

FORUM

University of Edinburgh
Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts
Special Issue 04 | Spring 2015

Title	Diaspora, Postmemory and the Transcultural Turn in Contemporary Jewish Writing: Barbara Honigmann's Autofictional Writings
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Publication	FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts
Special Issue Number	04
Issue Date	Spring 2015
Publication Date	9/03/2015
Editors	Christina Brennan & Joseph Ford

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Diaspora, Postmemory and the Transcultural Turn in Contemporary Jewish Writing: Barbara Honigmann's Autofictional Writings

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According to Marianne Hirsch, descendants of exiled Holocaust survivors unwillingly inherit their parents continued dislocation: as the homeland of their ancestors has “ceased to exist” they are destined forever to remain exiled from the “space of identity” (Family 243). The German Jewish writer Barbara Honigmann is one of those descendants of exiled Holocaust survivors even though she was born in Germany to where her parents had returned after the war. However, in contrast to Hirsch, she embraces life in diaspora and self-imposed exile as the true source for constructing a genuine identity in which she is true to her Judaism. In illuminating the discrepancy between Hirsch’s analytical reading of exilic postmemory and Barbara Honigmann’s way of creating it in literature, this article shows that different conceptualizations of diaspora give rise to different post-memorial aesthetics: whereas Hirsch’s photographic aesthetics represents the melancholic insight that a return to the place of origin is impossible, nostalgic aesthetics gives in to this very desire for a “final return” (Hall). However, both the nostalgic and the photographic aesthetics are based on a territorial understanding of home and on the idea that identity is bound to a specific space. In contrast, Honigmann’s aesthetics of postmemory, which I call transcultural, perceives diasporic identity as the result of a constant blending and mixing of cultures. Thus, identity is not connected to a distinct place, but rather to a “common genealogical origin” (Boyarin, Boyarin). However, as this origin has been forgotten, the author must laboriously reconstruct it in her autofictional writings.

As one of the most important representatives of the post-Shoah generation, which from the midst of the 1980s, started to broach the issue of their Jewishness, the German Jewish author Barbara Honigmann explicitly situates her writings in the aftermath of the “rediasporisation” of the European Jews.ⁱ This article investigates Honigmann’s writings through the lens of transcultural memory studies as recently defined by Astrid Erll. In a series of autofictional writings, which consist of “collages of recollected stories, letters, quotes from books, inscriptions of graves, [and] diaries” (Fiero 2), Honigmann stages herself as a truly transcultural figure, blending traces from various mnemonic frameworks:ⁱⁱ due to a self-imposed exile in Strasbourg, she shifts between her French residence, her German mode of writing and her Jewish religious practice.

In her autofictional writings, Honigmann seems to conduct a classical work of postmemory, understood as an “imaginative investment and creation” of the parents’ traumatic past (Hirsch *Family* 22): she reconstructs her parents’ Jewish genealogy, follows their routes of exile, considers their return to Germany after the war, and reflects on her own decision to leave Germany in order to readopt the Jewish religion. However, as I will show, Honigmann’s autofictional writings oscillate between an excavation of her parents’ past and the realization, that this task is not sufficient to trace their original identity and thus to restore her own. Through the work of postmemory, Honigmann realizes that her parents’ feeling of belonging to Germany, Austria or to the GDR had been a delusion

that ultimately resulted in a state of total homelessness: they no longer belonged to the Jews and had not become German either (*Past* 14). In contrast, Honigmann embraces life in diaspora as the sole possibility for being true to her Jewish birth and thus to regain an identity beyond national belonging. This reveals a striking discrepancy between Hirsch's conceptualization of postmemory in the aftermath of exile and Honigmann's literary conceptualization of diaspora and self-imposed exile. Whereas Honigmann understands diaspora as the true source of Jewish identity, Hirsch defines diaspora as a perpetuated exile of the descendants "from the space of identity." (Hirsch *Family* 243)ⁱⁱⁱ The reason for this discrepancy is that Hirsch's concept of exilic postmemory and Honigmann's fictional creation of self-imposed exile rely on different concepts of diaspora. Following this line of thinking, this article will explore different definitions of diaspora and elaborate which aesthetics of exilic postmemory those conceptualizations entail. This will lead to an analysis of Barbara Honigmann's autofictional writings as an example of a transcultural aesthetics, which is different both from Hirsch's photographic concept of exilic postmemory and from the practice of a nostalgic aesthetics.

Diaspora: historical and theoretical approaches

Originally, diaspora refers to the mythical event of the expulsion of the Jews from the Promised Land after the Roman destruction of the second temple. The yearning to end the state of dispersion holds a prominent position in Jewish liturgy and prayer. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, many of the Central European Jews had either abandoned their religious commitment to Jerusalem or were engaged in political efforts to found a Jewish state (Levi, Sznajder 50). As a consequence, the rediasporization of the European Jews, the religious practice of reenacting the religious bond to Israel, was replaced by a yearning for the abandoned European cities (Bos 98).

From the 1960s onwards, diaspora gained an expanded significance, referring to a wide range of experiences of displacement, such as slavery and postcolonial migrations. William Safran criticizes the fact that the term is used for virtually any group or minority "who can trace their origins to a country or region other than that, in which they reside" (255).^{iv} Levy and Sznajder on the other hand welcome the development and even stretch the term to encompass a feeling of disenfranchisement, which does not imply geographical displacement at all but which is caused by the accelerating outcomes of globalization in the "second modernity", a term they lend from Ulrich Beck (51). Their conception is part of a major positive redefinition of diaspora as a social formation that "challenge[s] hegemony and boundedness of the nation-state and, indeed, [...] any pure imaginaries of nationhood" (Werber 6). However, the "abstraction and generalization" of diaspora, implied a gradual disintegration of the term from the Jewish experience (Boyarin, Boyarin "Powers" 12). This disintegration is particularly explicit in Stuart Hall's definition of diaspora. According to Hall, the "literal" diaspora society understands the past as source of one true identity, which can only be achieved by returning to "some sacred homeland", "even if it means pushing other people into the sea." This "imperialistic" and "hegemonic" conception of diaspora *as a return* implies an "imaginative rediscovery" of a, previously hidden, "essential identity" (235). In opposition to the perception of the past as "a fixed origin" to which one can make a "final and absolute return" (226), Hall's

“metaphorical” conception of diaspora is not defined “by essence or purity but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity” (235). As Boyarin and Boyarin critically remark, Hall reduces Jewish diaspora to a “caricatured Zionism,” and “identifies Jewishness only with a lack, a neurotic attachment to the lost homeland” that “banishes the Jews from the brave new world of hybridity” (“Powers” 13). Even though the critique is a valid one, Hall’s distinction will show to be heuristically useful.

More neutrally related to diaspora societies in general, Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal criticizes the fact that the members of diaspora societies do not fully assimilate to their host countries but rather remain attached to their original home. Thus, she conceives diaspora societies as “an extension of a nation-state model”, a “trope for nostalgia” that preserves a linkage between “territory, culture and identity” (3). James Clifford objects to this perception in stating that “whatever their ideologies of purity, diasporic cultural forms can never, in practice be exclusively nationalist.” Rather “they are deployed in transnational networks built from multiple attachments” (307).

Despite their critique of both Hall and Clifford, Boyarin and Boyarin also see the diasporic identity as the result of a constant blending and mixing of cultures. In pointing out that God “grounded Jewish group identity in a common genealogical origin rather than in a common spatial origin” (Garloff 4), Boyarin and Boyarin stress that the “impossibility of a natural association between this people [the Jewish] and a particular land” lays bare the fact that “cultures as well as identities are constantly remade” and thus are a product of mixing (Diaspora 721). Hall, Clifford and the Boyarins thus agree upon the understanding of diaspora societies as open cultural formations that blend or mix the specific and local culture of the host society with cultural traces from the original homeland, thereby forming a hybrid or transnational identity. This insight is much in accordance with Astrid Erll’s concept of transculturality, understood as “mnemonic processes unfolding *across* and *beyond* cultures (9).” Both Erll’s conception of transcultural identity and the Boyarins’ concept of Jewish identity comprehend identity as a heterogeneous complex: According to Erll, it is part of everybody’s everyday experiences to belong to multiple mnemonic groups and to have hybrid identities such as “a German Protestant football fan or a Buddhist Englishwoman playing jazz” (10). Similarly, Boyarin and Boyarin identify the medieval scholar Rabbi Sa’adya, as an “Egyptian Arab who happens to be Jewish” and as “a Jew who happens to be an Egyptian Arab” (Diaspora 721).

The postmemory of exile and diaspora and beyond

Honigmann’s construction of her identity in her autofictional writings is paradigmatic for such a transcultural identity, which is based on the mixing of cultures and on the membership of multiple mnemonic groups. She lives a “triple life” in touching the margins of three cultures, the French, the German and the Jewish (*Past* 72). Furthermore, her Jewish identity to a great part is formed by a Jewish circle of friends, which contains both Ashkenazy and Sephardic Jews. Thus Jewish identity in itself is revealed as a highly inconsistent and diverse complex that contains different mnemonic groups. Honigmann’s justification of her self-imposed exile strikingly resembles Boyarin and Boyarin’s idea that the Jewish identity is not based on a territorial but on a genealogical belonging. In

a scene in the novel *Past*, in which Honigmann describes her protagonist's search for a Jewish identity, the gravestones of the Jewish cemetery in Berlin Weißensee in the mind of the protagonist begin to form a network of names, places and ages to which she as well as her parents and grandparents belong (*Past* 26). As origin is constructed as genealogy, her inherited homelessness is considerably eased when the narrator, upon publishing a book about her father, receives letters from hitherto unknown relatives that "helped her reconstruct the paternal family tree", which her father had not introduced to her (Schaumann 184).^v In contrast, in recalling her early attempts to find her identity in her mother's place of origin, Vienna, the narrator apprehends that Vienna was merely an arbitrary place of exile in a long line of other places of exile. Thus, she realizes that she has been searching for her origin in vain, presuming it to be situated in a distinct place: "Suddenly I realized that Vienna is an island. Also Vienna is one of those islands that is bound to sink into the ocean of exile sooner or later" (Und plötzlich wurde mir klar, daß Wien eine Insel ist. Auch Wien ist eine der Inseln, die alle früher oder später im Meer des Exils versinken; Honigmann *Past* 119; *my translation*). Thus Honigmann's act of postmemory does not lead to a positive and literal *return* to a place of origin.

Marianne Hirsch defines postmemory as a connection to the past that is "not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection and creation" (*The Generation* 5). Thus, postmemory describes a creative act in which the children try to "fill in the blanks" of a family story that is damaged by "historical trauma, by war, Holocaust, exile and refugeehood" (Bos 52; Hirsch *The Generation* 33). Even though Honigmann, just as in a classic performance of the work of postmemory, lets her autofictional narrator visit the places where her parents have lived and meets the people they had known abroad, she does not succeed in finding any trace of her parents' former life and is left with a feeling of bewilderment and disorientation.^{vi} It is neither satisfying for her to visit the streets of her mother's childhood in Vienna (*Past* 101), nor the streets of her father's childhood in Wiesbaden (*Love* 67-70). In *Chapter* she concludes that her mother never had tried to assemble the fragments of her life story (139) and asks what gives her the right to pick up the broken bits and pieces in order to arrange them into a consistent account (141). So, her failure to find her origin in a distinct place leads her eventually to deny ever having tried to pursue the work of postmemory. The autofictional narrator of the novel *Chapter* now states that she had not traveled to the places of her mother's past, had not searched and found any documents nor had she talked to anybody asking questions about her mother (141). However, I disagree with Schaumann's understanding that Honigmann in *Chapter* rejects the work postmemory all together (190). Rather, I understand it as a rejection of a postmemory that finds her parents origin in a distinct territory. Whereas Honigmann fails to "fill in the blanks" of family history through visiting the places of the past, she succeeds in this task in going further back in family history, revealing that she, "as so many Jews, has her origin in almost all European countries" (*Past* 89). Before her great-grandfather David Honigmann had started the process of assimilation, her family constantly used to travel from residence to residence, making each new home an island within a shoreless ocean of exile that is bound to sink sooner or later (*Past* 89). Thus, her genealogy provides her with an identity, which is intrinsically hybrid and continually subject to change. She underpins this identity in going even further back to the mythical past of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt that founded the Jewish people as wanderers. Already in the first of her autofictional novels, *Child*, she

describes the crossing of the Alexanderplatz during her first celebration of the Passover as a revelation, reminiscent of the division of the Red Sea during the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt (25). She seeks a cosmopolitan “home” (“Behaustheit”) in diaspora by embracing both the ancient past of the Jews, which started with Exodus from Egypt, and the tradition of her family which she reveals as constantly traveling (*Child* 25, *Past* 89). Also, Strasbourg, where the autofictional narrator resides in *Past*, is merely an accidental place of exile. Even though this insight sometimes makes her longing for an unknown place of home, she realizes that this nostalgia for a final place of belonging is a yearning that can only be fulfilled in a religious realm (*Past* 79-81). Thus, as Christina Guenther rightfully remarks: “Honigmann’s engagement with Judaism intensifies her feeling of spiritual exile or alienation”. The autofictional narrator transcends this spiritual exile by voluntary geographic displacement, thereby achieving “a self-imposed and empowering uprootedness” (222). In contrast, Marianne Hirsch’s conception of exile is filled with feelings of sorrow and loss.

In her book *Family Frames*, Hirsch dedicates a particular chapter to investigating the situation of those living in the aftermath of exile (241-268). In Hirsch’s view, the children of exiles – in contrast to children of survivors of the concentration camps – do not merely inherit their parents’ traumatic memories; they also inherit their feeling of displacement. Through stories and photographs of their parents’ place of origin, their entire sense of identity and belonging becomes tied to “a world that had ceased to exist”. Therefore these children always remain “marginal or exiled, always in the diaspora”. Even if they choose to return to the cities of their ancestors, “home” will always be elsewhere. As “home” according to Hirsch is rooted in a distinct place, she sees the identity position of those living in the aftermath of exile as utterly threatened. However, as Astrid Erll has shown in her account of transcultural memory, the private memory of the individual is able to combine several, overlapping “social frameworks of memory” – which is what Maurice Halbwachs had earlier called the “cadres sociaux de la mémoire” (Halbwachs qtd. in Erll 10). Just as a single person can belong to several national, religious and subcultural frameworks (Erll 10), an individual can simultaneously belong to his or her present national framework *and* to the unseen homeland of the ancestors. The imaginary place of origin, inherited by those living in the aftermath of exile, could be seen as one of these frameworks “which overlap and intersect in the individual mind” (Erll 10). Hence, what is at stake in the different conception of Honigmann’s exilic postmemory and Hirsch’s perception of it is a contradiction between diaspora, understood as a territorial attachment to the former home, and diaspora understood as a transcultural blending and mixing of identities.

The aesthetics of postmemory

In what follows, this contradiction will allow me to identify at least three aesthetics of exilic postmemory. In *Family Frames*, Hirsch illustrates that the postmemory of exile and diaspora brings with it a special aesthetics, which she designates as photographic. Photographic aesthetics has the ability to evoke the present, while simultaneously signaling its absence and loss (243).^{vii} In postmemorial works which describe the lost places of one’s ancestors, those lost places do not simply provide a referential sense of belonging; they remain places of genocide that have ceased to exist in the way known by the parents’ generation. Photographic aesthetics renders visible the void – the

unbridgeable absence of home. Hence, when Henri Raczymow, a French writer and descendant of Eastern European Jews, in the book *Tales of Exile and Forgetting* (*Contes d'exil et d'oubli*) depicts his parents' hometown of Konesk, he does not represent the town as it was, but rather as an empty memory. What he depicts is "the state of exile from Konesk", the inability to ever return (Hirsch *Family* 248). Hirsch's idea of photographic aesthetics that perpetually recaptures the irretrievable loss of home seems to correspond with Hall's metaphoric diaspora which refuses to give in to the "overwhelming nostalgia for lost origins" and the attempt to "return to the beginning" (Hall 236).

In her essay "Adopted Memory", Pascale Bos undertakes a critical reading of Hirsch, which reveals that the postmemory of exile may lead to another result. In focusing on Hirsch's differentiation between familial postmemory and adopted postmemory, she shows that especially the latter form of postmemory, which is carried out by persons who do not have any familial relations to victims, often evokes a nostalgic longing for the lost homeland, ignoring the aspect of difference which will forever separate the present generation from the remembered places. On investigating postmemorial writings of American descendants of East European Jews, Bos points out that writings such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* transform "the exile from the space of identity" into the beginning of a "creative journey." By inventing "the imagined more 'authentic' life in the shtetl", he "strength[ens] Jewish identity on the basis of nostalgia" (Bos 97, 104).^{viii} In promoting the possibility of identification with, and gaining a group identity through, a sense of belonging to a lost homeland, the nostalgic mode of diasporic postmemory remains entangled with the practices of territorial and national memory, even if the place of affiliation is an idealized utopia to which one only can return in a spiritual sense. Although the photographic and the nostalgic aesthetics seem to be clearly distinguishable, these two positions are not so far from each other. Despite the fact that photographic aesthetics does not attempt to "return to the beginning" (Hall 236), it still holds on to a territorial perception of home. Thus, for both aesthetics, identity remains connected to the place of origin of the (imagined) ancestors.

Transcultural aesthetics: Barbara Honigmann's autofictional writings

I now want to present a third aesthetic position, which I will call the transcultural position. Whereas the nostalgic and the photographic positions correspond with the theoretical conception of diaspora as a "perpetual longing for then and there" (Soysal 3), the transcultural position corresponds with the conception of the diaspora society as a heterogeneous home that blends traces from different national, cultural and religious frameworks. In contradiction to photographic and nostalgic aesthetics, transcultural aesthetics roots identity in a perception of culture that is alterable and hybrid. Like photographic aesthetics, transcultural postmemory of diaspora and exile rejects the possibility of a final return. However, unlike photographic aesthetics, transcultural aesthetics does not remain in the melancholy feeling of loss; rather, it positively creates a new position *in between* several cultural frameworks.

I would like to suggest that it is exactly this kind of aesthetics, which takes central stage in Barbara Honigmann's autofictional novels. As Honigmann puts it in *Past*, only her self-imposed exile, understood as separation, marginalization and distance (45), makes it possible for her to escape "the

history and the stories” of her parents (11) and to start writing her own story in her own way.^{ix} As Christina Guenther has observed, Honigmann is conscious of the “significance of exile within Judaism in terms of forced *and* voluntary dispersion (Diaspora and “Galut”) and literal *and* figurative displacement (221).^x It is exactly this duality of both literal and figurative displacement, which is crucial for the transcultural aesthetic Honigmann is practicing. Her transcultural diaspora position cannot be reduced to nomadism understood as “style of thought” that resists settlement “into socially coded modes of thought and behavior” (Braidotti 5 in Jeremiah 3). Rather, Honigmann’s nomadism entails a willingness to expose her to actual alienation, which forces her to rearrange her identity in accordance with her environment, combining the old with the new, the familiar with the foreign.

In addition, Emily Jeremiah suggests that Honigmann “explores ethnicity and Jewishness in particular, as a complex construct” and that she stresses “the fluidity and multiplicity of (Jewish) identities” (167, 169). But whereas Jeremiah emphasizes the connection between ethics and literature that takes place through addressing an “other” in writing (183), I stress the construction of identity that is achieved due to her actual geographical displacement. And whereas Jeremiah, much like Hirsch, stresses the loss which is entailed in the historical displacement of the Jews (177), I emphasize Honigmann’s perception of diaspora as a position that from time to time estranges her, but which first and foremost enriches her and is a precondition of her Jewish identity (*Past* 72).

Honigmann primarily constructs her transcultural identity by objecting to and revealing the failed identity position of her parents. Her postmemorial task leads her to reveal the family history of her father as the history of obliterating their true transcultural roots,” (Hirsch *Generation* 33). In retracing the gradual abandonment of Jewish culture and religion of her father’s ancestors, she shows that the families’ assimilation was all about achieving a nationally and territorially confined identity, which eventually rendered her father in a state of total “unhomeliness” [“Unbehaustheit”] (*Past* 34). In an entry in the father’s diary, which she quotes in both *Past* and *Love*, we see that her father was never able to reconcile with his transcultural existence: “Went to the circus tonight; go home feeling sad; don’t even know where I am. Like the Italian who just performed who is actually a Russian. He is the same kind of Italian as I am.” (“War im Zirkus abends: Gehe traurig nach Hause, weiß doch gar nicht wo ich bin. Wie der Italiener, der da gerade auftrat und eigentlich aus Russland kommt. Auch so ein Italiener wie ich”, *Past* 45; *Love* 101; *my translation*.)

Her mother on the other hand is reconstructed as a transcultural figure that nevertheless is unaware of her true cosmopolitan nature. Honigmann explains how her mother, who had lived in Bulgaria, Vienna, Paris and London, unconsciously avoided integrating into any of her multiple places of residence.^{xi} Her social circle consisted exclusively of a narrow group of former emigrants and communists, and almost all were Jews (*Past* 92). This circle of friends forms a kind of reversed diaspora society as its members deliberately separate themselves from their German and Austrian neighbours and colleagues, insisting upon maintaining a “close, almost nostalgic attachment to England.” Paradoxically, England was not their homeland but rather their former place of exile from which they had returned (*Past* 92). To complicate the constellation even more, the mother can never return to the land she loves and admires so much because she betrayed the country by working for the KGB during her marriage with the Russian Spy Kim Philby (*Chapter* 62, 111). Due to her cosmopolitan

nature, the mother possesses several personalities: English, Austrian and Hungarian, which shift in accordance with the language she chooses to speak (*Chapter 139*).^{xii} When her mother speaks Hungarian she changes into an airy and exited person (*Past 90*). In contrast, when she speaks English, she keeps her countenance and calmness. When she speaks German, her heavy Viennese accent expresses her contempt for the Germans (*Past 91*). She also feels contempt for the Hungarians, as the narrator explains in *Chapter (53)*. Not because they were Nazis like the Germans, but because they were “sloshed, drunken [...] illiterates” (“saufende, trinkende [...] Analphabeten”, 53; *my translation*). Her relationship to the Austrians is particularly complex since she loves the country but hates its people – not for being barbaric but for being well educated anti-Semites (53). Thus, Honigmann constructs her mother as a multilayered and transcultural person who had always lacked an original home and an “actual” personality. This lack of center is also evident in her many different names which changes in accordance with the context. In addition to the first names Alice, Litzy, Lizy, Lizzy and Lisa (*Chapter 43*), she has a number of different surnames, such as Kohlmann, Friedmann, Philby and Honigmann (*Chapter 78*). Furthermore, the mother’s ambiguous personality also affects her appearance: she changes the colour of her hair so often that she cannot remember its original colour (*Chapter 5*) and even generates uncertainty with respect to the date of her birth as well as the date of her death (*Chapter 44*). Despite her mother’s cosmopolitan nature, she remained deeply attracted to the idea of having a territorial identity, which in her case is embodied in her belonging to the diaspora community of former English emigrants.

It is thus possible to conclude that a transcultural aesthetics as performed in Honigmann’s autofictional writings generates an unsentimental relation to the past where the origin is not the final “return” – in Stuart Hall’s sense of the word – but rather a point of departure for constructing an identity, in which traces and impressions from different cultural, national and religious frameworks overlap and mix. In addition, the parents’ places of origin, which are reframed as merely one station of eternal wandering from exile to exile, become part of this mixture. Even though the loss of home is sometimes painful for the narrator, the life in diaspora is understood as a necessity for building an identity which is true to her Jewishness based on her cosmopolitan genealogy and the religious tradition of wandering. For Honigmann, Jewishness is not a facile identity position, but one which is interrupted by her linguistic boundedness to Germany, and thus to a country in which a natural relation to the Jews has become impossible (*Past 16*).

Far from wanting to replace Hirsch’s concept of the photographic aesthetics of exilic postmemory, it is my hope that my account of a photographic, nostalgic and transcultural aesthetics may serve as a preliminary and expandable catalogue of the various ways in which the experience of exile and diaspora is reflected in contemporary German Jewish literature.

ⁱ The concept of rediasporization means “a reversal of Jewish emancipation during the Third Reich and the Holocaust” (Garloff 6).

ⁱⁱ Autofictional writings offer the reader both an autobiographical and a fictional narrative which frequently contradict each other (Zipfel 305). For contradictions in Honigmann’s autofictional writings see footnote xi. I refer to the following autofictional novels: *Roman von einem Kinde* (A

Child's novel), henceforth referred to as *Child*; *Eine Liebe aus Nichts* (*A Love Made Out of Nothing*), henceforth *Love*; *Damals, dann und danach* (*The Past and What Came After*), henceforth *Past*; *Ein Kapitel aus meinem Leben* (*A Chapter of my Life*), henceforth referred to as *Chapter*.

ⁱⁱⁱ The terms “exile” and “diaspora” may be understood as two overlapping ways of describing displacement. However, whereas exile describes the concrete geographical displacement of a single person or family, diaspora is also linked to minority group solidarity, cultural dominance and identity and to the way in which these subjects are negotiated artistically (Israel 3).

^{iv} In order to limit the inflationary use of the term, Safran delineates several features that exclude several migrated groups from being labeled as Diasporas. See also Carol Bardenstein 20.

^v She refers to the publication of her novel *Love*.

^{vi} E.g. in *Love* she walks the Quai d’Orsay, the street in Paris in which her mother had resided (32) and visits Wiesbaden, the hometown of her father (66-70). In *Past* she visits the places in Vienna, where her mother had lived as a child (101) and visits, Pieter, the former lover of her mother in Amsterdam (108).

^{vii} The photographic aesthetics is inspired by Roland Barthes’ concept of the *punctum*. Hirsch writes: “Ultimately, the puncture of the *punctum* is not the detail of the picture but time itself: ‘I read at the same time *This will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future” (Hirsch *Family Frames* 5 and Barthes 96).

^{viii} As another example, Bos analyses Anne Weiss’s *The last Album: Eyes from the Ashes of Auschwitz-Birkenau*. It is necessary to underline that in Bos’ view, the writer does not necessarily intend to invite the reader into a sentimental and nostalgic “process of identification”, but that the audience chooses to use the works to reaffirm their “sense of Jewish identity and belonging” on the grounds of an over-identification with the stories and photographs presented in the writings (Bos 99).

^{ix} “Precisely in the distance, as if I could only then finally start to tell my own story in my own way.” (“Gerade in der Entfernung, als ob ich erst dort nun endlich anfangen könnte meine eigene Geschichte zu erzählen, in der mir eigenen Form”; 53; *my translation*).

^x According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, diaspora refers to self-chosen exile before the destruction of the Second Temple as well as to the era after the establishment of the state of Israel. With a biblical term, the intermediate period of dispersion is identified as *galut*, which refers both to forced exile and to the resulting lack of a political-ethnic center.

^{xi} According to *Love* (28-29), her mother was born in Bulgaria, raised in Vienna, exiled first in Paris and later in England and followed her husband to Berlin after the war. In *Chapter* (53) and *Past* (21) the mother is born in Hungary. Surprisingly, the mother does not have a French personality even though her stay in France is described as her happiest time in *Chapter* (85).

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In May 2012, Jessica Ortner defended her PhD thesis on the Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek, focusing on Jelinek's literary strategies of representing the Shoah and broaching Austria's national socialist past. Since fall 2013, she has been working on a post-doc project on Holocaust literature written by the second and third generation – a project which draws upon a wide corpus of German and Austrian writers. Besides her main interest in postmodern and magic realist narratological strategies, Ortner is examining the extent to which present Holocaust literature develops in relation to, or across, national boundaries.