry forms a clear division between generations, but the divisional lines do not run neatly along the decades. As Csejka astutely observed, Franz Hodjak and Bernd Kolf, older than their colleagues by 7 to 11 years, had also adopted a similar style by 1972, while Joachim Wittstock, a close contemporary of Hodjak and Kolf, had developed in a different direction (“Als ob” 66-7). Although belonging to a different age cohort (born during the war), by the early 1970s, Hodjak and Kolf had effectively become part of the post-war

generation. The same was to happen with Albert Bohn, who, despite his youth – he was merely 17 at the formation of the Aktionsgruppe Banat in 1972 – was also absorbed into the generation.

Gerhardt Csejka's characterization of the 1970s generation as a stylistic rather than an age community set the stage for the subsequent understanding of this group of poets in Romanian-German media and found its fullest development in Peter Motzan's study *Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik nach 1944* [*The Romanian-German Poetry after 1944*], published in 1980. The last chapter of Motzan's study deals with this youngest generation of Romanian-German poets, to which Motzan counts all those born during or after the war who had adopted a more direct approach to language, their audience, and their subjects than was hitherto customary in Romanian-German poetry.

Motzan's periodisation is more rigorous than Csejka's, and he neatly divides the poets according to the time of their debut: Anemone Latzina (b. 1942), Frieder Schuller, and Rolf Frieder Marmont, whose poems started appearing in national publications between 1964 and 1966, are cited by Motzan as “Wegbereiter” (138). To these “trail blazers,” Motzan adds Claus Stephani (b. 1944), Franz Hodjak, and Bernd Kolf, all of whom debuted around 1970, followed by the younger Werner Söllner, Richard Wagner, Rolf Bossert, and Gerhard Ortinau. The abbreviation “u.a.” (“and others”), which concludes this brief enumeration, signals that the names are representative of a larger group.

Despite differentiating chronologically between three waves of poets to have debuted since the mid 1960s, Motzan insists on their unity as a generation:

Eine Anzahl junger und jüngster Schriftsteller, aus verschiedenen Richtungen kommend, näherte sich allmählich oder frontal den gleichen Problemenkomplexen, schrieb Gedichte mit erkennbarer und bezweckter Ausrichtung auf einen Empfänger, bekundete – die Neigung zur Theoriebildung und zur poetologischen Reflexion war ein weiterer gemeinsamer Zug – ähnliche Auffassungen über Funktion und Wirkungsstrategien der eigenen Texte. Das berechtigt uns, von einem Kollektivbewußtsein im Sinne Lucien Goldmanns zu sprechen, von *einer* Generation, die durch einen übergreifenden

Erfahrungs- und Denkhorizont konstituiert wird. (138-9)

A number of younger and very young writers coming from different directions started advancing – incrementally or head-on – towards the same kinds of questions, wrote poems with a recognisable and intended focus on a recipient, and manifested – the affinity for theorising and poetological reflection was another feature they held in common – similar conceptions about the functions and strategies of their own texts. This allows us to talk about a collective consciousness à la Lucien Goldmann, about a *single* generation constituted through a common horizon of experience and thought.

Motzan's criteria for generational unity echo at first those of Csejka – common interests and attitudes towards the audience and the authors' own texts – but are expanded to include a common knowledge and deployment of theory and a common horizon of thought and experience. Through this expansion, Motzan not only grounds his definition in politically acceptable rhetoric – which put a premium on social(ist) theory and experience – but also comes closer to the understanding of generations since Karl Mannheim (on which that of the Romanian-born Marxist thinker Lucien Goldmann is based), shifting the emphasis even further from the age set as the most important criterion for defining the generation.

Both Gerhardt Csejka and Peter Motzan identified the Romanian-German poets who started writing in the second half of the 1960s and first half of the 1970s as a generation based not so much on age but on the concurrence of their debut and of their poetic intentions and styles. This concurrence was not coincidental but the effect of a particular socio-historical conjecture or location, in Mannheim's terminology, with three critical aspects. First, the members of the generation were born during or directly after World War II. Unlike the preceding generation, they did not experience the war or the hardships of its immediate aftermath as adults, but perceived themselves as being “born into” the socialist Romanian state, with which they at first identified. Their debut as poets occurred during the so-called “liberal” years 1964 – 1972, whose relative openness had a significant impact on their self-understanding as citizens and as poets and would define the relationship between their work and political

power. Second, the members of the generation all belonged to the German minority of Romania.²⁰ As members of the minority, they inherited its language and cultural legacy, but found themselves in opposition to what they perceived as the antiquated values and traditions of Romania's German communities. While the post-war writers would revise this perception somewhat in later years, their relationship with the minority remained conflicted. Third, although a significant number of post-war poets hailed from rural environments, their formative years were spent in urban university centres. Despite the generation members' growing disenchantment with Romania's poorly managed cities in the second part of the 1970s, they sought job placements in urban areas and retained an urban attitude.

These three aspects of their location were key in shaping the two cohorts of post-war poets into a generation. Romania's dramatic socio-historical changes in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s (which will be described in more detail below) provided the bond between the members of the generation, who witnessed, responded to, and, through their responses, intervened in these changes as poets, editors, and critics. The small, insular literary market ensured the exchange of responses, creating a remarkably tight-knit generation unit with a clearly defined group development despite individual differences.

The 1970s Generation from Generation Location to Generation Unit

Romania's post-World War II literary landscape, like that of much of the Eastern bloc, was characterised by alternating periods of dogmatism and relative liberality, in interplay with political events and the aims and strategies of the country's political leaders.²¹ An incipient

20 Although one member of the generation, Johann Lippet, was born in Wels, Austria, his Banat Swabian family returned to Romania when Lippet was 5.

21 These “ice ages” and “thaw periods” (“Eiszeit” and “Tauwetter”) are described in detail in Anneli Ute

resuscitation of the pre-war avant-garde movement after the coup d'état of August 23rd, 1944 was replaced in 1947, together with the monarchy, by a state-owned and state-run literary life. Liberal writers were discredited and retired from official positions, and the dogma of Socialist Realism – the unequivocal representation of the country's progress toward inevitable socialist fulfilment – became binding for all literary efforts. Stalin's death in 1953 ushered in a short “thaw period” of the political climate, but supplied contradictory impulses to Romania's cultural life. Calls for a more formally differentiated and less dogmatic literature were countered by the imposition of ideological guidelines, fuelling the growing feud between “dogmatists” (cultural functionaries) and “aesthetes” (liberal-minded authors and artists).

A new “ice age” followed this tentative liberalisation after the failed Hungarian revolt of 1956. Although it lasted only two short years, 1958 – 1960, it was marked by renewed Stalinist terror methods, such as arrests, denunciations, and show trials, meant to reign in Romania's increasingly unruly writers, artists, and critics back into the Party lines. For Romanian-German intellectuals, the 1959 trial of five German-language writers – Andreas Birkner, Wolf von Aichelburg, Georg Scherg, Hans Bergel, and Harald Siegmund – was an especially deeply-felt throwback after the concessions to cultural life of the previous years.²²

Starting in 1960, Romania entered a new phase of – carefully controlled – liberalisation. The country's leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, was looking to re-open trade with the West, and a relaxation of Romania's cultural policies was necessary for promoting a favourable image to the outside. In addition to the re-organisation of existing cultural institutions and the creation of

Gabanyi's study *Partei und Literatur in Rumänien seit 1945*. The following summary follows Gabanyi's description. Unfortunately, Gabanyi does not specifically address the relationship between Romanian Party politics and the literature of Romania's minorities. Details regarding these are identified separately. For a discussion of “ice age” as a metaphor, see chapter 2.

22 The trial and its circumstances are documented in the volume *Worte als Gefahr und Gefährdung: Fünf deutsche Schriftsteller vor Gericht*, edited by Peter Motzan and Stefan Sienerth.

new ones (among them several journals dedicated to cultural issues), the Party promoted the rehabilitation of important pre-war writers and critics and literary exchanges with Western nations. Yet like all imposed liberalisations, Dej's also contained contradictions: while previously taboo contemporary Western writers appeared in print and on stage, domestic literary activity was still expected to toe the Party line.

This careful balancing act was inherited, after Gheorghiu Dej's unexpected death in March 1965, by the new First Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party (soon to be renamed the Romanian Communist Party), Nicolae Ceaușescu. A relative newcomer to Romanian high politics, Ceaușescu was intent on solidifying his power by widening his appeal. Sceptics among the intellectuals were initially won over by a series of reforms, such as the de-centralisation of the press and more lenient publishing guidelines. A wave of formally innovative and thematically daring material reached the Romanian reading public in the wake of these reforms, raising hopes for the possibility of a critical literary engagement with socialist reality, while the expansion of the possibility to travel abroad for Romania's writers made Western standards of writing and publishing seem more attainable than ever before. Ceaușescu's resounding condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 further solidified his approbation among the country's intellectuals, smoothing over rising tensions between the latter and the Party.

In detailing Ceaușescu's relationship with Romania's intellectuals in the mid 1960s, Anneli Ute Gabanyi stresses several times the importance of (mis)interpretation in the latter's response to political hints, directives, and actions. Although Ceaușescu countered his strategy of winning over the country's intellectuals with growing restrictions,²³ the perceived liberalisation

23 Gabanyi identifies Ceaușescu's approach to cultural politics as a two-pronged one from the very beginning. Describing Ceaușescu's first speech to the Central Committee after his election, Gabanyi points out the twin

course, especially after the anti-invasion speech of August 21, 1968, contributed to a “feeling of euphoria”(163), which was maintained well beyond that watershed date. Not even Ceaușescu's announcement of a “cultural revolution” on the Chinese model in July 1971 was a strong enough signal that the country's true course was a different one.

The 1970s generation of writers fully shared in this incipient elation at the prospect of a more open form of government. Even after nearly 25 years of sobering experience with Ceaușescu's regime Franz Hodjak describes these formative years as “die schönen, liberalen Jahre in Rumänien, . . . die ja nicht ohne jeden Grund Hoffnungen, Illusionen, kühne Zukunftsprojekte in uns aufkommen ließen” (“the beautiful liberal years in Romania, . . . in which hopes, illusions, and bold plans for the future swelled in us not without reason”; “Von der Suche” 274). The appearance of liberalisation shaped the identity of the young poets, who comprehended themselves as part of the movement toward positive social change:

Das führte dazu, daß ich der festen Überzeugung war, man müsse einen Dialog führen mit der Macht. Ich glaubte an die Veränderbarkeit der Welt, bei der auch wir Schriftsteller eine wichtige Rolle spielen könnten, im Sinne, die Gesellschaft zu reformieren, die Wirklichkeit lebbarer zu machen. (274)

This led me to the strong conviction that one had to enter into a dialogue with power. I believed that the world could be changed, and that we, writers, could also play an important role in this, in the sense of reforming society and making reality more liveable.

Hodjak's tendency to romanticise the late 1960s is one he shares with his generation of Romanian-German poets,²⁴ most of whom made their literary debut during this time. The (ultimately illusory) hopes for liberal social reforms and the belief in the power of words to

aims of his strategy: “[E]rstens, die Schriftsteller und Künstler für seine Politik zu gewinnen und einzusetzen, zweitens, die Direktiven und Grenzen der Liberalisierung von Anfang abzustecken” (“First, to win and use the writers and artists for his political aims; second, to define the directions and limits of the liberalisation from the very beginning”; 122).

24 A possible exception is William Totok, who has more correctly remarked that the carefully manipulated periods of liberalisation in the four decades of Romanian communism corresponded, in reality, “einem gemäßigeren Stalinismus” (“to a more moderate Stalinism”; “Literatur und Personenkult” 95).

contribute to this change, described by Hodjak, are two of the hallmarks of their early poems and a direct response to their socio-political location.

For the Romanian-German literary market, the structural changes introduced by Dej and then Ceaușescu meant the creation of new publishing opportunities – the four publishing houses with German-language programmes date from this period – and a relative easing of taboos. While writers born before the war, who had lived through the Stalinist-type excesses of the 1950s, approached these changes cautiously, those born during or after the war embraced them enthusiastically. Their enthusiasm was met and fed by editors and critics – many of their own age – eager to develop a viable Romanian-German literature without the inferiority complex mentioned by Csejka. In addition to promoting dialogue about the state of contemporary literature through interviews and round-table discussions, the Romanian-German periodicals devoted space to new writers and even launched talent searches, such as the ones that brought to the fore a number of young Banat writers who would later become the Aktionsgruppe Banat.²⁵

If the relative liberalisation of the late 1960s and early 1970s and its attendant changes in the Romanian-German literary network were the perfect location for the creation of a new generation of writers and the fast and radical changes in Romania's cultural and political climate witnessed by the writers provided the bond for an actual generation, the small size and isolation of the educational and literary network encouraged the emergence of a generation unit, whose members knew and responded to each other as fellow students, artists, editors, and critics. From the very beginning, the poets' responses to the possibilities offered by the liberalisation years to emerging writers were remarkably similar and were often developed in reaction to each other.

25 The discovery of these writers and the genesis of the Aktionsgruppe are described in the introductory chapters to Thomas Krause's *“Die Fremde rast durchs Gehirn, das Nichts...”: Deutschlandbilder in den Texten der Banater Autorengruppe (1969 – 1998)*, pp. 55-65. See also note 19 above. On the role of the *Neue Literatur* in promoting the young generation of poets, see Motzan, “Sieben schillernde Jahre.”

The student circles Echinox – founded by Romanian, German, and Hungarian students at the university of Cluj/Klausenburg – and Aktionsgruppe Banat (Temeswar/Timișoara), in which the young poets first exchanged ideas and literary knowledge, played a special role in this context.²⁶ Together with the emergence of certain formal features – the short, often aphoristically pointed or dialectically conceived poem, the lack of capitalisation and punctuation – this period saw the emergence of the themes which have come to define the generation: the desire for social engagement, the rejection of the traditions of the minority, and the exploration of urban existence.

As Romania's economy started to decline in the second half of the 1970s, Nicolae Ceaușescu steered the country toward economic and, by extension, cultural isolation. His earlier-expressed commitment to open debate, as well as to Romania's minorities, was increasingly replaced with policies aimed at the uniformisation of Romania's population and the promotion of his own personality cult.²⁷ In this darkening political climate, the possibility of public engagement through the medium of poetry became a thing of the past, and the poetic features of the 1970s generation also started to change. The short, direct statements of ideas and points of view favoured in the early 1970s, for instance, made way to longer poems built around loose associations of impressions drawn from daily life. The language became more obscure and symbolic, the references more hidden. What is more, as the members of the generation matured

26 The activities of the Aktionsgruppe Banat, which emphasised teamwork, are an especially good example of the collaborative process through which the post-war generation of Romanian-German writers developed their skills as poets and critics, as well as a common set of poetic forms and topics. See Sterbling, “Aktionsgruppe – oder ähnlich so.” Gudrun Schuster has further argued for the importance of the Romanian “Germanistenschule” in the formation of the unified thinking and writing style of the post-war generation of poets (66). Cf. also Sterbling, “Zum Abschied” 218-9. On the activities of the Echinox circle and magazine, see the article by Klaus F. Schneider.

27 The changes in Ceaușescu's policies are described in detail in Mary Ellen Fischer's *Nicolae Ceaușescu: A Study in Political Leadership*. See also the description of Ceaușescu's so-called “Golden Age” in Stephen Fischer-Galați, *Twentieth Century Rumania*, 183-205.

as poets, they developed a plurality of individual styles.

Despite these formal changes, the poets continued to address social and political issues, to thematise the past and, increasingly, the present of the German minority, and to describe the conditions in Romania's rural and urban centres. Through the repeated thematisation of these concerns, the poets constituted themselves as a generation throughout their careers in Romania, which, for most, ended with their emigration in the mid to late 1980s.²⁸ In addition to defining themselves as a generation through their poetic focus, the post-war writers also defined what it meant to be a German writer in Romania of the 1970s and 80s and, by extension, the meaning of Romanian-German literature during those decades.

The 1970s Generation in Previous Scholarship

The reception of the 1970s generation of Romanian-German poets in previous scholarship is divided into three distinct phases. The first phase occurred in Romania and started with the very emergence of the generation onto the literary scene in the late 1960s. It was marked by a careful negotiation of the new theoretical insights of structuralism and the requirements of official socialist discourse. This phase culminated with the publication, in 1980, of Peter Motzan's study *Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik nach 1944* [*Romanian-German Poetry after 1944*].

The second phase started in the mid 1980s with the discovery of the generation (and of Romanian-German literature in general) in West Germany. The public's attention during this discovery was directed through the press and foregrounded the place of origin and the political dimension of the poetry. Against this one-dimensional understanding of the generation's work,

28 Although the experience of emigration is another feature the 1970 generation has in common, this momentous change deserves a study of its own and is not included here.

scholarly contributions since the mid 1990s have sought to place post-war Romanian-German literature in a larger context and to reclaim it as the object of literary study, initiating a third phase in its reception. Without the limits imposed by socialist discourse, scholars from both inside and outside Romania have explored various aspects of the generation's work, such as the use of language, the construction of identity, the extensive use of intertextuality.

In the first, Romanian, phase, the reception of the 1970s generation of Romanian-German poets consisted largely of reviews and articles published in various periodicals, as well as anthology prefaces and afterwords. Despite being perceived as a generation, the poets were mostly discussed separately, based on their individual volumes. The evolution of the generation was closely watched, however, and all new appearances on the very small stage of Romanian-German literature were discussed in detail in the Romanian-German press and even hotly debated. Subject of debate were also the purposes and methods of critical analysis.²⁹

In August 1970, the journal *Neue Literatur* published a round-table discussion about the current state and desired future of Romanian-German literary criticism under the telling title “Strukturalismus und Kerweih” [“Structuralism and Country Fair”]. Based on a conversation during a visit from Transylvanian critics Bernd Kolf and Peter Motzan and poet Franz Hodjak to the Bucharest-based journal, the round-table discussion distilled two main criteria of literary analysis, which were to dominate progressive Romanian-German criticism for the next two

29 Authors' ripostes to reviews of their books were not unusual, but critics, too, engaged in debates with each other, whether during round table discussions or in letters to the editor. For an example of the latter, see the argument between Werner Söllner, Richard Wagner (both members of the 1970s generation), and Wolf Aichelburg (b. 1912) carried out in the pages of the *Karpathenrundschau* between March and June 1973. The subject of the debate was the poetry anthology *Fahnen im Wind* [*Flags in the Wind*], reviewed by Werner Söllner on March 23rd – or rather the methodology of the reviewer. Wolf Aichelburg contested the grounds of the review – a structuralist understanding of poetry – prompting a defense of the reviewer and his method by Richard Wagner. See Söllner, “Bei uns sein – für uns stehn,” Aichelburg, “Mit wehem Mut,” and Wagner, “Zur Entlastung des Rezensenten.” The debate is also a good illustration of generational division among literary critics (who, in this case, are also all writers).

decades: formal structure and social context. Although the title put these two criteria, represented by a current international trend, structuralism, and a local, traditional cultural practice, the Banat-Swabian “Kerweih,” in clear opposition to each other, the debate was characterised by the attempt to bring the two terms together.

In a critical context dominated by the requirements of Socialist Realism, which valued literary works only as manifestations of socialist principles, the structural study of texts, proposed in the round-table discussion, was an attempt to free critical discourse from the dominance of state ideology. In an article published only a month before the round-table discussion, the critic Bernd Kolf had argued for a new (for Romania) understanding of poetry based on structuralist ideas, which had become the theory of choice of the young generation since the translation of Hugo Friedrichs *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik* [*The Structure of Modern Poetry*] into Romanian in 1969³⁰:

Das Gedicht versucht, wie jede Kunstäußerung, Lösung von inneren und äusseren Spannungen in der Struktur: durch die Form objektiviert sich die individuelle subjektive Erfahrung. . . . Der Einzelfall wird stellvertretend durch die Form: Werkstruktur ist Weltstruktur. (“Jenseits”)

Like any artistic expression, poetry tries to find the resolution of inner and outer tensions in its structure: the individual subjective experience is objectified through the form. . . . Through the form, the singular becomes the representative: the structure of the work is the structure of the world.

Despite allowing the poem to spring from subjective experience (through a dialectic synthesis of “inner” and “outer” “tension”), Kolf’s understanding of poetry underlines the primacy of form. In the totalising structuralist claim, the structure of the work not only mirrors that of the world, but is a world in itself and can thus be “objectively” analysed outside of the context of its creation.

30 Cf. Csejka, “Und wie weiter?!”

Kolf's argument for objectivity, which he repeated in the round-table discussion, was met with one for localisation. Older critics like Emmerich Reichrath, as well as younger ones like Gerhardt Csejka, argued that the unusual circumstances of Romanian-German literature, both as the literature of a numerical minority and as a literature written in German but disseminated in Romania, warranted special attention ("Strukturalismus" 49-51). According to this argument, the development of Romanian-German literature could only be measured against its own history and not by universal criteria, such as form.

A solution for combining these two seemingly opposed criteria was finally proposed by Peter Motzan, who redefined structuralism as the study of the way in which the form of a work of art expresses both the circumstances of its production (the "psychologische[...] und historische[...] Determiniertheit" 'psychological and historical determination' of the author) and the "poetische Idee" ("poetic idea") behind it ("Strukturalismus" 53-4). Motzan's definition grounded the new theoretical territory introduced by Friedrich's book in the more politically acceptable sociological study of literature.

Although literary works continued to be measured against the Romanian-German literary tradition, the idea, introduced by Kolf and refined by Motzan, that texts are highly structured expressions of social experience became the dominant paradigm through which the work of the 1970s generation of writers (at the time of the round-table discussion just emerging) was viewed both by others and by themselves. In a review of the anthology *Wortmeldungen [Requests to Speak]*, which presented the work of members of the 1970s generation from the Banat, the poet Franz Hodjak criticised the editor of the volume, Eduard Schneider, for failing to provide an analysis of the social context of the generation, from which the forms of its poetry ("die Beschaffenheit der Gedichtstrukturen") may be better understood ("Gruppenbild" 87-8). Although wearing here the critic's cap, Hodjak was outlining an understanding of poetry which

also guided him as a writer and which he shared with other members of the 1970s generation.

The understanding of the 1970s generation of poets as giving voice to the experience of their social context is evident in the definitions of the generation provided by Gerhardt Csejka and Peter Motzan. Gerhardt Csejka, for instance, saw the clarity and directness of the poetry of the 1970s generation as a reflection of the “veränderten Verhältnisse” (“changed circumstances,” code for political liberalisation) of Romanian-German literary life (“Als ob” 66). In a series of articles from 1975, which were to become the afterword to the poetry anthology *Vorläufige Protokolle* [*Preliminary Minutes*], published a year later, Peter Motzan also derived the linguistic characteristics of the generation's poetry directly from its historical situation:

Die ersten schriftstellerischen Erfahrungen fielen bei den meisten mit der landweiten Überwindung der dogmatischen Wirklichkeitsabspiegelung zusammen. Ganz richtig empfanden sie, dass mit rhetorischem Bombast und hochgestimmter Emphase der künstlerischen Wahrhaftigkeit nicht gedient ist. Daher versuchten sie es umgekehrt: lakonisch, aussparend, pathosfeindlich, aber auch spiel- und experimentierfreundlich. (“Nachwort” 96-7)

The first writing experiences coincided for most [of the generation members] with the country-wide overcoming of dogmatic representations of reality. They very rightly felt that bombastic rhetoric and highfalutin emphasis would not serve artistic veracity. Thus, they tried the opposite approach: laconic, spare, without pathos, but also playful and open to experimentation.

The article then gives examples of how the new poetic diction was put into practice, an analysis Motzan eventually included into his full-length study of post-war Romanian-German poetry, *Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik nach 1944* [*Romanian-German Poetry after 1944*].

Motzan's groundbreaking study is the first periodisation of post-war Romanian-German poetry up to 1980, the book's date of publication. The main concern of the study is to offer a “historical overview” of German poetry written in Romania after World War II. As required by Romanian communist discourse, Motzan's “year zero” is not 1945 but 1944, when Romania

switched allegiance from the Axis to the Allied Powers and entered into the communist sphere of influence, although the critic subverts this apparently clearly-cut division by tracing the pre-war traditions of Romanian-German poetry to at least 1919. In fact, it is only with the appearance of the 1970s generation that the critic draws a break from past literary traditions: “Die Protokolle dieser Generation schreiben sich nicht nur ins konkret Reale hinein, sondern stoßen sich gleichzeitig von der lyrischen Vorgänger-Norm ab” (“The records of this generation not only inscribe themselves in concrete reality but also reject the poetic norm of the precursors”; 139).

Despite Motzan's evident sympathy for the generation to which he himself belonged, the wider scope of his study allows him only a limited amount of space in which to discuss the generation's poetry. This discussion is marked by the necessity – imposed by the historical study – to highlight the formal features which distinguish the generation's poetry from previous Romanian-German verse. Motzan's concise sketch of the most salient formal features of the generation's poetry and his representative (and, in some cases, daring) selection of quotes, however, make this short essay an important primer to the 1970s generation, while his periodisation of post-war Romanian-German poetry remains authoritative (and is widely duplicated) despite the limitations imposed by the socio-political climate under which the book appeared.

After the publication of Motzan's book, the preoccupation with the 1970s generation of poets came to a halt in Romania. If the Romanian-German critic had just managed to include all pertinent names into his discussion of the generation,³¹ the gradual emigration of most of the writers belonging to it during the mid to late 1980s made subsequent studies of the generation

31 The only exception is Klaus Hensel (b. 1954), whose debut volume, *Das letzte Frühstück mit Gertrude* [*The Last Breakfast with Gertrude*], appeared after Motzan's study. See “Entstehung und Auflösung” 273.

impossible in a country in which emigrated authors were erased from the public domain.³²

In the meantime, the generation was being discovered in West Germany, where the emigrated authors were trying to find personal and professional footing. Romanian-German literature had slowly made inroads into the consciousness of the West-German critical establishment through the earlier immigration of older authors, such as Dieter Schlesak (b. 1934) and Oskar Pastior (1927 – 2006). Yet it was not until the 1984 publication in West Berlin of a collection of short stories by a young writer from the Banat, Herta Müller (b. 1953), and its attendant controversy,³³ that the literature of the German minority of Romania found a larger audience. Müller's volume, *Niederungen* [*Nadirs*], surprised the West-German critics with its frankness and literary freshness but scandalised the conservative German minority of the Banat (both in Romania and abroad) with its unflattering portrayal of Banat-Swabian life. The furore around Herta Müller's book had two principal effects: it put Romania as a source of progressive German literature firmly on the West-German critical map and led to the reception of other Romanian-German writers.³⁴ This discovery and understanding of Romanian-German literature was, however, limited to other authors associated with Müller, such as her husband, Richard Wagner, the former leader of the Aktionsgruppe Banat.

The strong personal presence and shocking revelations of the Aktionsgruppe members and the easy identification that group membership provided soon led to the group's dominance in critical reception. Romanian-German literature became almost synonymous with the Aktionsgruppe, and even writers not or only loosely associated with the group (like Müller herself) were merged into it:

32 This erasure corresponds with the fourth form of censorship described by Adrian Marino. Cf. Marino 2047.

33 For a detailed description of Herta Müller's early reception in West Germany see Eke, "Herta Müllers Werke."

34 Cf. Kegelmann, "Identitätsproblematik und sprachliche Heimatlosigkeit" 206.

Bekannte Autoren wie Herta Müller, Werner Söllner, Klaus Hensel u. a. wurden umstandslos dazugerechnet, ja manchmal schien die gesamte rumäniendeutsche Literatur in dem Begriff, den man sich von der Gruppe gemacht hatte, aufzugehen; das führte zu Irritationen und Richtigstellungen, aber natürlich auch zum Verdacht, Wagner & Co. hätten die Usurpation bewußt betrieben. Nein, dies war nicht nötig, der “mythische” Zusammenhang ist einfach stärker als die analytische Differenz. (Csejka, “Die Aktionsgruppen-Story” 243-4)

Well-known authors like Herta Müller, Werner Söllner, Klaus Hensel, and others were added to it without much ceremony. Sometimes, the whole Romanian-German literature seemed to be subsumed into the image that had been created of the group. This led to irritations and corrections but, of course, also to the suspicion that Wagner & co had knowingly usurped this literature. No, this wasn't necessary: the “mythological” context is simply stronger than analytical differentiation.

Gerhardt Csejka, himself a close collaborator of the group, is correct in pointing out that the power of the Aktionsgruppe Banat to muddle critical analysis was a function of its context, that is to say of the circumstances of its German reception. The Aktionsgruppe Banat reached critical prominence in the aftermath of a conference held in Marburg in the fall of 1989 – shortly before the fall of Romania's communist dictatorship – under the provocative title “Nachruf auf die rumäniendeutsche Literatur” [“In Memory of Romanian-German Literature”]. The conference (also referred to as the Marburger Literaturforum) was meant to incite discussion about the very existence of this overlooked literature, and the third part of its published proceedings, under the title “Rückblicke” [“Retrospectives”], does attempt to show the variety of literary experiences subsumed under the term “rumäniendeutsche Literatur.” The focus of the conference, however, was the 1970s generation of Romanian-German writers, which was represented almost exclusively by the Aktionsgruppe Banat. Former Aktionsgruppe members and associates William Totok, Richard Wagner, Helmuth Frauendorfer, and Gerhardt Csejka authored four out of the nine lectures making up the forum, among them Richard Wagner's key portrait of the Aktionsgruppe Banat (later republished in Ernest Wichner's collection of texts by and about the group). The organizer of the conference, Wilhelm Solms, even went as far as to admit that the

event “vermittelt ganz bewußt” (“very knowingly imparts”; Solms, “Nachruf” 13) a one-dimensional image of Romanian-German literature by singling out the Aktionsgruppe, leaving it the de facto representative of an entire literary generation, if not literature.

The proceedings of the Marburger Literaturforum, published in 1990, are one of the most widely cited sources in Romanian-German literary criticism, and the conference's treatment of the Aktionsgruppe Banat assured it critical prominence not only as a group, but also as the most representative instance of the 1970s generation of Romanian-German writers. In the wake of the conference, the Aktionsgruppe became the focus of a collection of primary texts and testimonial essays by group members edited by Ernest Wichner, and two dissertations (by Thomas Krause and Diana Schuster respectively). More importantly, it came to be seen as the embodiment of the “innovative Richtung” (“innovative direction”; Nubert) – all that is original and therefore worth discussing – in contemporary Romanian-German literature. Two major studies of Romanian-German literature between 1970 and 1990 – by René Kegelman and Cristina Tudorică respectively – also inadvertently equate the literature of those decades with that of the Aktionsgruppe.³⁵

The focus on the Aktionsgruppe Banat in critical literature explains why there have been no accounts of the 1970s generation of poets as a whole since the 1980s. The only exception is offered by Claire de Oliveira's *La poésie allemande de Roumanie: Entre hétéronomie et*

35 Despite the seemingly easy grouping which it affords, membership in the Aktionsgruppe has been hotly debated among critics. Full group membership is usually attributed to Richard Wagner, Johann Lippet, Gerhard Ortinau, William Totok, Anton Sterbling, Ernest Wichner, Albert Bohn, and Rolf Bossert. Werner Kremm is named as part of the group by Diana Schuster, but she does not analyse his works, and he does not appear in the collection of works by the Aktionsgruppe Banat edited by Ernest Wichner. Herta Müller and Werner Söllner are regarded as part of the more comprehensive “Banater Autorengruppe” (“group of Banat authors”) by Diana Schuster (22-3), but even this loose membership is contested by Thomas Krause. The latter identifies instead a “primary” and “secondary” group of authors associated with the Aktionsgruppe, according to its altering membership (35). The critic Gerhardt Csejka, who was arrested by the Romanian Securitate together with Gerhard Ortinau, William Totok, and Richard Wagner as a member of the Aktionsgruppe Banat, is usually disregarded in analyses of the group's literary works.

dissidence (1944-1990) [*The German Poetry of Romania: Between Heteronomy and Dissidence (1944 – 1990)*], the second – and, so far, last – overview of post-war Romanian-German poetry. Oliveira's book follows Motzan's periodisation, as well as his generational division, but is a more complex study of the historical and cultural circumstances of Romanian-German poetry and its responses to them. It is divided in three parts: the first details the history of the German minority in Romania; the second describes the different phases of Romanian-German poetry since World War II, against which background are then juxtaposed an “official” and a “dissident” literature; and the third part discusses several intercultural aspects of Romanian-German poetry.

The French critic discusses the 1970s generation, loosely defined as the “youngest generation” of Romanian-German poets, in the second part of her book, where she equates this group of poets with the dissidence to which she alludes in the title of her study. “Dissidence” is circumscribed here as any form of resistance to the total instrumentalisation of language by the communist regime – questioning everyday language, affirming one's minority affiliation, refusing to partake in the official discourse through the employment of dialect, non-engagement, etc. – and Oliveira demonstrates how the “jeune génération” uses the tools of poetry to undermine the state's co-optation of language into its service.³⁶ The focus of the discussion is the development of formal features as a response to the political pressures of totalitarianism in the generation's poetry.

Published in 1995, Oliveira's book represents a transition period in the reception of the 1970s generation. While the second part of her study, which focuses on the subversive tendencies of the 1970s generation harkens back to an earlier stage of the generation's reception

36 See Oliveira 176-223.

mainly interested in the political aspects of this literature, the third part, which investigates the intercultural aspects of Romanian-German poetry, paves the way for a more differentiated understanding of the literature. Oliveira is also the first critic to attempt thematic analyses of Romanian-German poetry, illuminating the tradition of the elegy, the autumn poem (“Herbstgedicht”), and the autobiography, poetic genres widely adopted by the post-war generation.³⁷

If the earliest West-German reviews had responded to Herta Müller's writing style and to themes such as home, belonging, foreignness, and minority existence, subsequent occurrences redirected the attention of the audience towards the political dimension of her writing and that of fellow members of the 1970s generation. Their literature began to be read against events such as Rolf Bossert's suicide in February 1986, a few months after his emigration to West Germany, and Herta Müller and Richard Wagner's own well-publicized emigration ordeal, as well as the information supplied by Müller and members of the Aktionsgruppe Banat about their conditions as minority writers in Romania.³⁸

Against the stress laid on these conflicts in the understanding of the generation's literary works in the media, scholarly analyses since the mid 1990s – many of them dissertations – have sought to embed the texts in prevalent critical discourses. The reduction of the generation's work to political statements was decried already in the first larger study to be published in Germany, René Kegelmann's *“An der Grenze des Nichts, dieser Sprache...”: Zur Situation rumäniendeutscher Literatur der achtziger Jahre in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [“*At the Border to Nothingness, to this Language...”: About the Situation of Romanian-German*

37 See Oliveira 263-82.

38 Cf. Motzan, “Rumäniendeutsche Lyrik” 742 and Kegelmann, *An der Grenze* 64-9.

Literature of the 1980s in the Federal Republic of Germany] which appeared in 1995 (the same year as Oliveira's book). In addition to offering an overview of the generation's reception up to the mid 1990s, Kegelmann's study also underlines aspects such as linguistic reflection, conceptions of home and foreignness, and the poetic re-working of personal experience. Kegelmann's investigation is driven by the question of whether Romanian-German literature ended or continued after the emigration of a significant number of authors in the mid to late 1980s. While his sample of four authors – Herta Müller, Werner Söllner, Klaus Hensel, and Richard Wagner – is too small to provide a conclusive answer, his work is the first to point out some of the thematic features that identify these writers as belonging to the same generation unit, as well as to show how their group identity weakened after emigration.

Following in Kegelmann's footsteps, Cristina Tudorică's study *Rumäniendeutsche Literatur (1970 – 1990): Die letzte Epoche einer Minderheitenliteratur [Romanian-German Literature (1970 – 1990): The Last Age of a Minority Literature]* offers a biographical interpretation of selected works by members of the 1970s generation. Despite the misleading title and the extensive historical introduction, Tudorică stresses the personal experiences of the writers not the political structures which shaped the generation's works, although the two are undoubtedly connected. The bulk of Tudorică's book highlights the thematic wealth in the works of Rolf Bossert, Herta Müller, Richard Wagner, Klaus Hensel, and Werner Söllner, pointing out the coincidences between their personal experiences and the themes of their works, without, however, providing an overarching framework for this investigation.

Finally, Thomas Krause's "*Die Fremde rast durchs Gehirn, das Nichts...*": *Deutschlandbilder in den Texten der Banater Autorengruppe (1969 – 1991)* [*"The Alien Races through the Brain, the Nothingness..."*: *Images of Germany in Texts by the Group of Banat Authors (1969 – 1991)*], from 1998, and Diana Schuster's *Die Banater Autorengruppe:*

Selbstdarstellung und Rezeption in Rumänien und Deutschland [*The Group of Banat Authors: Self-Representation and Reception in Romania and Germany*], from 2004, analyse the appearance and dissemination of various images by and about members of the 1970s generation belonging to or associated with the Aktionsgruppe Banat, while Astrid Schau's *Leben ohne Grund: Konstruktion kultureller Identität bei Werner Söllner, Rolf Bossert und Herta Müller* [*Life without a Cause: The Construction of Cultural Identity in the Works of Werner Söllner, Rolf Bossert and Herta Müller*], published in 2003, provides an analysis of works by three generation members (though only two of them are poets) from the point of view of cultural studies.

Present Methodology and Selection of Materials

The steady output of dissertations on the subject of Romanian-German literature since the 1990s is matched by a stream of articles taking up various aspects of post-war Romanian-German poetry. Despite the growing interest in Romanian-German literature and the declared importance of the 1970s generation within it, the study of the generation has remained fragmentary, however, with emphasis on the Aktionsgruppe Banat or individual generation members, as illustrated above. Likewise, no critical works dedicated to Romanian-German poetry have appeared since Claire de Oliveira's 1995 diachronic study, and no extended study of Romanian-German literature has ever been published in English.³⁹

The present study seeks to fill this gap by providing an analysis of the poetry of the

39 With the exception of Herta Müller, Romanian-German authors have hardly been noticed in Anglo-American criticism. I am aware of only two articles on Romanian-German poetry written in English, Robert Elsie's introduction to his volume of translations, *The Pied Poets*, and an essay by Fritz H. König on "Recent Romanian-German Poetry," which, unfortunately, is muddled by incomplete background information and a number of factual errors. Erika Nielsen's article "Coming Home into Exile: The End of Romanian-German Culture" provides an accurate historical overview of Romanian-German literature up to and including the 1970s generation, but does not discuss the generation's works in any detail.

1970s generation that encompasses as many of its members as possible. While indebted to Motzan and Oliveira's groundbreaking studies of post-war Romanian-German poetry, my analysis does not seek to account for the whole post-war period. The more limited scope of my study offers an in-depth look at only the two decades, from 1968 to 1988, in which the 1970s generation of poets were active in Romania. My study further eschews exact chronological divisions in favour of tracing thematic continuities – as well as probing for breaks within these – in the generation's work.

The present work examines the development of three major themes, through whose elaboration the group of poets under analysis constituted themselves as a literary generation and which differentiate them from their literary predecessors. Each chapter provides both a synchronic and a diachronic analysis of a separate theme, investigating how each theme is picked up and developed almost simultaneously by a variety of poets, as well as how these thematic threads are pursued and re-fashioned by the group over time. Chapter two looks at what is usually interpreted as the generation's “political” poetry. Starting with the poets' self-identification as socially engaged, which is echoed in much of the critical literature, the chapter examines how the possibilities and limitations of this engagement are articulated in verse and how the nature of this engagement changes through the 1970s and 80s. Chapter three discusses the generation's relationship with the Romanian-German minority, which provides a constant point of reference in the generation's poetry, despite changing attitudes. Chapter four provides the first description in critical literature of the generation's poetry of urban experience, the generation's most important generic innovation, mapping the stages of the generation's evolution against the changing city landscape.

While the information presented in this chapter provides a general context for the analysis of the poetry, each subsequent chapter elaborates on the socio-historical circumstances

of the texts under discussion. In doing so, however, my analysis does not mean to separate a socio-historical reality from its literary reflection, as I believe the latter is constitutive of the former. Instead, I aim to strike a balance between the horizon of expectation of the generation (and its audience) and a contemporary perspective which allows us to view the 1970s generation and the implications of its work in a wider network of literary and extra-literary interdependencies.

This aim and the thematic plurality of the material further necessitate the reading of the texts within several different discourses, both contemporaneous to the texts of the 1970s generation and contemporary to my analysis, each of which is briefly delineated in the appropriate chapter. Thus, the discussion of the generation's social and political poetry is informed by contemporaneous discourses of engaged literature, socialist construction, and anti-war and anti-American sentiment, as well as by contemporary conceptions of the public sphere, satire, and metaphorical language. Drawn into the discussion of the generation's relationship with the German minority of Romania are the contemporaneous discourse on "Heimat" in Romanian-German publications, the established representation of the space of the minority in earlier literature and its intersection with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of cultural deterritorialization, and Marianne Hirsch's work on postmemory. The generation's poetry of urban experience is discussed in conjunction with the established discourses on the city in previous Romanian-German literature and on the cultural figure of the flâneur. The aim of these juxtapositions is to show not only how these various discourses inform the poetry of the 1970s generation, but also how the poetry often modulates established discursive practices, both indigenous and imported, and to point out paths for future research into the generation's work.

The emphasis on the generation as one constituted through the development of certain themes also allows me to reintegrate into the study of the generation names which – as Motzan's

entry in the volume on 20th-century poetry illustrates – have not managed to impose themselves into the canon of post-war Romanian-German literature. In addition to texts by more established authors, such as Franz Hodjak (b. 1942), Werner Söllner (b. 1951), Richard Wagner (b. 1952), Rolf Bossert (1952 – 1986), and Klaus Hensel (b. 1954), the study also draws on the work of Anemone Latzina (1942 – 1993), Horst Fassel, and Frieder Schuller (b. 1942), Bernd Kolf, Rolf Frieder Marmont, and Eduard Schneider (b. 1944), Gerhard Eike (b. 1945), Johann Lippert, Adrian Löw, Hans Matye, and William Totok (b. 1951), Ernest Wichner (b. 1952), Mathias Schmitz, Hellmut Seiler, and Anton Sterbling, (b. 1953), and Horst Samson (b. 1954). Although the list is not and cannot be exhaustive, the wide spectrum of voices gives a fuller account of the 1970s generation than any other previous study.

The focus on poetry means the exclusion of important members of the 1970s generation who, at the time, were primarily authors of prose, such as Roland Kirsch and Herta Müller. Also excluded are poets born after 1955 or whose debut occurred outside of the formative late 1960s and early 1970s. As well, foregrounding a larger number of writers tends to erase their differences in terms of literary innovation and reception and obscures the significance of individuals for both the group and the literature as a whole. If I take this shortcoming into stride, it is only because I know others have already filled this gap by highlighting the achievements of individual poets.⁴⁰

The study encompasses the entire poetic output of the generation published in Romania between 1968 and 1988. The two limits have symbolic, as well as historical value. In August 1968, the young Romanian head of state, Nicolae Ceaușescu, was the only East bloc leader to

40 See, for instance, the works of Kegelmann, Tudorică, and Schau, which are built on individual case studies, as well as Kurt Arne Markel's study of Werner Söllner's life and work and Delia Cotârlea's monograph on Anemone Latzina.

condemn the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact members, a statement which strengthened the belief of Romanian (and Romanian-German) intellectuals in social reforms at home and which was formative for the 1970s generation of writers, then in their late teens or early twenties. The first poetry volume by a member of the generation, Frieder Schuller's *Kreise ums Unvollendete* [*Circles around the Incomplete*], appeared a year later, followed closely by the debut volumes of Franz Hodjak (*Brachland* [*Waste Land*], 1970), Anemone Latzina (*Was man heute so dichten kann* [*What One Can Write These Days*], 1971), and Bernd Kolf (*Zwischen 7 und ∞* [*Between 7 and ∞*], 1971). Also in 1969, the *Neue Banater Zeitung* started the talent search that would join the youngest members of the generation to those mentioned above. If 1968 thus marks the ideological beginning of the generation, 1988 marks the end of its literary career in Romania. That year saw the appearance of Franz Hodjak's volume *Luftveränderung* [*Change of Air*] – the last volume by a member of the 1970s generation, most of whom had by that time emigrated, to be published in Romania before the fall of communism in December 1989.

Over those two decades, the poets of the 1970s generation published almost 50 individual volumes of poetry and were featured in numerous anthologies and periodicals. Whenever possible, I refer the reader to poetry volumes and anthologies, which are easier to access than periodicals for further study. For poems which appeared in periodicals first, I refer to this first printing only when its context is of special significance or when the text has been altered in subsequent printings.

In the absence of ready English translations of the poems – Robert Elsie's *The Pied Poets* is an exception, but provides a different selection from mine – and other texts, I have used my own translations from the German throughout the analysis. While I do not claim a literary standard for my verse translations, in many cases I have felt that mere literal fidelity would

neither do justice to the poems nor satisfactorily illuminate the attempted analyses. I have thus chosen to travel the middle ground between a close rendition of the original structure and language and significant departure from both whenever I thought that a too close translation threatened to obscure rather than illuminate the understanding of the poems. The analyses of the poems are, of course, based on the German version of the texts and include literal translations of the German original to facilitate understanding of the unique features on which the discussion is based. Title translations are almost always literal, in order to convey the original associations with the title words.

Chapter 2

Social and Political Themes in the Poetry of the 1970s Generation

The Poetry of Social and Political Criticism: Phases and Definitions

The German poets born during and after World War II in Romania saw themselves as belonging to a socially and politically engaged generation. Unlike writers of the previous generations, they had experienced neither the war nor the deportations and Stalinist terror practices of its aftermath directly, and they were at first confident about the socialist ideals of their upbringing. Come of age in a period of relative – although highly manipulated – political openness in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they also displayed confidence in the intentions of the new government, headed by a young Nicolae Ceaușescu, to move towards a more liberal socialist society. What is more, they believed that they could play a role in this transition by helping to question old ideas and disseminate new ones through the medium of the written word, especially poetry.

Their attitude was associated in the very beginning with the notion of literary engagement, a term which had reached Romanian-German debates through contemporaneous German poetry and criticism.⁴¹ Anemone Latzina was one of the first members of the generation to claim “poésie engagée” as her literary program:

Es gibt – für mich – nur Lyrik: poésie engagée als einzige von der ich etwas halte und erwarte. Unter Engagement aber verstehe ich, die Partei des Sozialismus zu ergreifen . . . Ich versuche, das Einfache zu sagen, über die kleinen Probleme zu schreiben – über die grossen, die “unerhörten Ereignisse” ist schon soviel gesagt worden . . . (“Gedichte als Minimalprogramm” 8)

41 A review of “engaged poetry in West Germany” by German critic Rolf Seeliger appeared in the May-June issue of *Neue Literatur* of 1966. The journal also published texts by and a series of interviews with East German poets who were considered exemplary for an engaged literature, such as Günter Kunert, Volker Braun, Reiner Kunze, Rainer and Sarah Kirsch, Karl Mickel, Heinz Czechowski, Heinz Kahlau, and Wulf Kirsten.

For me, there is only poetry: poésie engagée is the only kind I believe in and expect something of. By engagement I understand taking the side of socialism . . . I try to talk about the simple things, to write about the small problems – much has already been said about the big ones, the “unprecedented events” . . .

The casual linking of “small problems” – simple, everyday topics – and the furthering of socialism in Latzina's early program speaks to her understanding of poems as small corrective measures in a collaborative effort toward a better (socialist) society. What appears here like a natural link, however, was a highly disputed correlation. In interviews and discussions with titles such as “Engagement ist Verantwortung” [“Engagement Is Responsibility”] and “Engagement als Chance und Veränderung” [“Engagement as Opportunity and Transformation”], the 1970s generation of poets attempted to justify its poetic enterprise and further adapt the term to the Romanian-German context. As defined in the latter round-table discussion from 1973, led by Bernd Kolf and attended by Aktionsgruppe Banat members Michael Bleiziffer, Albert Bohn, Werner Kremm, Johann Lippet, Gerhard Ortinau, Richard Wagner, and Ernest Wichner, engagement denotes participation in the public sphere through poems which reflect critically on current social and political reality. Although Wagner suggests that “jeder engagierte Text ist auch politisch” (“each engaged texts is also political”; “Engagement als Chance” 8), engagement is understood here as having a social rather than a political purpose: it is meant to change broader attitudes not influence specific forms of government.

A year earlier, the poet Franz Hodjak had articulated a similar understanding of engagement as a critical stance towards accepted social norms:

unter engagement verstehe ich nicht, über geleistetes zu sprechen – dabei könnte man sich leicht ver-sprechen –, sondern engagiertsein heißt, geleistetes bewußt in frage zu stellen, als einzige möglichkeit, weitere prespektiven für verbesserungen freizulegen, als einziger weg zu fortschritt. . . . die einzige aufgabe, wodurch das gedicht als sprachkunstwerk heute existenzberechtigung erhält, ist, mit der umwelt einen dialog aufzunehmen, d.h. eine gegenleistung zu schaffen, wobei die leistung der umwelt als these gelten dürfte, die gegenleistung des gedichts als antithese, aus denen wiederum die umwelt die synthese zu vollziehen hat, ein dialektischer prozeß also, der mit fortschritt

gleichzusetzen ist. (“Interview mit mir selbst” 13)

by engagement i don't mean speaking about achievements – one could easily mis-speak in the process. on the contrary, being engaged means knowingly questioning achievements as the only possibility of opening perspectives for corrections, as the only path to progress. . . . the only function which entitles the poem to existence as an art form today is to take up a dialogue with our environment, in which the achievements of our environment are the thesis and the achievements of the poem the antithesis out of which our environment has to draw a synthesis – a dialectic process which is equivalent to progress.

Although neither the members of the Aktionsgruppe Banat nor Franz Hodjak could point out more plainly the existing social structures (identified as “Geleistetes,” or 'achievements,' in Hodjak's essay) in need of questioning, both clearly saw the poets' roles as promoters of critical dialogues about social reality. For this reason, poetry was called on to reflect the existing social environment and to reject any form of escapism (exemplified especially by literature centred on the traditions of the Romanian-German minority). The simplified “dialectic” process between environment and poetry outlined by Hodjak points not only to the poet's Marxist self-understanding (shared with other members of his generation) but also to the crucial role his generation assigned to writing as a direct means of communication with the wider public.

In an interview with Richard Wagner from 1979, the critic Walter Fromm exposed the underlying assumptions of this kind of engagement, which, he argued, was based “auf Optimismus im allgemeinen und auf den Glauben an die Wirksamkeit sprachlich-künstlerischer Kommunikation im besonderen” (“on optimism in general and on the belief in the effectiveness of linguistic-artistic communication in particular”; Wagner, “Interview” 53). Such optimism, in turn, was fuelled by a conception of the author “als einem Repräsentanten und einer moralisch haftenden Instanz” (“as a representative and as a moral authority”), but also as someone who works in “Komplizität mit dem Leser” (“complicity with the reader”). The comment is illuminating both for the poets' earlier attitude towards their social roles and for their situation at

the time of the interview, less than a decade from their debuts. The Aktionsgruppe Banat, founded in 1972, had been dissolved in 1975, when three of its members – Gerhard Ortinau, Richard Wagner, and William Totok, as well as their friend and collaborator, the critic Gerhardt Csejka – were arrested by the Romanian secret service, the Securitate. The state's intervention into what had been conceived as a platform of open (literary) exchange was an unmistakable signal that such expressions were no longer tolerated. Poetry could no longer be conceived in direct dialectical contact with its environment, as envisioned by Hodjak, but was now understood as a form of communication which relied heavily on the reader's mediation.⁴²

The move from the belief in direct communication to hope in mediated understanding, in which the reader must supply his or her own information in order to unlock the text (the famous “reading between the lines” occurring in all socialist societies), was accompanied in Romanian-German literary criticism by a move from the notion of “Engagement” to that of “engagierte Subjektivität” (“engaged subjectivity”). Coined by Walter Fromm in 1979 (“Vom Gebrauchswert”), the term “engaged subjectivity” was meant to reflect both the continuities and the changes in the generation's attitude. The continuity was provided by the poets' interest in – or engagement with – current social reality. The change, denoted by the addition of “subjectivity,” referred to the new expression of this engagement through personal reflections on everyday occurrences. The tension between the two incongruous terms, which called forth such obfuscating definitions as Peter Motzan's description of engaged subjectivity as the expression of the “persönliche Betroffenheit des vergesellschafteten Individuums” (“personal involvement of the socialised individual”; “Kontinuität und Wandlung” 99), was not accidental: in the interpretative space it opened, the initiated reader could deduce that the real change had

42 This recognition is clearly expressed by Walter Müller in his review of Franz Hodjak's 1986 volume *Augenlicht* [*Eyesight*], entitled “Hoffnung auf den Leser” [“Hope in the Reader”].

occurred not in the poets' attitudes, but in Romania's increasingly restrictive political climate. Like many others, the Romanian-German poets had sought to salvage the expression of their social ideas by limiting their claims as expressions of subjective experience.

As Walter Fromm noted in an introduction to post-war Romanian-German poetry published in West Germany in 1983, the difference between the poetry of the early 1970s and that at the end of the decade is the disappearance of the elements of “Hoffnung and Utopie” (“hope and utopia”) from the “Gesellschaftskritik” (“social criticism”) that had always formed the basis of the generation's social engagement (“Die Entdeckung des Ichs” 146). Where the early poetry had been conceived as “vorsätzlich Handlung” (“deliberate action”; “Die Zeichen der Zeit” 8), by the early 1980s it had become merely questioning, the gesture not of the “Handelnden” (“actors”) but of the “Urteilenden” (“judges”; Hodjak, “Was Literatur vermag”). Although the poets repeatedly maintained their commitment to a critical evaluation of their environment, they could no longer hope to effect social change through such criticism.

The poets' desire to affect public opinion through their writing should not to be confused, of course, with their actual ability to do so. Although the poets' reception among their intended audience – the Romanian-German minority – has not been studied, the poets themselves do not believe to have had much impact with the wider public (Hodjak, Personal interview). However, as their means of expression became more codified in the 1980s, interest in the social observations hidden in their poetry grew, especially outside of Romania. In the same introduction mentioned above, Walter Fromm underlines the main functions of the generation's poetry in the early 1980s as

zum korrigierenden und in Frage stellenden Gestus sich durchzuringen, Ideologie dort zu überführen, wo sie zur Mystifizierung (etwa der Geschichte) und zur oft absurden Verdrehung von Sachverhalten (besonders solcher des Alltagslebens) verkommt. (“Die Entdeckung des Ichs” 144)

becoming a corrective and questioning gesture, uncovering ideology wherever it degenerates into mystification (of history, for instance) and into the absurd contortion of facts (especially pertaining to daily life).

Poetry had become, if not an alternative public sphere, then the only place to articulate alternatives to the official versions of Romania's past and present. As such, it was engaged in a new kind of criticism: whereas the early poetry was directed towards Romania's social structures, the poetry of the late 1970s and 1980s was directed against Romania's political system.

Given the reliance on poetry to provide a corrective to official depictions of life under Romanian communism, it is not surprising that the hidden political criticism has become one of the most discussed aspects of the generation's poetry. This aspect occupies, for instance, a whole chapter in Claire de Oliveira's extensive study of post-war Romanian-German literature.⁴³ Presented in contrast to the servile verses of Party writers, the poetry of the 1970s generation embodies instead the voice of "dissidence" announced in Oliveira's title, and the French critic examines in detail the methods by which the poets denounced Romania's increasingly totalitarian regime. The use of the term "dissidence,"⁴⁴ however, is a contested one in criticism dealing with the Romanian-German context. In a sensitive analysis of the political conditions under which post-war Romanian-German literature was produced, Horst Schuller Anger rejects the term, together with "opposition" and "resistance," as misleading when compared with the open opposition occurring in other socialist countries, proposing instead the concept of "Verweigerung" ("non-cooperation"; 170). The critic illustrates this concept with examples of hidden and double meanings in poetry and journalism, which could be understood only within a

43 Oliveira 165-218.

44 The term "dissident" is also employed repeatedly by Thomas Krause to designate the attitude of the Banat authors in the 1980s. See section 3.3.1, "Vom staatskonformen Autor zum Dissidenten," pp. 109-53.

certain context by initiated readers. The same idea is expressed in Gudrun Schuster's term "Nichtvereinnahmung" ("non-appropriation"; 64), which denotes the authors' attempt to write outside of the official discourse. Most recently, Petra Kory has returned to the concept of "kritische Lyrik" ("critical poetry"; "Die rumäniendeutsche Lyrik" 462) in her comparative study of Romanian-German and East-German poetry of the 1960s and 70s.⁴⁵ The concept of "critical poetry" accounts for both the early "engagement" and the late "engaged subjectivity" phases of the generation's poetry and comes closest to defining the attitude that pervaded both phases. However, as this attitude underlies the generation's whole poetic endeavour, it is useful to differentiate between an early poetry of social criticism, whose object was to influence public behaviour, and a later poetry of political criticism, whose aim was to expose the Romanian government's abuse of its citizens. At the limits of critical poetry lies the voicing of personal crisis under Ceaușescu's totalitarian regime of the late 1970s and 1980s. While the object of this latter poetry, exemplified here by a group of winter poems, is not first and foremost political criticism, its deeply personal depiction of the effects of Ceaușescu's government on the German intellectuals of Romania has given it a special ability to call attention to the conditions of its writing.

As the expression of disapproval by pointing out faults or shortcomings, criticism is usually understood as a direct form of communication. Within the context of a literature written under conditions of censorship, however, such an understanding of criticism cannot be taken for granted. Although the limits of what could be written and in what form varied widely between 1968 and 1988 – the late 1960s and early 1970s being a relatively tolerant period compared to the late 1970s and the 1980s – at no time was literary expression entirely free. Expressing

45 Kory's concept is borrowed from Karl Heinz Wüst's discussion of subversive practices in the GDR poetry of the 1960s and 70s. See Wüst 1-4.

disapproval, especially, was only possible during the early years and required a careful balancing act between what William Totok has termed “Scheinunabhängigkeit” (“apparent independence”) and “Loyalitätserklärung” (“loyalty decalaration”) (“Literatur und Personenkult” 97). The difficulty was rooted in the ambiguity of Ceaușescu's cultural policies, which called for both open exchanges of opinion and the maintenance of a clear ideological (i.e. socialist) position (Fischer 148-9). This meant that writers could articulate their desire for change only if their doing so did not appear to undermine Romania's socialist enterprise. The communist system and ideology were never open to discussion. The list of taboo topics grew in the latter half of the 1970s and included mismanagement and corruption within Party ranks, the personality cult around Ceaușescu, defection and the inability to travel abroad, the post-war deportations to the USSR and the Bărăgan, and topics undermining the ideal image of a socialist society, such as poverty, hunger, sexuality, and depression (Schuller Anger 167-8). Given these limitations, thematising a taboo topic was already an act of defiance, as was, increasingly, the failure to thematise a desired topic (such as the topos of socialist construction discussed below). More or less direct criticism could be articulated instead at the population at large, at international events and players, such as the US involvement in the Vietnam War and the war's reception in the media, and, of course, at one's self. Hidden criticism was expressed instead through the development of a set of metaphors for the abuses of the system and their effects on Romania's citizens.

The Rejection of the Poetry of Socialist Construction

For the post-war writers, social criticism started with the rejection of all former poetic models: the community-centred poetry of the Romanian-German minority, the abstract poetry of

interiority of the pre-war avant-garde (which had seen a brief renaissance after the war), and especially the officially-sanctioned poetry of praise of the 1950s and 60s (which was continued, with increased focus on the person of the country's leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, through the 1970s and 80s). Against these models, the 1970s generation of poets proposed a poetry reflecting (on) the current conditions in Romania and the world, expressed in clear, everyday language and offering independent evaluations, including critical ones.

The available models for socially engaged poetry at the time of the generation's debut prescribed an exclusively positive view of Romania's social and political transformation since 1944. All the possible depictions of life in contemporary Romania were covered by a limited number of set topoi

dessen sich Parteiverlautbarungen, Tagespresse und Rundfunk ebenso bedienten wie die eigentliche Poesie: Die Stadt war nur noch als Bauplatz denkbar, das Land als blühender Garten, das Volk als Helden befreiter Arbeit. (Stiehler 126)

used by Party communiques, daily press and radio, as well as actual poetry: the city was only conceivable as a construction site, the country as a blooming garden, the people as heroes of enfranchised work.

These highly stylized depictions, which bore no resemblance to actual living conditions, good or bad, because they lacked any specific detail, only served to underline the rightness of the country's political system and leaders.

The topos of construction (“Aufbau”),⁴⁶ especially, was a prevalent one in the literature of the time. The activity of erecting a building metaphorically stood for the development of the socialist system, as in Else Kornis' “Unser Bau” [“Our Building”]:

Dem neusten Tag ist unser Bau entsprossen

46 The German noun “Aufbau” has a number of English equivalents, including “construction,” “composition,” “configuration,” “erection,” and “development.” While the nearest translation of the phrase “sozialistischer Aufbau” is “socialist development,” this translation is misleading for the specific topos of building discussed here. For this reason, I have chosen to translate “Aufbau” as “construction” instead.

als wurzelfeste Pflanze,
an diesem Bau hängt unser aller Herz.
Karpatenerz
wird wie ein Schatz erschlossen,
Beton gemischt
und Stahl gegossen
für Pfeiler, die aus altem Boden
in hohe Bläue ragen
und zu den Höhen unsrer Zeit;
und es wird Stahl gegossen
für die Traversen unsrer Einigkeit. (*Fahnen im Wind* 6)

Out of the newest day shot up our building
strong-rooted plant
to which all our hearts adhere.
Carpathian ore
is unlocked like a treasure,
concrete is mixed
and steel is poured
for pylons rising from the old ground
into heights of blue
into the heights of our time.
And steel is poured
for the traverses of our unity.

The poem uses a typical technique of representing human activity – in this case construction – as a natural occurrence by intermingling building terminology (“concrete,” “steel,” “pylons,” “traverses”) with vocabulary describing the natural world (“sprouted,” “strong-rooted plant,” “ground”). The metaphor of buildings as flowers equates human activity with natural beauty, order, and inevitability. As if belonging to the natural cycle, the human constructions of the “newest day” (line 1) rise out of the “old ground” (line 8), erasing any historical opposition.

Already in the title, the construction is represented as belonging to the group, which, as the repetition of the first person singular possessive indicates, includes the speaker. The group is not delimited any further in this stanza and is identified only through the geographical marker of the Carpathians (one of the defining features of the Romanian landscape) in line 4, thus presumably referring to all Romanian citizens, regardless of ethnicity. The poem's emphasis on

unity in the enterprise of socialism, which is directly addressed in the last line of the first stanza, is reinforced in the second stanza:

Es ist, als hätte eine Hand
die Kelle unsrer Zeit geführt
und alles aufgestellt,

.....
Es ist nicht eine Hand,
es sind unendlich viele Hände,
die Stein um Stein zum Bau des Lebens fügen,
es ist das ganze Land,
geführt von einer Hand! (7)

It is as if one hand
had led the trowel of our time
and set up everything

.....
It's not one hand.
It's many hands
assembling stone for stone the building of our lives.
It's the entire country
guided by one hand!

In the second stanza, the poem recurs to the common synecdoche of the hands as a symbol of the unity of the country under strong leadership.⁴⁷ The potential opposition between “one” and “many” is disarmed from the beginning by the use of the subjunctive, which underlines the appearance of the “many” as “one.” Towards the end of the stanza, the “many” become a whole (“ganz”) under the leadership of “one.”

If the “one” remains an abstract entity in Else Kornis' poem, in Hans Schuller's “Augustsonne durchglüht unser Haus” [“August Sun Glows through Our House”] its identity is unmistakably spelled out. Like Kornis' poem, “Augustsonne” is written in the first person plural and speaks in the name of the community, which is identified here through the temporal reference in the title (August 1944 being the month in which Romania switched from the Axis to

47 In a previous print version of the poem, the adjectives “eine” and “einer” are italicized, stressing the unity of the people and the importance of the Party's leadership even more. See Kornis 23-4.

the Allied side in World War II, the turning point of Romania's history in socialist discourse).⁴⁸

Taking the “Schutt und Asche” (“rubble and ashes”) of the end of the war as its starting point, the poem praises the achievements of the new socialist republic under the leadership of the Communist Party:

Es war nicht leicht:
Wir aber bauten im Auftrag der Klasse.
Bauten, geführt von der Partei.

Jedes Jahr ist ein Stockwerk
am Hochbau des Sozialismus.
Wir bauen gut. (*Lichtkaskaden* 101).

It wasn't easy,
but we were building in the name of our class,
were building guided by the party.

Each year is a level
in the highrise of socialism.
We build well.

The poem directly identifies the act of building with the development of socialism, which is represented as a limitless highrise (“Hochbau”). Although still under construction, the socialist project is not open to discussion – the poem offers a pre-emptive evaluation of the project as “well built” (line 6).

This rigid understanding of construction as the fulfilment of an inherently right project is challenged in the Romanian-German poetry of the post-war generation. Although the responses of the generation members vary from the attempt to modify the topos of construction to encompass a wider range of meanings to outright rejection, “building” is never an unproblematic term in their poetry. In “Sprechen für geplante Zeiten” [“Speaking for Planned Times”], Anton Sterbling plays, for instance, on the semantic distinction between “bauen” (“to build”) and its

48 For a discussion of this date in the poetry of the 1970s generation, see chapter 3.

compound, “aufbauen” (“to build up” or “erect,” but also “to develop”):

Bauen heißt: aus Beton und Glas
einen Platz zum Schlafen
herrichten.

Aufbauen heißt: so zu bauen,
daß auch ein Platz
für die Sonne bleibt.

Bauleute werden sich vor dem Beton fürchten,
Erbauer hingegen werden die Fenster öffnen.

Man wird verschieden wohnen
zwischen Beton und Glas. (Stephani, *Befragung heute* 69)

Building means: making
a sleeping place
out of concrete and glass.

Erecting means: building
so that we also make
a place for the sun.

Construction workers will fear the concrete,
Constructors, however, will open the windows.

One will live differently
between concrete and glass.

The tension between the two nouns, “bauen” and “aufbauen,” is set up in the first stanza through two symmetrical definitions. While the first definition provides a practical interpretation of building (the use of concrete and glass to create a place to sleep), the second surprises by offering a reinterpretation of the first which has nothing to do with practical considerations. The second definition underlines both the similarity and the difference between the two concepts: as a compound of “bauen,” “aufbauen” incorporates the latter but also aims to do better, as indicated by the prefix “auf” (“up”). Building better, the stanza suggests, means moving beyond the practical and toward less tangible values, such as beauty, warmth, and harmony.

The second stanza deepens the opposition created by the first through the introduction of two kinds of builders: “Bauleute” (“construction workers”) and “Erbauer” (“constructors”). The

contrast between the two categories is achieved through the choice of words – “construction worker” denotes hands-on practicality, while “constructor” suggests visionary creativity – the actions of the figures – while the construction workers respond to a new vision of building with fear, the constructors embrace it – and their identification with either solid yet impenetrable concrete⁴⁹ or open windows. This last contrast is repeated in the third stanza, in which concrete and glass stand for the different (“verschieden”) solutions to living in the buildings (i.e. societies) of the future.

Sterbling's poem does not contain any direct criticism of the socialist society evoked by the topos of “Aufbauen,” yet it is also very different from the poems of praise of Else Kornis and Hans Schuller. The central opposition on which the poem is structured indicates that there are at least two paths to building a (socialist) society. Although the poem seems optimistic about the future, the last stanza may also be a warning that one will live only as well as the construction of one's society permits.

An even farther step from the unconditional glorification of Romania's socialism is represented by Anemone Latzina's “Lobgesang” [“Song of Praise”]. Published in the same anthology as “Unser Bau,” Latzina's verses reduce poems such as Kornis' to the absurd.⁵⁰ What announces itself as a straightforward poem of praise – a much-practiced genre of the time – is actually a laconic deconstruction of the topos of building the socialist society:

Da wird ein Haus gebaut.

49 The association may also have a satirical implication, as old-fashioned, hard-line Party functionaries were known in German as “Betonkommunisten” (“concrete communists”).

50 Poems such as Else Kornis', however, allowed Latzina's critique to be published: “[C]'est précisément le fait qu'il existe une multitude de poèmes de ce genre qui rend le palimpseste [of Latzina's poem] difficile à déceler et fait que le censeur, l'identifiant à cette tradition . . . qui'l veut au contraire dénoncer, a pu choisir l'incorporer dans une anthologie de propagande” (“[I]t is exactly the multitude of poems of this genre that makes the palimpsest [of Latzina's poem] difficult to detect and allows the censor, who identifies it with a tradition it actually denounces, to include it into a propaganda anthology”; Oliveira 204).

Da wird ein Feld bebaut.
Da legt man Straßen.
Und da pflanzt man Bäume.

Da baut man einen Sozialismus.
Was baut man da?

Da wird ein Haus gebaut.
Da wird ein Feld bebaut.
Da legt man Straßen.
Und da pflanzt man Bäume. (*Fahnen im Wind* 81)

A house is being built there.
A field is being tilled there.
Streets are being laid there.
And trees are being planted there.

A socialism is being built there.
What is being built there?

A house is being built there.
A field is being tilled there.
Streets are being laid there.
And trees are being planted there.

Dedicated to the East German poet Heinz Kahlau and written “in seinem Stil” (“in his style”), the poem was also included in Latzina's debut volume *Was man heute so dichten kann* [*What One Can Write These Days*] from 1971. “Lobgesang” consists of three stanzas, where the third stanza is an exact repetition of the first: four short statements noting simply the construction of a house, the cultivation of a field, the laying down of roads, and the planting of trees. The repetition is offset by the two lines making up the second stanza: a statement and a question.

This simple structure is indeed reminiscent of a song, but the message is hardly one of praise. Far from depicting socialism as a series of glorious achievements carried out by a united collective, the poem represents the building of socialism as a limited number of quite ordinary and repetitive actions belonging to unidentified individuals. The entire poem employs only the passive voice or the indefinite pronoun “man” (“one”), making no reference to either the

workers or the leaders of the socialist society. Similarly, the indefinite article preceding the noun “socialism” in line 5 points to the relativism of the enterprise: the possibility of “a” socialism among others robs the concept of the special status it held in official discourse as the unique and inevitable end of history.

The reversed order of the two central lines – with the answer preceding the question – suggests that the actions described in the first stanza have been made to fit foregone conclusions. The suggestion of empty rhetoric (Kory, “Lyrik im Zeichen” 107) is intensified by the repetition of the first four lines after the question in line 6, which, within the structure of a song – to which the title alludes – would represent the rehearsed answer of a call-and-response.

Like Latzina's ironic “Lobgesang,” Richard Wagner's “Lobender Zweifel” [“Praising Scepticism”], appearing in the same volume, is a play with the concepts of both praise and socialist construction.⁵¹ Unlike the detached and impersonal statements of “Lobgesang,” however, Wagner's poem constructs a persona eager to contribute to the change of these concepts:

ich lobe das bauen
ich zweifle an den bauten
ich baue sie um

ich lobe indem ich zweifle
ich verändere indem ich
zweifelnd
baue (*Fahnen im Wind* 102)

i praise the building
i question the buildings
i re-build them

i praise by questioning

51 Other manipulations of the praise poem can be found in Rolf Frieder Marmont's “Tor unserer Zeit” [“Fool of Our Times”] and in Werner Söllner's “Unhymnische Feststellungen” [“Non-Anthemistic Conclusions”] (*Wetterberichte* 37).

i create change by
questioning
building

The repetition of the first person singular pronoun (which occurs seven times in as many lines, five times in the first position) demonstrates the deep personal implication of the speaker in the building of society. Despite this implication, the “I” differentiates very clearly between the act of constructing and its achievements: the “Bauen” (“building”) and “Bauten” (“buildings”) of the first stanza. This differentiation enables the split attitude announced in the title: the possibility of being both supportive and critical of the socialist project. Indeed, as the second stanza indicates, praising and doubting become synonymous, as do building and changing.

This inversion of concepts goes hand in hand with the insistence on the individual's contribution to society. Read in the context of the genre suggested by the title, the poem further articulates a new position for the poet as both praiser and critic. The role of constructor is appropriated for the poet, who uses this capacity not to blindly follow a direction but to initiate change.

The role of the poet as a new type of constructor is also claimed in Franz Hodjak's portraits of the East-German poets Volker Braun and Reiner Kunze from the volume *Spielräume* [*Elbow Rooms*] (1974). In “Volker Braun,” the poet appears as an innovator who, by changing the way he writes, changes the attitude of his audience:

die landschaft seiner worte ist keine
sanfte gegend
mit stillen sammelplätzchen
ansichtskartenidyll

umgewandelt zu großen bauplätzen
liegen die wortfelder
offen und rissig

wer herkommt soll nicht
sich erbaun sondern mitbaun (*Spielräume* 23)

the landscape of his words is no
gentle region
with quiet meeting spaces
postcard idyll

converted to large construction sites
the word fields lie
open and rough

whoever comes here should not
edify himself but help erect

The poem centres on the metaphor of the wordscape, in which writing is equated with the creation of an entire physical and social environment. Two types of such environments are presented by the poem: the first, described with terminology borrowed from the visual arts (“landscape,” “postcard,” “idyll”), stands for convenience and social inertia. Its attributes – gentleness, silence, and smallness – belong to the iconography of the weak feminine and, as such, are devalued in the poem. The contrasting, favoured environment, described in the second stanza, is identified as one of “construction sites” and fields. Large, open, and rough, this markedly masculine environment is one of action.

Construction is understood here as active involvement in society, as denoted by the preposition “mit” (“with”) which precedes the verb “bauen” in the last line. (Its opposite, the reflexive verb “sich erbauen,” meaning “to edify one's self,” suggests, through its spiritual reference, passive reception.) By creating “construction sites” through his poems rather than gathering places for quiet contemplation, the title poet enables active participation in the construction of society.

Written at the height of Hodjak's confidence in a more democratic socialism, “Volker Braun” partakes perhaps the most in the official socialist rhetoric by employing the gendered dichotomy between a (feminised) bourgeois literature and a (masculine) socialist one. Through

the portrayal of another poet, the text also articulates perhaps the best Hodjak's own hope of influencing society through the medium of verse.⁵² However, at the time of the publication of *Spielräume* in 1974, this hope was already starting to wane. Printed across the page from “Volker Braun,” the poem “Gegenspiel” [“Counter Play”] provides a more shaded interpretation of the individual's relationship with his or her own constructions. The poem ponders the dangers of becoming imprisoned in one's own creations, which are represented as multi-layered and double-edged through the play with the semantic field of “bauen” and the switch in the relationship between subject and object: “im bau den ich aufbaue eingebaut / ist ein bau der mich abbaut” (“constructed into the construction i construct / is a construction which deconstructs me”; 22). Although in the first line the “I” is the subject and the creator of his own construction, already in the second line, he is the object of another building project. While this second building is located within the speaker's construction, it also overshadows it:

ein bau aus vorwänden
mit lückenlosem dach
das den gang verbirgt der gestirne
überschweigt mich . . .
.....
fenster die aussicht gewähren
nur bis zum nachbarn
umstellen mein wachsen . . . (22)

a construction of prefabricated walls
with a tight roof
which hides the motion of the stars
hushes me . . .
.....
windows whose view reaches
only to the neighbour
enclose my growth . . .

52 The concept of poetry as a means of stimulating social involvement articulated in the poem was elaborated by Hodjak in a subsequent essay entitled “Literatur und Gesellschaft” [“Literature and Society”], parts of which were reprinted on the dust jacket of Hodjak's next volume of poetry, *Offene Briefe* [*Open Letters*](1976).

The building in which the “I,” now reduced to an object, finds himself silenced and enclosed bears the features of a typical socialist-era apartment building. Made of prefabricated walls (as well as of pretence: the word “Vorwand” bears out both possibilities) and closed to the natural world, the cramped quarters of the apartment building forcefully reduce the speaker's horizon, as well as his free expression. These details suggest that the building inside the speaker's construction belongs to the socialist system. Despite the speaker's incipient involvement in constructing this system, some of its features have come to dominate and confine him.

The allusion to the dehumanising effects of the socialist enterprise in Hodjak's “Gegenspiel” is echoed more strongly in Horst Samson's “Neubau” [“New Building”]. Taking advantage of the double meaning of “Bau,” which, as in English, refers to both the act of building and its end product, the title recalls the topos of socialist construction in order to confront it with the depiction of life in a socialist tenement. As in Hodjak's poem, the apartment building thus comes to stand for the socialist project, in which human beings have become alienated:

ich grüße eine betonwand
zwei drei sätze
fallen wie zementstücke von der zunge

ich drücke einer betonwand
die hand
steige verlegen neben ihr
die treppe hoch

mieses wetter heute
sage ich zu einer betonwand
sonnige zeit
hallt es im treppenhaus zurück (*Reibfläche* 57)

i greet a concrete wall
two three sentences
fall like cement pieces from my tongue

i shake hands

with a concrete wall
walk up the stairs
shyly next to her

terrible weather today
i say to a concrete wall
sunny times
the stairway echoes back

The poem dramatises three encounters in an apartment building in which the neighbours the “I” meets have been substituted by concrete walls. Although the interaction seems to proceed normally – the participants greet each other, have conversations, shake hands, etc. – there is no real communication. This becomes evident in the last stanza, when the speaker's negative remark about the weather is returned by the echo as its polar opposite. Even though the remark seems innocuous, the completeness of its denial is telling. The poem denounces the ideological constraints of the socialist building, in which complaints are forbidden and the fiction of the “golden era” (referenced in the “sunny weather” of the penultimate line) is upheld at all cost.

Couched in absurd language, Samson's indictment of the socialist project as one in which people become alienated from both each other and their own opinions requires a great deal of context to make itself understood. For the reader familiar with the topos of socialist “Aufbau,” however, the satirical thrust of “Neubau” would have been plain, as would have been the double meaning of the last two stanzas in Mathias J. Schmitz's “Vier Vielzeiler” [“Four Many-Liners”]:

wer sagt: wir bauen jetzt ein neues leben,
das allen freude bringt, und damit meint:
es wird in zukunft vielleicht zeiten geben,
da keiner traurig ist und niemand weint,

der täuscht sich wohl. das beste an dem neuen,
dahin der lange weg uns einmal führt,
wird sein: daß wir uns etwas leiser freuen
und unsre trauer fröhlicher sein wird.

whoever says: we're building a new life
we'll all enjoy and thus implies

at times the future will be rife
with happiness and not with cries,

he errs. the best about the new
to which the path will lead instead
will be: a gladness tinged with blue
and sorrows made slightly more glad.

Setting the – possible – achievement of socialist goals in the distant future rather than in the past or in the present, Schmitz's verses take a swipe at the promise inherent in the poetry of socialist construction. Despite mimicking the tone and structure of many poems of praise (through the employment of rhyme and a regular meter, the first person plural, the dialogic construction, and the declarative sentences), “Vier Vielzeiler” flatly denies the claims of these poems. The high hopes invested in the socialist project are debunked as mystifications: even the best outcome would fall far short of the mark, while the worst outcome is left to the reader's imagination.

From Construction to Communication: Claiming a Space in the Romanian Public Sphere

The focus on the socialist topos of construction is largely replaced in the poetry of the 1970s generation with one on communication, especially on the possibilities and limits of public discourse. In the Romania of the late 1960s, public discussion was, if not entirely free, than at least outwardly encouraged. In an important speech held in March 1968, Nicolae Ceaușescu underlined the multiplicity of paths to the construction and depiction of socialist reality. Although the speech's primary intended application was foreign diplomacy, it was widely understood as an acknowledgement of the right to free public discussion by Romania's intellectuals (Gabanyi 148). In this general climate of openness towards matters of public interest, the young generation of Romanian-German poets set out to carve itself a space in the public forum. That the young Romanian-German poets understood themselves as free *and*

public participants is evidenced in Richard Wagner's blunt description of the initial attitude of the Aktionsgruppe Banat: "Was wir zu sagen hatten, sagten wir offen, wir hatten ja nichts zu verbergen, und was wir dachten, wollten wir unter die Leute bringen" ("What we had to say, we said openly, for we had nothing to hide, and what we thought, we wanted to disseminate"; "Die Aktionsgruppe Banat" 122).

Wagner and the Aktionsgruppe Banat's credo, "Man hat die Freiheit, die man sich nimmt" 'One has as much freedom as one claims,' is echoed in many Romanian-German publications of the time. Franz Hodjak's poem "Spielräume" ["Elbow Rooms"] from his eponymous 1974 volume is perhaps its most programmatic embodiment:

die freiheit
die täglich
uns spielraum
gewährt
ist immer so groß wie
der spielraum
den täglich
wir der freiheit gewähren (*Spielräume* 11)

the freedom
which daily
makes us
room
is always as big as
the room
which we daily
make for freedom

Programmatic texts, proclaiming either the speaker's own social engagement or his or her desire for social change, staked the poets' place in what seemed like the beginning of a genuine public sphere. In its loosest definition, the public sphere is a "realm of . . . social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (Habermas, "The Public Sphere" 136), a space in which private citizens come together in order to inform themselves and to further debate on subjects of common interest. The classical bourgeois public sphere described by

Jürgen Habermas is an institution guaranteed by liberal democracy and characterised by public discussion of “objects connected to the activity of the state” (136). Although political by definition, the public sphere has its roots in literary assemblies, such as the coffee houses and the salons of the 17th and 18th centuries, and in the printed texts (journals, treatises, but also novels and other literary productions) that offered them food for thought and discussion:

Even before the control over the public sphere by public authority was contested and finally wrested away by the critical reasoning of private persons on political issues, there evolved under its cover a public sphere in apolitical form – the literary precursor of the public sphere operative in the political domain. (Habermas, *The Structural Transformation* 29).

In this precursor to the public sphere, “critical debate ignited by works of literature and art was soon extended to include economic and political disputes” (33). This rehearsal of political discussions is evident in the poetry of the 1970s generation. In fact, as Walter Fromm has argued, the poetry of the young Romanian-German writers can be seen as a substitution for a genuine “kritisch-demokratische Öffentlichkeit” (“critical and democratic public sphere”; “Die Entdeckung des Ichs” 144).

What the poetry of the 1970s generation might contribute to the Romanian public sphere is thematised in Richard Wagner's “Klartext 1973” [“Plaintext 1973”]. The title poem of Wagner's debut volume, “Klartext 1973” underlines two core values of the generation from the very beginning: openness and timeliness. Written from the point of view of the first person plural, the poem attempts to locate the generation within the existing discourse:

in dieser wortreichen landschaft
daueraufenthalt nehmen
das unübersichtliche mit
doppelsinnigen gebärden ins
blickfeld zwingen
den wirrwarr der erscheinungen
der allmacht geltender ordnung entziehen
in ausführlicher rede den vorgefundenen
zustand augenfällig machen

unser beitrug in dieser runde
ist vorsätzlich und zugehörig
einem neuen gesichtspunkt (*Klartext* 63)

to take residence
in this word-rich landscape
to force the unmanageable
into the field of vision with
ambiguous gestures
to revoke the jumble of appearances
from the omnipotence of the existing order
to make obvious the found condition
in elaborate speech

our contribution to this round
is deliberate and belongs to
a new point of view

Borrowing vocabulary from the visual arts, the poem equates the literary sphere with a “word-rich landscape” – a common metaphor at the time, also employed by Hodjak in “Volker Braun” – and the activities of the generation with adjusting the way this landscape is viewed. Despite the poem's announced aim of clarity and its brevity, its intelligibility is obscured by a complex grammatical and lexical structure. The first stanza consists of four elliptical clauses lacking both subjects and predicates and broken up through the use of enjambment. The roughness of this structure requires the reader to continually readjust his or her perspective, thus modelling the adjustment described by the lines.

If the grammatical structure requires constant readjustment, the lexical structure requires constant interpretation. The first stanza makes frequent use of compounds and adjectival constructions used in a metaphorical sense to describe the changes proposed by the poem: forcing the examination of “unmanageable” issues, wresting away representation from those in power (the “omnipotence of existing order”), and depicting present reality through the “elaborate speech” of literature. The intended permanence of these changes is announced in the

first two lines as “taking residence” in the literary landscape. Appearing only at the beginning of the second stanza, the possessive adjective “our” focuses the claims of the first stanza as belonging not only to the speaker but to his whole generation, which is aligned in the last line with “a new point of view.”

Whereas the metaphors in the first stanza seem to refer to literary contributions, the use of “Runde” ‘round’ in the first line of the second stanza evokes the idea of public debate. Since 1965, the Romanian government had been holding “discussion rounds” not only with Party functionaries and foreign dignitaries but also with representatives of the different population strata, including the minorities.⁵³ Contributing to these discussions through the medium of verse was the stated intention of the 1970s generation.

While “Klartext 1973” promises that the speaker's generation will bring a new point of view to the exchanges of opinion between Romania's government and people, the poem remains vague about what this change might entail. More concrete examples are offered by poems such as Rolf Frieder Marmont's “Vorschlag” [“Proposal”] and Franz Hodjak's “Randnotiz” [“Marginal Note”].

Entitled simply “Vorschlag,” the opening poem of Rolf Frieder Marmont's debut volume *Fünfte Jahreszeit* [*Fifth Season*] is, as a challenge for historical revision, one of the most daring poems of social criticism of the 1970s generation (Kory, “Lyrik im Zeichen” 107). Built around the central metaphor of the political kitchen, in which historical events are the “Suppen der Geschichte” (“soups of history”; 9), the poem calls for the public's participation in punishing the “Oberköche” (“head chefs”) who have neglected to take responsibility for historical failures:

Fluch dem guten Ton!
Rein in die Kessel mit ihnen.

53 Cf. Fischer 90-4.

Laßt sie in ihrer eigenen Grütze ersaufen.
Aus ihren Rezepten dreht euch Fidibusse.
Topfguckerei soll von heut an keine Schande mehr sein.
Hebt die Deckel von den Töpfen
und tüchtig reingeguckt,
ob da nicht wieder
ein Medusenkopf liegt.
Überlaßt der Vergangenheit die Schuld der Versäumnis.
Laßt neue Kochbücher drucken. (9-10)

To hell with good manners!
Get them into the cauldrons.
Let them drown in their own mess.
Roll yourselves tapers out of their recipes.
From now on, watching the pot boil shan't be a disgrace anymore.
Lift the lids from the pots
and take a good look
in case there's a Gorgon head
in there again.
Let omission be a sin of the past.
Let new cookbooks be printed.

The tone of the second part of the poem, quoted above, is almost giddy, as the speaker calls for what amounts to a revolution. The stanza moves rapidly from the invitation to abandon all manners in the first line, to the violent overthrow of the “chefs” and the erasure of their ideas in the next three. Following the short outbursts of the first four lines, however, the lengthier line 5 introduces a change in tone, as the speaker shifts his attention from the present to the future (“von heut an” ‘from now on’). Elaborated over the last seven lines of the poem, the final change called for by the speaker is also the most important one: the examination of history for new horrors (the “Gorgon heads” of line 9) and, finally, the rewriting of the historical discourse in the guise of writing new “cookbooks.”

In addition to arguing for the need for wider control over the historical discourse (the poem speaks in the name of the multitude who bears the brunt of history), “Vorschlag” also uses its extended metaphor to camouflage a pointed expression of criticism. Seemingly referring to the need for vigilance announced in the preceding lines, the expression “Schuld der

Versäumnis” 'sin of omission' in line 10, together with the emphasis on renewed horrors in the “wieder” 'again' of line 8, also recalls the political excesses of Romania's immediate past, including the disappearance of those unwanted by the regime and their “omission” from historical representation.

The desire for the coincidence between the literary and the public sphere is perhaps best articulated in Franz Hodjak's “Randnotiz,” in which the speaker bemoans a literature which fails to engage contemporary international political issues. Written during the Vietnam War, the poem tries to promote attention to the conflict in the seemingly apathetic Romanian-German literary network:

in der rumäniendeutschen literatur
gibt es lyriker die sagen:
ich schreibe nur über situationen
die ich selbst erlebe

der das hört muß annehmen
ein lyriker schreibt über all das
was ihm nahe am herzen liegt

rumäniendeutsche lyriker
schreiben keine vietnam-gedichte

vietnam liegt ja auch ca. 8 000 km
von ihrem herzen entfernt (*Spielräume* 41)

in romanian-german literature
there are poets who say:
i only write about situations
i experience myself

whoever hears that must think
a poet writes about
what is close to his heart

romanian-german poets
don't write vietnam poems

vietnam is, after all, about 8 000 km
away from their hearts

Aimed at “Romanian-German poets,” the poem mocks traditional notions of poetry (invoked by the heart in the second stanza) in Romanian-German literature for being needlessly provincial. The mode of the poem is ironic: the first stanza offers a characterization of Romanian-German literature as one of personal experience, followed, in the second stanza, by a interpretation of this characterisation which equates personal experience with matters “close to the heart.” The ideological narrowness of this equation is exposed in the fourth stanza, in which the distance from Vietnam (which in the third stanza was declared *not* to be a subject of Romanian-German poetry) to the heart is given literally (“8000 km”). If “close to the heart” had the connotation of “dear,” “away from the heart” acquires the connotation of “unimportant.” The dismissal of Vietnam as a subject of poetry on the basis of personal distance is thus shown to be a judgement that the conflict is unimportant to those not directly participating in it, which, the poem implies, is unacceptable.

Like Marmont's “Vorschlag,” the title “Randnotiz” affects a nonchalance which stands in ironic contrast with the seriousness of the topic broached by the poem. The detached and impersonal tone of the poem stands in further contrast with its sweeping claims, not least of which is the assertion of “the Romanian-German literature” as an established and monolithic entity, when in fact the poem is addressed solely to the older segment of Romanian-German writers, the young generation already having taken up the cause of the Vietnam War, as discussed below. This ambiguity allows the poem to hover somewhere between call for action and indictment of contemporary poetic practice. In both cases, however, the poem evidences the desire for a more inclusive literature and, most importantly, for a literature which is in touch with current political issues.

Testing the Political Waters: The Thematisation of International Conflicts

Despite the repeatedly announced desire of the young generation of Romanian-German poets to contribute to an open discussion of social and political issues, Romanian politics remained taboo as a subject of public enquiry. The direct thematisation of politics in the generation's poetry thus occurs exclusively in poems dealing with international events, most prominently the 1973 coup d'état in Chile and the Vietnam War. In addition to these, the poetry of the 1970s generation covered a large range of current and historical international conflicts, from the Six-Day War in Günther Schulz's "Requiem oder zu Frieden" ["Requiem or For Peace"] (25-6) over the race conflicts in the US in Hans Matye's "San Quentin – 21. August 1971" (Schneider, *Wortmeldungen* 126) and Anemone Latzina's "Ein Vorschlag zur Lösung der Rassenfrage in den Vereinigten Staaten" ["A Proposal for Solving the Racial Question in the United States"] (*Tagebuchtage* 44), the Spanish Civil War in Matye's "Guernica" (Stephani, *Befragung heute* 21-2), Franz Hodjak's "Franco & Co." (*Offene Briefe* 24), and Richard Wagner's "Spaniengedicht" ["Poem about Spain"] (*Die Invasion* 56), the Portuguese Colonial War in Hodjak's "Leitspruch des Lissaboner Caetano-Regimes" ["Motto of the Caetano Regime in Lisbon"] (*Spielräume* 43) and "Caetano über Moçambique" ["Caetano about Mozambique"] (46), and youth agitation in Switzerland in Horst Samson's "Zürcher Polizeifunk" ["Zurich Police Radio"] (*Reibfläche* 58-9) to the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in William Totok's "Vergessene Wochenschau oder die Verhaftung und Hinrichtung Lumumbas" ["Forgotten News Reel or Lumumba's Arrest and Execution"] (*Freundliche Fremdheit* 25).

The predominance of Chile and Vietnam as subjects for the young Romanian-Germans is, of course, not accidental. As focal points of international attention, the two crises impacted

far more than their immediate environments and are part of the socio-historical location that defined the 1970s generation. The two conflicts particularly engaged the political imaginations of young Marxist intellectuals, providing the members of the the 1970s generation of Romanian-German writers with an opportunity to connect with leftist ideas worldwide:

Dabei war nicht so wichtig, was an jenen und anderen Brennpunkten der internationalen politischen Bühne tatsächlich geschah und welchen Stellenwert die Ereignisse für die betreffenden Gesellschaften in Wirklichkeit hatten, entscheidend war allein der subjektive Reflex auf die Tatsache, daß weltweit eine Bewegung entstand, deren Ziel es offensichtlich war, die Welt zum Besseren zu verändern. . . . [R]umäniendeutsche Literaten machten sich stark, um vom großen Kuchen auch für Rumänien eine Scheibe abzuschneiden. (Fromm, "Die Entdeckung des Ichs" 144-5)

What was actually happening at this or that focal point on the international political stage and what significance the events really had for the respective societies was less important, however. The decisive point was the subjective reflection of the fact that a global movement was taking shape, whose aim it was to change the world for the better. . . . [R]omanian-German intellectuals were agitating so they could claim a piece of the pie for Romania.

In the spring of 1968, *Neue Literatur* published a selection of Vietnam poems representing anti-war voices from the two Germanies and Austria. The chosen poems, by Hans Stilett, Reinhard Baumgart, Wolf Biermann, and Erich Fried, called for solidarity with Vietnam, drew parallels between the killings in Asia and the Holocaust, and expressed criticism against the United States government, media, and military. The selection was followed by an excerpt from the anti-Vietnam speech Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered on April 4, 1967 at a meeting of the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam in New York City. The original title of the speech, "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," was rendered in the translation as "Unsere Schande in Vietnam" ["Our Shame in Vietnam"]. The change of the title from one focusing on the future "beyond" the conflict to an admission – or rather assignation – of guilt is telling of the anti-American sentiment of the editors, which is further reinforced by the indication that Martin Luther King had been murdered a few months before the publication of the excerpt (the asterisk

leading to the footnote conveying this information is attached to the abbreviation “USA”) and the focus of the selection itself. Culled exclusively from the introductory part of the speech, the excerpt underlines apathetic America's “betrayal” of the Vietnamese in the face of the “destruction” of the latter's country and ends by asserting a strong connection between the Vietnam War and the American civil rights movement. Without the examples which flesh out this connection in King's original speech,⁵⁴ the assertion implies a similar “betrayal” and “destruction” of African-Americans, thus linking the issues not on a causal level, as King does, but on an ideological one, in order to highlight the systemic problems in the United State's handling of marginalised populations.

The Vietnam and Chile poems of the 1970s generation of Romanian-German poets connect to the discourses created by both the German-language anti-war poems and the Martin Luther King speech as represented in *Neue Literatur*. Thematic similarities between the two sets of poems are the call for solidarity with the nations in crisis, the thematisation of oppression against one's own people, and the condemnation of American intervention.⁵⁵ The similarities suggest that the young Romanian-German poets were deliberately engaging with the leftist discourses surrounding the issues in the German-language public sphere.⁵⁶ What is more, the placement of poems thematising political conflicts alongside other poems of social criticism

54 Cf. King, Jr, “A Time to Break Silence.”

55 A notable exception is the parallel between the Vietnam War and World War II drawn in the West-German poems but missing from the Romanian-German ones. Given the official suppression of Romania's alliance with Nazi Germany for most of World War II and the co-optation of the German minority by Nazi ideology, thematisations of the latter are rare in Romanian-German poetry. Cf. the discussion of this issue in chapter 3.

56 Poems with a critical attitude towards the “left,” such as Bernd Kolf's “Mitternachtsrhetorik” (“Rhetorics at Midnight”), which represents leftist intellectuals as self-satisfied bourgeois who rest (“füßen”) on the fame of German culture, are rare. The poem appeared in Kolf's debut volume, *Zwischen 7 und ∞* [*Between 7 and ∞*] (43-4), and again, with changed capitalization, in his second volume, *Die Bewohnbarkeit des Mondes* [*The Habitability of the Moon*] (5). It is unclear, however, if the poem is directed against German or Romanian-German intellectuals.

within the individual volumes suggests that they were conceived as an integral part of the public discussions towards which the verses aimed. Criticism of the United States' involvement in Vietnam and Pinochet's coup, especially, was controversial in Romania. While Ceaușescu had taken a much acclaimed stand against the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, his government continued trade relations with the US after the latter's involvement in Vietnam, as well as with Pinochet's Chile. This tacit support of the conflicts in Southeast Asia and South America was an unpopular policy with Romania's intellectuals.

As was already outlined in the discussion of Franz Hodjak's "Randnotiz" above, one of the first functions of the poems thematising international conflicts was to combat the perceived political apathy of the Romanian-German intellectuals and audience. In Anton Sterbling's "Heute 18" ["18 Today"], this apathy is embodied by a young woman, whose celebration of her 18th birthday is contrasted with the death of a soldier in Vietnam:

Sie war gerade achtzehn, heute, da die Zeitung wie immer,
eine Spalte Vietnam brachte. Doch sie merkte es nicht,
sonst sah sie es auch kaum, jene Spalte Krieg, heute
konnte sie es nicht sehen.
Sie stand vor dem Spiegel, kämmte sich ein Lied durchs
Haar und fand sich schön. Sie stand für sich allein
im Spiegel oder vielleicht für jenen jungen Mann
den sie noch niemals gesehen hatte.
Bestimmt für ihn haftet sie ihren Blick in den Spiegel
und will schön sein, da sie gerade 18 ist.
Er starb zur selben Zeit, in Vietnam, bloß den Tod,
von dem niemals in der Zeitung zu lesen sein wird.
Sie sahen sich niemals und wußten von allem nichts,
heute, da er starb und sie achtzehn ward.

She was just eighteen, today, as the newspaper brought the usual
Vietnam column. But she didn't notice it,
barely ever did, that column of war, today
she couldn't see it.
She stood in front of the mirror, combed a song through her
hair and thought herself beautiful. She stood there for herself
in front of the mirror, or perhaps she stood for that young man
she had never seen.

It's definitely for him that she clings to the image in the mirror
and wants to be beautiful, now that she is 18.
He died at the same time, in Vietnam, but the kind of death
that will never appear in a paper.
They never saw each other and never knew anything,
today, when he died and she was eighteen.

Written in plain, everyday language, without a regular rhythm or rhyme, and in complete sentences, "Heute 18" unfolds with the casualness of prose, or, given its depiction of two simultaneous moments in time, of film. Its fourteen lines, however, which are broken up by punctuation into a 4 - 4 - 3 - 3 or 4 - 4 - 4 - 2 arrangement, suggest one of the strictest of poetic forms – the sonnet. The first two groups of four lines, containing two sentences each, depict the gestures of the girl: her disregard of the newspaper with its "Vietnam column" and her preparation for the day in front of the mirror. The young man is introduced in the last two lines of the second group, where he appears as a possible suitor for the girl. This impression is strengthened in the next two lines (9 and 10) only to be shattered in line 11 by the information that he has died at the same time. Line 12 (which can be read together with line 11 or lines 13 and 14, depending on whether one regards the comma at its end to mark the extension of the previous idea or the beginning of a new one) foreshadows the anonymity of his death, which is then restated in the last two lines. Despite their matter-of-fact tone, lines 13 and 14 now cast a shadow over the event that gives the poem its title and ties the two protagonists together despite their ignorance of one other.

By leaving his protagonists nameless, Sterbling allows his poem to be located in any country sufficiently removed from Vietnam that the latter becomes no more than a short mention in the newspaper. The girl's indifference is paralleled by the indifference of the press (the boy's name will not be mentioned in the newspapers) and its public. Despite this apathy, however, the poem proposes an inherent connection between the two young people in the two elements of the

title: the temporal adverb “today” and the numeral “18,” each of which is repeated three times over the course of the poem. If “today” stands for the present and “18” for youth, being young in the present, the poem suggests, should be a strong enough connection to generate interest in each other's fate. The overlapping of the two protagonists' destinies is fleetingly captured in lines 9 and 10, in which the poem momentarily switches from the simple past (the tense denoting narration) to the the present (denoting immediacy). The moment captured by the lines suggests a parallel universe (connoted by the presence of the mirror), in which their two lives could intersect.

The desire to bridge the gap between people affected by crisis situations and the unaffected by-standers is also expressed in Ernest Wichner's “Chilegedicht” [“Poem about Chile”]. Unlike Sterbling's poem, with its use of the generalising third person, Wichner's articulates this desire in the first person. The personal involvement of the speaker is reminiscent of the programmatic declarations in other poems of social criticism of the 1970s generation:

zwischen chile
man sagte
 im herzen
 und dergleichen
zwischen chile und uns
wenn es dort dunkelt
wird es hier tag
 und umgekehrt
ich erkläre mich entschieden
gegen den gesellschaftlichen
 mißbrauch des
tag nacht
tag nacht
 wechsels (Wichner 94)

between chile
they said
 in our hearts
 and the like
between chile and us
when it gets dark there

day breaks out here
 and vice versa
 i declare myself resolutely
 against the societal
 abuse of the
 day night
 day night
 rotation

Whereas in “Heute 18” the adverbs of time stood for the simultaneity of different experiences, the “day” and “night” of Wichner's poem stand for the perceived impossibility of experiential overlap. The poem denounces this argument as “gesellschaftliche[r] Mißbrauch” (“societal abuse”) meant to maintain the distance between “Chile und uns” (“Chile and us”).

The mistrust of received information, already sounded but not elaborated in both Sterbling and Wichner's poems, was to become one of the most wide-spread themes of the poems dealing with crisis situations. If in “Möglichkeiten und Hoffnungen eines Chilenen in der augenblicklichen Lage” [“Possibilities and Hopes of a Chilean in the Momentary Situation”] Johann Lippert is still expressing hope in the intervention of the “Weltöffentlichkeit” (“world public”; Wichner 92), other poets of the generation had already started to articulate unease at the way information about the various conflicts was gathered, disseminated, and interpreted. In “Pro Chile,” Werner Söllner opposes a truthful “Mundfunk” (a neologism formed from the words for “mouth” and “broadcast”) to the untrustworthy official medium “Rundfunk” (“radio” or “broadcasting”; *Wetterberichte* 26-7), while in “Vietnam-Interesse” [“Interest in Vietnam”], Richard Wagner persiflages the empty proclamations of interest fed by the media:

die meldungen über kämpfe
 in vietnam mehren sich
 das interesse für vietnam steigt
 die meldungen über verluste
 der aggressoren mehren sich
 das interesse für vietnam steigt
 die meldungen über proteste
 in aller welt mehren sich

das interesse für vietnam steigt

die bücher über vietnam mehren sich
das interesse für das vietnam-interesse
steigt (*Klartext* 13)

the reports about fighting
in vietnam increase
the interest in vietnam grows
the reports about the aggressors'
losses increase
the interest in vietnam grows
the reports about protests
worldwide increase
the interest in vietnam grows

the books about vietnam increase
the interest in the vietnam interest
grows

Subtitled “Steigerung” (“increase” or “aggravation”), the poem parallels the increase in reports about Vietnam with one in interest for the conflict. This seemingly positive development is, however, exposed in the second stanza as self-feeding excitement: the interest in the actual events surrounding the Vietnam War – battles, casualties, and protests – are shown here to have been replaced with interest for its own sake. Significantly, the change is accompanied by an increase in the media exposure of the war from short “Meldungen” (“reports”) to entire “Bücher” (“books”).

The satire of “Vietnam-Interesse,” however accurate as an idea, is vague in its description of its objects. Just like the identity of the “aggressors” in line 5, the origin of the reports and books about Vietnam remains undisclosed. Wagner's critique becomes more focused in the poem “Kriegsende” [“End of the War”], which appeared in April 1974 as part of a group feature on the Aktionsgruppe Banat published in *Neue Literatur*. The poem dramatises an interview with the neighbours of a soldier who has returned from Vietnam. Most of the neighbours underline the normalcy of the veteran's behaviour: he tells the same jokes as before,

has the same habits, fights with his wife for the same reasons, uses the same arguments, and swears about his job in the same way. Against this seemingly normal everyday portrait, one neighbour describes the veteran as looking “furchtbar menschlich” (“awfully human”). The unusual description is disregarded by the reporter, however, who turns his recorder off. The last line of the poem explains the reporter's behaviour as conditioned by the publication for which he writes: “er war von LIFE” (“he was from LIFE”; Wichner 123).

Until the last line, the poem can be read, like “Vietnam-Interesse,” as a general description of media manipulation of the perception of the war, but the disclosure of the identity of the medium as American – *Life* magazine – makes the critique very specific. The only reason given for the reporter's manipulation of the information he receives from the neighbours – his disregard of the challenging last statement – is the identity of the publication. As the last word in the poem and printed in capital letters, the name of the publication has a dramatic impact, derived partly from the meaning of the word “life,” which stands in ironic contrast with the damaged existence of the soldier. The mentioning of the American magazine, however, also questions the conduct of the interviewer, shifting the perspective on the interview process described by the poem from an accidental misconception to a deliberate one. That *Life* magazine had been critical of the Vietnam War since the late 1960s, publishing pictures that concentrated on the human suffering brought on by the conflict,⁵⁷ is of little consequence for the poem (and possibly unknown to the Romanian-German author). As an American publication, *Life* was standing in for American influence, of which the young Romanian-German poets were critical, in spite of Romania's mild official position on the issue.

Published a year later in 1975, Werner Söllner's “Kommentierte Zeitungsnachrichten”

57 Cf. the magazine cover and article “The Faces of the American Dead in Vietnam: One Week's Toll,” from June 27, 1969, which had a deep impact on public opinion of the war.

[“Annotated Newspaper Reports”] also combines a critique of media representations of the Vietnam War with one of American intervention. The poem excerpts three “news reports,” each followed, as the title indicates, by an extended commentary. The news reports, which are made out to belong to the Vietnam News Agency (VNA), are set off from the rest of the text (the commentary) by the use of a smaller font and a different format. Despite the visual differentiation, the reports and the commentaries are syntactically linked, the last sentence of each of the reports being carried into the commentary. As Kurt Arne Markel has noted, this procedure makes it difficult to separate the different points of view of the poem (37), and the commentaries offer as much an in-between-the-lines reading of the terse journalistic language of the news reports as a sounding of the different voices that contribute to the Vietnam discourse.

Starting with reports of US attacks against Vietnamese targets, the poem pits the fate of the Vietnamese population against that of Americans, such as the civilian casualties and the fallen bombers in the first part:

wie die agentur vna meldet nahmen amerikanische flugzeuge
am 12. oktober am verminen der drv-häfen teil und griffen zahl-
reiche bevölkerte gebiete an. an demselben tag bombardierten
usa-flugzeuge ortschaften in den provinzen nge an ha tinh
und quang binh und das außenministerium der drv ließ den usa
eine protestnote zukommen in der gezeigt wird daß bei den
bombenangriffen etwa dreißig zivilpersonen ums leben gekom-
men sind

DARUNTER

drei frauen

zwei kinder

und

vorläufigen schätzungen zufolge

der rest bis zu dreißig

DARÜBER

hinaus

flogen die bomber

und einer fiel

der zählte nicht

denn er fiel für eine schlechte sache

alle aber die flogen

die fielen und die nicht fielen
verletzten folgende prinzipien der friedlichen koexistenz:
das recht aller völker auf selbstbestimmung
die staatliche unabhängigkeit und souveränität der drv
das sind die wichtigsten
es gibt auch andere
die wurden aber nicht verletzt
wenigstens nicht in den provinzen
nge an ha tinh quang binh (*Wetterberichte* 23)

as the agency vna reports american planes took
part in the mining of the ports of the drv and attacked numer-
ous populated areas. the same day us planes
bombed towns in the provinces nge an ha tinh
and quang binh and the state department of the drv sent the us
a letter of protest in which it is shown that around
thirty civilians lost their lives during the bomb-
ing

THEREUNDER

three women

two children

and

according to temporary estimates

the rest up to thirty

ABOVE

all

the bombers flew

and one fell

that one didn't count

for he fell for the wrong cause

but all who flew

who fell and who didn't fall

violated the following principles of peaceful coexistence:

the right of all peoples to self-determination

the independence and sovereignty of the drv

these are the most important

but there are others

which weren't violated

at least not in the provinces

nge an ha tinh quang binh

The ironic break-down initiated by the capitalised “darunter” in line 9 (which can be read both as “among” and “underneath,” a play on the position of the Vietnamese in relation to the American bombers, who are described as being “darüber” 'above' in line 15) stresses the

innocence and anonymity of the victims, of whom just five have been identified as women and children, their total number being only a “temporary estimate” and their identity being officially unimportant. In contrast to this sympathetic representation of the Vietnamese, that of the American bombers, who were identified in the preceding “report” as the aggressors, seems merciless. While the commenting voice is intent to account for as many lost Vietnamese lives as possible, it seems to dismiss American losses as “not counting” (line 19). As Kurt Arne Markel has pointed out, however, the shift in tone and diction at this point in the poem from an almost journalistic style to a colloquial one seems to indicate the insertion of yet another voice in the commentary (37). This mixing of voices, carried throughout the poem, makes an easy differentiation between perpetrators and victims on the part of the reader impossible. Instead, the end of the stanza condemns human rights violations everywhere, including, one can infer with Kurt Arne Markel, in Romania (38).

Despite the multiplicity of points of view represented in the poem, its end suggests a strong anti-American bias. Following an escalating denunciation of the bombing of Vietnam, the third stanza of the poem ends with the threat of retaliation:

dann wirds den heimgezahlt
dann fallen bomben in
massachusetts oder minnesota (*Wetterberichte* 25)

then they'll be paid back
then bombs will fall in
massachusetts or minnesota

As in the first stanza, it is impossible to assign the threat to a particular speaker (for instance, it may originate with the young woman killed by a bomb in the lines preceding it, as well as with the more inclusive “we” protesting the war at the beginning of the stanza), but it now becomes harder to prevent the linking of the American population with its government in the pejorative “den[enen]” ‘they’ lumping together all Americans from Massachusetts to Minnesota.

In contrast to this simplification, Hans Matye's “... der auf dem Schlachtfeld” [“... Who on the Battlefield”] explores the ways in which the American soldiers are themselves victims of those who profit from the conflict. Written as a string of unpunctuated associations, with words often broken up over two lines, and mixing German with English phrases, the poem presents the Vietnam War from a frog perspective. The title-less poem is introduced by a quote from the German magazine *Stern*, which functions as the poem's first stanza:

... der auf dem Schlachtfeld in Vietnam
 bis auf Herz und Verstand fast alles
 verlor, was man Mensch nennt (Stephani, *Befragung heute* 22)

... who on the battlefield in Vietnam
 lost almost everything one calls
 human, but heart and reason

This claim of humanity even for those on the battlefields of Vietnam is reinforced by the description of the soldiers in the main body of the poem. Shipped off to Vietnam as “topfpflanzen zier / pflanzen” (“potted plants decorative / plants”), the young soldiers have had to divest themselves of the capacity to think independently:

gedanken
 ballast abgeworfen ertrunken im atlanti
 k oder pazifik vom zoll beschalgnahmt t
 ot oder lebend im fort knox . . . (22)

thoughts
 dead weight discarded drowned in the atlanti
 c or pacific confiscated by customs d
 dead or alive in fort knox . . .

The new experiences they are offered instead are taken with a grim sense of humour:

neuer soun
 d neuer sarg by air mail blühendes gesc
 häft bleipillen gegen grippe . . . (22)

new soun
 d new coffin by air mail flourishing busi
 ness lead pills against the flu . . .

Because each new experience is accompanied by the possibility of death, each moment alive is an opportunity for business. The soldiers, however, are not the ones profiting from the business with their lives:

held
enblut-narrenblut who is daddy sei stil
I krokodilstränen zigaretten bibeln und
hasch schicken wir per luftpost und exp
ress übers große wasser charles “pete”
conrad apollo 12 kommandant sang auf d
em mond schritte tun sich auf gruben tun
sich . . . (22)

hero
's blood fool's blood who is daddy be quie
t crocodile tears cigarettens bibles and
pot we ship air and exp
ress over the big pond charles “pete”
conrad apollo 12 commander sang on t
he moon steps open up pits
open . . .

Mentioned first half-way through the poem in line 20, the second person plural “wir” (“we”) belongs to a different voice from that of the soldiers. Appearing after the identity of the authority figures is questioned (“who is daddy”) a few lines before, the entity identifying itself as “wir” admonishes the questioner(s) to be silent and offers cigarettes, bibles, and drugs. The bribery is immediately followed by a reference to the Apollo 12 lunar mission of 1969, during which Commander Charles “Pete” Conrad, Jr. was the first man to dance on the moon. His pioneering steps opening new possibilities for exploration are here contrasted with the pits (“Gruben”) which are “opening up” for the soldiers simultaneously fighting in Vietnam.

The proximity of the reference to an official governmental mission to the disembodied “wir” offering to buy the soldiers' silence suggests that the personal deictic stands for the US government. This is reinforced a few lines down, when the deictic reappears (for the second and

last time) in what seems to be an official statement:

“wir w
erden menschen in brutanlagen züchten”
neue zielscheiben frische ware fürs ver
derben sorgt die sonne und der mond so
ll erobert werden und die erde auch las
st sein den weizen pflanzt eisen und pf
lanzt rennpferde und pflanzt bäume nuß
bevorzugt idealer nußgewehrkolben um d
enen die fresse vollzuhaun zerstört di
e welt alles aus atomen . . . (22-3)

“we w
ill breed people in incubators”
new targets fresh goods for per
dition assure the son and the moon sha
ll be conquered and the earth too for
get the wheat plant iron and pl
ant racing horses and plant trees walnut
preferably ideal for gun butts to ba
sh their mugs in destroy th
e world everything is atoms . . .

The quote points to the rise of the new field of genetic engineering in the US, which is here equated with the destruction of the earth. The quote is followed by a call for conquering both the moon (illustrated by the Apollo 12 mission above) and the earth and for destroying the earth's features. In a reversal of Isaiah 2:4, the voice of the hostile “wir” calls for the replacement of the instruments of freedom with those of war: wheat is replaced by iron and walnut trees are repurposed for making guns. The American scientific ethos is finally reduced to its most destructive potential, as the world is declared to be only “atoms” and thus easily destroyed and reconstituted in a new image.

While the criticism of the US in the Vietnam poems of the 1970s generation was a genuine expression against America's policies and its public sphere and was mirrored in other

poems,⁵⁸ the thematisation of crisis situations also offered the poets an opportunity to deflect criticism from Romania onto a different subject.⁵⁹ As Romania's governing system, ideology, and policies were not open for debate, criticism of these was often carefully hidden in other contexts. Historical subjects, in particular, lent themselves to such double-meanings, as in Johann Lippet's "Grimassen der Geschichte" ["Grimaces of History"], which offers a broad historical survey from antiquity to the speaker's present:

und als caligula
 sein pferd zum minister ernannte
 hat die assistenz vielleicht
 öffentlichen beifall gespendet
 und die weisheit des herrschers gelobt
 und marie-antoinette
 zauberte sich im sommer eine schlittenfahrt herbei
 und dem führer war man gefolgt
 auch für volk und vaterland
 vater vetter vogel vieh
 führer volk vaterland
 und ein mensch wurde gefeiert
 als inbegriff der volksseele
 und franco lebt noch immer in spanien
 und leute knien noch nieder
 wenn der könig im auto vorbeifährt
 und 1974 im august
 erklärt rhodesien
 vorläufig noch ohne text
 die hymne an die freude zum nationalgesang
 und der nachrichtensprecher
 spricht es wie ein wetterbericht (Motzan, *Vorläufige Protokolle* 66-7)

and when caligula
 appointed his horse a minister
 the attendants may have
 publicly expressed their approval
 and lauded the wisdom of the ruler

58 See, for instance, Richard Wagner's "Freiheitsstatue" ["Statue of Liberty"] (*Klartext* 14) and "Vorwurf" ["Accusation"] (22) and Werner Söllner's "Sacco und Vanzetti" (*Wetterberichte* 19), which thematise what appeared as the limits of free speech in the US from the perspective of the Romanian-German poets.

59 This suggestion was also made, but not elaborated, by Thomas Krause about the Chile poems of the Banat authors. See Krause 108-9.

and marie-antoinette
conjured herself a sleigh ride in summer
and the führer was followed
also for *volk* and *vaterland*
vater vetter vogel vieh
führer folk fatherland
and one man was celebrated
as the epitome of the spirit of the people
and franco still lives in spain
the people still kneel
when the king drives by in his car
and in 1974 in august
rhodesia declares
without lyrics for the time being
the ode to joy as its national anthem
and the newscaster
announces it as if it were the weather forecast

Inspired by current events (the poem is identified as having been written in 1974, the year referenced in its last part), “Grimassen der Geschichte” laments the apathy with which the news of the adoption of a national anthem in Rhodesia, which had been internationally isolated since the declaration of its independence from Britain in 1965, is greeted in the media. To mark the symbolic importance of this overlooked moment of national emancipation, the speaker contrasts it with a series of historical downfalls. Each episode evokes an autocratic ruler, from Caligula, over Marie-Antoinette and Hitler to Franco (but omitting Stalin, a taboo subject). The focus of the episodes, however, is not on the rulers themselves, but on their relationships with their subjects, which are described as blindly adulatory.

In addition to celebrating Rhodesia's independence, the details in the descriptions of the historic figures raise unmistakable analogies to Ceaușescu's cult of personality, which, by 1974 – the year the position of president of the Republic was created for him – had been firmly instituted. Each of the descriptions of the historical figures in the poem contain details of Ceaușescu's cult: Caligula's investment of his horse with governmental power recalls the Romanian president's idiosyncratic changes in the government, including the widely unpopular

promotion of his wife, Elena, to increasingly more important functions; the “öffentliche[r] Beifall” (“public approval”) of line 4 and the “celebration of a man” in line 12 reference the mass ovations and personal celebrations with which Ceaușescu was received in public outings; Marie Antoinette's whimsical behaviour mirrors the “royal” deportment appropriated by the presidential couple; while the portrayals of the ruler as wise (line 5), as the leader (“Führer”; line 8), and as the “Inbegriff der Volksseele” (“epitome of the spirit of the people”; line 13) all have equivalents in the imagery of the cult, which spoke of the (“conducător”) as the “most beloved son of the people” (“fiul cel mai iubit al poporului”), whose wisdom was leading the country to glory.⁶⁰ The incongruous lines 9 and 10, containing the beginning of a mnemonic device for school children, further play upon the shouted slogans during Ceaușescu's official appearances in Romania, such as “Ceaușescu și poporul” (“Ceaușescu and the People”) or “Ceaușescu PCR” (where “PCR” is the abbreviation for the Communist Party of Romania).⁶¹ Such excesses in the behaviour of the ruler and of the people who supported his authority could not be discussed openly, leading the 1970s generation of writers to seek historical analogies or to resort to metaphorical evocations.

The Satirisation of the Romanian Political Situation

In July 1971, Ceaușescu, inspired by the results of the Asian “cultural revolutions” he had glimpsed on a trip to China, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Mongolia, presented a series of proposals to “improve the political-ideological activity” and “Marxist-Leninist education” of

60 See the chapter “From Revolutionary to Idol: The Emergence of the Leadership Cult” in Fischer 160-89.

61 The rhyme “Vater, Vetter, Vogel, Vieh, / Veilchen, Volk vergess ich nie” is meant to remind school children of the uncommon spelling of the nouns 'father,' 'cousin,' 'bird,' 'cattle,' 'violet,' and 'folk' and the verb 'to remember,' whose pronunciation requires an “f” sound although they are spelled with a “v.” In referencing the rhyme in connection to the “Führer,” Lippert is also alluding to the Nazi ties of the German minority of Romania, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Romania's citizens (Fischer 180). Known as the “July Theses” (“Tezele din iulie”), the proposals sought the centralisation of culture, education, and media and the uniformisation of Romania's population through an increase in socialist and nationalist indoctrination and the simultaneous restriction of other forms of expression. Although the implementation of the theses was gradual, their effect was wide-reaching and long-lasting, as the relative freedoms of Ceaușescu's early years were replaced by restrictions and interdictions, backed by the threatening arm of the Securitate, the multi-ethnic population was increasingly pressed into nationalist declarations, and Romania's openness toward the West was replaced by isolation. In addition, the government's drive to boost the heavy industry at the expense of agriculture and consumption industries, which had already been started under Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, together with Ceaușescu's ambition to pay off Romania's foreign debt within a decade, burdened the country's population with enormous material hardship. In 1981, bread and other staple foods began to be rationed for the first time since the war, while the energy crisis of 1979 ushered in cuts in personal energy consumption (heat, light, hot water, gas) which only increased through the 1980s. Despite the evidence of psychological and material privations, the official media insisted on the abundance and joy of the Romanian way of life through such designations of Ceaușescu's rule as “the golden age” (“epoca de aur”) and “the years of light” (“anii lumină”).⁶²

As living conditions in Romania deteriorated, the poets of the 1970s generation began to shift their attention from a general program of social change to specific social and political problems. The tone of their critiques sharpened, while, at the same time, the increasing limits posed on free expression challenged them to find more oblique forms of criticism. Obscuring figures, such as allegories and metaphors, became predominant, while the hope for social change

62 Romania's economy under Ceaușescu is discussed in detail in Shafir 107-26. See also the description of Ceaușescu's “golden age” in Fisher-Galați 183-205.

in the early poems was replaced by an alternation of bitter laughter and outright despair. How close these two ends of the emotional spectrum really are is suggested by what Barbara Meyer has called “vernichtende Satire” (“annihilating satire”; 90). Although Meyer referred in her description to East-German prose satire, her observations on the mixing of registers can easily be applied to the Romanian-German poetry of the late 1970s and 1980s:

Die Schärfe der satirischen Invektive . . . zielt auf die vollständige Vernichtung des angegriffenen Objekts, anstelle von versöhnlicher Komik tritt bissiger Sarkasmus, oft gepaart mit offener Polemik oder übergehend Resignation. Ein positives Gegenbild lässt sich nicht mehr ausmachen. (90)

The sharpness of satirical invectives . . . aims at completely destroying the targeted objects. Biting sarcasm takes the place of placatory comedy; often it is paired with open polemic and, temporarily, with resignation. The positive counterpoint disappears.

Sarcasm, polemic, and resignation intermingle in Rolf Bossert's “Vierzeiler” [“Quatrain”], perhaps the best known of the verse satires of the 1970s generation. As announced in the title, the poem is composed of a single stanza of four lines. The alternate rhyme, iambic tetrameter, and syntax of the poem (each line corresponds to a sentence and comes to a full stop) give the verses a feel of regularity, which stands in opposition with the apparently nonsensical content:

Auf hellem Feld ein Gartenzwerg.
Daneben stampft die Industrie.
Ein Kunststoffgalgen auf dem Berg.
Ein Land geht langsam in die Knie. (*Neuntöter* 15)

In a clear field a garden gnome.
Alongside pounds the industry.
A plastic gallows on the knoll.
A country sinking to its knees.

Cut off from each other by the break of the lines and the full sentence stops, the four images of the garden gnome, industry, gallows, and the genuflecting country seem unrelated to one another. The attempt to relate these cryptic images have subjected the poem to more critical

scrutiny than any other in post-war Romanian-German literature.⁶³ The image of the garden gnome, especially, has given rise to a controversy: is he a caricature, as Gerhard Mahlberg suggested in 1987, of the self-aggrandizing Ceaușescu (46), a symbol of “Spießigkeit” (“bourgeois smugness”; Eke 114), or an embodiment of the backwardness of the country as contrasted to the gigantic industry of the second line (Oliveira 195)? All three interpretations are certainly plausible and, to a certain degree, not mutually exclusive. The gnome could stand for both Ceaușescu and bourgeois smugness, if the latter is seen as one of his qualities, but it could also stand for a country that is simultaneously smug and backward.⁶⁴

As the analyses of the poem illustrate, the interpretation of the first line hinges on that of the rest of the poem. Is the gnome being threatened by the industry, or is he its master? What is the link between the gnome and the gallows? And is the gnome the country brought to its knees, or is he the one causing it to do bow down? While no possibility can be excluded entirely, the symmetrical syntax suggests a thematic symmetry, which may supply a key to the understanding of the poem. Each pair of lines (1-2 and 3-4) contains a contrast: the smallness and stillness of the gnome against the largeness and activity of the industry and the upward-pointing gallows against the downward movement of the country. A second symmetry is established between the rhyming lines (1-3 and 2-4): “Gartenzwerg” and “Kunststoffgalgen” are related to each other both on the grammatical level, as the only two compound words in the poem, and on the

63 For discussions of the poem, see Mahlberg 46-7, Eke, “Niemand” 114, Oliveira 194-6, Tudorică 76-7, and Diana Schuster, *Die Banater Autorengruppe* 72.

64 Another possibility is suggested by Bernd Kolf's poem “Das tapfere Schneiderlein oder Wie die Riesenangst im Land der Zwerge aufkam” [“The Valiant Little Tailor or How the Giant Fear Rose in the Land of the Dwarves”], in which the dwarves are said to live “hinter den sieben Bergen” (“behind the seven mountains”), a common designation for “Siebenbürgen” or Transylvania (*Die Bewohnbarkeit* 37). In this case, the dwarves are the “Siebenbürger Sachsen,” Transylvania's ethnic Germans and, by extension, Romania's German minority. The equation is further justified by the German origin of the garden gnome (in direct translation: “garden dwarf”) and his identification with rural German culture, with which the 1970s generation of writers equated the Romanian-German community.

thematic level, since both refer to objects made from synthetic materials. The size and location of each object, however, places them in the same contrast as before: the small gnome is additionally located at the geographic bottom – the open field – while the large gallows looms from the top of a mountain. The latter seems to suggest that the dwarf stands in the same relationship to the gallows as the country in line 4 and could, therefore, be a representation of the country. In that case, the synthetic material which links the gnome to the gallows points to the created character of both: like the means of the country's destruction, the people of the country have been shaped by the system in which they live. The repetition of the indefinite article “ein” preceding “Gartenzwerg,” “Kunststoffgalgen,” and “Land” can be cited as a further link between the three elements that suggests the identity of the country and the gnome.

The interpretations of the garden gnome, however, are not exhausted by these associations. Unlike the stomping industry and the gallows, whose meanings are relatively stable, the gnome eludes pinpointing. The image of the lone garden gnome in an empty field (the adjective “hell” can be translated as “light” but also as “clear”) is troubling not only in contrast to the images coming after it but also in and of itself. As an object belonging to the garden and not to the field, the gnome is out of place, his small size in the vastness of space enhancing the idea of isolation. The emotion that the gnome evokes – whether pity or derision – largely depends, however, on the individual reader's associations.

The controversy surrounding Bossert's “Vierzeiler” is instructive of the pitfalls of indirect criticism: the same ambiguity which allowed the poem to be published in the first place (it was included in Bossert's last volume to appear in Romania, *Neuntöter* [*Shrike*], in 1984) also makes it difficult to grasp for the reader. Yet while the indeterminacy of the gnome's identity raises questions about the limits of Bossert's criticism (how far did he really go?), it does not obscure the very daring statements the poem makes about the industrial and psychological ruin

of the country. Whether “Vierzeiler” directly attacks Ceaușescu or not, it speaks plainly about the effects of overly ambitious industrialisation plans and fear-instilling tactics, which are easily identified as those of the Ceaușescu era.

Despite the danger inherent in such an undertaking, several poems of the 1970s generation of Romanian-German poets do satirise the personal shortcomings of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Published in 1976 in the innocently named volume *Die Bewohnbarkeit des Mondes* [*The Habitability of the Moon*], Bernd Kolf's series of “Grimmige Märchen” [“Grimm Fairytales”] takes on the discrepancies between Ceaușescu's persona, as it was emerging from the many “decrees” (“decrete”) through which he increasingly came to govern the country and his cult of personality. The five poems borrow narratives from the story arsenal of the brothers Grimm that focus on the transformation of simple individuals into powerful characters, a play on Ceaușescu's rise to power from humble beginnings. Yet while the personality cult insisted on this rise as the accomplishment of an extraordinarily gifted individual, Kolf's poems represent it as the inglorious gain of a charlatan. Two of the poems, based on the stories of the wolf and the seven little kids and of the valiant little tailor respectively,⁶⁵ foreground the lie through which the characters convince others of their worthiness. In “Märchen von einem der auszog das Fürchten zu lernen oder Die märchenhafte Macht der Gewohnheit” [“Tale about One Who Went Out to Learn Fear or The Fabulous Power of Habit”], the central character gains power despite the fact that he is “dumm konnte nichts / lernen und begreifen” (“stupid could learn / and understand nothing”; 35), a popular rumour about Ceaușescu, who left school at eleven to become a shoemaker's apprentice. Ceaușescu's humble identity as a shoemaker is also hinted at

65 “Der Wolf und die sieben Geißlein oder Die illusionierende Wirkung des Märchens” [“The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids or The Illusionary Effect of the Fairytale”] (34) and “Das tapfere Schneiderlein oder Wie die Riesenangst im Land der Zwerge aufkam” (see note 64 above).

in the character of the valiant little tailor, which plays on the similarity between the two occupations.

The title of Kolf's series does not only allude to the stories of the brothers Grimm, but also to the grim reality of life under a totalitarian regime. This reality is present in the coupling of the motif of gaining power with that of ruling through fear. Three of the poems ("Der Wolf und die sieben Geißlein," "Märchen von einem der auszog das Fürchten zu lernen," and "Das tapfere Schneiderlein") thematise the wielding of fear as an instrument of power directly, while "Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten oder Die Gewalt der Musik" ["The Bremen Town-Musicians or The Force of Music"] (36) hints at the violence behind the animals' "musical" overthrow of the thieves in the well-known story. The last poem of the series, "Das Märchen vom Märchen oder Die Wirklichkeit des Märchenerzählers" ["The Tale about the Fairytale or The Reality of the Fairytale Teller"], takes on the intimidation through which a personality cult is created and maintained:

er
tötete den riesen
überlistete die hölle
besiegte die bösen
brachte wasser des lebens
rang fast den tod nieder
und diese taten
verhalfen ihm auf den thron

er
war der märchenheld aller märchenhelden
alles
scheiterte an ihm
auch die wirklichkeit

da versammelte er alle märchenerzähler
seines reichs um sich und verhieß
dem die prinzessin zur frau
der das schönste märchen
über ihn erzählt

und da sie nicht gestorben sind
erzählen sie heute noch (38)

he
killed the giant
outwitted hell
defeated evildoers
brought the water of life
almost wore out death
and these deeds
helped him onto the throne

he
was the fairytale hero of fairytale heroes
everything
came to grief against him
even reality

then he gathered all the fairytale tellers
of his kingdom around him and promised
the princess as wife to
whoever tells the most beautiful fairytale
about him

and since they haven't died yet
they are still telling fairytales today

The poem, which borrows a number of fairytale elements from the Grimm brothers without referring to any specific story, is divided into four stanzas of unequal length. The first two stanzas start with the third-person pronoun “er” (“he”), which stands alone in the first line. The identity of the person thus singled out is revealed in the second stanza only as the generic “Märchenheld” (“fairytale hero”). The first stanza lists a number of actions, which, like the reward – the throne – are well-known attributes of the fairytale hero.

The predictability of the story set up in the first stanza is abruptly interrupted in the last line of the second stanza, however, when a non-traditional fairytale character – “reality” (“Wirklichkeit”) – is introduced as another vanquished enemy of the hero. The third stanza further marks the change through a shift in the syntax, which now places the adverb of time “da”

(“then”) in the first position. Like in a fairytale, “da” signals a simultaneous development in the plot, yet this development does not follow from the well-known narrative outlined above. Instead of the traditional banquet as a celebration of his victories, the hero announces a contest for the “most beautiful fairytale” about him. The last stanza offers what seems to be a fairytale conclusion by appealing to the happy ending formula “und wenn sie noch nicht gestorben sind, so leben sie noch heute” (“and if they haven't died, they are still living”). In fairytales, this ending is usually applied to the hero and heroine and speaks to their immortality both as supernatural beings and as the story-teller's creation. In contrast to this tradition, the formula used here speaks about the tellers and not the hero of the story (the personal pronoun “sie” (“they”) in lines 20 and 21 refers back to “Märchenerzähler” (“fairytale tellers”) in line 15. It is they who are said to be continuing on, “*since* they haven't died yet” (my emphasis). The replacement of the open-ended “if” of the formula by another “da” (here as a conjunction referring to cause: “since”) further suggests that the continuation of the story is achieved by something other than magic immortality: the story tellers live because they have been allowed to – their lives hinge on the telling of the story. Powerful and powerless at once, the story tellers are thus revealed to be living a double reality: on the one hand, there is the reality fabricated by them (and, therefore, actually a fairytale), on the other, there is the reality they live within the constructed fairytale, in which they must fear for their lives.

Although telling stories has long been associated with telling lies, for a Romanian-German audience in the 1970s, Kolf's poem would have had a particular poignancy. As the “Märchenheld aller Märchenhelden,” the hero would have been immediately identifiable as the country's president, whose formulaic descriptions included “hero among heroes” (“erou între eroi”). The emphasis on the third person singular masculine pronoun in the lead-up to this designation was also part of the rhetoric of the cult of personality. The death threat to which the

last two lines hint would have also been understandable. To consolidate his absolute leadership, Ceaușescu relied on the help of writers, artists, journalists, and others employed in his program of mass propaganda, which, in turn, was dependent on an atmosphere of fear.

Cutting through this propaganda was often only possible at the expense of intelligibility, as the interpretations of “Vierzeiler” show, and it involved serious risk. In the case of Kolf’s “Grimm” poems, as well as of Bossert’s “Vierzeiler,” much of this risk was shouldered by fellow poet Franz Hodjak, who, as the German-language editor at Dacia, oversaw the publication of both their volumes. Hodjak was to take his own measure of Ceaușescu’s persona and achievements in the late 1980s in the poem “Dorfschenke” [“Village Tavern”], published in one of the last volumes by a Romanian-German poet of the 1970s generation to appear in Romania. Written in the style of a ballad, “Dorfschenke” draws much of its satirical impetus from the discrepancy between the lives of ordinary Romanians and the government’s propaganda. Like Bossert’s “Vierzeiler,” the poem is written in quatrains and is a seemingly nonsensical montage of unrelated images, stretching, this time, over seven individually numbered stanzas:

1
der mond, ein teller maisbrei
vom kuhstall tönt gebimmel
ich lebe, lallt der dorfnarr, frei
die luft ist grau wie schimmel

2
der himmeltata brunzt aufs dach
wo elefanten toben
was stinkt, das kommt von oben
die baubrigade säuft heut schwach

3
die autos scheppern wie geschirr
der ginster blüht wie eiter
der wächter stolpert durch die tür
nur weiter, sagt er, weiter

4

der totengräber fiedelt wild
sein hut macht froh die runde
nur was nach beifall klingt, das gilt
ganz ferne jaulen hunde

5
ganz nahe blaut das fernsehbild
in einem feld von ähren
erteilt, bevor der tod ihn killt
der held uns ein paar lehren

6
wo ist mein hut, wo sind die beine?
der tisch ist voll von schnaps und bier
ich sehe nur mehr Heine
und er sagt, was, du heute hier?

7
auch mir zieht's, bruder, durchs gemüt
wie stürmisches geläute
was ist das wieder für ein lied
ach, leute, sag ich, leute (*Augenlicht* 75-6)

1
a plate of porridge for the moon
bells to the cowshed sweetly called
i'm free, intones the village loon
the air is gray as mould

2
heavenly dada's pissing on the roof
where elephants go bop-bop
the building brigade swigs aloof
if it stinks, it comes from atop

3
cars clatter like dishes in a drawer
the broom, a flower of purulence
the watchman stumbles through the door
advance, he says, always advance

4
the grave digger fiddles wildly
his hat makes merrily the rounds
off in the distance, dogs whine mildly
only what sounds like clapping counts

5
close-by the tv screens combust
to life and in a field of sorrel
before he finally bites the dust
the hero teaches us a moral

6
where are my legs, where is my hat?
the table's full of schnapps and beer
i'm seeing Heine for all that
and he says, what, you're also here?

7
through my soul, too, it is now plain
the storm bells are resounding
what kind of song is this again
oh, brother, how confounding

Although the individual stanza numbers suggest fragmentation, the poem can be divided thematically into two parts: stanzas 1 through 5 describe images from village life, while stanzas 6 and 7 record the speaker's reaction to these images. The first five stanzas describe an evening in a village tavern full of sensory details: the yellow colour of the moon stands in contrast with the grey air of the tavern and the blue of the television screen, sounds from the cowshed blend harshly with the babbling of the village idiot, the sound of pissing and stomping on the roof, the clanging of cars, the call of the watchman, the violin music, the applause, the howling of dogs, and the sounds from the television, while words such as “Schimmel” (“mould”), “brunzt” (“pisses”), “stinkt” (“stinks”), and “säuft” (“swigs”) suggest an array of unsavoury smells and tastes. The collective impression of these details is one of decay and alienation, a world consisting of rubble pieces and jarring contrasts. Its inhabitants appear disconnected from each other, their words and actions unrelated to the reality surrounding them. The feeling of alienation is reinforced by the appearance, in stanza 6, of a first-person speaker, who immediately seeks to flee the scene, although stanza 7 discloses that he is also sympathetic to the misery he witnesses.

Despite the fragmented imagery, the first stanza places the poem in a recognizable Romanian village environment: the moon, likened with a plate of polenta (“Maisbrei”), one of Romania's staple foods, serves as a geographic coordinate, the sound of cowbells returned from the pasture signals the advanced hour, the grey, heavy air suggests the smoky atmosphere of the tavern, while the character of the village idiot is meant to lend further authenticity to the rural milieu. Further elements suggesting a 20th-century Romanian village, such as the fiddle-playing grave digger, barking dogs, and flickering TV screens, are interspersed with grotesque images, such as the pissing “Himmeltata” and the rampaging elephants, the puss-like bloom of the broom (“Ginster”), the bumbling watchman, and the dying television hero.

Neither the dismal environment nor its depressed inhabitants (the building brigade fails to achieve even at drinking) conforms with the official representation of village life in 1980s Romania. The official representation is referenced in stanza 5, in which the rural milieu appears as an impeccable “Feld von Ähren” (literally: “field of oars”; line 18) – a symbol of plenty, as well as of the Romanian nation's peasant roots, glorified in the official discourse – on a television screen. This mediated image of agrarian accomplishment stands in marked contrast with the poor performance of the village,⁶⁶ a disparity which prompts the disgust of the first-person speaker.

In addition to an elaborate scenario, Hodjak's short poem also boasts a large cast of characters. Among these, the village idiot and the grave digger are typical for the socially marginal characters favoured by Hodjak for their ability to move outside of the conventions of state and society. In “Dorfschenke,” too, their actions appear as expressions of carnevalesque

66 The false representation of village life and agrarian accomplishment is also thematised in Hodjak's “Naturgedicht” [“Nature Poem”], in which a perfect image of rural life is produced for the cameras: “es singt das dorf / es surrt die kamera” (“the village sings / the camera whirs”; *Flieder im Ohr* 36).

exuberance: the village idiot declares himself free, while the grave digger abandons himself to the power of music, fiddling “wildly.” The German poet Heinrich Heine, referenced in the last two stanzas, is also frequently cited by Hodjak as someone whose works offer a model for subversion through the medium of verse.⁶⁷ Other characters, however, are unique to this poem in Hodjak's work and more ambiguous: the “Himmeltata” (a compound of the German “Himmelvater” 'heavenly father' and the Romanian “tata” 'dad'), the boozing construction brigade, the drunken watchman shouting a non-sequitur, and the televised “hero.”

In her interpretation of the poem, Claire de Oliveira has read the “Himmeltata,” the grave digger, and the television hero as representations of different facets of Ceaușescu's personality cult (195). This reading seems justified in the case of the pissing “Himmeltata,” who is similarly represented as a figure of authority abusing his power in Klaus Hensel's poem “Schlußstrich” [“Bottom Line”] (*Das letzte Frühstück* 46), and of the TV hero, who, like Kolf's “Märchenheld,” is depicted as perpetuating a lie. (As the fulfilment of wishful thinking, the death of the hero in Hodjak's poem is therefore particularly funny and satisfying.) Whether the grave digger, who is a sympathetic character in Hodjak's “Siebenbürgisches Klagelied” [“Transylvanian Dirge”] (*Luftveränderung* 64), belongs to the same constellation, however, is doubtful. As the earner of a good income from his “fiddling” (an activity which suggests the hack not the professional), it is more plausible that the grave digger stands for the opportunistic artist, while his applauding audience displays a learned but meaningless response to his offering (associated, in the next line, with the howling of dogs).

In contrast to the superficial response of the audience within the poem, the speaker's own is visceral. The instinct to flee the situation expressed in line 21 belies deep compassion for the

67 See, for instance, the poems “Heine” (*Polly Knall* 24) and “22 Uhr 03 Gedicht” [“10.03 PM Poem”] (*Flieder im Ohr* 10).

ordinary people (“Leute”) caught in it. The last stanza modifies the beginning of Heine's famous poem of romantic longing, “Leise zieht durch mein Gemüt / Liebliches Geläute.” (“Faintly sings a song of spring / Like a maybell's ringing”; 118-9), into an expression of violent emotion. By replacing the adjective “lieblich” (“lovely,” “sweet”) with “stürmisch” (“stormy”), Hodjak evokes a sense of dread but also of urgency: if the “ringing” (“Geläute”) in Heine's poem referred to the pleasant news of the coming of spring, in Hodjak's poem it acquires the connotation of an alarm signal. Powerless to transform his vision into a suitable message, however, the speaker calls doubt on his poetic enterprise, his final lament expressing the same powerlessness to affect the situation faced by his audience.

At the Limits of Social and Political Criticism: Winter as a Metaphor of Oppression

The helplessness sounded in the last stanza of “Dorfschenke” is associated in many Romanian-German poems of the 1980s with the numbing coldness of winter. While a handful of poems, such as Rolf Bossert's “Winter. Kein Märchen” [“Winter. No Fairytale”] (*Siebensachen* 25) and Horst Samson's “Hatzfeld. Ein Wintermärchen” [“Hatzfeld. A Winter Tale”] (*Tiefflug* 23) allude to Heinrich Heine's satirical *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* [*Germany. A Winter Tale*], the associations of winter and its semantic field in Romanian-German poetry are not satirical.

In her comparative study of the critical vocabulary of East-German and Romanian-German poetry, Petra Beate Kory has pointed out the importance of the metaphor for the indirect criticism practised in these literatures (“Lyrik im Zeichen” 104). Kory's analysis focuses, however, on enlightenment and colour metaphors, whose use still implies the desire for and belief in social change (Kory's examples date from the mid 1970s). Unlike these metaphors, the

figurative uses of winter and its semantic field in the 1980s denote the absence of any hope in positive change, as well as of the belief in the communicative ability of poetry which had previously sustained this hope.

If the satirical poems of the 1970s generation are aimed at the poor general living conditions in Romania, at the discrepancy between these conditions and their overly-positive depiction in official discourse, and at the person of Romania's increasingly autocratic ruler, the winter poems thematise the country's complete isolation from the outside world under Ceaușescu's totalitarian regime and the intimidation of its imprisoned citizens. In contrast to the officially upheld designation of a “golden age” of socialist fulfilment, the poems depict an “ice age” of bitter disillusionment.

The “ice age” as a metaphor for totalitarianism is employed directly only once, however, in the poem “Winter der Gefühle” [“Winter of Feelings”], published in 1980 in Werner Söllner's third and last volume of verse in Romania, *Eine Entwöhnung* [*A Dehabituation*]. Ostensibly a depiction of the speaker's personal problems caused by his inability to make a difference through his writing and by failed love relationships, the poem expresses despair in a world over which the individual has no control.⁶⁸ Like death, with which it is brought into close relation, winter is a natural phenomenon beyond the sway of the “I”:

Mit dem Tod
in der Tasche kehr ich zurück und würg ihn, Bissen für Bissen
hinunter. Ich esse gefrorenen Zement. Ich wollte, ich hätte

die Macht, Jahreszeiten durcheinanderzubringen, Eis
Zeiten zu verhindern. . . . (*Eine Entwöhnung* 19)

68 After Söllner's self-identification as a Securitate informer in the period prior to the poems' publication, “Winter der Gefühle” was reread by Hubert Spiegel as a codified admission of Söllner's work for the Securitate, a reading whose validity the poet only partially denied (Spiegel). While this information may explain the guilt sounded in this poem and others, I believe that reading “Winter der Gefühle” within the winter genre to which it undeniably belongs allows for a fuller account of the complexities of this poem.

I return
with death in my pocket and force it down,
bite for bite. I eat frozen cement. I wish I had

the power to mix up the seasons, prevent
ice ages. . . .

The extended metaphor of lethal “food” forced on the individual not as much to satiate but to silence him vividly outlines the most dangerous aspect of the “ice age” the speaker is unable to prevent. Not surprisingly, at the end of the poem, the speaker is in the process of leaving the country which is now completely blanketed in snow: “Ich zieh die Schuhe aus, bevor ich geh: Schnee ist gefallen / auf die Karte des Landes, in dem ich lebte. Alles ist weiß.” (“I take my shoes off before I go: snow fell / on the map of the country in which I used to live. Everything's white.”; *Eine Entwöhnung* 20). The thematisation of emigration through the verb “gehen” (“to leave”) and the use of the simple past “lebte” (“lived”) in conjunction with the image of the snowed-in country is not coincidental. A common thread through the winter poems of the 1980s is the threatened existence of the Romanian-German community as experienced by its isolated intellectuals. This isolation is sounded in the disappearance of both what the Romanian-German poets once construed as a relatively open public sphere and of the community of friends and associates who chose the last resort of emigration.

The loss of belief in the power of poetry to provide alternatives to the official discourse of the communist government is already noticeable in Richard Wagner's *Die Invasion der Uhren* [*The Clock Invasion*] from 1977. In the poem “Schnee Blues” [“Snow Blues”], snow is a metaphor for the all-encompassing discourse of Romanian communist ideology, which spreads through the official media and is absorbed into people's minds. The first-person speaker of the poem, a writer, is no exception. The poem begins abruptly with the image of snow stealing into the speaker's mind and causing him to lose the ability to write: “schnee schob sich mir zwischen

die gedanken / es wollte nicht mehr so klappen mit den sätzen” (“snow shoved itself between my thoughts / the sentences didn't want to work anymore”; 48). That this is no ordinary snow, as the title, which references a generic sadness in the English word “blues,” seems to imply, becomes clear a few lines down. Here, the snow is said to reside in books, its metaphorical use confirmed by the compound “Ideenschnee” (“snow of ideas”):

schnee lag zwischen den buchseiten
ich ging stundenlang auf u. ab zwischen
zwei buchdeckeln ich war der held der durch den
schnee ging watete im ideenschnee versank knietief
lachend stießen wir einander hinab
in die abgründe der ideen
stellten fallen
wer sich darin verfang wurde schneemann genannt
u. einen schneemann bauen bedeutete für uns lange zeit
in eine falle gehen . . . (48)

snow lay between the pages of the books
i walked up and down for hours between
two book covers i was the hero who walked through the
snow waded sank to his knees in the snow of ideas
laughing we pushed each other down
into the abysses of ideas
set traps
whoever got caught in them was called a snowman
and to build a snowman meant for a long time
to fall into a trap . . .

The discourse alluded to in the metaphorical use of snow is depicted as relatively benign at the beginning of this segment: it is part of the “I”’s formation through reading and, as the speaker becomes part of a larger group of like-minded individuals (denoted by the transition from the singular to the plural first person pronoun), the object of intergroup play and friendly challenges. Yet the ideas the speaker so happily absorbs as a young man rehearsing the roles he finds in books and with which he challenges his friends also harbour a sinister potential, as suggested by the evocation of unstable terrain, into which the speaker “sinks knee-deep,” “chasms” (“Abgründe”), and, finally, “traps” (“Fallen”). By the end of the segment, the “snow of ideas”

has become entrapping, and playing with ideas, the core of a writer's activity, has consequently become dangerous. The ideological pressure forces the speaker and his friends to reach for euphemisms, such as “making a snowman,” code for falling into the trap of the very discourse they are attempting to manipulate.

The insidious ideological assault on the speaker and his friends culminates in the transformation of the group, denoted by the first person plural “wir” (“we”), into something approaching the dreaded “snowmen.” In the last segment of the poem, the official discourse has become pervasive, being disseminated through every journalistic endeavour:

in den zeitung en häufte sich der neuschnee
auf der ersten seite der leitartikelschnee
auf der dritten der lokalschnee
wir überflogen den feuilletonschnee
hinter dem schnee unsrer gedanken nach
wagten uns hinaus in den sturm der worte
suchten den scheeverwehungen auszuweichen
standen da wie die schneemänner
wie die schneemänner standen wir da
auf unsrem eingeschneiten wortplaneten (49)

the new snow was heaped up in the newspapers
on the first page the editorial snow
on the third the local snow
we glanced over the cultural section snow
mulled over the snow of our thoughts
ventured out into the storm of words
tried to dodge the snowdrifts
stood there like snowmen
like snowmen we stood there
on our snowed-in word planet

The poem's mock differentiation between a “Leitartikelschnee” (“editorial snow”), a “Lokalschnee” (“local snow”), and a “Feuilletonschnee” (“culture section snow”) in reality works as a crescendo and only serves to underscore the sameness, emptiness, and coldness of journalistic language in the service of ideology. All three types of language are part of “Neuschnee” (“new snow”), an allusion to “new speak,” the propaganda discourse imposed by

the totalitarian government in George Orwell's *1984*.

At the end of the poem, every positive aspect of “snow” has been erased. The imagery now evoked is that of severe weather (storm, snow-drifts, a frozen planet), which assaults, isolates, and, ultimately, silences the “we” of the poem. Despite the fact that the group of Romanian-German intellectuals has not fallen into the trap of ideology (the simile “like snowmen,” repeated twice in the penultimate lines of the poem, subtly underlines the difference), it has been effectively silenced, as its literary universe (“Wortplaneten”) becomes overwhelmed (“snowed under”) by ideology.

The two kinds of isolation – ideological and interpersonal – are linked in the companion poem to “Winter der Gefühle,” “Schneeballgedicht” [“Snowball Poem”], which was republished in *Eine Entwöhnung* from Söllner's previous poetry collection, *Mitteilungen eines Privatmannes* [*Communications of a Private Citizen*] (1978). Dedicated to fellow poet Rolf Bossert, “Schneeballgedicht” intensifies the impression of isolation already apparent in Wagner's “Schnee Blues.” Over the course of four pages, the poem follows the “I”'s desperate and unsuccessful attempt to find comfort in the company of his friend during a brief visit in the mountain resort of Buşteni (where Bossert had been assigned a teaching position).

The poem begins with a depiction of a day in the mountain town, but the snowy surroundings soon prompt a meditation on the condition of the intellectual in a hostile environment, starting with the personification of the Caraiman peak, visible from Buşteni:

Ein Blick aus dem Fenster: Es schneit.
In der Nähe trägt ein Berg geduldig
sein Kreuz, nicht umsonst heißt er
Caraiman, der schwarze Gelehrte.
In dieser Jahreszeit können ihm alle
den Buckel runterrutschen,
wenn sie es können. (58)

A look out the window: It snows.

Close by, a mountain carries patiently
its cross. There's a reason he's called
Caraiman, the black scholar.
Everyone can take a running jump
as far as he's concerned this season –
if they can.

As Söllner explains in the notes to the poem in the first collection of his poetry to appear in Germany a decade later, *Kopfland. Passagen* [*Country in My Head. Passages*] (1988), the name “Caraiman” means “the black imam” (120), which the poem translates as “the black scholar” (“der schwarze Gelehrte”). This solitary figure, patiently carrying its cross (a reference to the World War I monument marking the mountain peak), is seen as one of suffering but also of retreat from the world.

Unlike the stoic mountain-scholar, who has turned his back to society, the “I” is consumed by the question of the intellectual's social position. Although the poem does not specify the reasons for the “I”'s search for answers, the extended snow metaphor allows the reader familiar with its use in Romanian-German poetry to place the poem in the context of the changes in the situation of Romania's intellectuals in the late 1970s. In Söllner's poem, snow stands for the social processes that have brought about these changes. The “I” first views these processes with suspicion and tries to uncover them through his writing: he sees treachery in the snow “dem man die Kälte nicht ansieht” (“whose coldness one can't tell just by looking”; 58) and challenges the too-pure appearance of the snow with his “schwarzen Blick” (“dark vision”; 59). The poem itself is at first ammunition in the fight against “den unbeirrbar fallenden Schnee” (“the unperturbably falling snow”; 59), a metaphor for the concentrated effort of the individual mind against the impersonal, massive, and unavoidable change in the social climate (Tudorică 168). After “drei langen, schneereichen Jahren” (“three long, snow-filled years”; 59), however, the effort is declared in vain:

Aber ich merke es
auch schon, dies Gedicht wird wie
andere, lang. Es ist, wie das Schweigen, nichts
als eine Form der Sprachlosigkeit,
schlimmer noch, als mit Blindheit
geschlagen zu sein. (60)

But I'm starting to
notice that this poem, like all others,
is getting long. Like silence, it is nothing
but a kind of speechlessness,
worse than being afflicted
with blindness.

In the totalitarian reign of “snow,” poetry has lost its power to provide a social corrective; it is only an aggregate of words whose defining characteristic is length. Its meaninglessness is summed up in the declaration of writing as another form of speechlessness (“Sprachlosigkeit”). But poetry is different from silence (“Schweigen”) as mere passivity, because, the “I” argues, the poetic effort creates its own blindness to the social situation.

In the last segment of the poem, the “I” zeroes in on the exact means by which he and others like him, have lost the ability to speak. Oppressed by the “Herrschaft der Redner über die Sprachlosen” (the “speakers' rule over the speechless”; 60), which forces a positive reaction to even the most desperate circumstances, the “I” must break off the description of his situation:

Ich stehe ja auch nur fröstelnd im Niesel
der Behauptungen, im Matsch
der Erlässe, wie wir alle,
ein kleines Häufchen, uns and den Händen haltend,
um nicht zu versinken im mäßigen
Schnee, der uns den Mund (61)

I, too, am only standing shivering in the drizzle
of pronouncements, in the sludge
of decrees, like all of us,
a small heap, holding hands,
in order not to sink into the moderate
snow, which our mouths

As in Wagner's “Schnee Blues,” snow here stands for the assertions (“Behauptungen”) and

decrees (“Erlässe”) of communist propaganda (linked, through the choice of the second noun, directly to Ceaușescu's rule, who favoured government by special dispensations rather than by rule of law). This latter snow is described in negative terms as “Nieseln” (“drizzle”) and “Matsch” (“sludge”), both corrupt versions of the austere yet pure snow the “I” described in the first part of the poem. The change remains unexplained, superseded by the desperate situation of the disappearing community, which is emphasized by the redundant adjective “klein” (“small”) preceding the diminutive “Häufchen” (literally “small heap”) designating those German intellectuals and their friends still remaining in Romania. Not even the act of solidarity circumscribed in the holding of hands can save the threatened group: as the open end demonstrates, the attempt “einen eigenen Identitätsentwurf der im Schneematsch metaphorisierten gesellschaftlichen Situation entgegenzusetzen” (“to oppose one's own concept of identity to the social situation represented by the snow slush metaphor”; Schau 232) is futile. The poem ends abruptly in the middle of the sentence on the word “Mund” (“mouth”), the contested site of direct human communication, indicating not only the silencing of the “I” but also the cutting off of his link to others.

At the other end of the stylistic spectrum, Johann Lippet's short poem “Wintergefühl 1981” [“Winter Feeling 1981”] depicts the isolation of the individual caused by the shrinking of the Romanian-German community as one of natural inevitability. Drawing on the tradition of nature poetry, the poem constructs a hidden parallel between the migration of birds and the emigration of the Romanian-German minority:

die raben ziehen ihre runden unter dem himmel.
 die schwalben sind fort, die weltreisenden,
 die störche entflohn, die richtungsweisenden,
 die sperlinge, die ausharrenden, stellen sich ein auf den winter.
 es werden die tage, die meinen, kürzer,
 es werden die nächte, auch meine, länger.
 der winter ist da.

der meine bricht los. (*So wars im Mai* 29)

the ravens draw their circles under the sky.
the swallows are gone, the world travelers,
the storks have fled, the trailblazers,
the sparrows, the endurers, prepare for the winter.
the days, my days, are getting shorter,
the nights, mine, too, are getting longer.
winter is here.
mine breaks out.

The poem is deceptive in the simplicity of its images. While the first line seems to indicate a generic image of ravens circling in the autumn sky, in the next three lines, each type of bird mentioned is followed by a personification: the swallows are described as “world travellers,” the storks as “trailblazers,” and the sparrows as “endurers.” These sobriquets suggest the human experience behind the animal, prompting a re-reading of the birds as symbolic: the circling ravens, portents of death, now appear to menace those below them, while the swallows, the storks, and the sparrows exemplify the different options pursued by the Romanian-German community faced with the choice between staying and going. The coincidence between the natural and the human world is reinforced in line 5, in which the first-person speaker aligns his experience with that of nature (“auch meine” 'mine, too'). The parallel is broken in the last two lines, however, in which two winters are posited, one occurring in the natural world (line 7) and one occurring in the speaker's experience (“der meine” 'mine'; line 8).

These last two statements, which stand out from the rest of the poem through their brevity, conceal the real tragedy behind the autumnal tableaux: whereas the natural winter simply happens as the seasons change, the experiential winter violently “breaks out,” hinting at the speaker's suffering at being left behind. Although the speaker evaluates the choice to emigrate positively (those who go are designated as world travellers and trailblazers), the impact

of that choice is portrayed as unequivocally bleak.⁶⁹ The final differentiation between winter as a season and winter as an experience speaks to the “I”’s turn inward, while the shrinking of the Romanian-German minority is paralleled by the diminishing of communication, as the lines and the words themselves become shorter and the syntax simpler.

If the poetry of the late 1970s and early 1980s describes the isolation of the individual – the effect of the minority’s emigration – as in process, by the end of the 1980s the desolation of those left behind is complete. As one of the few Romanian-German poets of the post-war generation to have remained in the country until the fall of the communist regime in December 1989, Franz Hodjak was also the last to publish a volume of poetry there. Contained in this last volume to appear in Romania, *Luftveränderung* [*Change of Air*] (1988), is the poem “Morgentee” [“Morning Tea”], ostensibly a description of the morning tea drinking ritual of the speaker:

der tee, der die sinne wachruft
wie ein eben eingetroffener brief.
auf dem fensterbrett eine tote taube.
im grauen paletot erwartet die luft, das was kommt.
ich seh nirgends einen zusammenhang.

und es schneit; schnee fällt,
als würden alle schutzengel
sich vor machtlosigkeit
aus dem himmel stürzen. (*Luftveränderung* 19)

the tea which rouses the senses
like a recently arrived letter.
on the windowsill a dead pigeon.
in a grey paletot, the air waits for something to arrive.
i don’t see a connection anywhere.

69 Anemone Latzina’s “Mein fünftes Sonett” [“My Fifth Sonnet”], a painfully personal response to a friend’s emigration, echoes the description of the alienation and desolation felt by those left behind: “Was jetzt noch folgt, liegt schwer in unseren verwaisten Händen. / Auch unsere Tage sind gewogen und gezählt. / Der Winter, der nun kommt, wird niemals enden” (“What follows now burdens my orphaned hand. / The weighing of our days is also done. / The winter coming now will never end.”; *Tagebuchtage* 84).

and it snows; snow falls
as if all guardian angels
were plummeting from the sky
out of powerlessness.

Written in sentences of varying length and alternating between full and elliptical clauses in the manner of a report, the first stanza takes stock of the speaker's surroundings with apparent detachment. The restoring tea, the dead pigeon on the window sill, and the grey air seem at first not to make any impression on the "I," who only reveals himself in the last line of the stanza. The "I"'s pronouncement that he doesn't "see a connection anywhere" thus seems to deny any correlation between the three elements described before. The beginning of the second stanza belies this detachment, however, through the prominent position of the coordinating conjunction "und" ("and"), which reveals the previous statements as part of a connected, if cryptic, image.

The sudden revelation of the snow – the image occupying the whole second stanza – suggests, through the link to the many winter poems in post-war Romanian-German literature, a context for the interpretation of the seemingly disconnected elements. The lack of communication implied by the substitution of tea for letters as a restorer of the senses (a giver of life) and by the dead pigeon and the disappointed expectation of change in the personification of the air can thus be read as the effects of emigration felt by those left behind. The simile of the falling angels – an extension of the snow metaphor into the spiritual realm – in the last stanza bears witness to the full extent of the psychological damage of those affected: the loss of all hope, the institution of powerlessness.

The distance between the powerlessness indicated in the poems of the late 1970s and 1980s and the confidence exuded by earlier poems is the most dramatic change in the poetry of the 1970s generation and cannot be comprehended in terms of a switch from an "engaged" poetry to one of "subjective engagement." While the generation remained characterised by an

interest in social conditions, the poets' critical focus changed with their socio-historic context. The gradual changes in critical focus produced different types of social and political criticism, each with its own means, goals, and reception. Thus, in the 1960s and early 1970s, the focus was provided by the promises of liberalisation and manifested itself in the advocacy of open political discussion and even the thematisation of political events. The protest poetry against international conflicts such as the ones in Vietnam and Chile represents the apogee of open criticism in post-war Romanian-German literature. The thematisation of these conflicts allowed the poets entry into the Romanian as well as the international public sphere through topics that were, given Romania's ambiguous official position on the conflicts, at once controversial and safe. As Ceaușescu continued to consolidate his power at the expense of the Romanian population and living conditions in Romania started to deteriorate, the generation's poetry became focused on providing a corrective to the official depictions of these conditions. This highly charged political criticism was only possible, however, under the cover of irony and metaphor and relied heavily on an informed audience for its effect. Although not intended primarily as a poetry of criticism, the poems of the 1980s depicting the degrading personal situation of the post-war generation caused by the country's harsh political climate achieved the biggest critical resonance and helped elucidate Romanian conditions for an international audience.

Chapter 3

The 1970s Generation and the Romanian-German Minority

The 1970s Generation and the Romanian-German Heimat: Shifting Positions

In addition to seeking entrance into the Romanian public sphere with texts proclaiming their social engagement, the young German poets who debuted in the late 1960s and early 1970s also sought to distance themselves from the legacy of the Saxon and Swabian communities from which they had originated. For the young Romanian-Germans, the closed, often rural communities of their origin, intent on self-preservation through the exclusion both of ethnic others and of other points of views, were antithetical to the open exchange of ideas towards which the post-war generation was striving. Critical distance from the minority's traditions thus became a facet of the young poets' early social engagement and a necessary step towards their integration in the public sphere.

Discursively, the generation's rejection of the cultural heritage of the minority was prepared by debates and discussions initiated in Romania's German media in the second half of the 1960s. Unlike the immediate post-war years, which were marked by the deportations to the Soviet Union, and the 1950s, which saw the resurgence of Stalinist terror methods in the Bărăgan deportations⁷⁰ and the Kronstadt/Braşov show trial, the late 1960s were a comparatively stable period for the German minority, a fact which did not go unnoticed by the young generation:

70 Unlike the deportations to the Soviet Union, the forced relocations to the Bărăgan Plain in southeastern Romania were aimed at defusing potential tensions between Romania and Yugoslavia as relations between the two countries deteriorated after World War II. The Bărăgan deportations also offered a convenient way of purging the new socialist state of undesired elements and affected, among Romania's Germans, mainly the Banat Swabians. For an extensive account of the deportations, see the documentation by Walther Konschitzky, Walter Wolf, and Peter-Dietmar Leber, *Deportiert in den Bărăgan 1951-1956: Banater Schwaben gedenken der Verschleppung vor fünfzig Jahren*.

Damals, in den sechziger Jahren, waren die Banaterdeutschen Dorfgemeinschaften in gewissen Maßen wieder intakt, sie hatten sich von Krieg und Nachkrieg erholt, von Deportation und Zwangsmaßnahmen. Die Menschen hatten sich in den Grenzen der Zeit eingerichtet. (Wagner, “Die Aktionsgruppe” 123-4)

Back then, in the sixties, the rural communities of the Banat Germans were once again intact to a certain degree. They had recovered from the war and the post-war period, from deportations and sanctions. The people had adjusted to the limits of the time.

While the temporary recovery of the Romanian-German communities provided the ground for the cultural renaissance which helped produce the 1970s generation of poets, in the sparser literary landscape before the generation's collective debut, critical discussions of the cultural life of the German minority were often oriented towards the past. The survey “Zur Erforschung und Neuwertung des deutschsprachigen literarischen Erbes in unserem Vaterland” [“On the Exploration and Reevaluation of the German Literary Heritage in Our Fatherland”], for instance, published by *Neue Literatur* in the spring of 1966, called for a reassessment of the literary tradition of the German minority as a first order of business among Romanian-German intellectuals.

If the spring 1966 survey was mainly concerned with the categorisation of the previous literature of the Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians, a follow-up round table discussion in the fall of the same year and published in *Neue Literatur* the following spring already centered on contemporaneous – and newly designated – Romanian-German literature. Entitled “Rundtischgespräch zur Standortbestimmung unserer Lyrik” [“Round Table Discussion on Defining the Position of Our Poetry”], the conversation reflected the emergence not only of a new, hybrid literature, but also of a specific genre – poetry – which would dominate Romanian-German literature into the 1990s. Despite the seeming consensus on the term “Romanian-German” (which is never questioned during this discussion), a division between an older and a younger generation of authors and critics, each clinging to a different pole of Romanian-German

literature, designated in the discussion as “Heimatliteratur” (“Heimat literature”⁷¹) and “Moderne” (“modernity”), is already apparent here.

By August 1970, the date of publication of the seminal round table discussion “Strukturalismus und Kerweih” [“Structuralism and Country Fair”], which was to set the direction of Romanian-German literary criticism for the next two decades, the schism was unmistakable. The poles “Heimat” and “Moderne” were now represented in the very title of the discussion: “Heimat” being identified with the Banat-Swabian tradition of “Kerweih”⁷² (dialect for “Kirchweihe,” church consecration, the occasion for an annual country fair) and “Moderne” with the newly discovered structuralist method of literary criticism. The conclusion of the discussion, attended by generation members Bernd Kolf, Franz Hodjak, Anemone Latzina, and critic Gerhard Csejka, was to charge Romanian-German writers with the task of maintaining the distance to and a critical dialogue (where the emphasis was on “critical”) with the cultural legacy of the German minority (62-3).

The 1970s generation of poets took up the task with enthusiasm, seeking detachment from a cultural heritage which they felt reflected the worst characteristics of the minority: narrow-mindedness, isolationism, and the attendant glorification of these mental and physical boundaries in the focus on Saxon and Swabian settlements, virtues, histories, and traditions. In the round table discussion on Romanian-German poetry, the poet and critic Dieter Schlesak,

71 As Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman have pointed out, the German word “Heimat” has, despite its literal translation into the English “home,” polyvalent and untranslatable meanings (1) and has been retained for that reason in German. While extensive research is available on the uses of Heimat in German and Austrian literature and culture (see, for instance, the volumes by Boa and Palfreyman, Helfried Seliger, and Peter Blickle), the following section rests on the specific Heimat discourse created by Romanian-German journalism between the 1960s and 80s. In distinct opposition to the idea of Heimat in “binnen”-German discourse, the Romanian-German debate around the term is characterized by the fear of irrecoverable loss and the idea of impermanence.

72 For the connotations of “Kerweih” in the poetry of the 1970s generation, see note 78 below.

senior to the oldest members of the generation by a decade, had set the ground for this understanding by declaring Heimat literature the product of patterns of thought and belief reinforced by isolation and the repetition of norms and traditions:

“Heimatliteratur” ist die Literatur einer geordneten, klaren Herkunft, einer ungebrochenen Tradition, einer engen Gefühlswelt und eines isolierten Lebenskreises, mit festen Normen und einer Geschichte, einer engen Bindung an Natur und Boden, einer Weltanschauung. (“Rundtischgespräch” 118)

“Heimat literature” is the literature of a classified, clear ancestry, of an unbroken tradition, of a narrow world of emotions, and of an isolated circle of life with definite norms and a single history, with a close connection to nature and to the soil, with a single world view.

In Schlesak's argument, the minority's distinct origins, maintained traditions, isolated mode of life, and strict community rules had led to a particular literary production, whose consumption had in turn prepared the group to be receptive to National Socialist “blood and soil” propaganda:

[D]ie Mentalität der Heimatliteratur, die Verherrlichung des Bodens, der konservative Zug der nationalen Erhaltung konnte für “Blut und Boden” in Anspruch genommen werden. (118)

The mentality of Heimat literature, the glorification of the soil, the conservative trait of [the idea of] national preservation could be enlisted for [the doctrine of] “blood and soil.”

Schlesak's assessment is echoed more than 20 years later by Richard Wagner in his reminiscences about the beginnings of the Aktionsgruppe Banat, of which he was a founding member and the acknowledged spokesman. In fact, freed from the restrictions of censorship (the essay was published in West Germany after the author's emigration), Wagner cements the link by drawing a direct parallel between the minority's – in this case, Banat Swabians' – collaboration with Nazi Germany and the cultural traditions the ethnic group attempted to pass down to an unwilling post-war generation:

Sie redeten von den guten Zeiten wie von der Vergangenheit und von Deutschland wie von einer großen Zukunft. Wenn sie getrunken hatten, redeten die Männer von ihrer großen Zeit in der SS, und nach Mitternacht sangen sie die Lieder, mit denen sie im

Auftrag des Führers die Welt kennengelernt hatten. . . . Diese Männer und Frauen wollten uns in ihre Trachtenanzüge stecken und zu ihrer Blasmusik tanzen lassen. (“Die Aktionsgruppe” 124)

They spoke of the good times as if they belonged to the past and of Germany as if it were the glorious future. When the men were drunk, they spoke of their glorious days in the SS, and after midnight they sang the songs with which they had traveled the world on behalf of the Führer. . . . These men and women wanted to put us in their traditional costumes and make us dance to their oompah music.

Wagner places the group's beginnings in the context of the relative recovery of the Banat Swabians in the 1960s (quoted above), after a war which had had disastrous consequences for them. Like Schlesak, Wagner implies a seamless continuity of habits and mentalities, symbolised by the post-war revival of National Socialist marching songs along with the traditional “Blasmusik” of the Swabian communities, and conveys the struggle between the communities' attempts to preserve this continuity and the young generation's reluctance to accept their legacy.

Speaking after his emigration to West Germany in 1987, Wagner could be blunt about the Nazi legacy of the Banat Swabians,⁷³ a topic Schlesak could merely hint at in 1960s Romania. The vehemence of Wagner's denunciation, with which he was joining the criticism of the Swabian communities first sounded in the Federal Republic by Herta Müller's *Niederungen*, was a clear departure from the critical discourse on the minority's legacy in the German-language press of 1980s Romania. Following the complete rejection of the Saxon and Swabian

73 As ethnic Germans (“Volksdeutsche” in the appellation of the time), the Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians had been under the protection – and coercion – of Nazi Germany since Hitler's ascension to power. The informal alliance between Hitler and Romania's head of state during most of World War II, Marshal Ion Antonescu, lent further stability to the position of the Romanian-German minority. By a special understanding between Antonescu and Hitler from May 1943, mediated by the National Socialist wing of the Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien (German Ethnic Group in Romania), ethnic German men who were Romanian citizens could even join the ranks of the Waffen-SS, and an estimated 63,000 men did so. The circumstances and reasons for this commitment are elaborated in Paul Milata's *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu: Rumäniendeutsche in der Waffen-SS*. For a further discussion of the relationship of the German minority of Romania to Nazi Germany, see also Johann Böhm, *Die Gleichschaltung der Deutschen Volksgruppe in Rumänien und das “Dritte Reich” 1941 – 1944*.

legacy in the 1960s, the 1970s and 80s saw a softening of the discourse, as the fate of the German communities of Romania became increasingly uncertain and the survival of German culture in this Eastern landscape threatened by the rising wave of emigration.

A conciliatory tone had already been sounded by critic Gerhardt Csejka in the early 1970s. Having heralded a new literary generation in December of 1972,⁷⁴ Csejka was no less interested in the continuities of German literature on the territory of Romania. In 1973, *Neue Literatur* republished an earlier article by Csejka (written, according to a note to the text, as an introduction to an anthology of Romanian-German prose in Hungarian translation two years previously), which attempts to elucidate the character of the minority's literature – both Transylvanian Saxon and Banat Swabian – from the changes in its socio-historical context. Although Csejka finds that past minority writers had been helping to construct a “Minimythos” (“mini myth”) about the minority's existence rather than critically illuminating its position, he is sensitive to the circumstances which made such a creation necessary. Isolated from the mainstream of German language, literature, and culture, pre-war Saxon and Swabian writers did not have the luxury of purely artistic pursuits, Csejka argues. Instead, the literature of the geographically isolated and politically marginalized Saxons and Swabians was a response to the communities' need for self-preservation. The literary output of the German minority was “auf Selbstbestätigung und Selbsterziehung so sehr bedacht, wie die Umstände es erforderten, um zu überleben, um als eigenständige kulturelle Einheit der Übermacht der nachbarlichen Kulturen standzuhalten” (“as much focused on self-affirmation and self-education as the circumstances required it in order to withstand the superiority of the neighbouring cultures as an independent cultural unit”; “Bedingtheiten der rumäniendeutschen Literatur” 26).

74 See the discussion of this article, “Als ob es mit 'als ob' zu Ende ginge,” in chapter 1.

Csejka does not gloss over the fact that at times the drive for self-preservation meant putting literature in the service of ideology (although he is especially critical of the literature of praise of the post-war years, rather than of literary productions tainted by National Socialism). Yet the critic is not ready to dismiss the cultural legacy of the German minority, to which he acknowledges a complicated relationship (27). He welcomes the challenge to integrate this complex inheritance into contemporary literary production as a way of getting “festen Boden unter die Füße” (“firm ground under one's feet”), of achieving a more permanent and independent status for Romanian-German literature (31).⁷⁵

Starting in the late 1970s, the dominant nationalist rhetoric of Ceaușescu's cult of personality forbade any further attempt at a discussion of the legacy of an ethnic minority. The discussion of minority literature survived in the pages of *Neue Literatur* only to the extent to which it was denuded of Romanian-German content, first by being remade as an exploration of German “regional literature” with no direct connection to Romania and second by being “given over” to West-German critics Alexander Ritter and Norbert Mecklenburg,⁷⁶ who, as foreign authors, were presumably exempt from the strictest rules of censorship. An important exception is constituted by a project undertaken by the journal between 1985 and 1987 to inspire a new discussion about Heimat among Romanian-Germans. The project included a literary tour with readings in 13 cities and villages in Transylvania, Maramureș, and Banat, involving 36 writers and, according to the editors, 1430 local participants (“Eisbeutel am Kopf” 14). The tour was followed by a roundtable in the Transylvanian town of Kerz/Cârța, whose proceedings were

75 The sentiment is also echoed a year later in an article by Csejka published in *Karpathenrundschau*, “Deutsche Literatur in rumänischer Landschaft” [“German Literature in the Romanian Landscape”], which concludes that contemporary Romanian-German literature can only profit “aus ihrer einzigartigen Situation” (“from its unique situation”; 5).

76 See the article by Ritter, “Zwischen literarischem Vorbehalt und kulturpolitischer Empfindlichkeit,” and the article by Mecklenburg, serialised in two parts, “Rettung des Besonderen.”

published in *Neue Literatur* in the fall of 1987.

By the time the proceedings of this last roundtable were published, most members of the post-war generation had left the country. Among those quoted in the discussion, which is marked by discord and a palpable anxiety, only Franz Hodjak and critic Peter Motzan belong to the 1970s generation. The discussion is prefaced by two articles on the meanings of Heimat, penned by critics Stefan Sienerth and Peter Motzan respectively. Sienerth's article, "Der Heimatbegriff in der älteren siebenbürgisch-deutschen Literatur" ["The Concept of 'Heimat' in Older Transylvanian-German Literature"] is a historical survey of the uses of the word "Heimat" in Transylvanian-German literature up to 1900. Motzan's essay, "Schwierigkeiten im Umgang mit der Vokabel Heimat" ["Challenges of the Word 'Heimat'"] elaborates on Norbert Mecklenburg's theoretical constructions on the subject, which Motzan illustrates with examples taken from German and Austrian literature. By choosing a historical (Sienerth) and a theoretical (Motzan) approach to the subject matter, the two critics manage to elide the discussions about the homeland of the Romanian-Germans and its representations which had dominated earlier debates but which had become problematic topics in late 1980s Romania.

Following Motzan's theoretical investigation of the term, the participants in the roundtable also avoided the discussion of a specific Heimat, focusing instead on the plurality of meanings this term engenders in its different word combinations, such as "Heimatabend" ("Heimat evening"), "Heimatforscher" ("Heimat scholar"), "Heimatlied" ("Heimat song") or "heimatlos" ("Heimat-less"; "Heimat – Plural ungebräuchlich" 42). Not surprisingly, it is the latter combination which finds most resonance with the participants and which is invoked in Franz Hodjak's pladoyer for home as a location of safety and permanence:

Heimat heißt nicht nur mit dem Bewußtsein einer traditionsreichen Vergangenheit zu leben, sondern auch im Bewußtsein einer gesicherten Zukunft leben zu können. Heimat – für einen verantwortungsbewußten Schriftsteller jedenfalls – bedeutet nicht zuletzt die

Art und Weise, wie er schreibt. Denn Literatur kann nicht nur heimatbewußt machen, sondern selbst Heimat sein, und wer seine Sprache verloren hat . . . ist auf dem besten Wege heimatlos zu werden. (43)

Heimat means not only living with the awareness of a venerable past, but also within the consciousness of an assured future. Last but not least, Heimat also means the manner in which one writes – for a responsible writer, at any rate. For literature can not only make one conscious of one's home but can be home in and of itself, and whoever has lost his language . . . is well on his way to becoming homeless.

By bringing together the topics of Heimat, continuity, and literature, Hodjak returns the discussion to the previous terms of debate surrounding the legacy of the Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians (without, however, referring to these directly). Yet Hodjak's invocation of literature as Heimat has little in common with the “Heimatliteratur” rejected by his generation in the late 1960s and early 70s. Hodjak's defence of continuity is, significantly, not one of the “venerable past” of the minority, but one of the minority's very right to existence. This appeal notwithstanding, the refuge of the writer in the language demonstrates Hodjak's doubt that the German communities still had a future in Romania, a doubt which would be justified two years on by the near-disappearance of the German settlements of Romania.

The Rejection of Saxon and Swabian Environments of Identification

The “Heimatliteratur” rejected by the post-war poets at the time of their debut is, in the first place, the literary evocation of Saxon and Swabian environments of identification. In the case of the Transylvanian Saxons, this environment is a highly codified landscape, dominated by the silhouettes of the mountains ensconcing human settlements and of church towers rising up from them. They denote safety, permanence, and pride and are symbolic of the calling to protect the land that remained integral to Transylvanian-Saxon identity even after the Saxons lost their status as one of the ruling “nations” of Transylvania and became a political minority, first of the

multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire and then of the Romanian state.⁷⁷ The medieval “Wehrkirchen” (fortified churches), especially, in which the calling as guardians of the land meets the Saxons' Lutheran faith, have long been a symbol of Transylvanian-German endurance, their images recalled over and over in both words and pictures:

Man könnte von einer bei vielen Nationen zu beobachtenden Ideologisierung der Landschaft und der Baukunst sprechen. Solche Symbole ihrer Identität sind für die Siebenbürger Sachsen neben der “Schwarzen Kirche” in Kronstadt und dem Stundturm in Schäßburg vor allem die ehemals fast 300 (und heute über 100 gut erhaltenen) Kirchenburgen und Wehrkirchen, die für sie zu “Inbildern einer 850jährigen Tradition und Kontinuität” geworden sind. (Scheichl 390)

One could speak here of an ideologisation of the landscape and of architecture which can be observed in many nations. In addition to the Black Church in Kronstadt and the Clock Tower in Schäßburg, the symbols of identity of the Transylvanian Saxons are the almost 300 fortified churches (100 of which are well-preserved today) which have become for the Saxons the “embodiment of a 850-year-old tradition and continuity.”

Egon Hajek's “Was ist Heimat?” [“What is Heimat?”] offers a panoramic look over the landscape as it appeared in Transylvanian-German poetry in the inter-war period. Written after Hajek (1888 – 1963) had permanently moved to Vienna in 1929, the poem is a look back at the eastern “homeland” as related by a father to his child:

Was ist denn “Heimat”? Vater, sag mirs doch!

Siehst du im Osten jener blauen Berge Joch?
Weit drüben, hin, wo tausend Schwalben fliegen
im fernen Licht muß unsre Heimat liegen.
Dort glitzern Felder reich, wie Gold gemäht,
von Reben quillt der Hügel, taubesät.
Die dunkle Erde hat, was man in sie versenkt,
oft hundertfältig unserm Volk zurückgeschenkt.
Und in dem Busch, verträumt und doch so licht,
winkt dir des Dörfleins ernstes Angesicht.
Die Kirchenburg erhebt sich noch in alter Pracht.
Man denkt, sie sei noch da, die Zeit der Macht.
Noch heute steht der Bau gar stolz und warm...
doch unser Volk ist klein, ist elend, arm.

77 The semi-autonomous status of the Transylvanian Saxons is described in Shafir 136-7.

Und gerade deshalb lieb ich doppelt dieses Land.
Weißt du nun, Kind, was Heimat wird benannt? (Sienerth, *Ausklang* 90-1)

What is “Heimat”? Father, tell me please!

Do you see the blue mountains in the east?
Far yonder, where a thousand swallows fly
into the light must our homeland lie.
The rich fields there wink in golden glow,
the hills of vines and verdure overflow.
And everything we laid in the dark earth,
she's given back a hundred times its worth.
And from the green, dream-like and yet so clear,
you see the image of our village now appear.
The church still stands with mighty walls and tower.
It seems it's not yet passed, our glory hour.
The building still stands ardent and erect...
our nation, though, is small, is poor, abject.
And for this reason I doubly love this land.
What Heimat is, child, now you understand?

Hajek's elaborate panorama is not a depiction of an actual place, but an aggregate of all the traditional features of the literary Transylvanian landscape: mountains, fields, vineyards, villages, and fortified churches. The absence of cities from this landscape is conspicuous, especially given the fact that Hajek was himself an urban dweller. Pride of place is given instead to the Carpathians (the “blue mountains” of the second verse) and the fortified church (here “Kirchenburg,” line 11), representing natural and human strength respectively. Literally nestled between them (lines 6-10) is a region of perfect symbiosis between the natural and the human worlds, represented by the cultivated fields, vine-covered hills, and the vegetation-protected rest of the villagers. The “dark earth” and the people (“Volk”) are linked by mutual give-and-take. This link to the natural world continues despite the loss of importance that the speaker's “Volk” has suffered in the human realm. By line 12, the natural cycle of life and the history of the Transylvanian Saxons appear at odds with each other. Yet it is exactly from this opposition that the speaker derives his attachment to the homeland, which he attempts to inculcate in the next

generation.

In contrast to Transylvanian-German poetry, which resuscitates feelings of ethnic belonging out of images of loss and decay, the landscapes of Banat-Swabian verse are represented as flourishing:

War in den Versen von [siebenbürgischen Dichtern] das Landschaftsbild so gestaltet, daß es auf Verfallserscheinungen in den Reihen der sächsischen Bevölkerung hindeuten konnten, erwecken die Natur- und Landschaftsausschnitte in den banatschwäbischen Gedichten den Eindruck von Lebenszuversicht (Sienerth, "Entwicklungslinien" 55).

If in the verse of the [Transylvanian poets] the image of the landscape suggests the deterioration of the Saxon population, the nature and landscape descriptions in Banat Swabian poetry give the impression of confidence.

This is perhaps nowhere more visible than in the verse of Peter Jung (1887 – 1966), a contemporary of Hajek and one of the most popular Banat writers, whose 1921 poem "Mein Heimatland" ["My Homeland"], set to music by Josef Linster, became one of the hymns of the Banat Swabians. Jung's "Schwäbische Bauern" ["Swabian Peasants"] represents the relationship between the Swabians and their land as a timeless union. Under the influence of the title farmers, which in the poem are endowed with mythical powers, the importance of the Banat landscape is magnified, as it becomes the very home of civilization:

Sie schreiten durch die Welt wie Riesen,
Aus alten Sagen hergeweht,
Und Saaten leuchten auf und Wiesen,
Wo ihres Pfluges Furche geht.

Das Blut rollt schwer in ihren Adern,
Und wetterhart ist ihr Gesicht.
Sie baun der Arbeit Dom aus Quadern,
Und sind Apostel all der Pflicht.

Wo sie sich lautlos niederlassen,
Dort wendet sich der Segen hin,
Und Wege winden sich und Straßen,
Wo fröhlich mag der Wanderer ziehn.

Wo immer sie die Wildnis roden,
Den Fortschritt tragen in das Land,

Dort wachsen Städte aus dem Boden,
Wie unter eines Zaubrers Hand.

They stride through the world like giants
From old legends
And crops and meadows spring up,
Wherever their plows leave their furrows.

The blood rolls thickly in their veins,
And their faces are hardened by the weather.
They erect the cathedral of work
And are apostles of duty.

Wherever they silently descend,
They bring blessings,
And roads and streets are created,
To the delight of the wanderer.

Wherever they clear the wilderness,
They bring progress to the land,
Cities shoot up from the ground there,
As if from under a wizard's hand.

The poem plays upon the achievements of the Swabians as successful settlers on inhospitable soil: the Banat captured by the Habsburgs from the Ottoman Empire was nearly deserted after long years of conflict between the two powers and had to be turned from marsh and heath into agricultural land. By drawing on mythological and religious imagery (giants, legends, wizards, apostles, the “cathedral of work,” blessings), however, the first four stanzas of the poem quoted here reimagine the Swabian settlers as superhumanly able and benign. Stylized at the end of the poem as “Priester der Kultur” (“priests of culture”), they achieve no less than the creation of civilization out of wilderness (“Wildnis”).

Interspersed with the mythological and religious imagery is a catalogue of Swabian virtues: physical prowess and ability, hardness of constitution and character forged under inauspicious conditions, and a strong sense of duty and work ethic. The second stanza, especially, closely connects physical built with moral virtue, invoking the “blood and soil”

imagery criticised by Dieter Schlesak. Although the Banat-Swabian tradition meets the Transylvanian-Saxon one in the belief in a calling to defend and cultivate the land, the Swabian environment of identification is one created – mastered even – by the Swabian settlers, rather than one of symbiotic harmony between humans and nature.

For the post-war generation of writers, steeped in the ideology of the socialist state, the claims to stewardship of the land and to group supremacy embedded in the “Heimatliteratur” of both the Saxons and the Swabians felt deeply anachronistic. The early verse of the 1970s generation often deconstructs these claims by representing the Saxon and Swabian environments of identification as the settings of outmoded lifestyles and beliefs, boredom, and decay. Richard Wagner's ironic “Banater Rühreilandschaft” [“Banat Scrambled-Egg Landscape”] suggests already in its title that this is not a landscape depiction in the manner of traditional Banat poetry. In direct translation, the title qualifies the once mythicised Banat landscape as banal and disordered, like a dish of scrambled eggs. The play on the metaphorical sense of the German verb “rühren” (to “stir” or “move”) and especially the adjective “rührend” (“moving,” “heart-warming,” but also “pathetic”), embedded in Wagner's neologism, further mocks the touching sentimentality of “Heimatliteratur.”

In keeping with the implication of the title, the poem is a blend of observations from an unspecified location in the Banat narrated in an ironic and distanced manner:

heut hats mal wieder zu regnen vergessen
einer hält sich die pipatsch vors gesicht
auf den straßen liegt jede menge staub
die witze sind noch immer die gleichen
landauf landab geistert die kerweih
die sonne blinzelt verschämt den
steifen schwabengirls zu
dann und wann hör ich schritte
wie von stiefeln (*Klartext* 48).

rain has forgotten to fall once again today

someone holds the pipatsch in front of his face
the dust on the streets is aplenty
the jokes are still the same
the kerweih is haunting all over the country
the sun blinks coyly in the direction of the
stiff swabian girls
now and then i hear a sound
as if of boots

While the Banat setting is stressed through specific references, such as the “Pipatsch” (dialect for “Klatschmohn,” a type of poppy, and the name of the Swabian-dialect section of *Neue Banater Zeitung*), the “Kerweih,” and the “Swabian girls,” the rest of the landscape details are general, implying any place in the Banat. Also part of this lack of specificity is the absence of a clear designation of the location as a village or a town. The description, however, implies a very traditional and provincial setting, associated by the generation with rural environments.

The poem alternates gestures of boredom and absent-mindedness located in natural elements (the forgetful rain, the lying dust, the blinking sun) with portents of increasingly more sinister human activities. If the reader of the local “Pipatsch” in line 2 is guilty only of hiding from the world, the traditional “Kerweih” is already described as “haunting” in line 5,⁷⁸ while line 9 hints to the Swabians' Nazi sympathies in the uncanny sound “as if of boots.” (In contrast to this male-connoted activity, the Swabian “girls” appear stiff and prudish.)

The unsettling juxtaposition between extremely ordinary occurrences in the natural environment and the foreboding activities of the human world is heightened by the distancing manner of the description. Absent until the second-to-last line, the “I” appears in the closing of

78 Because of its instrumentalisation in the representation of Swabian identity, the Kerweih (or Kerwei) has a negative connotation in the early poetry of the 1970s generation, as in Johann Lippet's epic poem *Biographie. Ein Muster [Biography. A Pattern]* where the first-person speaker articulates his estrangement from this discarded tradition “das nach jahren / wieder ausgegraben wurde” (“which was unearthed again / after years and years”; 50). In the 1980s, however, the festival reappears in poetry as the symbol of a dying community: in Wagner's “Großvaterland” [“Grandfatherland”] (*Gegenlicht* 33-4), the Kerweih becomes a respite for the hard life of the minority, while in Horst Samson's “Kerwei” (*Lebraum* 46), the festival is filled with dark omens for the community.

the poem as the only conscious witness to the narrated scene but without any explicit ties to the community. Despite appearing in what could be a conciliatory gesture – listening – the “I” is clearly interested in unmasking rather than promoting understanding, a common gesture in the early poetry of the generation.

In a 1996 interview, Franz Hodjak described the generation's distancing from the patterns of previous Saxon and Swabian literature as a “Prozeß der Abwendung von provinziellem Mief” [“process of abandoning provincial mustiness”] a phenomenon in which

althergebrachte Muster provinziellen Schreibens über Bord geworfen und neue Möglichkeiten literarischer Bewältigung einer brutalen Wirklichkeit gesucht wurden. Die Enge verniedlichender Perspektive wurde aufgebrochen, die Linde am Dorfrand gefällt, der Dorfbrunnen als lebensspendende Kraft rechts liegengelassen, der heimatliche Acker als Identitätsfindung nicht mehr gesegnet undsoweiter undsofort. (Hodjak, “Von der Suche” 283)

traditional models of provincial writing were thrown overboard and new possibilities for coping with a brutal reality were sought. The narrow, trivialising perspective was forced open, the linden tree at the edge of the village cut down, the village fountain with its life-giving water abandoned, the fields of home not haloed anymore as sources of identity, etcetera etcetera.

Speaking from a distance of over two decades and in characteristic ironic manner, Hodjak both abbreviates and exaggerates the processes of renewal that characterise the poetry of the 1970s generation. Still, Hodjak's metaphorical description – which also undoes the elevated language of “Heimatliteratur” by pointing to its right-wing tendencies in the phrase “rechts liegengelassen” (literally: “let lie on the right”) – is perhaps the best representation of the meanings associated with the rural landscape for different generations of Romanian-Germans. Where the elements of the landscape (the linden tree, the village, the fountain, and the field) had traditionally stood for strength, endurance, and a secure sense of identity, for the young generation represented by Hodjak they had become synonymous with provincialism, constriction, triviality, and predictability, all of which the poets sought to forcibly remove from

their poetry.

Although speaking here as the former German editor of the Dacia publishing house, Hodjak himself was one of the most fruitful practitioners of the dismantling of the traditional Romanian-German landscape.⁷⁹ His series of poems dedicated to important centres of Transylvanian-Saxon identity,⁸⁰ chief among them the fortified churches and fortresses representing the Saxons' mission and endurance in eastern Europe, brought him both critical acclaim and popular controversy.⁸¹ “Rosenauer Burg” [“Rosenau Fortress”], a poem from the middle period of his preoccupation with the sites of Transylvanian-German identity, is representative of the poet's unorthodox take on these centres:

hier oben wächst die kamille
gott in den mund
.....
der wind die steine die gänse
fallen aus einem schlaf in den andern es gibt
keinen türken der sie aufschreckt
der pfiff einer fernen lokomotive nur
ruft zurück
in die gegenwart: hinter
flugbereiten mauern hinter abgereisten
türmen und toren blickt stolz
auf sich selbst
die hinterlassenschaft einer goldnen
zukunft: zermalmt und verschluckt und

79 For a brief overview of Hodjak's lineage as a dismantler of the Transylvanian landscape, see Hannes Schuster, “Bewahrungsgesten und Verlustanzeigen.”

80 “Die Stolzenburg” [“The Stolzen Fortress”], “Bergschule in Schäßburg” [“School on the Hill in Schäßburg”], “Kelling,” “Michelsberger Burg” [“Michelsberg Fortress”], and “Schwarze Kirche” [“Black Church”] in *Offene Briefe* (1976); “Rosenauer Burg” [“Rosenau Fortress”] and “Schäßburg – Stundturm” [“Schäßburg – Clock Tower”] in *Mit Polly Knall* (1979); “Kelling 2” in *Flieder im Ohr* (1983); “Kelling 3, “Wehrburg Tartlau” [“Tartlau Fortress”], and “Rundblick (Stundturm in Schäßburg)” [“Overview (Clock Tower in Schäßburg)”] in *Augenlicht* (1986); and “Michelsberger Burg 2” [“Michelsberg Fortress 2”], “Brukenthalschule. Im Hof” [“Brukenthal School. In the Courtyard”], and “Kerzer Abtei” [“Kerz Abbey”] in *Luftveränderung* (1988).

81 Dubbed “Lyriker eines kulturellen Zusammenbruchs” (“bard of a cultural collapse”) by Sigurd Paul Scheichl, Hodjak was accused by representatives of the minority of helping to precipitate the demise of the community. See Hodjak, “Von der Suche” 280.

verdaut von dem allgegenwärtigen
vergessen das
zuweilen uns zeichen sendet wie zufriednes
rülpsen (*Mit Polly Knall* 55)

up here the chamomile grows
into god's mouth
.....
the wind the stones the geese
fall from one sleep into the next there are
no turks to startle them
only the whistle of a far-away locomotive
calls one back
into the present: from behind
flight-ready walls from behind departed
towers and gates looks proudly
down on itself
the bequest of a golden
future: crunched and swallowed and
digested by the omnipresent
forgetting which
now and again sends us signs like contented
belching

As Sigurd Paul Scheichl has argued for other poems of the series, the description of the Rosenau fortress integrates time and place in a metaphor of decay (392). In fact, the poem gives few details of the fortress itself apart from its situation (“hier oben” 'up here') and the cursory mentioning of walls, towers, and gates, and concentrates instead on an atmospheric description that blends immediate occurrences with historic ones. The temporal melange seems for a while to suspend the fortress in time: like the wind, stones, and geese, it seems to be simultaneously of the past (represented by the Ottoman attack), of the present (represented by the sound of the locomotive), and a dream of the future. This impression is dispelled, however, by the string of participles in the second part of the poem (“abgereisten” 'departed', “zermalmt” 'crushed', “verschluckt” 'swallowed', and “verdaut” 'digested'), which pronounce even the legacy (“Hinterlassenschaft”) of the fortress as a thing of the past.

The once proud fortress, built in the Middle Ages to stave off the advancement of the

Ottomans, is not just a ruin, but a symbol of the lost purpose of the Transylvanian Germans. In the absence of the menacing Turks, an identity of the Transylvanian Saxons predicated upon the defence of the land and of Christianity has become obsolete.⁸² The progression of history (symbolised here by the distant locomotive) has bypassed the Saxons, whose world has “fallen asleep.” All that is left of the once proud fortress as the symbol of Saxon achievement is the vain dream of a glorious future, which has never come true. Hodjak's little-disguised contempt for the cherished dreams of the Transylvanian Saxons (which are reduced to a self-satisfied belch in the last two lines) is a clear indication that the break with the sources of Romanian-German identity found in the traditional landscape was meant as a distancing from the minority itself.

Uncanny Landscapes: The Defamiliarization of Home

The generation's early rejection of the minority's values and ideals, identified with mostly rural landscapes and lifestyles, coincided with the move of many of the young intellectuals from country to city to study and take up jobs. Their subsequent urbanisation (discussed at length in the next chapter) further contributed to this separation and increased the difficulty of a return to the rural roots of the minority. At the same time, Ceaușescu's drive toward systematisation, the policy announced in 1972 and legally established in 1974 of restructuring villages and towns into industrial centres for a “multilaterally developed socialist society,”⁸³ sped up the destruction of the minority's rural basis. This parallel development heightened the generation's awareness of the impossibility to return, which would become a theme of the generation's poetry throughout

82 How much the Transylvanian Saxons were still entrapped in this self-identity is illustrated by Horst Fassel's poem “Der Rahmen” [“The Frame”]: “ein junges sächsisches paar / unter der kirchenburg / eingefangen / . . . / in diesem rahmen einmal / wird es so bleiben / so lange die letzte niete / noch hält” (“a young saxon couple / at the foot of the church / once caught / . . . / in this frame / it will stay that way / as long the last nail / still holds”; 49).

83 See Fischer 253-4; Bachman 78-80.

the 70s and 80s.

Richard Wagner's first two "Landaufenthalt" ["Country Stay"] poems, published in 1977 but likely written earlier,⁸⁴ chronicle the unsuccessful attempt of the "I" to re-acclimate himself in the rural environment he has left behind. The title of the series evokes Sarah Kirsch's poem and volume of the same name; however, where Kirsch's "Land" describes a multitude of spaces, ranging from the natural world offering sanctuary to the weary city dweller to divided Germany, Wagner's poems focus specifically on the rural environment of his youth. In "Landaufenthalt 1," the speaker's disassociation from the rural is made palpable in his inability to create order in his thoughts and view his actions there as part of a meaningful whole. The intellectual and affective matrices that give the speaker's thoughts and actions meaning do not function in the rural setting:

ich denke in bestandteilen
zerlege jede geste in andere ihr untergeordnete gesten
der aufenthalt auf dem lande erscheint so als eine
anzahl von subsystemen die sich zu keinem system summieren (*Die Invasion* 30)

i think in component parts
disassemble each gesture into subordinated gestures
the stay in the country thus appears as a
number of subsystems which do not add up to any system
Lost between disparate ideas and gestures he cannot reconcile productively, the speaker

breaks his stay off early (31).

The second poem of the series intensifies the feeling of alienation by juxtaposing the rural environment with the explicitly foreign concepts to which the speaker and his unnamed companion resort for its understanding. Under the pressure of the sophisticated conceptual tools of these city-educated intellectuals, symbolised by the distancing metaphor of the "Fernrohre"

84 Two more poems from this series, discussed in the last section of this chapter, appeared in the volume *Hotel California I* in 1980.

(“binoculars”; literally: “distance tubes”), the landscape becomes a “daguerreotype” and the yard a “chinoiserie” (35). Yet this newly acquired artistic appreciation of the landscape emotionally distances the speaker from his home environment, which all of a sudden appears small and derisory. Unsure how to respond to his changed perceptions, the speaker once again flees – this time into laughter (36).

Written about the same time as the first “Landaufenthalt” poems, but not collected into any of Wagner's volumes, “Kontroverse” [“Controversy”] explores the theme of alienation from a different perspective. The reasons for the speaker's avoidance of the village of his youth are located here not in the changed perception of the “I” but in the rural environment itself:

Zu meinen Eltern aufs Land
komm ich nur noch selten. Dort wohnt
Königin Sylvia, sie trägt ihr Baby
durchs Haus. Und die Leute bekommen
Briefe von weither zu
Ostern und zu Weihnachten.
Dann reden sie von den Pflaumen vom
vergangen Jahr. Ihre Sache. Sagst du.

I rarely come anymore
to my parents in the country. Queen Sylvia
lives there, she carries her baby
through the house. And the people receive
letters from far away for
Easter and for Christmas.
Then they talk about the plums from
last year. Their business. That's what you say.

Similar in length and structure to “Banater Rühreilandschaft,” “Kontroverse” seems at first to pick up the criticism of the minority started in the former poem. This time, the setting announced in the first two lines is explicitly the countryside where the speaker's parents reside. Instead of a description of the country landscape, however, the poem delivers a sample list of the concerns of its rural residents. To the surprise of the reader, these concerns seem neither topical for a village environment nor timely. The first two, the pregnancy of Sweden's queen Sylvia,

which interests the speaker's family as acutely as if she actually lived in the house, and the news “from afar” awaited as eagerly as the two most important holidays of the year, are oriented toward a future located outside the village. In contrast to these, last year's harvest represents a local concern, located, however, firmly in the past. Caught between a no longer viable past and an intangible future, the rural residents appear suspended in a world sustained by nothing but words instead of a livable here and now.

The rarity of the speaker's visits, thematised in the first two lines, communicate his refusal to participate in this world. This refusal appears as a wholesale condemnation of the rural inhabitants' concerns until the last line. The insertion of the second person singular at this point transforms the monologic representation into a conversation. At the syntactic level, the last line is broken up into three sentences, each corresponding to a different point of view: the first continues the matter-of-fact tone of the description of the villagers' concerns, the second inserts a distancing evaluation, while the third distances itself in turn from this evaluation, implying that the attitude of the second evaluation may be wrong, and that there is no opposition between “their” and “our” concerns (“Sache”). This rapid shift redefines the controversy of the title from one about the concerns of the minority to one about the relationship between the speaker(s) and the minority.

If at the end of “Banater Rühreilandschaft,” the “I” remained a silent and critical observer of the community, the openness to dialogue at the end of “Kontroverse” seems to imply a readiness to speak on behalf of the minority. Despite this conciliatory gesture, however, the speaker's attitude remains undecided, and, as the first lines make clear, his contact with the community remains sporadic.

Echoing Richard Wagner's “Landaufenthalt” poems, Horst Samson's “Landregen” [“Country Rain”], published in 1981, also seems to thematise the impossibility to return to one's

childhood environment. The poem recounts a seemingly banal occurrence in the house of the speaker's grandfather. Locked in by mistake, the "I" spends an afternoon studying his surroundings:

das zimmer ist klein
es riecht nach schimmel
in den ecken spinnweben
überall staub
und aus dem radio fehlt der lautsprecher (*Tiefflug* 20)

the room is small
it smells like mould
spider webs in the corners
dust everywhere
and the speaker is missing from the radio

While the first perception, the smallness of the room, seems to mirror the experience of the speaker in "Landaufenthalt 2," the sensory details of the next lines (the smell of mold, the cobwebs and dust, the missing radio speaker) reveal that the strangeness of the environment is due not so much to the speaker's changed perception but to the fact that the house is uninhabited (which is later underlined by the mentioning of boarded-up windows). Nor can the house become inhabited again. After almost being lulled to sleep by the country rain which starts at night, the speaker breaks the windows in order to break free:

ich zerschlage die fensterscheiben und blute
dann ist es wieder still ringsum
es ist nicht aufzuhalten das schweigen (21)

i break the windowpanes and bleed
then everything around me goes quiet again
it is unstoppable the stillness

Although it is understandable that the speaker needs to get out of the house, the breaking of the windows (in plural) is an act of aggression which supersedes his need. The sudden violence, together with the emphasis on its effect – bleeding – suggest that a hidden pain has come to the fore. The "unstoppable" stillness that follows – alluding to progressive loneliness and alienation

– reveals the source of the speaker's pain.

The poem does not disclose any further information about the reasons for such unbearable stillness, but the volume holds several different clues. In another poem from the same volume, entitled “Es geht weiter” [“Business as Usual”], the speaker, who is visiting the village “k.” notes that the population is shrinking (6). Toward the end of the volume, “Heimweh” [“Homesickness”] describes changes in the village of the speaker's childhood. The first change is the shifted position of the most salient feature of the village landscape, the church:

die kirche
steht nicht mehr in der dorfmitte
und die zerfressenen orgelpfeifen
greifen schrill in den schritt
weil das dorf
unsystematisch
aus dem sattel stürzt (70)

the church
is not standing in the village centre anymore
and the corroded organ pipes
pick up the pace screaming
because the village
topples out of the saddle
unsystematically

This surprising change may be interpreted figuratively as a shift in the importance of the church in village life, a reading supported by the out-of-sync organ pipes in the third line and the off-kiltering metaphor in the last line. The adverb “unsystematisch” (“unsystematic”), standing alone and as the only word of Latin extraction in line 6, suggests a different reading, however. Containing its opposite, “systematisch,” the adverb reminds of Ceaușescu's dreaded systematisation plan, which sought to mould Romania's population into the perfect socialist people by eradicating differences between urban and rural, as well as between ethnicities. Although the plan affected the country's entire population, Romania's minorities felt it as a

double pressure to conform. For the Romanian-Germans the alternative was emigration, which by 1981 had reached the proportion of mass exodus (Oschlies, *Rumäniendeutsches Schicksal* 174).

Samson's poem is unique in its almost open reference to the systematisation of villages (an achievement due in no small part to the volume's editor, Franz Hodjak)⁸⁵ but is one of many poetic descriptions of the exodus of the Romanian-Germans. The changing political situation of the German minority through the 1970s and 80s forced the poets of the 1970s generation to renegotiate their relationships with their ethnic groups: in place of the early rejection of the minority, the Romanian-German poems of the 1980s would chronicle with increasing concern the untimely deterritorialization of the German community of Romania.⁸⁶ Despite the poets' sympathy for the plight of the minority, however, the rural spaces of this poetry remained uninhabitable for the younger generation, and by the late 1980s, most members of the post-war generation had themselves joined the exodus of the minority.

The Deterritorialization of the Transylvanian Saxons in the Poetry of Franz Hodjak: A Case Study

As one of the few members of the 1970s generation to remain in Romania until after the fall of Ceaușescu's regime in December 1989, Franz Hodjak witnessed the Romanian-Germans' deterritorialization to its end in the early 1990s. Claiming the exodus of the German minority in

85 Hodjak himself would publish a poem openly describing the destruction of Romanian-German villages only after Ceaușescu's demise in late 1989: "in großvaters garten wachsen / statt pflaumenbäumen / zementplatten, / statt grillen zirpen bremsen" ("cement plates / are growing in grandfather's garden / instead of plum trees, / breaks chirp instead of crickets"; "Nachruf" ["Obituary"]).

86 Richard Wagner described this transition as one from "Betroffener" ("person concerned") to "Protagonist" ("Ich stelle" 309-10).

general and of the Transylvanian Saxons in particular as an image for his own rootlessness,⁸⁷ Hodjak made the cultural demise of the Saxons a constant motif in his poetry of the late 1970s and 80s. While the motif of emigration also occurs in the poetry of other members of the generation, Hodjak's poetry is unique in illustrating the deterritorialization of the minority at both the symbolic and the syntactic level and is therefore given here special attention.

The concept of “deterritorialization” – literally “loss of territory,” understood, however, primarily as cultural territory – was introduced to cultural studies by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who applied it to the analysis of “minor literature” in their 1975 landmark study of Kafka's works, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. In Deleuze and Guattari's definition, a “minor literature” is a literature “which a minority constructs within a major language” (16). Deleuze and Guattari's example is the German literature of Prague. When Kafka started writing at the beginning of the 20th century, the language of the Prague Germans was deterritorialized by being cut off from the German mainstream and impoverished through neglect and misuse. By employing instead of rejecting this language and pushing it to its extremes, Kafka created the possibility for a minor literature that destabilized the linguistic norm of the German practised in the far-away centres of the German and Austrian empires.

Deleuze and Guattari's use of “minority” does not necessarily refer to an ethnic minority like the Prague Germans, however. Indeed, the appeal of their theory is that any literature fulfilling certain “revolutionary conditions” can be minor, even if it is not produced by an ethnic minority (18). Conversely, not every ethnic minority produces a minor literature. As Deleuze and Guattari later argued, the primary function of any language is to transmit order (*A Thousand Plateaus* 76). All utterances reinforcing that order are majoritarian, even if they belong to an

87 Cf. “Von der Suche nach einem Ort” 280.

ethnic minority.

The difference between a minor and a major use of language is its degree of deterritorialization, its separation from its cultural sources. Until the end of the 20th century, the language of the Transylvanian Saxons was not deterritorialized in the same sense – or to the same degree – as that of the Germans of Prague. The Saxons' more than 850-year history in Transylvania had assured the community an identity rooted not in the remote German centre but in the Eastern landscape, while regional institutions protected the German language from erosion even under the most inauspicious conditions.

Ronald Bogue has further elaborated on Deleuze and Guattari's concepts connecting language and territory, noting how a minority constructs a major – order-imposing – language through repeated reference to its homeland in literature or music:

As birds sing their territory, so do humans speak or sing theirs. But the literature and music of a given territory are transfused by relations of power, and to the extent that they are territorial arts, they reinforce the domination of the majority, i.e. those who represent the standard or norm against which all deviation is measured. No matter how oppressed a given group may be, a return to its native soil, to the tales and songs of the homeland, remains a return to the major culture and major usage of language and sound. (131)

As exemplified in the second section of this chapter, the literature of the Transylvanian Saxons is suffused with works which were designed to help protect the integrity of the community. These works often reference the Transylvanian landscape, whose elements function as symbols of the group's centuries-long traditions and continuity, asserting a sense of permanence on an ever-shifting political territory. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the standard evocation of Transylvanian-German landscape is Adolf Meschendörfer's “Siebenbürgische Elegie” [“Transylvanian Elegy”] written in 1927. The “Siebenbürgische Elegie” is the most famous poem of the Transylvanian Saxons, as well as of the modernist poet (1877 – 1963), prompting one critic to quip that it might as well be the only poem the prolific

author ever wrote (Anger 276).

At first entitled simply “Heimat,” then “Siebenbürgische Heimat,” and, finally “Siebenbürgische Elegie,” the 16-line poem offers a series of vignettes predicated on the “otherness” of the Transylvanian-Saxon experience:

Anders rauschen die Brunnen, anders rinnt hier die Zeit.
Früh faßt den staunenden Knaben Schauer der Ewigkeit.
Wohlvermauert in Grüften modert der Väter Gebein,
Zögernd nur schlagen die Uhren, zögernd bröckelt der Stein.
Siehst du das Wappen am Tore? Längst verwelkte die Hand.
Völker kamen und gingen, selbst ihr Name entschwand.
Aber der fromme Bauer sät in den Totenschrein,
Schneidet aus ihm sein Korn, keltert aus ihm seinen Wein.
Anders schmeckt hier der Märzwind, anders der Duft vom Heu,
Anders klingt hier das Wort von Liebe und ewiger Treu.
Roter Mond, vieler Nächte einziggeliebter Freund,
Bleichte die Stirne dem Jüngling, die der Mittag gebräunt,
Reifte ihn wie der gewaltige Tod mit betäubendem Ruch,
Wie in grünlichem Dämmer Eichbaum mit weisem Spruch.
Ehern wie die Gestirne zogen die Jahre herauf,
Ach, schon ist es September. Langsam neigt sich ihr Lauf. (29)

The fountains murmur differently here, differently runs here the time.
The astonished boy is early seized by the shiver of eternity.
The forefathers' relics decay walled into vaults,
The clocks beat only hesitantly, hesitantly the stone crumbles.
Do you see the emblem on the gate? The hand faded away.
Peoples have come and go, even their name disappeared.
But the pious peasant sows in the shrine of the dead,
Cuts his wheat from there, from there he presses his wine.
The March wind tastes differently here, differently the scent of hay,
The words of love and eternal devotion sound differently here.
Red moon, the only friend during many nights,
Blanched the brow of the youth, browned by the noon,
Ripened him like mighty death with deafening corruption,
Like an oak tree with wise saying in the green twilight.
Like the bold stars, the years went by,
Alas, it's already September. They slowly come to a close.

The otherness of the Transylvanian space is established already from the first word of the poem, the adverb “anders” (“differently”), which appears, alone or in conjunction with the spatial deictic “hier” (“here”), pointing to the “Siebenbürgen” of the title, five times over the course of

the poem. It is a complete otherness, enveloping not only the physical world but time itself in a complex pattern of death and rebirth. In lines 1 through 6, space and time are conflated into images of death and decay: ancestral bones molder in walled crypts, clocks strike slowly, stone crumbles, historical memory fades. In opposition to this urban decay – the emblem on the gate in line 5 suggests that the location is a town, specifically Meschendorf's home town, Kronstadt/Braşov – line 7 introduces an image of rebirth through the figure of the peasant, who uses the humus of history to raise new crops. The adverbial pair “anders – hier” is reintroduced at this point (lines 9 and 10) to affirm that the Transylvanian-Saxon experience is rooted in the cycle of the seasons, of life and death. The destiny of the individual, traced from the “Knabe” (“boy”) in line 2 to the ageing “Jüngling” (“youth”) in line 12 in anticipation of his death in lines 13-4, is subordinated to this experience. The last line of the poem contains the only direct lament in the interjection “ach” (“alas”), which precedes the observation that time is coming to an end, both for the individual and for the historical period.

The end-of-time atmosphere of the “Siebenbürgische Elegie” – partially created, as Edith Konradt has shown, with the help of early Expressionist imagery⁸⁸ – belies, however, a strong sense of the historical permanence of the Transylvanian Saxons. Although the markers of the past are shown to be crumbling in the poem, history is treated with absolute reverence: the boy in line 2 encounters it with wonder, while the peasant in lines 7 and 8 even resurrects the ancestral “Gebein” (“relics”; line 3) into the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Both the boy and the peasant are also close to the Transylvanian landscape, which is evoked through a density of details: fountains, crypts, the emblem on the gate, crops of wheat and wine, moon, sun, stars, and the oak. In the cycle of death and rebirth, the figures, representing the Saxons, and the

88 See Konradt, “Kriterien und Klischees literarischer Rezeption bei den Siebenbürger Sachsen am Beispiel von Adolf Meschendorfs ‘Siebenbürgische Elegie’” 271-4.

landscape complete each other. In the universe of the poem, the destiny of the Saxons is unthinkable outside of the Transylvanian landscape.

The strength of Meschendörfer's poem ultimately lies in its powerful evocation of cultural identity rooted in regional topography. The many reworkings of Meschendörfer's material – and not only among the Transylvanian Saxons – bear witness to this power. Since the elegy was first published in December 1927, at least fifteen authors have reacted to the “Siebenbürgische Elegie” with poems of their own (M. Markel 182). In the 1970s and 80s, the reception of the elegy was tightly linked to the exodus of the Romanian Germans, their late but irreversible deterritorialization.

One of the poets to pick up Meschendörfer's elegy at this time was Franz Hodjak. In an analysis of Hodjak's series⁸⁹ of mediations on the ruins of once glorious Transylvanian-Saxon landmarks, Sigurd Paul Scheichl has shown how the poet has employed the very “Burgen” (fortresses) that have isolated the Transylvanian Saxons as a means to weave a story about the loss of cultural legacy with universal appeal.⁹⁰ Scheichl demonstrates how Hodjak integrates time and place markers in order to evoke the past, as well as the present of the Saxons out of the Transylvanian landscape, taking a distanced stands towards both. As an analysis of the evolution of the Transylvanian landscape in Hodjak's poetry, Scheichl's essay misses the mark, however, when the critic comes to the conclusion that later poems, such as “Kelling 3,” forego landscape details “vielleicht weil Hodjak . . . damit rechnet, daß seine Leserinnen und Leser die ersten

89 Hodjak wrote only two actual series of poems dedicated to the Transylvanian landscape, “Kelling” (1976) / “Kelling 2” (1983) / “Kelling 3” (1986) and “Michelsberger Burg” [“Michelseberg Fortress”] (1976) / “Michelsberger Burg 2” (1988). Poems focused on this landscape recur, however, throughout his career, and, taken together, can also be read as a series. (See note 80 above.) Scheichl refers to both kinds of series in his article.

90 At the end of his essay, Scheichl poses the question of reception and comes to the conclusion that “lokale und literarische Anspielungen werden unwichtig, denn die allgemeine Relevanz von Traditionsverlust wird auch für nicht-siebenbürgische Leser durchschaubar” (“local and literary allusions become unimportant, for the general relevance of the loss of tradition is comprehensible even for non-Transylvanian readers”; 399).

beiden 'Kelling'-Gedichte kennen" ("maybe because Hodjak . . . assumes that his readers already know the first two 'Kelling' poems"; 394).

While it is true that Hodjak knowingly built on his readers' expectations in his series of poems of the same title, the lack of details in "Kelling 3" is not a feature unique to Hodjak's serial poems but is shared by several of his landscape poems from the latter half of the 1980s. These poems evoke the landscape only through selected sensory cues or through references to other literary works (including Hodjak's own). As Werner Söllner has aptly noted, the literal disappearance of the landscape from these poems reflects that of the Transylvanian Saxons as an independent community, their deterritorialization as they are separated from their physical and cultural landscape through emigration ("Nachwort" 139).

Unlike other reworkings of the poem, which tended to reaffirm, often without Meschendörfer's finesse, a Transylvanian-German identity rooted in a glorious past (that is, to reterritorialize the Transylvanian landscape for the Saxons), Hodjak's reception of Meschendörfer has been praised as "ein Musterbeispiel für die Absage an jede Mystifikation siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Geschichte" ("a paradigm for the refusal to mystify Transylvanian-Saxon history in any way"; Konradt 279) and for being "dezent und raffiniert" ("restrained and refined"; M. Markel 191). Echoes of the elegy appear in Hodjak's poems as borrowings from Meschendörfer's themes and imagery, as direct quotes, or as oblique allusions.

Hodjak's interest in Meschendörfer's most famous poem became apparent in his third volume of poetry, *Offene Briefe* [*Open Letters*] published in 1976, which contains at least 3 poems with echoes of the elegy: "Haus" ["House"], "Bergschule in Schäßburg" ["School on the Hill in Schäßburg"], and the first "Kelling" poem. The same volume also saw an intensification of Hodjak's interest in the Transylvanian landscape and, by extension, the history and fate of the Transylvanian Saxons (Hodjak's previous volume, *Spielräume* [*Elbow Rooms*] from 1974,

contains only 2 poems on the Transylvanian landscape against the 7 in *Offene Briefe*). A brief reference to the “Siebenbürgische Elegie” also appeared in the eponymous story in Hodjak's first volume of short stories, *Das Maß der Köpfe* [*The Measure of Heads*] (1978). Yet it wasn't until the publication of the poem “Osterspaziergang” [“Easter Walk”] in Hodjak's fifth volume of verse, *Flieder im Ohr* [*Lilac in the Ear*], from 1983, that the two themes started overlapping. Their convergence found its most poignant form in “Siebenbürgisches Klagelied,” published in the last volume of Hodjak's poetry – and the last volume of verse by a member of the 1970s generation – to appear in Romania before the fall of communism, *Luftveränderung* [*Change of Air*] (1988). The poem represents Hodjak's most direct response to the elegy and most moving account of the disappearance of the Transylvanian Saxons.

One of the earliest poems to engage Meschendörfer's imagery, “Kelling” describes a famous Saxon fortress in Western Transylvania (today an UNESCO World Heritage site), built in the Middle Ages to stave off Ottoman advancement into Europe. The poem is divided in two parts of unequal length. The first part, comprising 11 lines, guides the observer into and through the fortress, while the second part, only 2 lines short, provides a coda to the experience of this once important Transylvanian defence point:

in der dorfmitte an die
alle häuserzeilen
sich heranschreiben gerade
durch die chronik des staubs daraus
wächst kamille darin picken hühner
geschützt von den weißen hellebarden der kastanien
belagert von großen scharen von gänsen die
majestätisch ruhn in den samtene falten der hitze
am tor bald verrufen bald gerühmt
von den lästerzungen des lattichs
im hof die legenden abgegrast von hasen
die wände geschmückt
mit den wappen der feuchtigkeit
gesegnet von seiner hoheit dem moderduft
empfängt stolz den hohen besuch

belangloser gäste
die burg trotzig und erschöpft wie
ein greiser bauer
dreimal umgebaut, steht zu lesen
im reiseführer, jetzt end-
gültig renoviert

in den weinfässern der himmel
ist ahnungslos blau (*Offene Briefe* 80)

in the centre of the village toward which
the rows of houses
are inching straight
through the chronicle of the dust out of which
chamomile grows at which chickens pick
safeguarded by the white halberds of the chestnuts
besieged by large gaggles of geese which
rest majestically in the velvety folds of the heat
at the gate much vaunted now made infamous later
by the snide tongues of the lettuce
in the courtyard the legends grazed clean by rabbits
the walls decorated
with the emblem of dampness
hollowed by his highness mustiness
proudly receives the state visit
of inconsequential visitors
the fortress defiant and exhausted like
an old peasant
reconstructed three times, it says
in the tourist guide, now de-
finitely renovated

in the water barrels the skies
are cluelessly blue

The poem opens in *medias res* – “in der Dorfmitte” ‘in the center of the village’ – and proceeds through the gate into the courtyard and then into the fortress itself. Despite the linear progression in space, however, the poem's syntax is complex, as layer after layer of description is added around the word “Burg,” which appears only in line 17. Repeated use of enjambment, subordinated clauses, and participles with no immediate referent in the first 16 lines impede the reader's progress through the space of the poem, which appears maze or dream-like. The dream

quality is further accentuated by vocabulary recalling the history of the medieval fortress, which seems to be teeming with invasions, palace intrigues, proud displays of wealth and power, and other legendary deeds.

At every step, however, the weight of history is thrown off balance by Kelling's more mundane present-day reality. Protected by chestnut trees instead of soldiers (line 6) and surrounded by gaggles of geese instead of Ottoman armies (line 7), the present-day fortress wears only the shell of its former glory. The building has fallen into decay, despite the human attempt to hold off the signs of advancing time. The final renovation announced by the guidebook is questioned by the split in the compound adjective “endgültig” (“final” or “definite”) in lines 10-11, which begs further examination of the two component parts. Animals and vegetation have taken over the grounds, while humidity and mildew (personified in lines 13 and 14) have claimed the building itself.

Like the “Siebenbürgische Elegie,” from which Hodjak borrowed the images of the gate and emblem (which appeared together in Meschendörfer, but are used here on their own in lines 9 and 13 respectively), the figure of the peasant in line 18, and the verb “modern,” denoting decay (modified as “Moderduft” ‘mustiness’ in line 14), “Kelling” shows a historical legacy that has succumbed to time. Hodjak's poem goes further, however: the clash between the lofty medieval terminology and the mundane details of Kelling's present produces a comical effect and exposes any aspiration at resurrecting the Saxons' historical importance as laughable. If in Meschendörfer's elegy, the figure of the peasant could endow the past with meaning through his faith and toil, the “Bauer” whom the reader encounters in “Kelling,” and who is used as a term of comparison for the fortress itself, is too old (“greis”) and too exhausted (“erschöpft”) to provide this continuity, his defiance (he is described as “trotzig” in line 17) bearing shades of sullenness rather than boldness. The poem's coda reinforces the disconnection through its

suggestion of widespread cluelessness (though the sky is described as “ahnungslos,” its ignorance is reflected back to earth in the wine barrels) as to the situation of the fortress and, by extension, of the Transylvanian Saxons.

Despite the satirical tone and the manifest disbelief in the continuation of the Saxons' historical role in Transylvania, “Kelling” is a detailed evocation of the Transylvanian landscape, which derives its richness from the very elements it seeks to undermine. There is a definite sense of space in the poem, the visual description enriched through tactile and olfactory details, such as the velvety envelopment of the heat in line 8 and the smell of mould and decay in line 14. Most importantly, the space is immediately recognizable as belonging to the Transylvanian Saxons, a territory marked by historical continuity and cultural heritage.

Such territorial recognition had already begun to fade from Hodjak's poetry by 1983, the year the second Kelling poem was published in Hodjak's fifth collection of verse, *Flieder im Ohr*. Although “Kelling 2” is still filled with a wealth of details, the description is fractured, made up of a jumble of impressions (supported at the level of the syntax by the alternation of short and long sentences and sentence fragments). The specificity of Kelling as the location of a famous Transylvanian-Saxon fortress has also disappeared. The poem makes only a passing reference to “Burgruinen” (“fortress ruins”), reserving most of its 22 lines to the description of general scenes of village life: “heuwagen, vereinzelt die straÙe lang das kino, der konsum, die wandzeitung. der postbote / schwitzt. . . .” (“hay carts, singly along the street the theatre, consumerism, the wall newspaper. the postman / sweats. . . .”; 72). While the short line provides details about the economic development of the village (there is a cinema, but horse-drawn carts are still the most common mode of transportation), the system of governance (consumerism and the wall newspaper are typical referents under Romanian communism), and every-day life (in the figure of the postman), none of them are unique to the Saxon community.

Also published in *Flieder im Ohr*, “Osterspaziergang” [“Easter Walk”] Hodjak's most famous reply to Meschendörfer (as well as to Goethe), takes this tendency to generalize the space of the poem even further: whereas “Kelling 2” still named the location described in the poem, “Osterspaziergang” could be taking place anywhere. That its location is, in fact, a village is revealed very early in line 1. The Transylvanian situation of the village, however, is revealed only indirectly in line 6, which modifies the first line of the “Siebenbürgische Elegie”:

der holunderduft am dorfrand als memento
und in den burgruinen hausen illegal
verfickte kater.
die tage ähneln immer mehr gepackten koffern.
der kettenhund streckt unruhig die ohren in den wind.
die brunnen, die einst anders rauschten, sind ausgedorrt.
man rückt auf den stühlen hin und her.
wie feine bazillen verbreitet
unausgesprochenes nachdenklichkeit.
gott ist das, was von gott geblieben ist.
die botschaften, die von allgemeinem interesse sind,
stehn auf ansichtskarten
und in briefen. (38)

the elder scent at the edge of the village as memento,
and in the ruins of the fortress dwell illegally
fucked-up tomcats.
the days resemble more and more packed suitcases.
the chained dog extends his ears in the wind restlessly.
the fountains, which once murmured differently, have dried up.
one slides back and forth in the chair.
like fine germs
unsaid things spread pensiveness.
god is whatever remains of god.
the messages of general interest
are on postcards
and in letters.

Here, too, the space is defined by the archetypical “Burgruinen” (located, this time, at the edge of the village). The poem does not dwell on the features of the landscape, however. If the first sentence (lines 1-3) situates the observer at the edge of the village among elder trees, fortress ruins and, in an ironic swipe at the idyll, unwanted and multiplying pets, the second sentence

(line 4) already moves indoors and into the consciousness of the villagers. Exterior features, such as the packed suitcases, become keys to private experiences, as time is measured through anxious waiting for departure (“waiting on packed suitcases” was in fact, a common euphemism for being ready for emigration). This anxiety is reinforced in the next line by the attitude of the chained dog, straining for news borne by the wind. In line 6 exterior and interior space are once again collapsed, as topographic features – the fountains – are referenced through a mental construct – Meschendörfer's “Siebenbürgische Elegie.”

The ironic reversal of Meschendörfer's “Anders rauschen die Brunnen [hier]” stands at the center of the poem (line 6 of 13) and connotes, in the drying up of the wells, the end of the tradition that sustained the community of the Transylvanian Saxons. Behind are left only restlessness, regret, melancholy meditation, and broken beliefs (lines 7-10). Hodjak's change of the iconic Meschendörfer line is also arresting for the disappearance of the deictic denoting the Transylvanian specific: “hier” is no longer an option for the Transylvanian Saxons. The community, on the brink of departure, gathers sustenance from looking outward, to postcards and letters from those already departed (lines 11-13).

The absent “hier” also echoes through the title reference to Goethe's famous interlude from *Faust I*, in which the eponymous hero observes the spring awakening of nature and people:

Ich höre schon des Dorfs Getümmel,
Hier ist des Volkes wahrer Himmel,
Zufrieden jauchzet groß und klein.
Hier bin ich Mensch, hier darf ich's sein! (*Faust: Eine Tragödie* 36)

Hark! Sounds of village mirth arise;
This is the people's paradise.
Both great and small send up and cheer;
Here am I man, I feel it here. (*Faust Part I*)

In Faust's vision, “hier” is synonymous with paradise (“Himmel”), but one to which people rightfully belong (the “true” paradise, in which they are allowed to be human). If Hodjak's

landscape is a paradise, its inhabitants are preparing their exile from it. The Saxons are on the brink of becoming deterritorialized, and the elements of the Transylvanian landscape – once markers of communal identity – have become mere mementos (line 1), destined to disappear from the consciousness of the Saxons like the fleeting scent of the elder trees.

Despite its melancholy subject, “Osterspaziergang” is written in the neutral tone of a report. Consisting entirely of short statements punctuated by periods and employing an almost unvaried syntax (with the exception of the sixth sentence, lines 8-9, the subject is always in first position), the poem has a repetitive, mechanical quality. The detached tone is further emphasized by the absence of personal deictics. By contrast, Hodjak's last engagement with the “Siebenbürgische Elegie,” the poem “Siebenbürgisches Klagelied” [“Transylvanian Dirge”] published only a short year before the massive emigration of the Romanian-Germans in the wake of the 1989 revolution, strikes a more personal chord. The 8-line poem consists of 4 statements and 4 questions, the lines both removed from each other through double spacing and linked through an *ababccaa* rhyme pattern:

der totengräber, er ist verschwunden.

bald schiebt der postbote eine karte zwischen unsre fensterscheiben.

nun gut; doch wer befördert uns jetzt nach unten?

und wer trinkt jetzt den schnaps derer, die hinterbleiben?

es ist juli, doch wir waisenkinder frieren stark.

wer quetscht jetzt, wenn sie zu groß sind, unsre füße in den sarg?

der totengräber ist verschwunden.

werden wir ihm folgen, wir, seine notorischen kunden? (*Luftveränderung* 64)

the gravedigger, he has disappeared.

soon, the postman will push a card between our windowpanes.

well, all right; but who will convey us downward now?
and who will drink the schnapps of those left behind?
it's july, but we orphans are very cold.
who will squeeze our feet now, if they are too large, into the coffin?
the gravedigger has disappeared.
will we follow him, we, his notorious customers?

Despite the title reference to the “Siebenbürgische Elegie,” “Siebenbürgisches Klagelied” seems at first to bear neither formal nor thematic resemblance to Meschendörfer's poem. The unusual typesetting of the 8 double-spaced lines, however, recollects the 16 lines of Meschendörfer's elegy. The ghostly spaces reflect, before the poem is even read, the advancing deterritorialization of the Saxons. In addition to visually demonstrating the holes in the Saxon community, the empty lines also break up the flow of the poem, commanding a slower, more ponderous reading.

The gravity imposed by the arrangement and length of the lines is broken, however, by the casual tone employed throughout and by the description of what is, in essence, a comedic situation. The poem begins with the announcement that the gravedigger has disappeared. The speaker's feigned shock at this piece of news is further sustained by a series of rhetorical questions about the fate of those whom the gravedigger has left behind and who are alternately characterized as his orphans and his customers. The gravedigger is thus ennobled from a humble servant of the community to its symbolic father, the gatekeeper of its most important rite of passage, and also revealed as the community's most important shopkeeper. The move is ironic, but so is the situation he leaves behind: without its gravedigger, the ailing community cannot complete its earthly business, for it is bereft of even the possibility to die, the precondition to

Meschendorfer's cyclical movement of death and rebirth.

“Siebenbürgisches Klagelied” contains no landscape details: at this late hour in the history of the Transylvanian Saxon the focus is on sheer physical survival. The community is identified only through its link to the gravedigger, a figure symbolically dividing life and death. His disappearance signals the end of the community, splitting it into those who are left behind (“die hinterbleiben,” line 4) and those who will follow him (line 8). In the context of the late 1980s, the subtext is clear: the gravedigger has not simply disappeared, but has left for a place from where he is now sending news to be delivered clandestinely between the windowpanes by the postman (line 2). That the gravedigger's postcard with news of his emigration (the essence of the “Ansichtskarten” 'postcards' and “Briefe” 'letters' of “Osterspaziergang”) is already expected suggests that the community knows the truth about his absence.

The balance between the tragedy and the comedy of the exodus is reflected in the title of the poem, which translates the neologism of Greek extraction “Elegie” into the more descriptive, and entirely Germanic, “Klagelied” (“lament” or “dirge”). While the blank lines in the poem sustain the lament, the rhyme (an unusual feature in Hodjak's poetry) and the repetition of the first line in line 7, which functions as a chorus, help give shape to the song. The encompassing “wir” (“we”) of the poem – a departure from the detached observations of “Kelling” and “Osterspaziergang” – speaks to the dimension of the emigration, which is now affecting everyone. The last question of the poem points out the future path of the Transylvanian Saxons, following their own pied piper in a backward movement from the one that populated Transylvania according to legend (“Der Rattenfänger”).

Family Stories: Reclaiming the Link to the History of the Minority

The deterritorialization of the Transylvanian Saxons, along with other Romanian-Germans, was completed, against expectation, after the fall of communism in Romania in December 1989. Its advancing symptoms, however, had been lucidly portrayed in the poetry of the post-war generation since the early 1970s. Starting in the early 1980s, the conflict between the post-war Romanian-German poets and the German communities of Romania was pushed into the background by the changing social reality of the German minority. As the quote by Richard Wagner at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the generational conflict had been sustained by the young poets' perception of the minority as a stable, "intact" community. Already in the mid 1970s, however, under pressure of Ceaușescu's "small cultural revolution" on Chinese and Korean models, the community was starting to disintegrate, or, rather, its disintegration was starting to become visible, as more and more Romanian-Germans chose to leave the country. Emigration to West Germany accelerated, reaching the level of mass exodus in the early 1980s.

The poetry of the postwar generation reflects these changes not only in a shift in mood from satirical to elegiac, but also in an increase in the thematisations of the history of the German minority. In order to avoid the appearance of providing a corrective to the official historical record, which denied ethnic difference in the experience of historical events, these thematisations are typically mediated as the depiction of private family memories inherited by the poets from the older generation. Like all "postmemories," a term coined by Marianne Hirsch, the second-generation memories of the postwar Romanian-German writers are characterised not by recollection but by "imaginative investment and creation" (22). In the case of the Romanian-German poets, however, the investment is not only in providing coherent

family histories but also in marking the history and, thus, the existence of the German minority of Romania in the face of the latter's disappearance as a social unit.

As second-generation memory, postmemory sits at the intersection of personal and social acts of remembrance. The past events reconstructed and recorded by the poets reflect not only the unique paths of individuals but also those of whole families and – at the widest point of intersection – communities. This is especially apparent in Johann Lippet's “Schwaben-Epos” (Bossert, “Faktenreichtum”) *Biographie. Ein Muster* [*Biography. A Pattern*], the only epic poem written by a member of the 1970s generation. Like its prose model, Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* [*Patterns of Childhood*] (1976), Lippet's poem emphasizes already in its title the general experience behind the biographical details. The point is reinforced in the signature at the end of the poem, in which the narrator calls attention to the changeable and interchangeable nature of autobiographical details: “ich, johann lippet, verfasser dieser biographie, / die nicht nur die meine ist und noch offen bleibt” (“i, johann lippet, author of this biography, / which is not only mine and remains open”; 71).

Lippet's claim to a biography shared with others is supported by the many biographical poems written in a similar vein by members of the postwar generation which appeared around the same time. Lippet's volume, however, stands out both for its formal characteristics – while the long poem had been flourishing in the Romanian-German poetry of the mid to late 1970s, Lippet's remains, at around 2500 lines, the only epic poem – and for its unprecedented breaking with the taboo of the postwar deportations of Romanian-Germans. Although it purports to tell the story of an individual, *Biographie. Ein Muster* is as much the story of a Banat-Swabian family from the end of the war to the writer's present (the poem was completed in August 1977

and published in 1980).⁹¹

The poem opens before the narrator's birth with the dramatic early histories of his parents. In a note which serves as an introduction to the parents' story, as well as to the poem as a whole, the narrator frames his biography as a story of dislocation. Structured on the first stanza of Bertolt Brecht's "Vom armen B.B." ["Concerning Poor Bertolt"], the introductory note explains the narrator's existence as the result of a triple displacement:

ich, johann lippet, bin nur indirekt aus dem banat.
meine mutter brachte mich in österreich zur welt,
wohin sie aus der sowjetunion gekommen war, und die frage
nach dem warum und wie, wird sich mir noch öfter stelen. (5)

i, johann lippet, am only indirectly from the banat.
my mother brought me into the world in austria,
where she had come from the soviet union, and the question
of the why and the how would bother me often.

Unlike the self-assured narrator of Bertolt Brecht's poem, however, Lippet's narrator is haunted by questions about the context of his birth.⁹² The impression that his existence is due to an accident of geography is further heightened in the history of the narrator's parents, which follows the introductory note. The first story told by the poem is that of the "Reise" ("travel") of the narrator's mother "in einem fremden land" ("to a foreign country") where she works in a foundry and "mußte einen schweren winter überleben" ("has to survive a hard winter"; 5-6). In contrast to the euphemisms disguising the mother's deportation as a simple trip, the details of everyday life in the Soviet "Lager" ("camps") are very specific. The story details how the mother survives the cold in inadequate clothing, is required to perform dangerous work in the foundry and is punished when she shows her fear, and defies death by weakening her system

91 Lippet subsequently elaborated on his familial memories in the novel *Die Tür zur hinteren Küche* [*The Door to the Back Kitchen*], a family saga exemplifying the experience of the Banat Swabians in the last three decades of Romanian communism.

92 Cf. Brecht 261.

with quinine in order to be sent home (7-8).

At the end of her ordeal, the narrator's mother “lands” in Germany, from where she crosses over illegally to her sister in Austria. Here, she meets the narrator's father, also from the Banat, who had fled his village as a 17-year old, out of fear of the advancing Soviet army. After serving as a soldier, being wounded, and surviving an American POW camp, he also went to Austria and became a “proletarian” (10-2). The two marry and have four children before “die briefe von zu hause zu rufen [begannen]” (“the letters from home started to beckon”; 15). The family finally “returns” to the Banat in 1956, just in time for the young narrator to see “den ersten panzer meines lebens / im bahnhof von budapest” (“the first tank of my life / in the train station in budapest”; 16).

The first section of the poem thus covers the years 1944 to 1956, from the occupation of Romania by the Soviet army and the deportation of the Romanian-Germans to the Soviet Union to the suppression of the Hungarian Revolt. Although the historical events signified by the dates are portrayed in sparing detail, with many ellipses (attributes, such as what kind of tanks the narrator witnesses in Budapest or the army the narrator's father joins, are often missing) and euphemisms (most striking of which is the one referring to the mother's deportation simply as a journey), even referring to these events was extremely daring for the time. Lippert's courage in thematising them was matched only by Klaus Hensel's in editing the volume, which bears a set of train tracks leading into the empty distance on the front cover and a collection of family pictures, yellowed by time and pinned to a rough wooden fence, on the back. The train tracks to nowhere and the images of a time irrecoverably lapsed into history speak not only of the devastating past of the Romanian-Germans but also of the present danger of the latter's disappearance.

Until 1980, the publication year of *Biographie. Ein Muster*, the family was a rare topic in

the poems of the postwar generation. When it did appear, it was to highlight the difference between the members of the generation and its predecessors, and it often thematised conflicts between parents and children. Bernd Kolf's poem "Biographie" ["Biography"], for instance, dramatises a conflict between the speaker and his father which has had a profound impact on the former. Unlike Johann Lippet's similarly titled poem, Kolf's "Biographie" is only four stanzas short and recalls a single experience from the speaker's childhood, centred on the memory of the speaker's father, a reputable pigeon breeder with a particular fondness for laughing doves. The father's excessive affection for the birds ("ihr glück / war das seinige" 'their happiness / was his') leads him to brutally hit his son when the latter scares them by clapping his hands. The now-adult son comes to associate clapping with the slap, and what should have been a gesture of happiness becomes a marker of pain:

seither verspüre ich beim
klatschen immer den
salzigen geschmack im mund den
das gestörte glück anderer
hinterläßt (Die Bewohnbarkeit 23)

since then whenever
I clap I always feel the
salty taste in my mouth left
behind by the disrupted happiness
of others

Although the poem does not portray the subsequent interaction between the "I" and his father, it is easy to imagine that the relationship is not a close one. The father's rigidity and violent treatment of his son – character traits which hint at the fascists tendencies imputed by the postwar generation to their elders – are represented by the speaker as indelibly committed to memory, along with the more physical sensation of the slap.

The distant relationship between a member of the 1970s generation and his parents is also thematised in Werner Söllner's "Brief an die Eltern" ["Letter to the Parents"]. The parents

in this poem are also connected to the recollection of – though not blamed for – traumatic childhood experiences, such as an aunt's withering scolding and the death of the speaker's cat. While the speaker of this poem has no more to reproach his parents than their not having understood him, his estrangement from them is evident in his avoidance (with a single exception) of terms of endearment and in his evasive tone. Far from uniting the family, the shared experiences are revealed as sources of misunderstandings: “Begreift ihr es heute? Ich / nicht.” (“Do you understand it today? I / don't.”; *Mitteilungen* 48). The competing interpretations of the past result in a fractured relationship between the family members.

Figured as a letter, Söllner's poem precludes the possibility of an immediate reply and, thus, of the representation of the parents' point of view. Typical for the early poems of the 1970s generation thematising the family, the recollections described in “Brief an die Eltern” do not extend beyond the experience of the “I” and do not include those of other family members. The insistence on only one point of view renders these memories highly idiosyncratic, in palpable resistance to the social memory of the family as a group.

The attempt to disconnect one's self from familial bonds and to offer a corrective to the social memory of the family is perhaps best illustrated by Klaus Hensel's “Familienfeste. Erinnerungssplitter” [“Family Celebrations. Memory Shards”]. In place of happy recollections, as would befit the announced family celebrations of the title, the poem conflates embarrassing situations from family weddings and christenings into a discordant and mortifying family portrait. Written in the second person singular, the poem highlights the affective and experiential distance between the “you” and the family: “Die große Leere an den langen Tischen paart sich / mit der großen Leere in deinem Kopf.” (“The big emptiness at the long tables pairs up / with the big emptiness in your head.”; *Das letzte Frühstück* 35).

Despite the emphasis on personal memory in the title, the use of the second person and

the clichéd situations detailed by the poem – the speech-making uncle, the general drunkenness and gossiping, the traditional food and music, the allusion to familial “dirty laundry” – take the story beyond the particulars of one family. In fact, there is little in “Familienfeste” to distinguish even the group to which the described family belongs, making the poem one of historically unspecific inter-familial conflict.

This approach sets “Familienfeste” apart from the other family poems in Hensel's delayed debut volume, *Das letzte Frühstück mit Gertrude* [*The Last Breakfast with Gertrude*]. Published in 1980, the same year as Johann Lippert's *Biographie. Ein Muster*, which Hensel edited, *Das letzte Frühstück* captures a transitional phase in the poetry of the generation thematising the family. Of the four family poems contained in the volume, “Familienfeste” is the least specific in the description of the historic or cultural context of the family. Two others, “Ersatzkonstruktion für Kindheitserinnerung” [“Substitute Construction for Childhood Memory”] and “Schneckenberg meiner Kindheit” [“Snail Mountain of My Childhood”], emphasize the memory reconstruction of the “I” but in the specific cultural and historic spaces of the German minority.

In contrast to all three of these poems, “Großmutter besucht Sonnenheim” [“Grandmother Visits Sonnenheim”] focuses on the experience of a member of the prewar generation. Yet the emphasis of the poem is not on the titular grandmother's past but on her present visit to a recreation home (the “Sonnenheim” of the title), where she is said to “live it up” with card games and smuggled cognac. The grandmother's past is alluded to only once and only to be immediately dismissed: “Gespräche enden im Sommer vierundvierzig.” (“Conversations end in the summer of forty-four.”; 38). Despite the perfunctory dismissal, the associations raised by the line – which opens the poem – cast a long shadow over the antics of the seniors gathered at the recreation home, and their gaiety appears forced, the result of

accommodation within an undesired fate rather than of choice.

The “summer of forty-four” is an allusion which figures often in post-war Romanian poetry. August 23, 1944 marks the day on which a successful coup against Marshall Ion Antonescu changed Romania's war allegiance from the Axis to the Allied powers. That night, King Michael held a radio address in which he called for the end of hostilities and the joining of forces with the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States against Romania's former Axis partners. Despite Michael's leading role in the coup, August 23, 1944 was advanced in the mythology of Romania's communists, who ousted the king in 1947 to declare a People's Republic on the Soviet model, as the day the country, led by the Communist Party, liberated itself from fascism and embarked on the path to socialist fulfillment (Boia 78). August 23 became Romania's official holiday – abandoned only when the communist dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu was toppled in 1989 – and was celebrated with speeches and parades meant to consolidate the communists' hold on power.

The young Romanian-German writers identified at first with the communist myth of the glorious beginning signified by August 23, 1944. Richard Wagner's account of the short-lived Aktionsgruppe Banat opens, tellingly, with the story of a confrontation between the 16-year old Wagner and his grandmother about the meaning of the day. While the young Wagner upholds it as the “Tag der Befreiung” (“liberation day”), to be celebrated with a festive meal, the grandmother perceives it as the “beginning of the end” of the German community: “An diesem Tag hat unser Ende begonnen” (“Our end began on this day.”; “Die Aktionsgruppe”121).

As Richard Wagner would later concede through the recollection of this story, the successful coup of August 23, 1944, had had more than one historical consequence. For the German communities of Romania, the immediate consequences were loss of property, citizenship, and deportation. Although many Romanians had also sympathized with the fascist

cause, Romania's strategic reversal of fronts late in the war assured the country and most of its citizens – to the extent that they were ethnic Romanians – a better position in the subsequent negotiations with the war's victors. Partly in order to bolster this position, the postwar Romanian government fully cooperated with the Soviet Union in its demand that all German men between 17 and 45 and women between 18 and 30 be handed over to Soviet authorities for the purpose of “reparation through labour,” resulting in the deportation of some 80 000 Germans and the death of an estimated 12 000.⁹³ The psychological traumas of these events contributed to the further erosion of the minority, hastening its decline through emigration.

The stunted conversations of Klaus Hensel's “Großmutter besucht Sonnenheim” represent not only the painful memories associated with August 1944, but also the taboo imposed on thematisations of the event and its aftermath. Acknowledgement of the deportations would have meant a re-evaluation of Romania's actions in the wake of August 23, 1944 and, thus, a re-evaluation of a day which had become foundational to the communists' own myth of origin. The taboo imposed on the discussion of these events was doubled in strength by the fact that such a discussion would have introduced an ethnic variation to the historical record, something the nationalistic orientation of Romanian communism – which became especially marked in the late 1970s and through the 1980s – could definitely not allow.⁹⁴

By the time of the publication of Hensel's volume, however, the post-war generation was ready to challenge this taboo. Like Johann Lippet's *Biographie. Ein Muster*, Richard Wagner's last two “Landaufenthalt” poems (also published in 1980), see the return of the “I” to the

93 Cf. Polian, 241-9, and Weber et al., *Die Deportation*, 9, 89.

94 “[A]lthough the first reluctant and cautious references to the issue fell from the lips of N. Ceaușescu as early as 1966 and 1971, no attempts at scientific analysis of the matter were even contemplated at the time. It was not until 1994 – 1995 that the first publications based on the data from the Romanian state archive located in Bucharest came out . . .” Polian, 242.

environment of its childhood and its attendant memories. Whereas the speaker of the earlier poems of the series had felt disassociated from these memories, in the later poems, the “I” is receptive to them. What is even more, in addition to his own childhood memories, the “I” now “intercepts” and makes his own the memories of other, older family members. Fragments of memories from the speaker's own childhood are now interwoven with stories which the poet, having been born after the war, could not have witnessed. Thus, in “Landaufenthalt 3,” the speaker moves ghost-like through both space and time, from his own childhood memory of a family dinner to the postmemory of the dramatic events at end of the Second World War:

Ich saß am Tisch und blickte auf
das Besteck. Wir aßen und der Fernseher
lief. Drüben im anderen Zimmer. Ich lächelte,
aber auch das war mir nicht anzusehn. Dann gings
weiter. Unvermittelt. Großmutter saß in ihrem Lehnstuhl
im Hof. Es war Sommer, und die Bäume fielen
uns auf die Köpfe. . . .

.....
Ein Gewitter war im Anzug. Großmutter
war noch immer dunkel gekleidet und in den Maisfeldern
fielen vereinzelt Schüsse. Es war plötzlich September
neunzehnhundertvierundvierzig und alle gingen auf den
großen Treck. Nur ein Blindgänger blieb liegen,
den fanden wir später, da saß Großmutter noch
immer im Hof und wußte Ortsnamen wie Kiskúnfélegyháza. (*Hotel California* 1 42-3)

I sat at the table and looked at
the cutlery. We were eating and the television
was running. Over in the next room. I smiled,
but that, too, couldn't be seen. Then on it
went. Without warning. Grandmother was sitting in her armchair
in the yard. It was summer, and the trees were falling
on our heads. . . .

.....
A storm was coming. Grandmother
was still dressed in black, and in the cornfields
scattered shots were falling. Suddenly it was September
nineteen hundred forty-four, and all were going on the
big trek. Only a dud remained on the ground;
we found it later, when grandmother was still sitting
in the yard and knew place names like Kiskúnfélegyháza.

As the speaker moves from the safe indoor space to the exposed outdoors and regresses in time from his own childhood to the fateful September 1944, when the Soviet army completed its occupation of Romania, the images of his grandmother, clad in dark and sitting in her armchair in the yard, provide a constant (emphasized by the adverb “noch” 'still') which allows the speaker to connect his own memories with those of the older generation. The grandmother thus becomes a connection point between the generations: as the speaker remembers her, he also remembers her memories; by writing these down, he saves them from extinction and hands them on to the next generation.

Like Lippet and Hensel's evocations of the Romanian-German past, Wagner's is also defined by the limits of what could be said in 1980 in Romania. The historical events witnessed by the grandmother are hinted at rather than described. Thus, the poem offers no explanation for “the big trek” (referring to the deportation of the Romanian-Germans) or the grandmother's knowledge of the Hungarian town Kiskúnfélegyháza (a hint at the Hapsburg Empire, under which the grandmother would have lived and which united an area divided after the war between Romania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia).

The limits imposed on the evocation of the minority's past were keenly felt by the postwar generation. Already in the same volume, Wagner calls into question the generation's ability to effectively memorialize the experience of the minority. In “Notizen zur Familienchronik” [“Notes for a Family Chronicle”], a ten-part poem which follows the speaker's family history from 1913 to the present, the deportation of the speaker's parents, who are said to have simply disappeared for five years, is casually dismissed as a topic of conversation:

Dann sind sie weg. Ab nach Tscheljabinsk,
fünf Jare. Hei, darüber reden wir
nicht. (49)

Then they're gone. To Chelyabinsk,

five years. Hey, we don't talk
about it.

The poem does not explain the use of the first person plural “we,” leaving the question of whether the taboo is imposed by the family or by outside structures open. A similar ambiguity defines the speaker's lament about the impossibility to fix the memory of those who have gone before:

Wo sind sie hin die Lieben.
Kein Grab auf das zu zeigen wäre.
Nur diese Briefe, die immer länger
brauchen, bis sie in deutlicher
Sprache schweigen.

Where are they the dears.
No grave at which to point.
Only these letters, which take longer
and longer to become silent
in articulate speech.

The lament constitutes part eight of ten and follows an episode constructed in a similar manner to “Landaufenthalt 3,” in which the speaker's own childhood memories are intertwined with those of his grandmother. Given the preceding glimpses into the grandmother's life, the lamented “dears” seem to be those of the older generations who have since died. The lack of graves, pointed out in the second line, however, runs counter to this interpretation, and the meaning of “dears” shifts to include other “departed”: those who have emigrated from the Banat. Such “departed” would have been indeed removed from existence by official imposition and present only in letters, which, like the generation's poems, were subjected to censorship.

In the last line of the poem, the “I” finds himself stifled by the pebbles and sand of the river Marosch/Mureş, which once defined the landscape of his childhood and provided materials for the construction of his childhood home. This image of forceful silencing picks up the thematisation of the taboo of memorialisation from earlier in the poem, as well as that of the

meaningful silence of the censored letters. The suppressed past of the minority and its present disintegration are brought together in an image of crumbling walls and flowing water poised to entrap and silence the “I”:

jetzt ist mein Fuß in
der Wand, im Haus, hin geht der Wind,
die Zeit, ich hab die Kiesel im Mund, wo
das alles mal floß, Wort um Wort,
den Sand, voll davon der Mund. (50)

now my foot is in
the wall, in the house, there goes the wind,
the time, I have the pebbles in my mouth, where
all of this used to flow, word for word,
the sand, my mouth is full of it.

The progress of “Notizen zur Familienchronik” from the remembrance of the history of the German community to the mourning of its passing speaks to the rapid deterioration of the social and political circumstances of the German minority of Romania. Within a few short years, the focus of the postwar generation of poets shifted from the recollection of the past to the lament of the present. The shift is dramatically demonstrated by the juxtaposition of a pair of poems by Horst Samson centering on the poet's father: “Schneehütte” [“Snow Hut”, published in 1981, and “Es darf geweint werden” [“Crying is Allowed”], which appeared a year later.

“Schneehütte” is among the few poems to recall the experience of another postwar deportation, undertaken by the Romanian government in 1951 and targeting ethnic minorities and other “elements with a heightened risk factor” along the border with Yugoslavia. This forced relocation was to the Romanian Bărăgan Plain – an inhospitable area in south-central Romania known for its aridity and weather extremes – and affected primarily Banat Swabians. “Schneehütte” recalls the Bărăgan winter – although the location is never named – and its effects on the deportees. At the center of the poem is the speaker's father, one of

jenen namenlosen

die ihr heim so oft entdecken durften
daß sie der schnee bereits langweilte (Tiefflug 17)

those nameless
who were allowed to uncover their homes so often
that they were already bored by the snow

The daily chore of shoveling his home out of the snow becomes for the speaker's father a routine, unworthy of being painstakingly recorded in his diary, quoted in the poem. For the speaker, however, who emphasizes the Sisyphean dimension of the task, this daily event is a symbol of human endurance, an act banal and heroic at the same time.

The poem seeks to counter the anonymity of the victims with concrete details of their daily lives. By underlining the daily life and worries of the deportees – “dächern / kindergeschrei / pferdemist / träumen” (“roofs / children screaming / horse manure / dreaming”; 18) – the poem allows the reader to relate to their drama, without, however, diminishing it. In the last two lines, the gravity of the deportees' situation is brought to the point in the speaker's report of his father's near-loss of hope: “und vater is überhaupt nicht sicher / ob er damals an heimkehr dachte” (“and father is not even sure / if he thought of return at the time”).

Written in the past tense, the last lines of the poem also stress, however, the father's return and, thus, his resilience in the face of adversity. Such resilience stands in marked contrast with the father's despair recorded in “Es darf geweint werden.” Here, the father “reibt sich wund / an der last seiner heimat” (“chafes himself raw / under the load of his homeland”; *Reibfläche* 20), an image which vividly conveys his succumbing to a difficult existence in Romania. The father's only recourse is emigration, suggested by the description of his life as one “für die koffer” (“for the suitcase”), a metaphor which hints at the euphemism for imminent emigration “sitting on packed suitcases.” Although the father may be used to migration, the prospect of emigration entails a permanent loss. As his life and identity begin to “unravel,” the father allows

himself and those bound to his fate a – presumably atypical – expression of sadness: “es darf geweint werden / sagt mein vater” (“crying is allowed / says my father”).

If the speaker of “Schneehütte” had preserved a reverential distance from the trauma of his father, in “Es darf geweint werden,” father and son are united in their grief. The poem opens with a report in the first person, which seems to identify the speaker as the son. In the second stanza, however, the speaker is identified as the father, yet it remains unclear whether he has been speaking all along or whether his speech starts in the second stanza, and he is merely joining the son in an expression of alienation and dejection. The ambiguity allows the expression of sorrow to flow from one to the other, bridging what had been a generational divide not long ago.

The uneasy rapprochement between the generations is also demonstrated by one of the most important thematisations of the disintegration of the Romanian-German community, Anemone Latzina's “Siebenbürgische Elegie 1983” [“Transylvanian Elegy 1983”]. This often-quoted poem has been usually discussed in relation to its pre-text, Adolf Meschendörfer's “Siebenbürgische Elegie.”⁹⁵ While the discussion of the intertextual relationship between the two poems is made unavoidable by the very construction of the updated elegy, which pastiches Meschendörfer's text by inserting addresses of family and friends after every two lines of the original, it has precluded a closer look at Latzina's unusual composition as a family poem:

Anders rauschen die Brunnen, anders rinnt hier die Zeit.
Früh faßt den staunenden Knaben Schauer der Ewigkeit.
der freund: 8 münchen 50, linus-funke-weg 20
Wohlvermauert in Grüften modert der Väter Gebein,
Zögernd nur schlagen die Uhren, zögernd bröckelt der Stein.

95 See, in order of publication: Edith Konrad, “Kriterien und Klischees literarischer Rezeption bei den siebenbürger Sachsen am Beispiel von Adolf Meschendörfers 'Siebenbürgische Elegie',” Claire de Oliveira, *La poésie allemande de Roumanie* 263-71, Michael Markel, “Adolf Meschendörfers 'Siebenbürgische Elegie': Bausteine zu einer Rezeptionsgeschichte,” Delia Cotârlea, *Schreiben unter der Diktatur: Die Lyrik von Anemone Latzina* 149-55.

die freundin: 8011 vaterstetten/baldhahn, rotwandstraße 19
 Siehst du das Wappen am Tore? Längst verwelkte die Hand.
 Völker kamen und gingen, selbst ihr Name entschwand.

der vater: innerstädtischer friedhof, kronstadt
 Aber der fromme Bauer sät in den Totenschrein,
 Schneidet aus ihm sein Korn, keltert aus ihm seinen Wein.

der bruder: 8192 geretsried, steiner weg 173
 Anders schmeckt hier der Märzwind, anders der Duft vom Heu,
 Anders klingt hier das Wort von Liebe und ewiger Treu.

der bruder: 7500 karlsruhe, nikolaus-lenau-straße 5
 Roter Mond, vieler Nächte einziggeliebter Freund,
 Bleichte die Stirne dem Jüngling, die der Mittag gebräunt.

die mutter: 7500 karlsruhe, lange straße 90
 Reifte ihn wie der gewaltige Tod mit betäubendem Ruch,
 Wie in grünlichem Dämmer Eichbaum mit weisem Spruch.

die mutter: 7500 karlsruhe, lange straße 90
 Ehern wie die Gestirne zogen die Jahre herauf,
 Ach, schon ist es September. Langsam neigt sich der Lauf.

*die mutter: 7500 karlsruhe, lange straße 90 (Tagebuchtage 76)*⁹⁶

The fountains murmur differently here, differently runs here the time.
 The astonished boy is early seized by the shiver of eternity.

the friend: 8 münchen 50, 20 linus funke way
 The forefathers' relics decay walled into vaults,
 The clocks beat only hesitantly, hesitantly the stone crumbles.

the girlfriend: vaterstetten/baldhahn 8011, 19 rotwand street
 Do you see the emblem on the gate? The hand faded away.
 Peoples have come and go, even their name disappeared.

the father: inner city cemetery, kronstadt
 But the pious peasant sows in the shrine of the dead,
 Cuts his wheat from there, from there he presses his wine.

the brother: geretsried 8192, 173 steiner way
 The March wind tastes differently here, differently the scent of hay,
 The words of love and eternal devotion sound differently here.

the brother: karlsruhe 7500, 5 nikolaus lenau street
 Red moon, the only friend during many nights,
 Blanched the brow of the youth, browned by the noon,

the mother: karlsruhe 7500, 90 long street
 Ripened him like mighty death with deafening corruption,
 Like an oak tree with wise saying in the green twilight.

the mother: karlsruhe 7500, 90 long street
 Like the bold stars, the years went by,
 Alas, it's already September. They slowly come to a close.

96 Although collected in a volume of poetry only after 1989, the poem first appeared in the *Neue Literatur* in the summer of 1983.

the mother: karlsruhe 7500, 90 long street

Among the many re-workings of Adolf Meschendörfer's famous "Siebenbürgische Elegie" from 1927, Latzina's poem occupies a special place. It is the only poem to use Meschendörfer's text in its entirety, modulated only by the insertion of addresses after every two lines. The addresses are prefaced by a noun denoting a relationship ("friend," "girlfriend," "father," "brother," "mother"), and designate the places where the speaker's family and friends are located in 1983, the date indicated in the title.

If the specific addresses tie the experience of loss very closely to the poem's speaker (and, beyond the poem, to the poet herself), the general relationships prefacing each address, as well as the "Transylvanian" in the title, speak to a larger experience. For Edith Konradt, the poem works as a "zynische Demontage des vielbeschworenen siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Behauptungswillens" ("cynical demontage of the often-invoked Transylvanian-Saxon self-assertion"; 280), a bitter acknowledgement of the community's demise which the poem "hurls" in the face of both ethnic and official rhetoric, which met in the West-German designation of the emigration of the Romanian-Germans as "Familienzusammenführung" ("family reunion"). Latzina's poem undermines this one-sided view by showing how families and communities must be divided on one side to be reunited on the other by contrasting the five West German addresses of the friends, brothers, and mother against the Transylvanian landscape, now the broken-up home of those left behind. More than any other poem of the 1970s generation, Latzina's elegy measures the distance between the German "motherland" and the Transylvanian "fatherland" not just as an identity crisis, as Delia Cotârlea has noted (151), but as an existential one.

Yet the poem does not simply spite the authorities or those who wanted to maintain a belief in the permanence of the Transylvanian Saxons. The mention of the dead father along

with the departed friends and family members and the repetition of the mother's address three times at the end of the poem give the latter a plaintive, rather than cynical, quality. Nor is the poem a pure act of demontage of the Saxon patrimony. Although Latzina's poem physically parses Meschendörfer's text into its component parts, by retaining them and even adding to them, it helps write the elegy anew rather than denying it. Thus, the poem accepts the inheritance of the Transylvanian Saxons, even as it mourns the disintegration of the community itself.

Unlike other poems in which the family serves as a model for the German minority, Latzina's elegy does not evoke the history of the minority through the recollection of factual information but through reference to an important cultural repository of Saxon identity: Meschendörfer's landscape. In direct opposition to Hodjak's reworking of the same poem, however, Latzina's elegy attempts not to deterritorialize the Transylvanian landscape but to reterritorialize it. The resulting hybrid of Saxon and West-German locations speaks to the Saxons' split allegiance between their old and new homelands and anticipates their attempt to hold on to a Saxon identity even as they adopt a German one.

The co-existence of Latzina and Hodjak's radically different responses to Meschendörfer's iconic elegy is symptomatic of the ambivalent relationship of the 1970s generation of poets to the heritage of the minority. The generation's early rejection of this heritage had been based on the young writers' suspicion of the minority's values, its involvement in the war, and its claim on its artists as defenders of the ethnic community, all of which were antithetical to the poets' aim to integrate into Romanian society and the Romanian public sphere. The rejection occurred in poetry in the denial of the minority's environments of identification, to which the young poets maintained their distance even as their attitude towards the German communities changed with the increasingly precarious situation of the Romanian-Germans in

the late 1970s and 1980s. This is particularly evident in the poetry of Franz Hodjak, whose engagement with Meschendörfer's "Siebenbürgische Elegie" over the span of a decade reflects the poet's sense of loss over the unfolding exodus without an attempt to reclaim the spaces of the minority. Instead, the poets turned their attention to the suppressed history of the Saxon and Swabian communities. 1980 saw the publication of the first work by the generation to break the taboo of the post-war deportations, Johann Lippet's *Biographie. Ein Muster* [*Biography. A Pattern*], but other volumes published the same year – Klaus Hensel's *Das letzte Frühstück mit Gertrude* [*The Last Breakfast with Gertrude*], Werner Söllner's *Eine Entwöhnung* [*A Dehabituation*], Richard Wagner's *Hotel California 1*, Horst Samson's *Reibfläche*, and William Totok's *Die Vergesellschaftung der Gefühle* [*The Socialisation of Feelings*] – also show an increased interest in bearing witness not only to the history of the community but also to the moment of its dramatic disintegration.

Chapter 4

The City in the Poetry of the 1970s Generation

The City Poem – A New Genre in Romanian-German Literature

The poem of urban experience is one of the genre innovations of the 1970s generation of Romanian-German poets. The city⁹⁷ had, of course, appeared in poems by previous Romanian-German writers, but only sporadically so. The true setting of Romanian-German poetry before the late 1960s had been the countryside. Although one of the accomplishments of the German settlers of both Transylvania and the Banat is the foundation of cities which in the course of history became important economic and cultural centres, the self-understanding of both groups remained tied to a rural lifestyle and environment. In poetry, this self-understanding found expression in numerous depictions of rural vistas and vignettes of village life, which became the traditional domain of minority writers.

The relationship between city and country is reversed in the poetry of the 1970s generation. Although a large number of poets belonging to the generation were born in rural environments, their literary interests lead them to urban educational and cultural centres, such as Temeswar/Timișoara, Klausenburg/Cluj, Hermannstadt/Sibiu, and, of course, Bucharest. The young poets' adaptation to these multiethnic urban centres arguably contributed to their rejection of the traditional role of minority writers – conceived as rhapsodes and preservers of the German community⁹⁸ – together with the minority's rural environments of identification. Instead, they found inspiration in urban settings and experiences, which came to dominate their poetry.

97 While English discriminates fairly strictly between the size of a “city” and that of a “town,” German uses “Stadt” to mean either (unless, of course, it is preceded by the suffixes “Groß-” or “Klein-” (“big” or “small”). For this reason, “urban” designates here all types of experiences outside of natural or countryside settings, “city” is used as a general term for an urban setting, while “town” is used exclusively to designate a small city.

98 Cf. Motzan, “Die vielen Wege” 109-10.

Despite the predominance of urban environments in the poetry of the post-war generation, this aspect of its work has received little critical consideration. Taking the pulse of the generation in 1970, Gerhardt Csejka was the first to note an interest in the city in post-war poetry. However, at the time, the city poem was only beginning to appear “on the horizon” of the literary landscape, and Csejka gives it just a cursory mention (“Über den Anfang” 19). Almost a decade later, the critic Walter Fromm also mentions what he terms an “urbanen Typ der Lyrik” (“urban type of poetry”) in the verse of Richard Wagner, without, however, discussing the concept further (“Interview” 54).

The only sustained attempt to analyse the urban dimension in the poetry of a member of the generation has come from Delia Cotârlea, who provides a new reading of some of Anemone Latzina's poems under the heading “Stadtpoesie” [“City Poetry”]. Drawing on the affinity between Latzina's writings and those of New York School poet Frank O'Hara (with which Latzina had become acquainted through Rolf Dieter Brinkmann's translations and during her stay in the United States in 1972 – 73), Cotârlea points out the urban consciousness behind Latzina's poems. Even though Latzina's verses rarely describe specific city locales, Cotârlea argues, the experience they thematise is implicitly urban (177).

Cotârlea names three key characteristics of Latzina's city poetry: the use of plain language, the lack of rural (Transylvanian) elements,⁹⁹ and the foregrounding of everyday experience (177). These characteristics also describe much of the city poetry of the generation, which found a source of inspiration in Latzina's debut volume *Was man heute so dichten kann* [*What One Can Write These Days*] from 1971. More important than the lack of rural elements, however, is the lack of focus on the (Romanian-German) community: at the centre of the

99 With the exception of Latzina's “Siebenbürgische Elegie 1983,” discussed in chapter 3.

generation's urban poetry is the "I" or, at most, a small group of like-minded intellectuals who reflect the multiethnic composition of Romania's population. Individual observation is the hallmark of the city poetry of the 1970s generation, whether the representation of the urban environment is positive, as in the early poems exploring and delighting in the anonymity of the city, or negative, as in the later poems, in which the act of observation becomes increasingly linked to state and private surveillance in an environment devoid of privacy.

The Depiction of Urban Environments in Earlier Romanian-German Literature

The few poems set in an urban environment to appear in Romanian-German poetry in the inter-war period describe the city very much in opposition to the rural repository of positive identification. As in Karl-Heinz Schuleri's "Verfluchte Stadt" ["Cursed City"], the city is often portrayed as a place of moral and social dissolution:

Müd im Schoß der Nacht ist Tag versunken –
Sterne grün vom Himmel niederschauen –
Gassen irren kreuz und quer, wie trunken –
nackt auf weichen Kissen ruhen Frauen.

Schwanger ist von Sonnenglut die Luft –
vom Aroma überreifer Früchte –
von verwelkten Blumen weht ein Duft –
geil in Gossen wachsen kranke Süchte.

Durcheinander schwirren fremde Sprachen.
Wild die blassen Menschen schrein und lachen.
Lippen zerren sich in Glutgelüsten

nach gewölbten, straffen Bronzebrüsten.
Schmeichelnd schluchzen die Zigeunergeigen.
Toll Bezechte tanzen einen Reigen. (Sienerth, *Ausklang* 178)

Tired day has sunk into the fold of night –
Stars cast their green light from the sky –
Alleys ramble on in drunk delight –
Women naked on soft pillows lie.

The air's expectant from the summer heat –
from the aroma of decaying fruit and musk –
from withered flowers wafts a scent of sweet
sick obsessions growing in the dusk.

Foreign tongues whirr together in confusion.
Pale people scream and laugh in wild inclusion.
Lips twitch in lusty heat, unnerved

by bronzen breasts, smooth, taut and curved.
Flattering sobs pour out of gypsy violins.
The dance of crazed carousers now begins.

Schuleri's description is typical for the inter-war period not only in its subject matter – urban decadence – but also in its manner. Although overwhelming in the number of impressions it conveys – visual, aural, tactile, olfactory – the description remains vague and detached. Except for the title, there are few details (such as the multitude of streets, of people, and of languages) that even identify the subject as a city, and there are no indications as to the city's identity. The poem lacks not only personal deictics, but also temporal and spatial ones, presenting the reader with little more than a generic tableau (albeit spiced with such exotic details as “gypsy violins”). The generic feel of the poem may be explained by the fact, pointed out by Stefan Sienerth, that the elements making up the city poems of the inter-war period were often drawn from literature rather than from personal experience (*Ausklang* 16).¹⁰⁰ Schuleri's poem recalls German Expressionist city poems, such as Georg Heym's “Der Gott der Stadt” [“The God of the City”] or “Die Verfluchung der Städte” [“The Cursing of the Cities”], to which the title may allude.

While pre-war Romania lacked a multitude of large urban centres, the country's rapid

100 The city poetry of Oscar Walter Cisek represents an exception. Born and raised in Bucharest, Cisek “stand durch Herkunft, Lebensumstände, Interessen, Bildungsweg außerhalb des Erfahrungskreises siebenbürgisch-sächsischer und banat-schwäbischer Autoren und der spezifischen Problematik deutscher Siedlungsgruppen” (“was located, due to his background, circumstances, interests, and educational path, outside of the horizon of experience of the Transylvanian-Saxon and Banat-Swabian authors and the specific problems of the German communities”; Motzan, “Ein Einzelgänger” 12). Cisek's city poems reflect the multi-faceted experiences of an urban dweller, neither vilifying nor glorifying city life.

industrialisation after World War II forced a growing number of people into its cities, whose populations often swelled beyond capacity. At the same time, the one-way migration from country to city was beginning to change the demographic composition of the country, causing labour shortages in agriculture and under-employment in the industry.¹⁰¹ Despite these dramatic changes, which impacted city and country dwellers of all ethnicities, there were few Romanian-German city poems written in the 1950s and 60s. The often painful twin realities of urbanisation and industrialisation are instead sublimated in the evocation of the beauty and peace of natural and rural landscapes and re-affirm an identity rooted in a bucolic lifestyle.

As dictated by the needs of a propagandistic literature intent on promoting a positive image of the country's urbanisation and industrialisation, the few city poems of this period are also unequivocally positive. They fall into two categories, either glorifying the historical towns of the German minority or praising urban socialist achievements. Franz Johannes Buhlhardt's volume *Stätten und Stunden* [*Times and Places*] from 1968 unites both types of poems in its first part, dedicated to different sites around the country (the "Stätten" of the title). While poems like "Klausenburg" and "Schäßburg" depict historic locations by recollecting either the history of the Transylvanian-Germans or painting an idyllic world seemingly untouched by time, the portraits of "Reschitza" and "Hunedoara" emphasize the cities' new industrial development. In "Hunedoara," for instance, the industrial development is neatly integrated into the town's history, just as the growth of industrial facilities is integrated into the town's historic outline:

Im Schatten deiner Burg
wachsen
Menschen,
Häuser,
Hochöfen,
Stahlmengen,

101 See Bachman 77-80.

Blumen
für den Bau,
der heute schon
sein Licht
vorauswirft. (18)

In the shadow of your fortress
grow
people,
houses,
furnaces,
crops of steel,
flowers
for the construction
which already
lights our way
ahead.

The poem refers to the growth of the medieval town of Hunedoara in southeastern Transylvania (whose symbol is the Hunyadi Castle in the first line) into an industrial giant and mentions several facets of this development: the addition of people, of dwellings, of industrial structures, and of industrial products (in this case, steel). Hunedoara's post-war expansion was indeed unprecedented in Romanian history, as the communist government sought to accelerate Romania's industrialisation by building on Hunedoara's historic steel mills (Turnock 549). Although the expansion came at a heavy cost to people and the environment alike, it was a success story for a government intent on “modernising” the country. The poem's central metaphor, which equates the growth of the industry with that of flowers, uncritically replicates this official view of Hunedoara. By presenting industry as the “natural” link between the glorious past (symbolised by the castle) and the bright future (suggested by the light in line 10), the poem upholds a teleological vision of socialist society.

In upholding this vision, the poem says nothing about the individual experience either of the speaker or of others. Although vastly different in content and attitude from Schuleri's city

poem, Buhlhardt's "Hunedoara" is similar to it in the generalizing gaze and totalizing tone.¹⁰² The vegetation metaphor (denoting decay in "Verfluchte Stadt" and healthy growth in "Hundeoara") underlying both poems removes the cities from the human realm into that of primordial – and, thus, immutable – nature. As a result, the poems simultaneously distance themselves from the subject matter and deny a contrary point of view.

From Rural to Urban Lifestyles: Liminal Spaces and the Poetry of Transition

As the early poems of the post-war generation reflect it, the urban environment comprises both large and small cities, which provides for a range of settings and experiences, from small-town pride or ennui to big-city camaraderie, cosmopolitanism, or anonymity. In contrast to the distancing city tableaux in previous Romanian-German literature, the city poems of the 1970s generation are full of personal, provocative, and often contradictory observations. By offering multiple takes on city life from multiple perspectives (which often change over the course of each poet's career), these poems are not static portraits of cities but kinetic descriptions of urban experience.

The totalising visions of Schuleri and Buhlhardt's poems are entirely absent from the poetry of the post-war generation, for whom the city offers a multiplicity of experiences and lyric subjects. As newcomers to Romania's capital and other large university centres, many members of the generation first experienced the city from the margins, and their early poems reflect a tension between rural and urban environments. But even those who were born in urban environments, as in the case of Kronstadt/Braşov native Klaus Hensel, often dwell on the

¹⁰² For more nuanced, although also overwhelmingly positive, representations of industrial cities from the same period, see Oskar Pastior's "In Reschitz" (14) and "Donaufahrt Tulcea – Galaţi" ("Danube Journey Tulcea – Galaţi," 42-3).

marginality of their experience.

One of the earliest poems by a generation member dedicated to the city, Hensel's "Meine Stadt" ["My Town"], published in 1974 when the poet was 20 years old, although likely written earlier, pits the nameless home town of the first-person speaker against internationally renowned Tokyo, Sydney, and New York. The tension of the poem derives from the marginal location of the speaker's town vis-a-vis these famous international urban centres but its central affective location for the "I":

vielleicht
werde ich tokio
sidney oder new york
aus dem flugzeug
sehen

doch meine stadt
die
kenne ich
aus dem kinderwagen

das kann ich
bei bestem willen nicht
über
new york sidney oder tokio
sagen

maybe
i will never
see tokyo
sydney or new york
from a plane

but my town
that one
i know
from my stroller

this is something
i simply cannot
say
about new york, sidney or tokyo

The construction of “Meine Stadt” is typical of the early dialectic poems of the 1970s generation. The first two stanzas are shaped as thesis and antithesis, while the third stanza resolves the tension between them by deploying a punch line. In this case, the tension between the world-renowned cities of the first stanza and the home town of the second stanza is the degree to which they are knowable to the speaker. The difference is expressed through a series of oppositions: the three proper nouns denoting well-known foreign cities against the single common noun “Stadt” (“town”) preceded by the first-person possessive pronoun “meine” (“mine”), two very different vehicles of knowledge acquisition (airplane and baby stroller), two vantage points (from above and from ground-level), and two opposing modes of perception (seeing and knowing). While the three foreign names and the technologically advanced airplane denote a certain level of sophistication, the verb “sehen” (“to see”) attaches a sense of distance to the implied metropolitan refinement. By contrast, the humble baby carriage and the possessive pronoun denoting endearment are grounded by the weight of the verb “kennen” (“to know”) into a strong show of affection.

The sense of uncertainty introduced by the word “vielleicht” (“perhaps”) opening the poem and amplified by the negative construction of the punch line does not detract from the strong assertion of sympathy for the native town. The uncertainty of whether the speaker will get to see New York, Sydney, and Tokyo functions as a hidden complaint about the inability to travel beyond Romania's borders but also works to strengthen the bond between the speaker and his native town.

As a city poem – an expectation raised by the title – “Meine Stadt” is conspicuous in its lack of urban detail. Not even the name of the city is mentioned, although an introductory note identifies the poet's home town as Kronstadt (Braşov). The note, which starts with the assertion “Ich bin kein Banater” (“I am not from the Banat”), is more likely meant as a jibe at the

pervasive presence of Banat poets in Romanian-German publications of the early 1970s than as an explanatory note to the poem.¹⁰³ The poem is not concerned with the city as such, but with its symbolic geography. It explores the home town's location vis-a-vis much more famous, yet very distant cities, and in doing so, it imparts something of their importance to the speaker's place of birth.

Despite the poem's lack of urban details, "Meine Stadt" centres on a quintessential theme of the city poetry of the 1970s generation: the attempt to find a place for the self within a world dominated by urban centres. It is perhaps not surprising that this attempt should start at the periphery. In Hensel's case, the city itself appears in a peripheral location in relation to the world's metropolises. Most often, however, the periphery refers to the margins of the city, in which rural and urban, past and future, (German) minority and (Romanian) majority intersect and hold each other in balance. Significant for these poems are the simultaneous explorations of space and language: frequent references to Romanian place names and concepts, as well as to an inclusive "us," speak to the generation's integrationist vision of the Romanian city, though cracks in this image would also appear early.

Gerhard Eike's "Am Rande unserer Großstadt" ["At the Edge of Our City"] describes a general experience at the outskirts of a large city (likely Bucharest, where the country-born Eike studied and worked), but involves the reader by including her/him both in the first person plural "unser" ("our") of the title and in the generalizing "man" ("one") used throughout the poem. The slide from the title to the first line places the reader directly into the scene, where s/he is maintained in a balance between comfort and danger:

103 Although he eventually befriended the Aktionsgruppe Banat, Klaus Hensel's later comments on his relationship with the Romanian-German literary scene imply that he felt neglected while Banat poets held the spotlight: "Irgendwie bin ich also durch dieses rumäniendeutsche Raster durchgefallen" ("Somehow I fell through this Romanian-German grid"; "Entstehung und Auflösung" 273).

kommen manchmal noch schafe
aber ohne flötende hirten
gehn durch die menschen
oder die menschen durch sie.

am rande unserer großstadt abends
kann man noch sitzen
neben ausrangierten bussen
etwas beklemmt

ob nicht doch
die GOROBETSI
sich sammeln
zu vergewaltigen.

am rande unserer großstadt abends
zwischen kamille und mond.

über der stadt aber lastet
auch sonntags der SMOG

und küsse schmecken anfangs
schon nach benzin. (6 & 60 26)

sometimes sheep still come
but without shepherds piping
go through the people
or the people through them.

at the edge of our city
one can still sit in the evening
next to discarded buses
feeling somewhat apprehensive

whether
the GOROBETSI
won't gather after all
for the rape.

at the edge of our city in the evening
between chamomile and the moon.

SMOG lies heavy over the city
even on sundays

and from the very beginning
kisses taste like gasoline.

The rural and urban worlds meet in this description in uneasy co-existence: the wandering sheep are only ghosts of a former idyllic lifestyle (represented by the evening setting, the piping shepherds, and the moonlight kisses), while the safety of the city (gendered female in German) is threatened by the outcast “Gorobezzen” (small-time criminals) living on the outskirts. Both the reference to the piping shepherds, the quintessence of Romanian rural identity, and the word “Gorobezzen,” in all caps for emphasis, make clear that this is a Romanian city.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, however, the “unser” (“our”) of the title, understandable only to a German-reading public, invites the Germans' identification with the Romanian cityscape.

Eike's poem balances criticism of urbanisation as a means of destruction of the rural and natural environment (evident in the mention of the broken buses littering the landscape, the smog, and the smell of gas) with the evocation of a world of romantic dreams: between the “still” of the idyllic rural (lines 1 and 6) and the “already” of the contaminated and dangerous urban (line 18) flourishes a world which continues to nourish idealistic dreams.

In Richard Wagner's “Notizen für ein Gedicht aus Hunedoara” [“Notes for a Poem from Hunedoara”], one of the author's first long poems, this idealism is tempered by the speaker's recognition of his position as an outsider in a new environment. Despite the speaker's feelings of awkwardness, however, he maintains an open curiosity for his new surroundings, which he investigates in a series of seemingly random “notes” or impressions. As in Bulhardt's poem, the town in question is the Transylvanian birthplace of John Hunyadi, the father of the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus. Yet the town's significant history – and its historic architecture, including the Hunyadi Castle – is never mentioned by the poem. Instead, the description focuses

104 “Gorobeți” means “ruffians” or “thugs” in colloquial Romanian. Earlier printings of the poem emphasise the Romanian locale even more strongly by using the Romanian word, modified only by the German spelling: “Gorobetzi” (cf. *Fahnen im Wind* 99, and Motzan, *Vorläufige Protokolle* 60).

on the speaker's present, in which Hunedoara is a steel town, dominated by giant smoke stacks: “am morgen das stadtbild mit den roten rauchfahnen / die schlote die den begriff 'ansichtskarte' unmöglich machen” (“in the morning the image of the city with the red smoke plumes / the smokestacks which make the concept of 'postcard' impossible”; *Die Invasion* 17). Unlike in Buhlhardt's poem glorifying the industrialisation of Hunedoara, however, “Notizen” is wary of the ways the town's present industrial identity has enveloped and altered the outlying countryside.¹⁰⁵ Reminders of the latter (houses and farmyards belonging to an entire village universe) stand next to apartment buildings, symbols of the rapid growth of the city. The effect of the juxtaposition is a displacement of concepts, people, and attitudes:

die begriffe unten u. oben
 das dorf vor dem wohnblock (“haus” “hof”)
 die leute sehen aus als kämen sie von weither
 man ist versucht auf der straße jeden zu grüßen (17)

the concepts above and below
 the village in front of the apartment building (“house” “yard”)
 the people look like they've come from afar
 one is tempted to greet everyone on the street

Unsure of how to interpret his surrounding (the semantically unattached pair “unten u. oben” 'above and below' and the words “house” and “yard” offset by quotation marks visually represent this uncertainty) and of how to behave in a town in which everyone is simultaneously come “from afar” and somehow familiar, the “I” eschews contact with others. While wandering alone through the town, the speaker finds consolation in natural details – the morning dew on his

105 Wagner's poem also stands in contrast to Horst Samson's “Hunedoara,” written a few years later as a commemoration of Samson's visit with Wagner in the latter's new place of residence. Samson's poem is an unmitigated description of the deplorable – both environmental and economic – state of the city, its environment, and its inhabitants: “die ausgelagerte glut wetteifert mit der sonne / es ist heiß und schwül in hunedoara / daß man kaum atmen kann / in riesigen schlangen vor verkaufsläden / erstehen auch hier die leute / frische luft” (“the released heat competes with the sun / it is so hot and muggy in hunedoara / one can barely breathe / in huge lines in front of the stores / here, too, the people are buying / fresh air”; *Tiefflug* 59). While environmental and social critique are the focal point of Samson's poem, Wagner's overriding interest is in a more positive aspect of life in Hunedoara: the resilience of the town's inhabitants.

shoes and a walk under trees (17-8) – but his interest soon returns to the town inhabitants, whom he follows into a flat of apartments and a movie theatre. In a typical move for Wagner, the closing of the poem blends snippets from film and TV with the lives of those watching them:

im fernsehen läuft ein comencini-film lauter blaue vierecke
stefania sandrelli in einen bus einsteigend
bauernstimmen dringen von unten herauf
auf einem aquarell ein oxsenwagen produktive widersprüche
der bus den man hört die durchgestrichne fünf (18)

a comencini film runs on tv nothing but blue rectangles
stefania sandrelli getting on a bus
peasant voices rise from below
an ox-drawn cart on a watercolour painting productive contradictions
the bus one can hear the line number five

Although the stanza makes no direct reference to the town inhabitants, the visual and aural details give a vivid impression of their lives. The multitude of blue rectangles – simultaneously lit TV sets – suggests not only a view onto an apartment building but also the knowledge that the building inhabitants are immersed in the same activity. The second line of the stanza thus catches the action of the movie (the actress Stefania Sandrelli boarding a bus) as a moment in a collective experience, which includes the sound of another bus (the “crossed-out” five is a common route number in Romania) and of voices coming from the street. The doubling of the lives inside and outside of the TV frame(s) and the “productive contradictions” of still and dynamic media (the watercolour painting and the film/TV), erotic glamour (embodied by Sandrelli) and the mundane, “peasant voices” and proletarian movie¹⁰⁶ show that the uneasy balance between the rural and the urban encountered by the “I” in the beginning of the poem is a

106 The poem likely refers to *Delitto d'amore* [*Crime of Passion*] (1974), the only full-length movie Stefania Sandrelli filmed under the direction of Luigi Comencini before 1977 (the publishing date of *Die Invasion der Uhren*, which includes “Notizen”). The movie portrays the clash of southern and northern Italian proletarian cultures.

way of life for Hunedoara's inhabitants.¹⁰⁷

Despite the melancholy tone of the poem and the jumble of impressions, the picture of the town and its inhabitants that emerges from the poem is one of intriguing dynamism (at least for poets in search of material, as the last line implies; 19). In this reading, the town's lack of success in embodying a postcard is not meant as a criticism. Two further poems from *Die Invasion der Uhren* [*The Clock Invasion*] which thematise the city as a postcard support this view. In both cases, the postcard functions as a metaphor of alienation: in “Projekt für eine Straßenbahnfahrt” [“Project for a Tram Ride”], the speaker, who is wandering aimlessly through the city, is afraid of becoming an extra in a postcard (14), while in “Gedicht für M.” [“Poem for M.”], the perusal of postcards evokes a “Gefühl der Fremdheit” (“feeling of alienation”; 23).

In the end, it is the “I” who is left searching for balance in a town caught – but not lost – in the passage from rural to urban. Not surprisingly, the poem dates from a period of transition in Wagner's own life: his assignment to a job in Hunedoara after finishing his studies in Temeswar/Timișoara in 1975. Such assignments were common under the communist regime and typically marked a second transition in a young adult's life. While the first transition was often from one's home town or village to a bigger urban centre in order to attend university, the move to an assigned work place was generally the reverse.

If “Notizen” describes acclimatisation attempts in a provincial town, Rolf Bossert's “Studentenheime Grozăvești, Bukarest” [“Student Dormitories Grozăvești, Bucharest”], first published in *Neue Literatur* in 1975 and anthologised in *Vorläufige Protokolle* [*Preliminary*

107 Another poem by Wagner from the same time suggests even more strongly that the flight into media, especially TV, is an effect of imposing urban structures over rural ones: “die stimme, die um hilfe schreit, wird im fenster vermutet. lange / noch nach dem eintreten der stille. / dorfstille. / dorfhoffungen. / . . . / nach dem eintreten der dunkelheit das eintreten der fersehstille” (“the voice calling for help is presumed to come from the window. long / after the arrival of silence. / village silence. / village hopes. / . . . / after the arrival of the dark the arrival of tv silence”; “Die Welt des Dorfes” [“The World of the Village”] 32).

Minutes] a year later, bears witness to a student's exploration of the capital. Born in Reschitz/Reșița in southwestern Transylvania, Bossert attended university in Bucharest in the early 1970s before being assigned to a teaching job in the mountain resort town of Bușteni. (He eventually returned to Bucharest to work as an editor in the early 1980s). “Studentenheime” is the earliest published of four poems specifically set in Bucharest and one of two bearing the name of the Grozăvești neighbourhood in the title.

Bossert's tri-part title evokes (and almost achieves) the specificity of an address, proceeding from the smallest dwelling unit (buildings) to the largest (city). The use of the plural “Studentenheime” (“student dorms”), however, undercuts this specificity, claiming validity for a more general experience. This mix of the general and the specific is present throughout the poem, starting with the first word, the adverb of place “hier” (“here”), which can refer back to any (or all) of the three elements of the title. At its most open, “here” can refer to the entire city of Bucharest, but the comma between “Grozăvești” and “Bukarest” in the title restricts that reading, pointing back to only a certain area within the capital – the Grozăvești neighbourhood:

hier verkriechen sich leitungsrohre
unter brückenbäuchen
thermozentrale und studentenheim

dazwischen undurchsichtig
und seicht
die dîmbovița

schießbudenfiguren echt
täglich totgeschossene
erlernen das überleben
an einer straßenecke

daneben: wie
läßt sich der duft
einer gogoășe
ins deutsche übersetzen

botanischer garten und zigarettenfabrik

kämpfen um unsere lungen
(die wir brauchen
zum atmen in den zimmern
unserer neubauten)

da
bereiten
wir
uns
vor

conduit pipes hole up here
under the bellies of bridges
heating plant and student dorm

in between opaque
and shallow
the dâmbovița

authentic shooting gallery figures
shot down daily
learn survival
on the street corner

alongside them: how
can one translate the fragrance
of a gogoășe
into german

botanical garden and cigarette factory
fight for our lungs
(which we need
to breathe in the rooms
of our new buildings)

here
we
prepare
our
selves

Running along the Dâmbovița river, Grozăvești is a mixed industrial and residential neighbourhood made up of apartment buildings meant to house workers and of student dormitories, both built during the expansion of the capital in the 1970s, as well as of industrial

complexes. This mix is represented in the poem by the juxtaposition of incongruous architectural fragments: “Leitungsrohre” (“conduit pipes”), “Brücken” (“bridges”), “Thermozentrale” (“heating plant”), “Studentenheim” (“student dorm”), “Botanischer Garten” (“botanical garden”), “Zigarettenfabrik” (“cigarette factory”), and “Neubauten” (“new buildings”).

Amid this jumble of architectural details, individual experience, too, is fragmented. In the construction of the poem, the fragmentation is embodied by the split into two stanzas of two otherwise adjacent experiences. Stanzas 3 and 4 describe two wildly different experiences on the same street corner. The first is the demoralising existence, as perceived by the speaker, of people down on their luck. The poem is deliberately vague about the persons concerned, as poverty, prostitution, and other social “ills” could not be openly mentioned in 1970s Romania, but the social comment, delivered unexpectedly, is still poignant. The second experience is the pleasurable encounter with a food vendor's stand and the specific smell of a Romanian doughnut. The somewhat opaque description of the “shooting gallery figures” from the first stanza pales in comparison with the pointed articulation of the second experience. Worded as a question, the second stanza goes beyond the encounter itself to dwell on the implication of two worlds colliding: the speaker's German heritage and his Romanian everyday experience. The retaining of the Romanian word for doughnut, “gogoășe,” suggests that the two do not entirely correspond; the seamless integration of the Romanian word in the German text, however, indicates that they can easily coexist.

Ultimately, the speaker's everyday experience is given coherence by participation in a larger community, signalled both by the plural in the title and the introduction of plural personal deictics in the final stanzas. The title of the poem specifies not only the locale but also a point of view, summoning up a specific student experience (in contrast to the generic “Grozăvești 2,”

published in Bossert's debut volume four years later). The point of view is further strengthened by the use of the possessive adjective “unsere” (“our”) and pronoun “wir” (“we”) in the first person plural, which include all those who are in Grozăvești to “prepare” themselves (“vorbereiten”) and balance the openness of the “here” from the beginning of the poem.

While “Studentenheime” was included in Peter Motzan's anthology of young Romanian-German poetry *Vorläufige Protokolle* [*Preliminary Minutes*] of 1976, it does not appear in Rolf Bossert's debut volume *Siebensachen* [*Odds and Ends*], published three years later. Instead, the volume features three other poems specifically set in Bucharest: “Splaiul Independenței, Frühjahr 1975” [“Splaiul Independenței, Spring 1975”] (29), “Grozăvești 2” (30) and “Hallo” [“Hello”] (54). The first poem is similar in style to “Studentenheime,” relying on a jumble of incongruous metaphors to evoke the coming of spring in a Bucharest street both as a natural and as a social phenomenon. Also set at the intersection of the rural and the urban, “Splaiul Independenței” focuses on the uprooting of nature, as well as of people, in the creation of urban centres. Immediately following “Splaiul Independenței,” “Grozăvești 2” depicts a symbolic relationship set in a generic evening landscape. The neighbourhood is personified by two unnamed male and female actors who play out different stages in a cycle of domestic abuse. The poem is reminiscent of Werner Söllner's evocations of the strained relationships between the sexes in the urban environment (discussed below), but its atmospheric depiction lacks the potential for social criticism of Söllner's poems.

The last poem in *Siebensachen*, “Hallo” is also the most optimistic about life in Bucharest, celebrating the bohemian lifestyle afforded by the convergence of several young Romanian-German intellectuals in the capital:

gerhardt hatte uns kaffee versprochen, er
hielt ihn auch. nachschlagewerke, wacklige
türmchen, mein schreibtisch ist meine burg.

aus dem rauch hörten wir creangäs geiß
mit den drei geißlein, bis aufs ende
ins deutsche gebracht, dann kam
melanie, fast hätte der wolf sie
gefressen, so ernst meint es gerhardt.
pläne: werner spricht von baconsky, team-
work ist eine gute sache, einer muß
schnell um wein gehn, das letzte geißlein
wird in der schublade versteckt. ich trete
auf den balkon, jetzt ist louis armstrong
da. der abend ist heruntergefallen. trotzdem
verheißt das rötliche straßenlicht wärme.
den nordbahnhof könnte ich kraulen, als
hätte ers nötig. der nachbar ißt bratkartoffeln.
später tranken wir auf die zukunft in bukares.

gerhardt had promised us coffee, he
kept it, too. reference books, tottering
towers, my desk is my castle.
out of the smoke we heard creangă's nanny goat
with the three kids, rendered until the end
into german, then melanie
came, the wolf almost ate
her, that's how seriously gerhardt takes everything.
plans: werner speaks of baconsky, team-
work is a good things, someone needs
to go grab wine, the last kid goat
is hidden in the drawer. i step
out on the balcony, louis armstrong arrives
now. the evening has fallen down. still
the russet of the street lights augurs warmth.
i could pet the north station, as if it
needed it. the neighbour is eating roast potatoes.
later we drank to our future in bucharest.

The poem describes a music, literature, and wine-filled gathering of young Romanian-German intellectuals (easily identifiable by their first names) at the apartment of critic Gerhardt Csejka. The gathering has the character of a literary circle, in which the divide between languages and cultures is easily bridged. The frequent use of enjambment linking the lines into a fluid whole mirrors the stated purpose of the gathering: joining cultures through translation. The German first names of the participants (Gerhardt, Werner, and Melanie) are interspersed not only with

those of Romanian writers ([Ion] Creangă and [A. E.] Baconsky) but also with an American one (Louis Armstrong). The local and the global intermingle as easily as the “letzte Geißlein” (“last kid goat,” referring to a popular story by Ion Creangă, one of the most celebrated Romanian writers) and “Louis Armstrong” come and go. Yet this openness also represents vulnerability. The foundations of the intellectual enterprise, the reference books of line 2, are but “wacklige Türmchen” (“tottery towers”), while the critic’s “Burg” (line 3) – the impenetrable Germanic defence structure – is breached by a humble Romanian weapon: the smell from a neighbour’s roast potatoes.

As in “Studentenheime,” the Romanian setting is represented by a smell, a reminder of its permeation of every experience of the young Romanian-Germans. Unlike in the earlier poem, however, the setting and the experience have become one: the speaker’s contentment is mirrored by the warmth of the city lights and by the personification of the “North Train Station” (one of Bucharest’s most recognizable landmarks, but also a point of connection with the rest of the country and the world; line 16) into a docile animal, ready to be petted.

Placed at the very end of *Siebensachen*, “Hallo” functions as an epitaph to the incipient hopes of the young Romanian-German intellectuals in the capital. Although the last line expresses hope for the group’s future in Bucharest, the return to the past tense denotes that this chapter in their lives is already over. Whether the optimism of the title greeting carries into a new phase remains a moot point.

From Incognito to Dangerous Conspicuity: The Poet as Flâneur

With the poets’ accommodation in Romania’s cities, their poetic personas also gained confidence in their urbanity. This confidence was also partly inspired by the poetry of Anemone

Latzina, in whose early verses urban spaces are already claimed as the natural habitat of modern Romanian-German poetry.

Although, as Cotârlea has shown, Latzina's spare style precludes detailed descriptions of setting and milieu, her poetic personas are explicitly placed in and interact with city settings, which are created by the symptomatic naming of urban public spaces, such as cinemas, buses, and offices. In "Beschreibung eines Vormittags" ["Description of a Morning"], the speaker's daily routine is traced through a city landscape evoked by the simple enumeration of different stations in her trajectory, as she moves from "Haus" ("house") to "Bus" ("bus") to "Redaktion" ("editorial office") and back again. This trajectory is constructed with the help of short, simple sentences which relate the speaker's daily activities in a matter-of-fact tone:

Ich gehe aus dem Haus.
Ich fahre mit dem Bus.
Ich betrete meine Redaktion. (*Was man heute* 33)

I leave the house.
I take the bus.
I enter the editorial office.

The sparseness of detail and the simplicity of the syntax underline the repetitive nature of the described actions. At the same time, however, they allow the three locations named in the poem to stand out: the speaker's house, the bus, and the editorial office become, *pars pro toto*, an unmistakably urban universe through which the "I" navigates effortlessly and confidently.

The theme of the bus ride as a central part of the daily city routine also appears in Latzina's poem "Es tut gut" ["It Feels Good"] from the same volume. Whereas the description of the routine in "Beschreibung eines Vormittags" is deliberately neutral, with the central part of the poem even replaced by a series of dots, "Es tut gut" describes the daily routine of riding the bus as a positive, grounding experience:

Es tut gut: in einen Bus steigen,

denn es folgt:
Karten lösen,
niedersitzen oder stehenbleiben,
absteigen,
weitergehen.
Das ist dann alles
ganz sicher.
Es tut gut: sicher zu wissen,
daß etwas folgt.
Selbst für kurze Zeit.
Es tut gut:
sich einschalten,
sicher zu wissen, was folgt,
auch nur für ganz kurze Zeit. (22)

It feels good to get on a bus,
for then follows:
validating the ticket,
sitting or standing,
getting off,
walking on.
Then everything is
very certain.
It feels good to know for sure
that something follows.
Even for a short while.
It feels good
to join in,
to know for sure what follows,
even for a very short while.

The poem can be divided in three parts of unequal length, each beginning with the statement which gives the poem its title, “es tut gut” (“it feels good”). The first part describes the routine sequence of a bus ride – ascending the bus, validating the ticket, sitting or standing, descending from the bus, walking on – from which the speaker derives a sense of security. The second part of the poem elaborates on this feeling of security, explaining that it stems from the ability to foresee future events, even, as line 11 qualifies, “for a short while.” The third part reiterates the sentiment but adds an important explanatory element: the sense of certainty acquired during the bus ride is only possible in the letting go of individuality, in the joining of one’s fate with that of

others. Through the introduction of the polyvalent verb “einschalten,” which, in its reflexive form means “to join in,” but, as used in science, can also mean “to interpolate” or “to activate” something (e.g. in an electrical grid), the poem turns the simple experience of the bus ride into a parable about existence in modern society, with its regulations and automatisms.¹⁰⁸

It is important to note that neither the integration of the individual into the social order nor the relationship between the individual and the urban environment is negatively connoted in this early poem, though this would change in Latzina’s later poetry.¹⁰⁹ The poem represents a mode of being (whose general applicability is emphasised by the careful avoidance of personal deictics) completely at ease with the public space of the bus, just as the “I” of “Beschreibung eines Vormittags” appears at ease with the transition from private to public spaces and back.

In Latzina's poems, the bus is both a marker of and a conveyance through the urban landscape, a function it retains throughout the poetry of the 1970s generation. Thus, in Hodjak’s early poem “Frühe Morgenstunden” [“Early Morning Hours”], buses are assigned the vital role of “rote blutkörperchen im kreislauf der stadt” (“red blood cells in the circulation of the city”; *Spielräume* 34-5), hinting at the connections they create between the different points and inhabitants of the city. A bus is also background to the meeting and connection point between the speaker and the unnamed “you” of Richard Wagner’s “Gedicht mit einem Autobus” [“Poem with a Bus”] (*Klartext* 55) and a (potential) meeting point in Wagner’s “Regine” (*Hotel California I* 68), in which a young woman boarding a bus searches for a man to alleviate her loneliness. Most often, however, buses and bus stations offer a place of observation, as in

108 The first printing of the poem, in the January-February 1966 issue of *Neue Literatur*, emphasises this aspect from the very beginning of the poem, which opens with the verses: “Es tut gut: sich in einen / Automatismus einschalten.” (“It feels good to join / into an automatism.”)

109 In “13. Juli 1974” [“July 13th, 1974”], which, however, did not appear in print in Romania, the bus ride is represented as a disruption in the creative activity of the individual, which renders the speaker incapable to function as a poet. See *Tagebuchtage* 67.

Wagner's "Gedicht in der Haltestelle" ["Poem at the Bus Stop"] (16), Klaus Hensel's "Aus einem Busfenster. Novemberbild" ["From a Bus Window. November Image"] (*Das letzte Frühstück* 24), Horst Samson's "Frau in der Haltestelle" ["Woman at the Bus Stop"] (*Tiefflug* 64), Adrian Löw's "Rolltreppenlaufen" ["Escalator Run"] (*Betroffen aus Versehen* 33), and Franz Hodjak's "Im Bus" ["On the Bus"] (*Flieder im Ohr* 59-60).

Most often, however, the generation's exploration of the city appears not as a bus ride but as a walk. As the public space *par excellence*, the street is the generation's favourite place for and object of observation. As city walkers and modern urban spectators, the Romanian-German poets stand in the tradition of the flâneur, the peripatetic observer of urban environments brought to literary prominence by Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin. Like the flâneur, the "I" of the poems walks the streets of the city, recording and interpreting impressions of his surroundings. His¹¹⁰ stance is alternately engaged and distant, as he "swings between involvement and detachment, between emotional immersion and decontrol and moments of careful recording and analysis of the 'random harvest' of impressions from the streets" (Featherstone). For the modern flâneur, as for his 19th-century counterpart, the city is a repository of secrets: secret lives, secret identities, secret meanings. The flâneur, too, has a secret, for behind his apparent idleness lies the work of the detective: the (re)creation of entire life universes out of urban fragments.¹¹¹ The work of the flâneur is the decoding of the city's secrets while keeping his own.

The flâneur's detection work is thematised in many poems of the 1970s generation. Klaus

110 Following the Baudelairian tradition, flânerie is a distinctly male activity for the 1970s generation. Despite the fact that Latzina's personas are urban, their relationship with the city is not that of the flâneur. In Latzina's poems, the city is already a given and does not need to be reconstituted from fragments of experience by the "I."

111 For a discussion of the flâneur as detective, see Benjamin 72-9.

Hensel's early poem "Straßentreten" ["Street Walking"] emphasizes the game aspect of flânerie-as-detection, its attraction to the play with "disguises and masks" emphasised by Baudelaire

(21):

maskenerkennen oder -verkennen
selten sind es keine

ein blick zu tief –
ich bin nicht vorsichtig
ich blicke dahinter –
sprachlose welt der gesichter
rastloses wimperpinseln
winseln

recognising or mistaking masks
rarely there aren't any
a look too deep –
i am not careful –
i look behind
speechless world of faces
restless eyelash painting
whimpering

Like many of the generation's short poems, "Straßentreten" moves in dialectical fashion by juxtaposing and then conflating two seemingly disparate, highly distilled and highly symbolic images. The first image is contained in the title, which merges, in the activity of walking the streets, flânerie and prostitution. The first stanza picks up a different image, however: that of the masquerade, which depends, for its effect, on both disguise and recognition (the "verkennen" 'to mistake' and "erkennen" 'to recognise' of the first line). The third stanza brings these different notions together in two ways: first, by the introduction of the "I," who, in his role as flâneur-detective walks the streets in search of the truths behind social "masks," second, by the suggestion that (female-coded) prostitution requires a kind of painful masquerade, suggested by the rhyming of "wimperpinseln" ("eyelash painting") and "winseln" ("whimpering").

As the title suggests, however, the relationship between the two streetwalkers, the flâneur

and the prostitute, is not just one of observer and observed. The final word of the poem, the verb “winseln” – indicative of pain and shame – appears in its infinitive form. It is thus not allocated to a subject and can be linked both to the made-up “faces” (“Gesichter”) two lines above it and to the “I,” who is described as carelessly looking “zu tief” (“too deep”) and thus liable to find out inconvenient truths, in the beginning of the stanza. Linked by pain or a sense of shame to his subject of study, the flâneur appears here not as a detached observer but as someone invested in the suffering of the streets.

Similarly sympathetic portrayals of – mostly female – urban dwellers also appear in the poetry of Richard Wagner, William Totok, Horst Samson, Rolf Bossert, and Werner Söllner.¹¹² The most optimistic of these poems, Richard Wagner's “Junge Frau von 1978” [“Young Woman of 1978”] is a portrait of the modern urban working woman:

Schmales Gesicht in der Menge, Lächeln,
das sich entfernt. Nickelbrille, kurzgeschnittenes
Haar. Bluse, Schlagzeilen drauf. Einkaufsbeutel

unterm Arm, Jeans unten aufgestülpt. Helles
Gesicht hinter der Busscheibe, weggewischt.
Kommt aus der Unterführung raus, ein knallgelb

verpacktes Kind auf dem Arm. Schaut auf, taucht
weg im Passantenstrom, stummes Gesicht. Drückt die
Tasten, die Kasse springt auf, gibt Wechselgeld

raus, spricht monoton Sätze. Stippt die
Asche weg, betätigt den Anlasser, Ecke, kriegt
die Kurve im letzten Augenblick, an der Kreuzung

mal runter, ein Limo an der Endstation. Flott geht

112 See Wagner, “Hausfrauenmorgen“ [“Housewife's Morning”] (*Hotel California* 1 19), “Die Kellnerin“ [“The Waitress”] (41), “Alleinstehende Frau” [“Single Woman”] (59), “Junge Frau von 1978” [“Young Woman of 1978”] (67), “Regine” (68); Totok, “Hausfrauenportät” [“Portrait of a Housewife”] (*Vergesellschaftung* 38), “Junge Mutter” [“Young Mother”] (39); Samson, “Frau in der Haltestelle” [“Woman at the Bus Stop”] (*Tiefflug* 65); Bossert, “Schalterfräulein in einem Bahnhof dritter Klasse” [“Counter Girl in a Third-Rate Train Station”] (*Siebensachen* 40), “Besuch einer jungen Lehrerin” [“Visit from a Young Teacher”] (41); Söllner, “Haus, Frauen, Nachmittag” [“House, Wives, Afternoon”] (*Eine Entwöhnung* 38-42).

sie über die Straße, Blickfang, Wassernixe und
Schokoladenwerbung, die berufstätige Frau. Der

Nachmittag, windig wie ein April. Schmales Gesicht
in der Menge, Nickelbrille, einen hellen Augen
blick lang, dann taucht sie weg, in einen

nicht näher zu bestimmenden Lebenslauf rein. (*Hotel California* 1 67)

Slender face in the crowd, a smile
striding away. Chrome glasses, short
haircut. Shirt, slogan. Shopping bag

tucked under the arm, pegged jeans. Fair
face behind the bus window, wiped away.
Comes out of the underground passage, a bright yellow

child in her arms. Looks up, dives
into the stream of passers-by. Silent face. Presses the
buttons, the cash register springs opens, hands out

change, speaks monotone sentences. Taps down
the ashes, shifts into drive, corner, catches
the curve at the last moment, takes a break

at the crossing, a lemonade at the end of the line. Walks
briskly across the street, eye-catcher, mermaid and
chocolate advertisement, the working woman. The

afternoon, windy like the month of April. Slender face
in the crowd, chrome glasses, a fair moment
in time, then she dives away, into an

unqualifiable life story.

The poem's goal of capturing the essence of a late-20th century woman is stated already in the title, which alludes to Arnold Zweig's similar attempt at providing an understanding of the condition of women in the early part of the century, the novel *Junge Frau von 1914* [*Young Woman of 1914*].¹¹³ Unlike Zweig's novel, however, which focuses on a single heroine,

113 Zweig's title is also referenced in Rolf Frieder Marmont's anti-Vietnam poem "Junge Dame von 1972" ["Young Lady of 1972"] (*Fünfte Jahreszeit* 39), which foregrounds, however, the pacifist message of the novel.

Wagner's poem is a composite portrait made up, in the fashion of the flâneur, from impressions of various women encountered on the street.

The setting of Wagner's poem is marked as urban: in line 1, a woman emerges from the “crowd” (“Menge”), while another disappears in line 8 in a “stream of passersby” (“Passantenstrom”). The various encounters are projected against different city spaces: a bus (line 5), an underpass (line 6), a store (lines 8-10), a street (13-4). The women's looks and behaviours also denote them as modern and urban: they have short hair (lines 2-3), wear young, stylish clothes (3-4), dress their children fashionably (6-7), work (8-10), smoke, even take on male professions, such as driving a bus (10-3). Above all, they are in motion, appearing into and disappearing from view in an instant, connecting with the observer only through a brief look (line 14).

Behind this modern and self-assured appearance, however, the flâneur sees a different reality. In the moment of contact, the look significantly “caught” by the male observer, the women are revealed not as independent individuals but as archetypes. The compound noun “Blickfang,” which can connote both the act of catching someone's eye and the object catching someone's attention, highlight the male gaze, which reduces the women to images, whether traditional – “mermaid” (“Wassernixe”) – or modern – “chocolate advertisement” (“Schokoladenwerbung”; lines 14-5). The reduction of the encountered women to these two images correlates with the poem's insistence on the singular, definite “the woman” (“die Frau”; line 15), despite the described variation in female urban dwellers. This reduction is further echoed by the repetition of the synecdoche of the face, which appears four times in the poem, preceded by the attributes “schmal” (“slender”; lines 1 and 16), “hell” (“bright”; 4-5), and “stumm” (“silent”; 8). As the only common feature of the many women encountered by the flâneur, the face comes to define the women of 1978 collectively as small, ethereal, and

submissive despite their emancipated exterior.

If the flâneur fails to do justice to modern female identity – as he readily admits – he is not bothered by this. At the end of the poem, the observing voice notes that the women's lives, which would confer them individuality, escape his grasp. As in Hensel's "Straßentreten," the relationship between the observer and the observed is too brief, their contact too superficial (or vague, in the case of Hensel's poem) to yield long-term understanding, yet this does not detract from the self-assurance with which the flâneur sizes up his surroundings.

The flâneur's confident stance changes, however, when his attention is concentrated inwardly toward himself. This is particularly evident in Richard Wagner's body of work, which contains a large number of city poems. In addition to "Junge Frau von 1978," Wagner's *Hotel California I* (1980) includes an impressive array of urban vignettes, set in the streets, in workplaces, in pubs and cafés, and in apartment buildings, as well as reflections on urban life. Yet Wagner's interest in the urban environment was already apparent in his previous volume of verse, *Die Invasion der Uhren* [*The Clock Invasion*] (1977), whose first section is entitled "Stadtgespräch" (translatable as "common talk" but also as "city talk," that is: talk about the city).

"Projekt für eine Straßenbahnfahrt ["Project for a Tram Ride"] is one of the longest and most complex "Stadtgespräch" poems. Together with "Notizen für ein Gedicht aus Hunedoara," which follows it and which was discussed above, it offers an elaboration on the practice of flânerie in the specific space of the Romanian city. Like the title "Notizen für ein Gedicht aus Hunedoara," which emphasises the fragmentary, "note-taking" nature of the poem, the title "Projekt für eine Straßenbahnfahrt" emphasises a tentative, process-oriented mode of writing in the leading noun "project." This kind of writing is explained in the poem as conditioned by the mode of perception inherent in flânerie: as the observer moves through the city, he is stimulated

by fleeting impressions and associations which need subsequent interpretation to become a whole.

In an interview from the same period, Wagner contrasted rural and urban experiences as having very different effects on writing. In opposition to life in the country, the faster rhythm of life in the city challenges the writer to keep pace:

Grundverschieden: das Gehen auf der Dorfstraße und das Gehen auf dem Boulevard im Stadtverkehr. Der Rhythmus der Erfahrungen ändert sich und damit auch die Qualität der Erfahrungen. "Das Ganze" erscheint dadurch viel komplizierter, es muß erst aus den zerstückelten Läufen (re)konstruiert werden (Wagner, "Interview" 54)

Entirely different – walking along the village road and walking along the boulevard in city traffic. The rhythm of experience changes and so does the quality of the experiences. "The whole" appears much more complex as a consequence; it has to be first (re)constructed from the fragmented runs

The "(re)construction" of the experience fragmented by the increased pace of urban life is one of the main goals of the flâneur. "Projekt" offers a 20th-century twist on this endeavor of flânerie, for in the poem, the experience of the flâneur is made coherent by his prior reception of similar images through modern media: photographs and films. The duplication of city images through these media makes each individual image replaceable ("stellvertretend") through any other and exposes each gesture as a pose or an act:

u. wenn man hier so absichtslos vorübergeht
.....
kann es einem passieren daß all das
"was einem ins auge springt" einem zum bild gerät
stellvertretend wird da ist das dösen der alten leute
auf den bänken das betont langsame vorbeischieben eines
kinderwagens das sich küssende pärchen
man hat den eindruck das alles schon mal im
kino gesehn zu haben . . . (*Die Invasion* 14)

and when one walks by here with no particular intention
.....
it can happen that all of those things
which catch one's eye become an image
become substitutions there is the dozing of the old people

on the benches the emphatically slow pushing of
a baby stroller the kissing couple
one has the feeling of having seen all of this before
at the movies . . .

As in the classic age of the flâneur, the various people populating the streets – old people dozing on benches, (women with) prams, kissing couples, and, later in the poem, streetcar commuters – are part of the “spectacle of the public” enjoyed by the peripatetic observer (Tester 7). Yet, if these people are imagined as actors, they are not stars but extras on a vast set: the spectacle is now conceived not in terms of theatrics or even masquerade, as it would have been in a 19th-century setting, but in terms of film. The potential presence of a camera changes the relationship between the spectacle and the flâneur, who imagines himself not only as the accidental director of the scene but also as its protagonist:

ich gehe schräg über
die straße imaginäre blicke im rücken bewege mich
wie einer der sich beobachtet weiß
bewege mich also für jemanden u. dieses sichbewegen
ist somit gleichzeitig wahr u. falsch . . .

i cross the street at
an angle imaginary eyes at my back i move
like one who knows he is being watched
move thus for someone and this movement
is at once true and false . . .

Like the 19th-century flâneur, the “I” stands out through his difference, symbolised by his diagonal movement across the street, but, unlike the self-assured Baudelairian flâneur, the speaker is self-conscious about this difference. Furthermore, he is aware of being as much an observing subject as an object of observation. The sudden introduction of the first-person singular pronoun in the middle of the fifteenth line (the beginning of the poem had used only the indefinite “man” ‘one’) signals this self-awareness. The rest of the poem follows the “I,” as he attempts to make sense of his experience as part of but also apart from the masses of people that

surround him.

Although the observation of the “I” by a third party is described as “imaginary,” in the context of late 1970s Romania it has a very real implication: shadowing through the Securitate.¹¹⁴ The “I”’s insistence on his being watched and his self-consciousness – signified by the “false” movements – at his being so belie the claim that the observation is only hypothetical. The anxious reality of the situation is further underlined by the speaker’s thematisation of suicide: while still crossing the street, the “I” has to force himself to take the next step “von der fahrbahn weg” (“away from the road”) and to avoid “den schritt ins leere” (“the step into the void”; 15).

The carefully hidden change in the poem from a meditation on flânerie to a reflection on the effects of state observation marks an easy-to-miss transition in the city poetry of the 1970s generation. Whereas earlier poems embraced the persona of the flâneur as an empowering one, starting in the mid 1970s, flânerie increasingly becomes the expression of being ill at ease in the city. Significantly, however, it is not the technical modernity of the city that creates the flâneur’s malaise, as it did for his 19th-century counterpart, but the reach of the socialist state into everyday urban life.¹¹⁵

Published in 1981, Horst Samson’s “Die Stadt freitagmorgens” [“The City Friday Mornings”] takes a survey of everyday life in an unnamed city. The opening lines register an

114 References to a society under state observation are also hidden in other city poems, such as Werner Söllner’s “Schattenriss” [“Silhouette”] (*Wetterberichte* 9), Klaus Hensel’s “Ein Nachmittag im Cişmigiu” [“An Afternoon in Cişmigiu”] (*Das letzte Frühstück* 21), Rolf Bossert’s “Rosettiplatz, siebzehn Uhr” [“Rosetti Square, Five P.M.”] (*Neuntöter* 67), and Franz Hodjak’s “Hotel ‘Römischer Kaiser’” [“Roman Emperor Hotel”] (*Augenlicht* 19).

115 This is true even in poems which, on the surface, criticise the technological mechanisation of urban life, such as Wagner’s “Gedicht in der Haltestelle” [“Poem in the Bus Station”] (*Hotel California 1* 16) and Hellmut Seiler’s “Flash I” (60). In these poems, the city dwellers are rendered inhuman (Wagner uses the metaphor of giant machinery, Seiler that of automatons) by the “system” – the mechanical standing in for the political – in which they are caught.

urban landscape sapped of vitality and interest:

sie sieht nicht anders aus
als sonst
kniehoch der staub
die da einkaufen dösen vor sich hin
ihre stimmen sind heiser
der beifall hat die leute ruiniert
man möchte hinausfahren
aufs land
wenn es so etwas noch gäbe (*Tiefflug* 47)

it doesn't look any different
from the usual
knee-high the dust
the shoppers are lost in their reverie
their voices are hoarse
acclamation has ruined the people
one wants to drive out
to the country
if it still existed

The dusty and boring space described in the beginning of the poem is reminiscent of Richard Wagner's "Banater Röhrelandschaft." If the space in Wagner's poem had strong rural connotations, however, here the environment is indicated as urban: as the title announces, the poem is a description of a city, which is personified in the first stanza as "sie" 'she', according to the feminine gender of "Stadt." As a space, the city stands under the sign of ruin, yet it represents the only livable option: the once idealized countryside, with which the city is contrasted at the end of the stanza, does not exist anymore, as the subjunctive construction "wenn es so etwas noch gäbe" ("if something like that still existed") implies.

The flâneur, who identifies himself in the second stanza, maps out the urban space through details such as advertising pillars ("Litfaßsäulen"), asphalt, streetcars, display windows ("Vitrinen"),¹¹⁶ and high-rises ("Hochhäuser"). Yet all of these physical details acquire meaning

¹¹⁶ Romanian-German usage, borrowed from the Romanian "vitrină."

only in relation to the city's denizens: the advertising pillars bear witness to the inhabitants' lack of up-to-date information, the asphalt records their weariness, the streetcars are an embodiment of the city dweller's automated lives, which run as if on a track, the display windows mirror the strains of everyday life, while the walls of the high-rises exude the indifference and apathy of the buildings' inhabitants. The image of the city population that emerges from the poem is one of extreme dissociation, both from an environment lacking any natural elements and from one another:

die szene ist wendbar denke ich
aber dann sehe ich die leute mit den gestreiften gesichtern
jeder trägt ein gitter vor sich her
netze in den händen
schweigt
und da fällt mir ein
daß dieses jahrzehnt das der berufsfischer sein könnte (47)

the setting can be turned around i think
but then i see the people with the striped faces
everyone carries his own prison cell
a catching net in his hands
is silent
and it occurs to me
that this could be the decade of the career fishermen

The observer's incipient hope that a revitalisation of the social life of the city is possible, if only one were to find the “passende Wörter” (“right words”) with which to reach others, is dashed when he realizes the extent of the city dwellers' disengagement. In addition to each person living within his or her own prison (symbolised by the grid in line 3), each is also a potential threat to all the others: behind the seemingly innocuous designation “Berufsfischer” (“career fishermen”; line 7) lies the image of the silent hunters on the prowl with their nets (lines 4-5). The image of the hunted hunters, the ironic designation “career fishermen,” and the ambiguous remark (in the first stanza) of the city inhabitants' ruin as a result of “acclamation” (“Beifall”) merge into the image of a manipulated society beyond the rescue of “the right words” offered by the “I.”

Unlike the 19th-century flâneur, for whom interaction with others would have undermined his own elevated status, the observer in this poem feels compelled to intervene in the life of the city. Yet the “I” is not only powerless to initiate the change for others, he himself becomes a victim of the city:

es hat gar keinen sinn zu schreien
in der stadt am freitagmorgen
die beine gleiten mir aus
das merkt nicht einmal der mann neben mir im strom
dann hat mich alles eingeholt was ich hinter mir glaubte
und das haut mich um
dann liege ich unten
gebaut wie ein verkehrsunfall
 “den habe ich nie gesehen”
 “den kenne ich nicht”
 “noch nie gehört”
 “nein”
 (denken ist plötzliche das größte laster)
ob aus eigenem verschulden
fahrlässig leichtfertig oder absichtlich
beiwörter finden sich schon
auch an diesem freitagmorgen
auch in dieser stadt (48-9)

there is no point in screaming
in the city on a friday morning
my legs slip from under me
not even the man next to me in the stream notices it
then everything i had thought behind me catches up with me
and it bowls me over
then i'm down on the ground
resembling a car accident
 “i never saw him coming”
 “i don't know that guy”
 “never heard”
 “no”
 (thinking is suddenly the biggest sin)
whether it was my own fault
negligent careless or deliberate
they'll find plenty of epithets
also on this friday morning
also in this city

Although the “I” is defeated by his own dashed expectations (lines 5-6), the comparison of his

demise to a traffic accident, the flâneur's inevitable end in the age of the automobile, is indicative of the mismatch of forces between the individual and the manipulated urban collective. The incongruity of the forces is further stressed by the reactions to the “accident” recorded by the poem: set off from the rest of the stanza, a chorus of voices disavows its participation in the occurrence (lines 9-12), even as the next two lines register the disembodied public's speculations on how the incident may have occurred. The last two lines suggest that even a tragedy such as the observer's demise has been absorbed and naturalised into the life of the city, making its social crisis permanent. What is more, the repetition of the spatial and temporal elements of the title in conjunction with the adverb “auch” (“also”) speak of a proliferation of the urban crisis.

William Totok's urban poems from the beginning of the 1980s further explore this crisis, in both its social and personal dimensions. Published at the beginning of the decade in *Neue Literatur*, “Verwirrung” [“Confusion”] also envisions the city as a threatening space: in its opening lines, a dog is run over by a car in a residential street. In the context of the poem, this seemingly accidental death becomes emblematic of a city perpetually on the edge of violence:

in den Straßenbahnen streiten die Leute
gereizt sieht einer dem anderen ins Gesicht
so als suchten sie Streit
versteckte Wut schwebt in der Luft (42)

the people fight in the streetcars
peering into each other's faces irritably
as if they were looking for a fight
hidden wrath floats in the air

Unlike in Latzina's “Es tut gut,” in which the public means of transportation offered the “I” a chance to participate in a community, however predictable its path, the streetcar is here a space of conflict. The benign order which organized the life of the commuters and offered them security has become a threatening monolith – a system so rigid and imperturbable

(“unerschütterlich”) that it drives its participants to madness (“Wahnsinn”) and self-destruction (“Selbsterstörung”; 43).

The rigidity of the system is keenly felt by the flâneur, whose very existence is predicated on difference. In a system which suppresses any deviation from the norm, the flâneur's pride and self-assurance have been replaced by feelings of alienation and despair. Totok's series of urban poems from *Die Vergesellschaftung der Gefühle* [*The Socialization of Feelings*], published in the same year as “Verwirrung,” offer an insight into the threatened existence of the habitual flâneur. In “Gedicht am frühen Morgen” [“Early Morning Poem”], the “I” is in open conflict with the city, which is represented as invading the privacy of the speaker:

die Straßengeräusche dringen in alle Winkel meines Zimmers
ein kurzes Räuspern wie eine gezückte Waffe
war meine Antwort darauf
als ich dann auf die Straße stand und mir die Morgensonne ins Gesicht schlug (50)

the sounds of the street penetrate into all corners of my room
a short clearing of the throat like a pulled weapon
was my answer to it
when i finally stood in the street and the morning sun hit me in the face

The city and the natural world (represented by noises from the street and the morning sun respectively) unite in assaulting the “I,” whose counter-attack is an attempt to make his own voice heard. Once on the street, the “I” adopts the habitus of the flâneur and temporarily enjoys the privilege of his “princely incognito” (Tester 4), deriving satisfaction from his ability to “unmask” the secrets of passersby while his own identity remains safely hidden:

hastende Menschen sahen mich kurz an
in ihren Köpfen formte sich ein Blitzurteil über mich
daß ich sie durchschaute wurden die wenigsten gewahr
ich registrierte alles
zeichnete sozusagen alles auf
vom Skelett der Wirklichkeit bröckelte sozusagen der letzte Putz ab

people glanced at me in their haste
a snap judgement about me formed in their heads

few of them were aware that i saw through them
i noticed everything
recorded it so to speak
the last bit of plaster came down from the skeleton of reality so to speak

Although all urban dwellers engage in the attempt to “read” the identity of all others, the speaker is dismissive of their ability to judge him correctly. In contrast to the mistaken “snap judgement” (“Blitzurteil”) others form about him, the speaker is confident that he can “see through” (“durchschauen”) all those he encounters. His confidence is expressed in a consciously hyperbolic metaphor, in which the penetrating gaze of the “I” wrests the underlying truth – in the image of the skeleton – from behind its phony façade (suggested by the “plaster” in line 6). The flâneur then proceeds to apply his revelatory skill to the waitress of the café he enters, inferring an unhappy private life from her “zerknittertem Gesicht” (“crumpled face”; 51).

This display of confidence is only momentary, however. The flâneur's pride in his difference is rapidly replaced by shame, and he now interprets his distinctness as an anomaly:

plötzlich muß ich mich schämen
.....
ich fühle mich wie ein Eindringling
wie ein Fremder unter eigenen Leuten
ich verspüre Lust allen zu sagen wer ich bin
warum ich schon so früh hier herumsitze
was dies für Bücher sind
und ich habe Lust im Lokal laut zu schreien
ich setze mir die Sonnenbrille auf

i'm suddenly compelled to feel ashamed
.....
i feel like an interloper
like a stranger among my own people
i feel the need to tell everyone who i am
why i'm already sitting here this early
what these books are
and i feel like screaming out loud in the pub
i put my sunglasses on

The speaker's sense of alienation is so great that he is impelled to extreme measures to alleviate

it: talking to strangers, offering explanations, screaming. Although what the speaker most seeks is communication with others, in the end, he finds solace – or resignation – in concealment, as he hides behind his sunglasses. Finally, having failed to engage either his neighbour or the waitress, he sees no recourse but to leave.

This seemingly uneventful poem – a man wakes up, walks onto the street and into a café, fails to communicate with others, and leaves – is remarkable not for the information it conveys but for the information it hides. Despite the speaker's avowed need to explain himself to others, the poem contains no explanations about his behaviour. Instead, the poem raises several indirect questions about the “who,” “why,” and “what” of his identity. The answers to these questions, however, were well known to Totok's Romanian-German audience, as indicated by Helmut Britz's review of *Die Vergesellschaftung der Gefühle*, published in *Neue Literatur* in the spring of 1982.¹¹⁷ The title of the review, “Seine Gedichte waren Aktion” [“His Poems Were Action”], implicitly places Totok's volume in the context of the Aktionsgruppe Banat, of which the poet was a prominent member. The past tense of Britz's title reminds with spare precision that the group no longer existed at the time of the volume's publication: it had been disbanded by the Securitate five years before, in October 1975. Of the four intellectuals arrested at the time of the group's dissolution – the three others were Gerhard Ortinau, Richard Wagner, and the critic Gerhardt Csejka – William Totok would remain in custody longest, serving a total of eight months on trumped-up charges (Csejka, “Die Aktionsgruppen-Story” 242). Britz thematises these events through daring word choices, speaking of the Aktionsgruppe as having been “gesperrt” (“locked up”) in a chapter of literary history and highlighting the personal sacrifices

117 This very bold review was reprinted two years later in the second volume of *Reflexe*, Emmerich Reichrath's collection of the most important Romanian-German literary criticism of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Britz's is the only analysis of Totok's poetry included in the volume.

exacted by membership in a literary movement which taught too many “das Fürchten” (“what fear is”; 169). Britz's analysis of Totok's volume concentrates on the quest for an individual identity after the group's dissolution and notes three important characteristics of Totok's poetry: the use of “Signalwörter, die eine Auslöserfunktion übernehmen sollen” (“signal words, which are supposed to fulfill an activator function”; 169-70), the fragmentary nature of the observations (170), and the employment of a “Sprache des Entzugs” (“language of withdrawal”; 171).

One of the signal words of “Gedicht am frühen Morgen” is the innocuous-seeming “die Arbeit” (“the work”), which stands alone as one line towards the end of the poem. Observing that the café is emptying rapidly, the “I” wonders why everyone is in such a hurry, before realising that the others are going to work (*Vergesellschaftung* 52). In stark contrast to those around him, the “I” is not called away by “Arbeit.” The poem offers no explanation for this difference; by calling attention to it, however, the speaker also calls attention to the cause for his unemployment: his status as a political pariah in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Aktionsgruppe.

Totok's poem makes plain the biggest difference between the Baudelairian flâneur and his Romanian-German counterpart: while the first is a gentleman of leisure, his apparent indolence a chosen vocation, the latter is either stealing an idle minute from his workday or is forced into inactivity as a punishment. The flâneur's status as a gentleman of leisure was in direct violation to the ideal of the socialist worker, to which all Romanian citizens were required to subscribe. If at first it could be somewhat reconciled with the idea of the poet as social medium, whose flânerie is made productive by verses aimed at improving Romanian society, by the end of the 1970s, it was becoming an increasingly dangerous position to inhabit. At the same time, the flâneur's observations were becoming more attuned to the increasingly miserable social

conditions of life in Romania's overcrowded and badly maintained cities, represented in the poetry of the 1970s generation by the universe of the “Wohnblock,” the ubiquitous prefabricated and shoddily constructed apartment building.

Wohnblock Lives: The Critique of Enforced Urbanisation

The “Wohnblock” is the most important symbol of urban life under Romanian socialism in the poetry of the 1970s generation. Romania's rapid urbanisation, which achieved sinister overtones as Ceaușescu's plans for the systematisation of urban and rural spaces came to the fore of his political agenda in the 1980s, also impacted city dwellers. With the destruction of villages deemed too small for a “rational” distribution of resources, many rural dwellers migrated to the cities, where they were housed in hastily constructed mass housing developments lacking the necessary infrastructure to support their residents. Having been assigned residences in these housing developments along with their work places after university graduation, the poets of the post-war generation experienced “Wohnblock” living first-hand. Although they could not describe the poor living conditions in these developments directly, their poems often reflect on the dehumanising effects of forced cohabitation in the arbitrarily assigned, inadequately constructed and supplied, and socially isolating apartment buildings. Positive “Wohnblock” poems, such as Eduard Schneider's “So geh ich meinen Weg” [“And So I'm on My Way”] (*Daß am Abend* 46-7), in which the housing development inspires a sense of belonging in the speaker, are a rare exception. The earliest thematisations of apartment living, however, tend to be satirical observations on the shortcomings of this government-imposed lifestyle.

Rolf Bossert's “Aus meinem Leben” [“From My Life”], which appeared in the poet's debut volume from 1979 but commemorates an episode from two years earlier, according to the

dates given in the poem, mocks the arbitrariness with which citizens were assigned living spaces by the governmental bureaucracy. The space described in “Aus meinem Leben” does not refer to an apartment in a prefabricated building but to one in a building converted from a single-family to a multi-family home. Such conversions were popular with Party managers for their space-saving capability, even though the often erratic divisions disrupted the daily lives of the apartments' inhabitants, raising similar problems to those experienced by “Wohnblock” dwellers.

Bossert's poem is written in the manner of a diary entry¹¹⁸ divided in two parts: the first, dated September 24, 1977, describes the speaker's living situation and his request for a change in it that would more adequately meet the needs of his four-person family. The second part, subtitled December 21, 1977, announces the granting of his request and his confidence in the power of poetry to initiate social change. Within these brief descriptions, however, lies hidden the exposé of an entire society functioning not according to the needs of its members but to the whims of its leaders.

As a diary entry, the poem approximates the flow of stream-of-consciousness prose – broken only by the line divisions – which takes the speaker from a description of his marital status to a reflection on the merits of poetry:

24. september 1977
ich bin verheiratet und habe zwei kinder meine
frau lehrt deutsch als fremdsprache ich auch wir
bewohnen zwei zimmer einer dreizimmerwoh-
nung das kleine zimmer ist sieben komma sie-
benundachtzig quadratmeter groß das große zim-
mer ist neun komma achtundachtzig quadrat-
meter groß das größte zimmer der wohnung ist

118 This popular form was pioneered by Anemone Latzina's “Tagebuchtage” [“Diary Days”], two of which appeared in *Neue Literatur* in September 1975. The series would also provide the title for Latzina's debut volume in Germany in 1992.

vierzehn komma neunundsechzig quadratmeter
groß wir wohnen nicht darin es ist abgesperrt
meist steht es leer aber im winter wohnt ein
altes Ehepaar in dem zimmer so sparen die leute
holz bei sich zu hause auf dem dorf oft kommen
an wochenenden unbekannte familien mit kin-
dern die höhenluft tut den kleinen gut die drei-
zimmerwohng liegt im schönen luftkurort
buşteni küche badezimmer und klo werden von
vielen personen benützt nur der balkon liegt
an der sonnenseite er gehört zum dritten zimmer
ich darf ihn nicht betreten
ich habe ans wohnungsamt geschrieben
an den volksrat
an die zeitung
ich habe bei vielen genossen vorgeschlagen
nun schreibe ich ein gedicht
ich habe unbegrenztes vertrauen in die macht
der poesie

21. dezember 1977

dieser text ist unveröffentlicht gestern bekamen
die alten zwei zimmer in einer villa wir bekamen
den schüssel zum dritten zimmer womit bewie-
sen ist daß auch unveröffentlichte gedichte die
realität aus der sie schöpfen verändern können
ich werde noch gedichte schreiben (*Siebensachen* 47-8)

september 24th, 1977

i am married and have two children my
wife teaches german as a foreign language
me too we live in two rooms of a three-
room apartment the small room is seven point
seventy-eight square metres the large room
is nine point eighty-eight square metres the
largest room of the apartment is fourteen
point sixty-nine square metres we don't live
in it it is locked mostly it stands empty but
in winter an old married couple lives in the
room that's how the two save wood at home
in the village often unknown families come
on the weekend with children the mountain
air is good for the little ones the three-room
apartment is locatd in the beautiful mountain
resort buşteni kitchen bathroom and loo are
used by many people only the balcony lies
on the sunny side it belongs to the third room

i am not allowed to enter it
i have written to the housing office
to the people's council
to the newspaper
i have called in on many comrades
now i am writing a poem
i have unlimited trust in the power
of poetry

december 21st, 1977

this text is unpublished yesterday the old couple
received two rooms in a villa we received
the key to the third room which proves that even
unpublished poems can change the reality that in-
spires them i will continue to write poems

The poem begins simply with a summary of the speaker's family and employment status and proceeds to outline his living situation by listing the different rooms of his apartment in ascending size order. The logic imposed by this procedure and by the very precise room measurements is undercut, however, when the speaker reaches the third and largest room and announces that, unlike the others, this room is not available to him and his family, having been assigned to an elderly couple from the countryside. The comic effect of the logical break is increased by the revelation that the elderly couple also does not reside in the desired room except in winter, letting it out for the rest of the year to vacationing families. A further break is hidden in the description of the families, who bring their children to the speaker's mountain town for its fresh air and with whom the speaker's family must share their accommodations, except for the apartment's only benefit, the balcony attached to the third room.

After writing a series of petitions for a change of living arrangements without any result, the speaker takes an unorthodox approach to his problem: writing a poem. When he finally receives the key to the third room, he credits this poem with granting him his wish. The parallel drawn by the poem between writing petitions and writing verse may seem playful, but it raises serious questions about the ability of average citizens to influence social processes. The tongue-

in-cheek version of the events points to the absurdity of a system in which petitions are less likely to effect needed change than unpublished verse. At the same time, the poem plays on the generation's earlier intention of intervening in social life through poetry, proving it equally false.

In addition to encapsulating the absurdity of a system governed not by foresight or the needs of its citizens but by inscrutable bureaucratic forces, the poem also provides a glimpse into the lengths to which ordinary people had to go to make the system work for their everyday lives. Behind each playfully depicted element of the story lies a negative feature of life under Romanian communism: the elderly couple's move to the town every winter signals the scarcity of fuel available to heat rural homes, the families visiting the mountain resort on the weekend are escaping the pollution of industrialisation in the cities, while the shared kitchen and bath speak to the severe constraints under enforced communal living.

These constraints are also thematised in the work of Werner Söllner, whose volume *Eine Entwöhnung* [*A Dehabituat*], published in 1980, contains a series of darkly satirical poems on the subject of “Wohnblock” living. The first of these, “King-Kong oder der sanfte Sonntag” [“King Kong or the Mellow Sunday”], is a fable of two apartment buildings, the reputable “Bonzenblock” (“bigwig block”; 31) A-14 and the disorderly – and very drunk – P-20. The apartments come to life and become enmeshed in a fight, cheered on and helped along by their respective inhabitants:

Milizmäner stehn herum und schau'n zu, ihr Hauptmann
wohnt in A-14 und hat einen Zigeuner aus P-20
in der Mangel. (32)

Militia men stand around and watch; their captain
lives in A-14 and is giving a gypsy from P-20
a grilling.

As the parallel between the humans and the buildings emphasises (the police captain lives in the better building, the Rom in the worse), the fight between the two buildings dramatises the social

differences supposedly inexistent in socialist society. The two protagonists, the police captain and the Rom, like the two letters assigned to the buildings, A and P, represent the two extremes of power and powerlessness, wealth and poverty in this society.¹¹⁹ It is, however, the anarchic P-20 who carries the day, a symbolic ending in which the power relations are overturned, though only temporarily, as A-14 awaits his – literal and figurative – reconstruction.

While “King Kong” depicts “Wohnblock” life from a remote, bird's eye perspective, in which the buildings themselves become protagonists, the two poems following it zero in on the very consciousness of apartment building inhabitants. “Nachmittag eines Fauns” [“Afternoon of a Faun”] and “Haus, Frauen, Nachmittag” [“House, Wives, Afternoon”] are first-person poems, each reproducing the interior monologue of an apartment building inhabitant. “Nachmittag eines Fauns” is the description of an afternoon from the point of view of a male protagonist who has returned home from work. The speaker spends his off-work time being served by his wife and eying “die Schwarze von drüben” (“the dark one from next door”; 34), his dark-featured neighbour, before settling in front of the evening program and finally going to bed.

The poem satirises the bourgeois habits of the speaker, whose contentment rests on a good meal (“Suppe und Schnitzel / mit kaltem Kartoffelsalat und Kuchen” 'soup and schnitzel / with cold potato salad and cake'; 34), plentiful drinking opportunities, a sound nap, and the entertainment provided by the television. The speaker's narrow world view is underlined by his obsession with his work (one of his few conversation matters and the subject of his dream) and by his lack of civic involvement (he is reluctant to engage with the information provided on the news, preferring to stay home in front of the TV to any other action).

Although the speaker's peaceful afternoon is made possible entirely by his hardworking

119 While the police captain was not at the actual extreme of power and wealth in Romania, he was at the allowable representational extreme, as Party functionaries could only be depicted in a flattering manner.

wife, he finds little to say to her, alternating between disdain for her appearance and falsely subservient pronouncement of her “goodness” to him. Like “L'après-midi d'une faune,” to which the title alludes, “Nachmittag eines Fauns” is charged with the sexual fantasies of its speaker. The lyrical eroticism of Mallarmé's poem and Debussy's prelude, however, are replaced here by crude assertions of male sexual power:

Müd bin ich
Muschilein, müd. So, meine Liebe, lehn dich
zurück, während ich rauch und dir zuschau, deine
Titten sind gut, wenigstens so viel hab ich

vom Leben. Wenn sie nur nicht so prüde wär
ham Sie's Ihrer Frau schon mal in der Küche be
sorgt, stehend, von hinten, wenn sie sich
über den Abwasch beugt? Ich nicht, und ich

träume davon. Die Schwarze von drüben, die
macht bestimmt keine Zicken. Aber vielleicht
ist es gut so, daß mein Muschilein sowas nicht
macht, so kommt sie nicht auf schlechte Ge

danken. . . . (35)

I am tired,
pussycat, tired. Yes, my dear, lean
back, while I smoke and look at you. You've
got good tits, at least I got that

out of life. If only she weren't such a prude.
Have you ever given it to your wife in the kit-
chen, standing, from behind, while she's leaning
over the dishes? I haven't, and I

dream of it. The dark one from next door, that
one wouldn't play hard to get, I'm sure. But maybe
it's good that my pussycat doesn't do stuff
like that, otherwise who knows what ideas

she might get . . .

The graphic description of the speaker's fantasies (a highly unusual feature in Romanian-German poetry, calculated to shock the poet's audience) and the change in addressee from the

speaker's wife, addressed pejoratively as "Muschlein" ("pussycat") and "meine Liebe" ("my dear"), to the reader, addressed formally as "Sie" and implicitly as a male with a similar experience as the "I," underscore the speaker's machismo. The contrast the speaker creates between his (German) wife's prudery and the exoticised "dark" neighbour further accentuates his chauvinistic attitude. While the speaker is ready to take advantage of the imputed sexual curiosity of his neighbour, his gratefulness for his wife's supposed inhibition as a deterrent from sexual escapades indicates that he would not welcome the same behaviour in her.

The imaginary domination of the male speaker over the women in his life is counterpointed with the suppressed indignation of a female voice in the following poem, "Haus, Frauen, Nachmittag." Written entirely in subordinate clauses starting with the conjunction "dass" ("that"), the poem presents a series of wishes, conditions, and conclusions regarding both the intimate and communal lives of women in an apartment building. The fragmentary syntax draws attention to itself, lending the discourse more urgency, but also to the missing main clauses and, thus, to those things that remain unsaid despite the poem's detailed excursions into the daily life of the title women. Although the title implies a plurality of voices, the utterances are consistent with one another and appear to be made by only one speaker, indicating that the one voice is representative of a collective experience.

Like the speaker in the previous poem, the "I" of "Haus, Frauen, Nachmittag" is preoccupied with her marital relationship, the comfort of her home, and her relationship with her female neighbour. Not surprisingly, however, the "I" of this poem accents these preoccupations differently from the male speaker in "Nachmittag eines Fauns." If the speaker of "Nachmittag eines Fauns" blamed the shortcomings of his marriage on the supposed prudery of his wife, the "I" of "Haus, Frauen, Nachmittag" expresses unfulfilled romantic desires and suffers because of her husband's infidelities. Her marital unhappiness, however, is also closely linked to her living

situation. Whereas the male speaker of the previous poem was either oblivious to the difficulties of his living arrangements or derived pleasure from the closeness of his neighbours (in the form of an attractive woman), here the “I” is conscious of the shortcomings of her home and of the difficulties posed by communal living.

For the female speaker of the poem – a stay-at-home wife and mother – the private and the public coincide in her home. Her concern for her family's comfort and her desire for her own happiness are often intertwined with anxiety over the image her home projects to the outside:

Daß die
Fenster und Türen noch abgedichtet werden

müssen, daß es in der Wohnung nicht mehr zieht.
Daß Ruhe im Haus ist. Daß man sich nicht mehr
schämen muß, wenn Gäste da sind. Und daß
alle sagen müssen, wie schön es bei denen ist. (38-9)

That the
windows and doors still need to be

insulated, so it's not so drafty anymore.
That the house is quiet. That we don't need
to be ashamed anymore when we have guests. And that
everyone says, how nice their place is.

Within the space of a few lines, the speaker moves from a practical consideration concerning the insulation of the windows and doors (an implicit critique of the apartment's construction) to the articulation of her desire for familial concord to that of a model existence that would impress others. The space of the apartment and the psychic space of the marriage come together in the image of a life so perfect, it can be lived openly before others.

The speaker's desire for a better life is rooted in an understanding of the effects her living conditions have upon herself and her marriage. Thus, she contemplates the possible benefits for her marriage that a change in living conditions would bring:

Daß wir vielleicht bald umziehen. Daß das

vielleicht eine Lösung ist, daß man mehr Raum
hat, daß man sich ausweichen kann. (41)

That we may move soon. That that
may be a solution, that we have more
room to get out of each other's way.

The correlation between living space and psychic space is also noticeable in the relationship between the “I” and her female neighbour. The shared living space – the apartment building – has created a relationship between them that oscillates between mutual mistrust and understanding. As witnesses to each other's marital misery, the two women are both each other's support network and fiercest competition. Despite her disdain for her neighbour as a “Schnüfflerin” (“snoop”; 39), the lonely speaker is happy for the company when the neighbour drops by for a visit. The uncomfortable truths the two women know about each other – the wife's attempt to leave her husband and the neighbour's affair with the gas man – and the speaker's suspicion of the neighbour's interest in her own husband make the “I” wary of lending her neighbour the emotional support she is seeking. Still, the “I” is sympathetic to her neighbour's abuse, to which she is also privy:

Daß ihr Mann säuft, und daß er
sie schlägt, daß die es schwerer hat als ich. Daß sie
lauter blaue Flecken hat, und daß sie ihn am Bahn
Hof hat rumlungern sehn. Daß er mir bloß wie
der nach Hause kommt, daß ich nie mehr was sagen
werd. Daß ich den Mund halten werd. Daß es
eigentlich schade ist. Daß ich heut nacht ganz
lieb zu ihm sein werd, daß er es spürt. . . . (40)

That her husband drinks, and that he
beats her, that she has it worse than I. That she
is black and blue all over, and that she has seen
him loitering about at the train station. That he

doesn't dare to come home like that one, that I will never
speak to him again. That I will keep my mouth shut. That
it is actually a pity. That tonight I will be very

good to him, so he can feel it. . . .

Although the speaker's comparison between her own marital state and that of her neighbour is meant to highlight the differences between them, which the "I" believes show her superior condition, the comparison reinforces the ways in which the cycle of abuse is perpetuated for both women. Both suffer the brutality or indifference of their husbands in silence, trying to hide it from one another. The speaker even goes so far as to try to make up for her husband's neglectful behaviour by being especially loving. The speaker's remarks that she will "keep her mouth shut" and that "it's really a shame" are ambiguous in this context, as they can be applied both to her deteriorating relationship with her husband and her knowledge of her neighbour's abuse. In either case, however, her resolve allows the behaviour to continue and the community between her and her neighbour to deteriorate.

The reluctant community of the two women is, in fact, created artificially through their close living spaces. It is their living situation which brings them together but also drives them apart, as each jealously guards her private desolation. The poem makes plain, however, that privacy is non-existent in the apartment building. Despite the speaker's attempts to create her own individual happiness, her life – and that of all others – is molded by the circumstances of her habitation.

The degrading sameness of "Wohnblock" lives is also thematised in Klaus Hensel's "Entwurf eines Nachmittags" ["Outline of an Afternoon"]. Although similar in concept to Söllner's "afternoon" poems, to which it is linked by the title, Hensel's "outline" pushes the limits of satire further by directly associating the sordid lives of apartment dwellers with the unfulfilled promises of socialism. The poem presents a cross-section through the different

spaces of an apartment building, briefly illuminating the lives of the women, children, and men who inhabit it:

Geruch von Krautrollen ver
duftet aus übereinander
geschachtelten Küchen, Frauen

Stimmen bruzeln in der Bratpfanne.
Kinder verrichten ihre Sachen
unter Bäumchen, liebevoll

im Sondereinsatz gepflanzt. Kinder
spielen freiwilliger Wohnblock
Verwalter, brüllen:

Jetzt ist Sitzung im Sand! Im Treppenhaus
blickt Großväterchen aus den Bilderrahmen
auf heimkehrende Väter

herab. . . . (*Das letzte Frühstück* 14)

The smell of cabbage rolls wafts
out of kitchens nested on top of
each other; women's

voices frizzle in the frying pans.
Children do their thing
under the trees planted

lovingly by volunteers. Children
play voluntary apartment building
administrator, bellow:

Meeting in the sandbox now! In the staircase
granddaddy looks from his frames
down on homecoming

dads . . .

The space of the apartment building is divided into different domains, which also represent different degrees of physical and social enclosure. The women, whose domains are the kitchens, are the most limited (an impression heightened by the description of the kitchens as forming an interlocking pattern like nesting boxes). The children, whose domain is the courtyard, enjoy in

the open space with its natural elements – the trees and the sand – the largest degree of freedom. The men are assigned to the intermediate space of the staircase, which connects the inside with the outside, the private with the public, and represents, in its vertical orientation, social mobility, but also, in the watchful eyes of the “granddaddy,” the strictures of state supervision. These divisions are upheld by the form of the poem, with different stanzas dedicated to each sphere. Yet the form also undermines a strict separation: as each stanza is linked to the next through enjambment, so do the different spheres touch and influence each other.

The molding power of life in the apartment building is particularly striking in the description of the children's games, which replicate adult behaviour conditioned by “Wohnblock” living. The falsity of the adult behaviour is revealed in the description of the game of “voluntary building administrator.” Since such a position was never entered into voluntarily by the adults, the children's assumption of the designation must be read as ironic and revelatory of a coerced situation. A further irony arises from the juxtaposition of the children's reproduction of a limiting social situation with the open space in which it occurs and for which the children show little appreciation: in addition to yelling at each other in imitation of the administrator, the children also literally urinate (the secondary meaning of “seine Sache verrichten”) on the work of the “Sondereinsatz” (“special assignment”) volunteers. Despite their relative freedom of movement, the children have already internalised the controlling mechanisms of their society, as represented by the hierarchy of the apartment building.

Society's complete control over the building's inhabitants is illustrated in the last three stanzas of the poem, in which all succumb to the (centrally manipulated) media:

Schichtweise steigt Selbst
Zufriedenheit in die Köpfe
von Etage zu Etage.

Briefkästen bersten von der Last der Tages

Zeitungen, Gedanken versinken in
Fernsehröhren. Die Postbotin

entschlüpft mit einem Wechselschritt
in eine immer noch
bessere Zukunft (14-5)

Self-contentment rises head
by head, layer by layer, floor
by floor.

Mailboxes burst from the burden of the day
ly newspapers; thoughts drown in
tv conduits. The mail woman

slips away dancing her two-step
into a still yet
better future

In the last part of the poem, the building inhabitants are represented not by nouns designating their social roles as homemakers, children, and fathers, but by the synecdoches “Köpfe” (“heads”) and “Gedanken” (“thoughts”). The separation into different spheres from the beginning of the poem no longer applies here, as all are taken in by newspapers and television. The uniform effect of the media is illustrated by the opposition of the “rising” self-satisfaction and the “sinking” level of thought, which affects all building dwellers equally.

As complacency envelops the building, spreading like an infectious disease from floor to floor, only the mailwoman seems to escape. Her two-step indicates a youthful nonconformity the building's children lack, and the open end (deliberately lacking punctuation) seems to promise a better future. In a society in which the “better future” of socialism was supposed to have already occurred, however, the end of the poem appears ironic. This reading is supported by the double adverbial construction “immer noch” (“still yet”) in the penultimate line, which suggests that the better future remains an unfulfilled promise.

A similar irony can be found in Anemone Latzina's “Csikzereda – Miercurea Ciuc. 22.

September 1978,” one of only a handful of verses by the poet to appear in the 1980s.¹²⁰ The poem has been described by András Balogh as an example of the use of “Zäsur” (“caesura”) in Romanian-German poetry. Balogh defines caesuras as the fault lines of the text: those ellipses, deliberately empty spaces, and seemingly illogical associations that allowed poems to pass censorship yet still called the readers' attention to things which could not be expressed freely and directly (69). The critic points to the title as a first caesura, and shows how it functions to bring attention to an inter-ethnic conflict which could not be thematised directly under Romania's nationalist-communist regime. By uniting and then dividing the Hungarian and Romanian names of a small Transylvanian town through the dash, the poem graphically represents the conflict between Hungarians and Romanians instead of naming it (72). A second dash in line 7 marks another gap, this time between people, who view each other with suspicion from behind closed doors, while a third caesura is marked by the switch from German to English in the last four lines of the poem (73):

gleich hinter wohngemut 1 von
 Klára und István beginnt
 das maisfeld. tagsüber blöken
 schafe, nachts bellen hunde
 oder es kräht in der küche nebenan
 der wasserhahn. die sicherungskette
 an der tür – es scheint
 da auch menschen zu geben.
 THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND
 THIS LAND IS MY LAND
 FROM CALIFORNIA
 TO STATEN ISLAND (*Tagebuchtage* 71)

right behind the A1 building of

120 “Csikzereda – Miercurea Ciuc” was published, along with four other poems, including “Siebenbürgische Elegie 1983” [“Transylvanian Elegy 1983”], in the June issue of *Neue Literatur* in 1983. They were the first poems by Latzina to be published in a decade. The only other Latzina poems to appear in Romania before 1989 was a series of six sonnets, prompted by the emigration of Latzina's close friend Gerhardt Csejka, which appeared in two installments in *Karpathenrundschau* in the fall and winter of 1986. On Latzina's gradual withdrawal from poetry, see Cotârlea 67-8.

Klára und István begins
the maize field. sheep bleat
by day, dogs bark by night
or the watertap crows from
next door. the safety latch
on the door – there seem
to be people there, too.
THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND
THIS LAND IS MY LAND
FROM CALIFORNIA
TO STATEN ISLAND

The German part of the poem is composed of three sentences, each stretching over several lines and describing one aspect of life at “Wohncomfort 1,” the designation for a first-quality apartment building under Romanian socialism. As each subsequent sentence makes clear, however, the designation is nothing short of a misnomer: the bleating sheep and barking dogs of the second sentence evoke the image of almost wild surroundings, while the metaphor of the “crowing” water tap (a play on the German word “Wasserhahn,” literally “water rooster”) points to the faulty construction of the building itself. The striking metaphor may also call to mind, as Balogh has argued, the practice of keeping animals in apartment buildings in order to supplement the scarce diets of city dwellers (72-3). The third sentence introduces the people who live in this neighbourhood, yet their introduction almost as an afterthought is far from comforting: the image of the safety chain at the beginning of the sentence suggests danger and suspicion and reinforces the division of the title.

Against the bleak picture painted by the first eight lines, the hopeful beginning of Woody Guthrie's “This Land is Your Land,” which is reproduced in the last four lines of the poem,¹²¹ strikes a dissonant chord, a contrast which is reinforced by the English language and upper-case

121 The second line of Guthrie's song actually reads “From California to New York island.” There seems to be no intention to the change in Latzina's text, and it is possible that she may have heard or remembered, and, thus, reproduced a different version.

type.¹²² Latzina's poem plays on the promise of Guthrie's song for a country that truly belongs to its people, a promise which was also integral to the concept of socialism. Just as Guthrie's song referenced the biblical promised land as an image for the US, the poem uses Guthrie's America as a stand-in for Romania. By contrasting the song's assertion of belonging with the images of the inhospitable dwelling of Klára und István, the poem suggests that the socialist promise had not been fulfilled for the poem's protagonists.

The song's evocation of a land in common also reminds of the ironic disjunction between the socialist ideal of equality and the ethnic discrimination of Ceaușescu's population policies. The liminal space between city and country in which the apartment building of this poem is located is no longer a space of possibility, as it was in the early poetry of the generation. If the early poetry bears witness to the poets' desire to be integrated into what they understood as vibrant multicultural cities, Latzina's poem demonstrates the destruction of that dream in its representation of the bleak, marginalised lives of Hungarian minority members Klára and István.

Latzina's poem is unusual in its thematisation of the urban experience of an ethnic minority. Significantly, the minority in question is not the German one, to which Latzina belonged, but the Hungarian minority, to which she was tied through her marriage to author János Szász. For the 1970s generation of poets, the representation of the German minority remained linked to the depiction of rural spaces. The early rejection of the rural and thematisation of the urban in the poetry of the generation reflects the poets' desire for a literature which would not be subservient, in their understanding, to the needs of the minority. The generation's early urban poems can thus be read as a declaration of independence from the Romanian-German minority and an attempt to redefine Romanian-German literature on different

122 The 1983 print sets off the English text from the rest of the poem through italics. Like the rest of the poem, the song fragment appears in lower case, with the exception of the two place names, which are capitalised.

terms.

The rejection of the rural spaces of the German minority was concurrent in many cases with the poets' move to larger cities. Their attempted integration into these comparatively cosmopolitan environments is reflected in their poetry as tentative explorations of liminal spaces and conditions. A different note is sounded in the early poetry of Anemone Latzina, whose confident persona would soon be appropriated by the rest of the generation and developed into a new figure in Romanian-German literature, the *flâneur*. The initial self-assurance of the *flâneur* would wane, however, after the dissolution of the *Arbeitsgruppe Banat* through the *Securitate* in 1975 and the subsequent work bans imposed on its members turned a social vocation into an occasion for state discrimination.

As the influence of the state became more and more felt in Romania's cities, the *flâneur's* individualistic habit became a foil for a progressively regimented urban existence. Perceived through the eyes of the *flâneur*, the city was transforming into a threatening space, in which every trace of difference was, at best, suspicious, and, at worst, brutally suppressed. The image of the manipulated, unthinking urban population became a focus of the “*Wohnblock*” poems, satirical or pointed critiques of communal living. Increasingly, these poems also came to illustrate the quiet suffering of marginalised others, especially women, and the degrading conditions of life under socialism.

Conclusion

unsere generation? eins immerhin
ist sicher: man kann sich große worte ersparen
auch lorbeerkränze
oder salut
die begeisterung, liebe anwesenden, war groß
es war so, daß alles anders aussah
die zeit hatte eine andre geschwindigkeit
Brecht marschierte mit qualmender zigarre voran
alles was man tat oder unterließ, hatte ein präzises ziel
selbst der haarschnitt war politisch
nichts erweckte den vertrauten eindruck
daß nichts zu verändern wär
man trank sich zu, nüchtern und engagiert
der postbote, er brachte welt in die köpfe
die gespräche wurden immer länger
doch immer wenn die zukunft greifbar nah schien
war der arm zu kurz
man bog etwas betreten um die ecke
die gegenstände sahen plötzlich aus
als wären es geknickte schwingen
die fragen häuften sich
das telefon von dr. Marx war stets besetzt
man saß nächteland vor dem radio
man begann sich zu erinnern
einigen halfen kleine kellnerinnen
über die enttäuschungen hinweg
andere waren immer und überall dabei
und das waren auch unsre liebsten clowns
andere standen vor den kinos
andere vor dem paßamt
andere hatten nichts dagegen
andere stellten sich um auf pfeife

und was zu tun war
gründlich
wurde es zerredet (*Flieder im Ohr* 62-3)

our generation? one thing at least
is certain: we can spare ourselves big speeches
and laurel wreaths, too
or salutes
the enthusiasm, ladies and gentlemen, was big
it made it so that everything looked different

time had a different speed
Brecht led the march with smoking cigar
everything we did or omitted had a precise goal
even the haircuts were political
nothing made the familiar impression
that nothing could be changed
we toasted each other, sober and engaged
the postman brought the world into our heads
the discussions were getting longer
but whenever the future seemed close enough to grasp
the arm was too short
we turned the corner a little embarrassed
the objects suddenly looked
like broken wings
the questions accumulated
dr. Marx' phone was always busy
we sat in front of the radio all night long
we started remembering
some were helped by little waitresses
over their disappointments
some were always there and everywhere
and those were our favourite clowns, too
others stood in front of the passport office
others had nothing against it
others changed over to smoking pipes

and what was to be done
was thoroughly
talked to death

Published in 1983, roughly a decade after the debut of what I have called the 1970s generation of Romanian-German poets, “Grabrede” [“Eulogy”] represents Franz Hodjak's farewell to the dreams and illusions of a literary career begun under the sign of hope for political and social engagement through the medium of poetry. With bitter irony, the poet deconstructs the components of this engagement as modish, epigonic, and ultimately inefficient posturing. Having mistaken the early signs of political repression, the generation has had to face its disillusionment and adapt to the new situation. The different adaptations strategies run the gamut from romantic adventures to escape through entertainment or intoxication, from collaboration with the state to detachment or emigration.

Although accurate in its trajectory from the initial “Begeisterung” (“enthusiasm”) to the hopelessness denoted by the wait in front of the “Paßamt” (“passport office”), Hodjak's sketch of the generation's evolution is symptomatic of the elliptical description to which Romanian-German poets had to resort in order to publish in Romania. The poem offers only the most perfunctory connections between the different stages of the generation's Romanian careers, leaving the informed reader to fill out the rest. Explanations of cause and effect are kept vague, concrete details obscured by euphemisms, signal words padded with innocent commentary, the bitter tone sweetened by jokes.

Through my study, I have attempted to point out the fault lines of the generation's poetry and to fill out some of its intentional ellipses or, rather, to show how these features would have resonated with meaning for the Romanian-German public. I have done so by focusing on key socio-historical experiences which shaped the generation, on some of the important discourses to which generation members contributed, whether through their poetry or through their journalistic activity, on the older literary traditions to which they were responding, and on some of the significant inter-group textual references. By connecting these different (con)textual levels, I have attempted to show some of the connections between the socio-political context of the generation and its thematic interests and to trace the development of some of the major themes of the generation's poetry against its literary career in Romania.

This career started in the late 1960s with the re-organisation of the Romanian-German literary network. The strengthening of the Romanian-German literary market, which by the early 1970s included four newspapers, two journals, and four publishing houses with German-language programmes, made possible the promotion of emerging talent and even its recruitment from Romania's German-language high schools and universities. Encouraged by their early incorporation into this subsystem of the Romanian literary network, the members of the 1970s

generation considered themselves part of the Romanian public sphere and literary ambassadors of the socialist republic rather than representatives of an ethnic minority. Unlike previous generations of Romanian-German writers, whose work the young poets derided because of its focus on delineating and defending the narrow confines of the largely rural minority, the poets of the 1970s generation were eager to explode these confines and to explore new social environments.

I have focused on three of these explorations, whose thematisation has come to define the generation and set it apart from its predecessors, as well as pave the way for its successors and its own later successes. Through their interest in social and political issues, their distance from the Romanian-German minority, and their urban identities, the poets of the post-war generation created a new diction for German literature in Romania and, in the process, successfully challenged entrenched notions of minority literature, previously equated with “Heimatliteratur” and considered a negligible outcrop on the margins of the German-speaking literary field. The success of a number of these writers after their emigration to Germany – including the extraordinary achievements of Nobel laureate Herta Müller, whose work, although primarily written in prose, was nurtured in the context of the generation's poetry – would not have been possible without the course set at the time of the generation's debut and the collective modulations of this course between 1968 and 1988.

In addition to furnishing background information for the still persisting questions of the provenance of this literature, my study also hopes to expand the perspective on (German) literature written under the strictures of socialism. As I have argued in chapter 1, the three themes explored here are not coincidental but were generated by the socio-historical location of the generation, which affirmed social consciousness (however bound to a particular ideology), a sense of belonging to a state rather than an ethnic group, and urbanisation. Although I have

investigated each theme separately, they are clearly interrelated: the poets' identification with a socialist discourse which emphasised the post-war period as one of new beginnings is visible in their attempt to break with the literary and cultural traditions of the Transylvanian-Saxon and Banat-Swabian communities from which they had originated, while their rejection of the Saxon and Swabian environments of identification is spurred on by their own urban lives and lifestyles.

The interconnection of the three themes is also manifest in their development over the two decades studied here. The generation's enthusiasm for a socially engaged poetry is aligned with its early embracing of the multi-ethnic environment of Romania's cities and rejection of the closed rural existence of the Romanian-German community. By the end of the poets' careers in Romania, all of these early attitudes had changed: while the enthusiasm for socialism and urbanisation turned into critical questioning, the German minority – now on the brink of mass emigration – regained a cautious appreciation in the verse of the generation.

Following the continuities and changes in the development of these themes has also allowed me to probe the possibilities and limitations of artistic freedom in an increasingly totalitarian state. Although the literary expression of the generation cannot be considered entirely open at any point in time, the relatively liberal late 1960s and early 1970s allowed for a poetry which could question social dogmas in everyday life and bring a new point of view to bear on Romania's established social discourses. Engagement with literary discourses, both contemporary and historical, indigenous and foreign, is particularly prevalent at this time, and shows the generation's belief in its own power to shape the social conversation. However, truly controversial topics – such as poverty, sexuality, or psychological depression – are rarely addressed at this early stage, which favours safer and more distant subjects of criticism, evident in the poems thematising the Vietnam War and the 1973 military coup in Chile.

As the analysis of the figure of the flâneur suggests, whose self-confident attitude is

shattered when this urban observer finds himself the object of (state) observation, a collective change of mood occurred in the mid 1970s. It gradually directed the generation's focus from general social and political questions to the specific circumstances of life under Romanian socialism, from national and international causes to the minutiae of everyday life, from the group to the individual. The focus on minute and often mundane details, however, should not be confused with a poetry of interiority. On the contrary, poems such as those thematising the history of the poets' families or those belonging to the winter genre have highly representative character, illustrating the larger struggles of the German minority of Romania and its intellectuals. These two groups of poems also illuminate the importance of obscuring representational techniques that came to dominate the late verse of the generation in Romania – the first group making ample use of ellipses, the second of metaphors – but also the importance of creating, through the repetition of certain metaphors, tropes, and even exact formulations, group-specific discourses which were private enough to shelter the writers from the eyes of the censor and to allow controversial topics and views to be addressed with relative impunity.

The in-depth study of the generation's poetic language and techniques presented here provides an unprecedented level of detail about the generation's literary identity, aims, and limitations. It is certainly my hope that it provides a convenient starting point for other explorations of the generation's works, both before and after emigration. Since the late 1980s, the writers' individual lives and career paths in Germany have led to the unravelling of the generation unit and, with it, to their inhabiting disparate positions within the continuum of German-language literature. Despite these differences, the three themes of their early careers continue to resonate in the works of individual writers. (While Richard Wagner, for instance, has established a reputation for an urban literature, Johann Lippert has continued to address the history of the Romanian-German community, and social criticism is still at the heart of Franz

Hodjak's works.) Pursuing some of these developments would add further richness to the understanding of the generation's works.

The specific contexts dictated by my choice of themes is one of the narrowing factors of my analysis. Placing the work of the 1970s generation in different contexts would thus help round out its understanding. Particularly salient seem to me the contexts of post-war (East) German and Romanian literature, questions of gender and intertextuality, and the experience of emigration as a factor in building generational unity. Other topics in the poetry of the generation (such as language and censorship) also bear further exploration.

Last but not least, I hope my reproduction and translation of some of the key poems published in German in Romania between 1968 and 1988 has brought these texts closer to the interested public and will inspire further reading and research in this area.

Biographical Notes

Rolf Bossert

Born in 1952 in the industrial town of Reschitza/Reșița (Banat). Studies German and English at the University of Bucharest, where he becomes a member of the Aktionsgruppe Banat. After graduation, assigned a teaching position in the mountain resort Bușteni. In 1979, move to Bucharest, where he works as programme coordinator at the cultural institute “Friedrich Schiller” and later as editor at the Meridiane and Kriterion publishing houses. Applies for emigration in 1984, after he is brutally beaten by the Securitate. Emigrates to West Germany in December 1985 and commits suicide in Frankfurt am Main in February 1986. In addition to poetry, author of children's books and translations from Romanian.

Selected publications: *Siebensachen* (Bucharest 1979), *Neuntöter* (Cluj Napoca 1984), *Auf der Milchstraße wieder kein Licht* (Berlin 1986), *Befristete Landschaft* (Berlin 1993), *Ich steh auf den Treppen des Winds* (Frankfurt a.M. 2006).

Gerhard Eike

Born in 1945 in Agnetheln/Agnita (Transylvania). Studies art history in Bucharest, then editor at *Volk und Kultur* and *Neuer Weg* in the capital. After debuting with poems in *Neue Literatur* and various anthologies, publishes own volume of verse, *6 & 60 Konelliptische Landschaften* in 1975.

Horst Fassel

Born in 1942 in Temeswar/Timișoara (Banat) as the son of Romanian-German poet Irene

Mokka. Between 1960 and 1965, studies German and Romanian at the University of Klausenburg/Cluj, where he also obtains his doctorate in 1978. Teaches at the University of Iassy/Iași (Moldova) until his emigration to West Germany in 1982. His volume of verse, *Kennzeichen*, appears in Bucharest in 1981. Extensive scholarly publications and translations to and from Romanian.

Klaus Hensel

Born in 1954 in Kronstadt/Braşov (Transylvania). Studies German and English at the University of Bucharest, then editor at the Meridiane and Kriterion publishing houses. Emigrates to Frankfurt am Main in 1981, where he works as a journalist for radio and television. Numerous German prizes, including the Leonce-and-Lena-Förderpreis (1983), Marburger Literatur-Förderpreis (1984), Friedrich-Hölderlin-Förderpreis (1986), writer-in-residence at the Villa Massimo in Rome (1992), and participant in the Frankfurter Poetikvorlesungen (1993).

Selected publications: *Das letzte Frühstück mit Gertrude* (Klausenburg 1980), *Oktober Lichtspiel* (Frankfurt a.M. 1988), *Stradivarius Geigenstein* (Frankfurt a.M. 1989), *Summen im Falsett* (Rome 1995), *Humboldtstraße, römisches Rot* (Frankfurt a.M. 2001).

Franz Hodjak

Born in 1944 in Hermannstadt/Sibiu (Transylvania). From 1965 to 1970 studies German and Romanian at the University of Klausenburg/Cluj. Upon graduation, becomes the German-language editor at the Dacia publishing house in Klausenburg, a post he holds until his emigration to Germany in 1992. Offered the position of writer-in-residence of the city of Mannheim in 1982, but unable to leave the country to receive it. Numerous prizes, including the

Georg-Maurer-Preis (GDR) and Kärnten-Preis at the Ingeborg Bachmann Competition (1990), the Andreas-Gryphius-Preis (1992), writer-in-residence in Minden (1995), Nikolaus-Lenau-Preis (1996), writer-in-residence in Dresden (2002), Kester-Häusler-Preis of the Deutsche Schillerstiftung (2005).

Selected publications: *Brachland* (Bucharest 1970), *Spielräume* (Bucharest 1974), *Offene Briefe* (Bucharest 1976), *Das Maß der Köpfe* (Bucharest 1978), *Mit Polly Knall spricht man über selbstverständliche Dinge, als wären sie selbstverständlich* (Bucharest 1979), *Flieder im Ohr* (Bucharest 1983), *Augenlicht* (Bucharest 1986), *Luftveränderung* (Bucharest 1988), *Siebenbürgische Sprechübungen* (Frankfurt a.M. 1990), *Landverlust* (Frankfurt a.M. 1993), *Grenzsteine* (Frankfurt a.M. 1995), *Ankunft Konjunktiv* (Frankfurt a.M. 1997), *Der Sängerstreit* (Frankfurt a.M. 2000), *Ein Koffer voll Sand* (Frankfurt a.M. 2003), *Links von Eden* (Aschersleben 2004), *Die Faszination eines Tages, den es nicht gibt* (Weilerswist 2009).

Bernd Kolf

Born in 1944 in the town of Zeiden/Codlea (Transylvania). Between 1965 and 1970, studies German at the University of Klausenburg/Cluj. Literary debut in the student journal *Echinox* in 1969. After graduation, editor at *Karpathenrundschau* in Kronstadt/Braşov until his emigration to West Germany in 1978. Since emigration, work with different publishing houses, including Falken, Ullstein, and Dornier.

Selected publications: *Zwischen 7 und ∞* (Klausenburg 1971), *Die Bewohnbarkeit des Mondes* (Klausenburg 1976).

Anemone Latzina

Born in 1942 in Kronstadt/Braşov (Transylvania). Between 1962 and 1967, studies German and Romanian at the University of Bucharest. From 1969 until her death in a streetcar accident in 1993, editor at the literary journal *Neue Literatur* in Bucharest. From 1972 to 1973, writer-in-residence at the International Writing Program in Iowa City, Iowa, with her husband, János Szász. Extensive translations from Romanian and Hungarian.

Selected publications: *Was man heute so dichten kann* (Bucharest 1971), *Tagebuchtage* (Berlin 1992).

Johann Lippet

Born in 1951 in Wels (Austria) to an emigrated Banat-Swabian family, who returns to Romania when Lippet is 5. Studies German at the University of Temeswar/Timişoara, where he is a member of the Aktionsgruppe Banat. After graduation, receives teaching assignment. Between 1978 and his emigration to West Germany in 1987, dramatic advisor at the German State Theatre in Temeswar. After holding different positions in the German arts, becomes free-lance writer in 1999.

Selected publications: *Biographie. Ein Muster* (Bucharest 1980), *So wars im Mai so ist es* (Bucharest 1984), *Protokoll eines Abschieds und einer Einreise oder die Angst vor dem Schwinden der Einzelheiten* (Heidelberg 1990), *Die Falten im Gesicht* (Heidelberg 1991), *Abschied, Laut und Wahrnehmung* (Heidelberg 1994), *Der Totengräber* (Heidelberg 1997), *Die Tür zur hinteren Küche* (Heidelberg 2000), *Im Garten von Edenkoben* (München 2000), *Banater Alphabet* (Heidelberg 2001), *Anrufung der Kindheit* (München 2003), *Das Feld räumen*

(Heidelberg 2005), *Vom Hören vom Sehen vom Finden der Sprache* (München 2006), *Migrant auf Lebzeiten* (Ludwigsburg 2008), *Das Leben einer Akte: Chronologie einer Bespitzelung* (Heidelberg 2009).

Adrian Löw

Born in 1951 in Schäßburg/Sighișoara (Transylvania). Between 1973 and 1977, studies Romanian and English at the University of Bucharest, then assigned teaching post in home town. Returns to Bucharest in 1980 as editor at *Volk und Kultur*. Extensive journalistic and translation activity.

Selected publications: *Tagaus tagein* (Bucharest 1979), *Nebengleis* (Bucharest 1980), *Selbstanzeige* (Bucharest 1982), *Betroffen aus Versehen* (Bucharest 1983).

Rolf Frieder Marmont

Born in 1944 in Kronstadt/Brașov (Transylvania). Studies German and English at the University of Bucharest between 1963 and 1968. Work at Radio Bucharest and as editor at the Kriterion publishing house. Debuts with own volume of verse, *Fünfte Jahreszeit*, in 1974. Translator from Romanian. Emigration to West Germany in 1988.

Hans Matye

Born in 1951 in Triebswetter/Tomnatic (Banat). Studies German and Romanian at the University of Iassy/Iași (Moldova). Literary debut in *Neue Banater Zeitung*, *Neue Literatur* and anthologies.

Horst Samson

born in 1954 in the hamlet of Salcâmi (Bărağan), where his parents had been deported from the Banat. Study at the teacher's college in Hermannstadt/Sibiu, then teaching assignment. From 1977 to 1984, editor at *Neue Banater Zeitung* in Temeswar/Timișoara. In 1984 becomes editor at *Neue Literatur* in Bucharest, then receive a work ban after he applies for emigration in 1985. Emigrates to West Germany in 1987, where he resumes work in journalism.

Selected publications: *Der blaue Wasserjunge* (Temeswar 1978), *Tiefflug* (Klausenburg 1981), *Reibfläche* (Bucharest 1982), *Lebraum* (Klausenburg 1985), *Was noch blieb von Edom* (Berlin 1995), *La Victoire. Poem* (München 2000).

Mathias Schmitz

Born in 1953 in Kleinsanktpeter/Sânpetru Mic (Banat). Studies German and Romanian at the University of Temeswar/Timișoara, then teaching assignment in Arad. Debut in various publications. Publishes own volume of verse, *Auseinandersetzung*, in 1981.

Eduard Schneider

born in 1944 in Temeswar/Timișoara (Banat). Between 1962 and 1967, studies German and Romanian at the University of Temeswar. From 1969 until his emigration to Germany in 1989, editor at *Neue Banater Zeitung*. Publishes own volume of verse, *Daß am Abend der Himmel so rot war*, in 1982. In 1992, becomes part of the staff at the Institut für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas in München. Since 2006, editor of the journal *Spiegelungen*, published by the Institute.

Frieder Schuller

Born in 1942 in the village Katzendorf/Cața (Transylvania). Studies theology in Hermannstadt/Sibiu then German in Klausenburg/Cluj. Between 1968 and 1972, journalist for *Karpathenrundschau* in Kronstadt/Brașov. From 1972 until his emigration to West Germany in 1978, dramatic advisor at the German theatre in Hermannstadt. In addition to continuing his literary activity, in Germany Schuller increasingly turns to films, writing and producing several documentaries and features.

Selected publications: *Kreise ums Unvollendete* (Bucharest 1969), *Ausgespielt* (Klausenburg 1972), *Paß für Transsilvanien* (Bonn 1979), *Einladung zu einer Schüssel Palukes* (Bonn 1980), *Mein Vaterland ging auf den roten Strich* (Hermannstadt 2006), *Abschiedsgerichte – Zvonuri de adio* (Bucharest 2007).

Hellmut Seiler

Born in 1953 in the town of Reps/Rupea (Transylvania). Studies German and English at the University of Hermannstadt/Sibiu. Between 1976 and 1987, teaching assignment in Neumarkt/Târgu-Mureș. Applies for emigration after being banned from publishing in 1985. Emigrates to West Germany in 1988, where he works as a teacher and freelance writer.

Selected publications: *Die Einsamkeit der Stühle* (Klausenburg 1982), *Siebenbürgische Endzeitlose* (Frankfurt a.M. 1994), *Schlagwald. Grenzen, Gänge* (München 2001), *Glück hat viele Namen* (Esslingen 2003), *An Verse geheftet* (Ludwigsburg 2007).

Werner Söllner

Born in 1951 in the village of Neupanat/Horia (Banat). Between 1970 and 1975, studies physics, German, and English at the University of Klausenburg/Cluj and is German editor of the student literary journal *Echinox*. During this time, becomes informal collaborator for the Securitate after threatened with exmatriculation. From 1976 to his emigration in 1982, editor at the publishing house Ion Creangă, specialising in children's literature, in Bucharest. After emigration, various positions in the German arts, guest lecturer at Dartmouth and Oberlin Colleges in the US, and, from 2002, director of the Hessischer Literaturforum in Frankfurt am Main. In 2010, he steps back from this position, after revealing his collaboration with the Securitate. Awards include: Andreas-Gryphius-Förderpreis (1985), the young writer award of the Friedrich-Hölderlin-Preis (1988), the German Language Prize (shared, 1989), the young writer award of the Kulturkreis im Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie, the special mention of the German Schillerstiftung (1996). Extensive editorial work and translations to and from Romanian.

Selected publications: *Wetterberichte* (Klausenburg 1975), *Mitteilungen eines Privatmannes* (Klausenburg 1975), *Sprachigkeit* (Dreieich 1979), *Eine Entwöhnung* (Bucharest 1980), *Das Land, das Leben* (Büdingen 1984), *Es ist nicht alles in Ordnung, aber ok* (Assenheim 1985), *Kopfland. Passagen* (Frankfurt a.M. 1988), *Der Schlaf des Trommlers* (Zürich 1992), *Zweite Natur* (München 1993).

Anton Sterbling

born in 1953 in Groß Sankt Nikolaus/Sânnicolau Mare (Banat). Literary debut in various publications while still a high school student. Member of the Aktionsgruppe Banat. After the disbanding of the group through the Securitate in 1975, emigration to West Germany. Studies

sociology and political economy at the University of Mannheim and at the Bundeswehr University in München. Publishes widely in the sociology of modernity. Professor of sociology at the Police Academy of Saxony.

William Totok

born in 1951 in Großkomlosch/Comloşul Mare (Banat). In 1973, begins to study German and Romanian at the University of Temeswar/Timişoara in 1973, where he becomes a member of the Aktionsgruppe Banat. Arrested by the Securitate on trumped-up charges in 1975. After eight months in prison, resumes his studies in 1977 and concludes them in 1979. Banned from publication until 1987. Teaching assignment from 1979 to 1981, then editor at the *Neue Banater Zeitung*. Cursory dismissal in 1985, followed by emigration to West Berlin in 1987, where he continues to write and work as a freelance journalist. Member of the committee for the study of the Holocaust in Romania, headed by Elie Wiesel, and co-editor of the journal *Halbjahresschrift für südosteuropäische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik*.

Selected publications: *Die Vergesellschaftung der Gefühle* (Bucharest 1980), *Freundliche Fremdheit* (Temeswar 1984), *Das prompte Eingreifen des Fallmeisters beim Versuch eines Hundes sich eigenmächtig auf die Hinterbeine zu stellen* (Mainz 1987), *Eiszeit* (Berlin 1987), *Die Zwänge der Erinnerung* (Hamburg 1988).

Richard Wagner

born in 1952 in Lowrin/Lovrin (Banat). Between 1971 and 1975, studies German and Romanian at the University of Temeswar/Timişoara, where he is a founding member and spokesman of the Arbeitsgruppe Banat. In 1975, arrest by the Securitate on trumped-up charges. After graduation,

receives a three-year teaching assignment in the Transylvanian city of Hunedoara. From 1978 to 1983, editor for the newspaper *Karpathenrundschau* in Temeswar. Summary dismissal followed by publication ban. Emigrates to West Berlin in 1987, where he continues his literary and journalistic activity. Recipient of numerous literary prizes, including the Leonce-und-Lena-Sonderpreis (1987), the Andreas-Gryphius-Förderpreis (1988), the German Language Prize (shared, 1989), writer-in-residence at the Villa Massimo in Rome (1990), the ndl-Literaturpreis (2000), and the Georg-Dehio-Buchpreis (2008).

Selected publications: *Klartext* (Bucharest 1973), *Die Invasion der Uhren* (Bucharest 1977), *Hotel California 1* (Bucharest 1980), *Hotel California 2* (Bucharest 1981), *Gegenlicht* (Temeswar 1983), *Rostregen* (Darmstadt 1986), *Ausreiseantrag* (Darmstadt 1988), *Begrüßungsgeld* (Darmstadt 1989), *Die Muren von Wien* (Frankfurt a.M. 1990), *Sonderweg Rumänien* (Berlin 1991), *Heiße Maroni* (München 1993), *Mythendämmerung* (Berlin 1993), *Giancarlos Koffer* (Berlin 1993), *Der Mann, der Erdrutsche sammelte* (München 1994), *In der Hand der Frauen* (München 1995), *Lisas geheimes Buch* (München 1996), *Mit Madonna in der Stadt* (München 2000), *Miss Bukarest* (Berlin 2001), *Habseligkeiten* (Aufbau 2004), *Der deutsche Horizont: Vom Schicksal eines guten Landes* (Berlin 2006), *Das reiche Mädchen* (Berlin 2007), *Es reicht: Gegen den Ausverkauf unserer Werte* (Berlin 2008).

Ernest Wichner

born in 1952 in Guttenbrunn/Zăbrani (Banat). Studies political science and German in Temeswar/Timișoara, where he is a member of the Aktionsgruppe Banat. After the disbanding of the group through the Securitate in 1975, emigration to West Berlin, where he continues his studies and work as writer, literary critic, editor, and translator. Recipient of the Marburger

Literatur-Förderpreis (1986), Andreas-Gryphius-Förderpreis (1987), Lyrik-Stipendium
Niedersachsen (1991), and Prize of the city of Münster for European Poetry (shared, 2005).
Since 2003, director of the Literaturhaus Berlin.

Selected publications: *Elegien in Weiß* (Berlin 1987), *Steinsuppe* (Frankfurt a.M. 1988), *Alte
Bilder* (Heidelberg 2001), *Die Einzahl der Wolken/Singularul norilor* (Bucharest 2003),
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