Shared Memory: Transgenerational Transmission and Transcultural Junctions in Ulrike Draesner's *Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt*

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Introduction

> Kommt dir das bekannt vor: Zwei Leute treffen sich zum ersten Mal. Zufällig stoßen sie auf ein Stück Familiengeschichte, stellen fest, dass jeweils wenigstens einer ihrer Elternteile vertrieben wurde, und fragen einander sofort, woher Mutter oder Vater stammte. Bizarr! Meist kennen sie den Ort gar nicht. Aber es hat für sie eine Bedeutung, dass ihre Eltern oder Großeltern sich gekannt haben könnten. Es hat eine Bedeutung, aus welcher Landschaft man kommt, welche Erfahrungen die Familie dort machte. Mit dem Wetter, der Erde, den Menschen, dem Schlag (Draesner 265).

The psychologist Boris Nienalt, one of the main characters in Ulrike Draesner's novel Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt, reflects here on the

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meaning of homeland and origin from the perspective of the descendants of displaced persons, who were forced to migrate during and after WWII in Silesia and Poland. His conclusion: origin matters. Not only for those who witnessed the historical events themselves, but equally for those who belong to the following generations.

Published in 2014, Draesner's novel serves as an example of transgenerational transmission of flight and forced migration and how the effects thereof are depicted in contemporary German literature. Through the application of multiple generational perspectives, the text sheds light on different ways of dealing with a traumatic past through familial interaction. By including the experiences of 'Zeitzeugen' as well as members of the following generations, the novel exemplifies a shift from silence and displacement to a mutual understanding.

Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt connects the histories of two families, one German, one Polish. The encounter of the descendants Boris Nienalt and Simone Grolmann illustrates similarities and differences of the characters' family histories and post-memories.[1] Beside the impact on their individual biographies and identities, the novel also points to transcultural junctions of a globalised collective memory in which overlapping, but also distinctive parts are revealed and negotiated.

This article analyses acts of transmitting and remembering collective history in transgenerational and transcultural settings. Using Ulrike Draesner's novel Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt as an example for contemporary German postmemory literature, the article contributes to the literary discourse of cultural memory studies with an emphasis on the memory of the family and effects of migration in the 21st century.

Generational Lacks and Cracks in Identity

As one of the typical institutions of transmitting experiences, the social structure of the family represents a genealogic point of reference for the individual. According to Maurice Halbwachs' understanding of collective memory, the memory of a family constructs a framework of identity by

1 In contrast to memories that associated with lived experiences of an individual or a collective, the concept of post-memories extends the possibility to remember an experience to subsequent generations. See Marianne Hirsch's theory below.

selecting different elements of a shared past 'to ensure the family's cohesion and to guarantee its continuity' (83). In *Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt* Boris Nienalt chooses »Shared Memory« as the title for his psychological study about post-traumatic symptoms of children of war.[2] This contribution to the discourse of collective remembrance reflects how traumatic experiences and memories of the historical events of WWII are shared within the social structure of the family. In line with Halbwachs' theory, the transmission of memory in Nienalt's book therefore represents an act of intersubjective communication.[3]

In the novel Nienalt defines the meaning of 'sharing' for his theoretical approach:

> *Shared Memory* lautete mein Arbeitstitel, geteiltes Gedächtnis. Ich meinte: aufgeteilt, unterteilt. Zugängliches und Weggestecktes. Selbstkartierung. Selbstbild (Draesner 80).

According to this, 'shared memory' means not only the collective construction of a common memory and group identity, as in Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, but also a subdivided structure of the remembered content. The double connotation of the German expression 'geteilt' unfolds two possible meanings: One is the understanding of sharing the memory of a common historical experience among a group. The other is the idea of a divided memory, which might be divided in itself, or exist partially detached from conscious acts of remembering. Through the depiction of multiple perspectives of different generational and cultural references, *Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt* addresses both the linking and the dividing aspect of 'teilen'/'sharing'.

2 The focus in Draesner's novel lies on German childhood memories, which include not only the experiences of the war, but also on a social level the presence of the ideology of the National Socialism as part of family life. There is a vast wealth of research on the dynamic effects and aftermaths of these experiences, especially in the field of oral history studies. For further reading see e.g., Reiter 2006.

3 The theory of 'communicative memory' was implemented by Jan Assmann in which he specified Halbwachs' concept. The communicative memory represents acts of daily communication among oral communities. Referring to this, Assmann points to a 'floating gap' of forgetting after every three generations. For an overview of Assmann's theory and its impacts on cultural memory studies see e.g., Astrid Erll et al. 2005.

The novel contains two storylines, including two basic temporal references: the first one, which is linked to the past, depicts the experiences of flight and forced migration of the Silesian and the Polish population in the year 1945, during the last months of WWII.[4] The other is intended to take place in the present, here in 2013, with the focus on the familial interactions and the everyday life of the characters in different places, mainly in the region of Munich and in Krzyżowa / Kreisau, a village in Lower Silesia, where Boris Nienalt gives group seminars for his patients. On the one side there is the German family Grolmann, who escaped to Bavaria in January 1945 from Oels, a small town in Lower Silesia. On the other side there is the history of Boris Nienalt's Polish family, who was resettled from the east to the west of the country shortly after the end of WWII. Despite the parallelism of the two families, the ratio between the German and the Polish perspective on the past and present experiences is not balanced in the structure of the novel: eight of the eleven chapters contain different perspectives of the Grolman characters, so the German experience is center stage in the novel.[5] Altogether nine characters appear, who represent in total four generations.

In line with the literary genre of generational novels[6] in Ulrike Draesner's book, the generation serves as a key medium to track the private history of the family against the backdrop of the collective history of the 20th century. The generation as a sociological concept goes back to Karl Mannheim. In his influential essay *Das Problem der Generationen* from 1928, he introduces the concept of a generation as a social group of

4 The Soviet army occupied the territory of the river Oder in January 1945, which caused a massive migration movement of the German population. Shortly afterwards the allied powers decided on the settlement of the territory with a Polish population as an effect of a new nationalisation, the so-called repolanisation or "Westverschiebung" (Halicka 118ff.).

5 As Ulrike Draesner refers partially on memories of her own family archive, one can interpret the overweigh of the German perspective in line with an autobiographical approach, which is characteristic for many contemporary German generational novels (Eichenberg 28). See also Draesner's web page of the novel, which functions as a paratext: https://der-siebte-sprung.de/.

6 Friederike Eigler implements the term 'Generationenroman' for the genre of family novels after 1989. Therein are depicted most of all the cracks and contradictions within the memory of the family and the novels focus on the backdrop of transgenerational interactions, to what extent the family history was forgotten, displaced or deformed (Eigler 2005 25).

individuals who participate in the same historical events and therefore share a certain collective identity (165). According to Mannheim a generation is an age-based community of experience which differs from other generations by 'limits of understanding' (Giesen 206). Whereas Mannheim's approach of differentiating separate generations of experience had a broad influence in social and cultural studies, recent approaches shift more to the process of dissolving generational boundaries, by means of transgenerational exchange, for example in the works of Sigrid Weigel. She points out that on the micro level of the family the concept of generationality becomes visible in the genealogic structure and its vertical form of transmission (93ff.). In contrast to segregating experiences alongside the horizontal generational framework, the family as a contact zone of three or four generations synchronises experiences by intergenerational transmission and shows how historical events affect the individuals beyond the generational gap (A. Assmann, 'Unbewältigte Erbschaften' 55).

In *Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt* one can distinguish four different generational points of view within the collective of the Grolmann family. The parents Lilly and Hannes represent the perspective of 'Zeitzeugen', who witnessed the historical events of WWII and fled from their Silesian hometown, while their sons Eustachius and Emil experienced the events as children. The history of the family's 'expulsion'[7] mirrors two fundamental experiences of violence and loss: first, the forced loss of home, second the loss of the disabled Emil. When Lilly escapes from Oels on the 19th of January 1945 with Emil, the older sibling, and the 14-year old Eustachius, the husband / father Hannes is based in Breslau as a soldier in the German Wehrmacht. The reunion of the family takes place about one year later in a Bavarian reception hall, but Emil is no longer with the family. He disappeared during their flight from Silesia. The night of Emil's disappearance is central of the multi-perspective tracking of the past events. Until the end of the novel is not entirely clear what exactly happened on that night and it remains a

7 'Expulsion' refers to the act of forced migration as an involuntary act of losing one's homeland (Ther 99). In this context Friederike Eigler claims to a potential nostalgic rendering of a lost homeland which runs the risk to show slight tendencies of historical revisionism (Eigler 214 4).

mystery whether Emil left his mother and brother of his own accord or if Eustachius might have killed him.[8]

Both experiences, the loss of home and the loss of the son / brother, represent traumatic experiences for those who witnessed the events. It becomes visible to what extent Lilly's, Hannes' and Eustachius' conflicts of identity are based on their inability to track the meaning of the events and to link their life-stories before and after they were forced to flee. This crack in identity leads to forms of misplaced experiences and blurred facts, as discussed in Cathy Caruth's analyses of the structure of traumatic experiences (84ff). The inability to come to terms with the experiences during the war and the forced migration causes different conflicts of identity that come to light after the family is reunited. Hannes lists the losses which are not part of the public discourse of the immediate postwar area, but shape the mental state of the individuals:

> Wir hatten ein Kind verloren, das Erbe verloren, alle Gräber, ein Stück unserer Selbst, die Verbindung zu unserer Vergangenheit, die Verankerung in Besitz und Beständigkeit, das Vertrauen, da sein zu dürfen (Draesner 381).

By means of the multi-perspective, internal viewpoint of each of the three remaining family members, one can trace the difficulties each has in processing the past events. The paradoxical time perspectives of Lilly and Hannes after their deaths illustrate their struggle to cope with their new environment and to go on with everyday life, including the unwelcoming attitude of West Germans towards them as refugees. In contrast, Eustachius' forward-looking approach represents the ambition to succeed within the new structures. Even more, in focusing in his scientific research on the free will of great apes, he seemingly seeks an explanation for the deeds of his father's generation and in doing so he attempts to overcome the traumatic family history (ibid. 379).

In light of these experiences it becomes clear that the characters' identity conflicts also refer to issues on the level of intergenerational communication. While important memories remain unspoken, others are

8 In one of the last dialogues between Eustachius and his granddaughter Esther, he confesses to her, that he shot Emil (Draesner 501). Although he finally seems to take the responsibility for the deed, Esther cannot determine, if he is telling the truth or if it is just Eustachius' imagination.

transmitted in a selective way. The sociologist Harald Welzer analyses communicative acts of transmitting memories within the social framework of the family. Welzer points out that acts of 'conversational remembering'[9] take place unintentionally, *en passant,* in the sphere of everyday conversations (2001 17). The collective memory of a family is highly affected not only by the present situation and the context in which the communicative acts take place but most of all by the particular members who generate memories that help constitute the identity of the group. In another study Welzer looks at representations of 'memory talk'[10] in German families, and especially the ways of communicating about the experiences and memories of National Socialism and the war time within the setting of the family. In his influential analysis *»Opa war kein Nazi«*, Welzer examines the extent to which German family memories paint the image of victimization and suffering of WWII and how this functions as a strategy of harmonisation (155).

In her essay on *Flight, Expulsion and Resettlement in Contemporary German Literature,* Jessica Ortner stresses that Draesner's novel "highlights the suffering of the German refugees and represents the accusation of the Wehrmacht soldier Hannes" (Ortner 106) as those topics, which are communicated within the family. But while the experience of the lost homeland represents a conscious narrative[11] in the collective of the displaced family, the individual loss of Emil is not. His disappearance brings up fundamental questions of responsibility and guilt which reflect the racial ideology of the National Socialists: firstly, in terms of the familial failure to take care of and protect the disabled family member, and secondly, in terms of the attitude of Eustachius who had been influenced by Nazi ideology since his early childhood and who might have questioned his brother's very existence. According to Nicole Sütterlin, the generation of 'Zeitzeugen' in *Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der*

9 The term 'conversational remembering' is rooted in the field of cognitive psychology in order to frame, how individuals adapt narrative representations of the past to their specific context and according to their conversation partners (Hirst and Manier 1996).

10 The German literary scholar Birgit Neumann applies the concept of 'memory talk' to the analysis of fictions of memory (176ff).

11 In her recent study Friederike Eigler analyses narratives of the lost homeland and concepts of 'Heimat' on the basis of 'postmemory' literature of German and Polish writers (Eigler 2014).

Welt emphasizes an increase in the silence about the experiences of the displacement, due to a blending of perpetrator's and victim's identities (171). At the beginning of the novel Boris Nienalt subsumes various belated effects of the experience of losses for the generation of the war children in a radio interview:

> Hitlers Kinder, die 1945, anders als die Erwachsenen, die einzige Welt verloren, die sie kannten, seien nicht erzogen, sondern im wörtlichen Sinne verzogen gewesen: an ihrer Psyche habe man gezogen. […] Jetzt im Alter, erlebe auch diese junge Kriegsgeneration, dass die Kindheit zurückkehre. Also der Verlust (Draesner 22).

The character of Eustachius, who works as a scholar in the field of emotional dispositions in primates, experiences such flashbacks of his childhood in an unconscious way.

Apart from the depiction of the perspective of the 'Zeitzeugen', the characters Simone and Esther exemplify the perspectives of family members who are born after the war and the displacement. In depicting these two characters of the Grolmann family, Draesner's novel illustrates Marianne Hirsch's theory of 'postmemory'. According to Hirsch,

> '[p]ostmemory' describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before - to experience they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* 5).

In Hirsch's theory, the term represents forms of intergenerational transmission to describe the relation between post-Holocaust children and their parents as survivors. Like Mannheim, Hirsch also distinguishes between different generations, but she points to specific genealogical dynamics between the generation who witnessed a historical event and the generation who is born after the event. Although the descendants have no lived or experienced memories, their life-stories are affected by the event and they perceive their parents' memories "in their own right" (Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory" 110). This

phenomenon of partially adapting another's life-story very often contains an unconscious and traumatic core and reveals certain identity conflicts.

The problem in communication amongst the 'generations of experience' is in fact a lack of communication regarding the next level of generational transmission: due to the silence about the events of the war and the forced migration, the postmemory generation only receives fragmented recollections and ideas about the past. Simone suffers from symptoms which show the impact of the event of the family's displacement on her life. She remembers the conversations with her father and her grandmother as followed:

> Vater berichtete wenig aus seinem vorbayrischen Leben, Oma Lilly hatte stets nur Anekdoten aus einem versunkenen Landstrich des 19. Jahrhunderts erzählt, der Schlesien hieß, und ich ahnte, was fehlte, wenn ich anfing, darüber nachzudenken, warum mein Vater war, wie er war. Eine Antwort hatte ich nicht. Nur Vorstellungen, Annäherungen, Symptome (Draesner 16f.).

One of her symptoms, the fear of snow, reveals a structure of transmission beyond communicated acts of remembering and sheds light on her conflict of identity. She perceives the subconsciously transmitted memories as if they were her own memories without the possibility of verifying if they are real: "Ein Stück kopiertes Leben im eigenen. Oder andersherum: eigenes Leben, umschlossen von Kopiertem." (ibid., 19) Because of these fantasies of experience, Simone is not able to connect her parents' and grandparents' experiences with her own life-story and the lack of communication between father and daughter becomes visible. In the dialogue with Simone, Boris Nienalt explains to her,

> in welch luft-, genauer erdleerem Raum sich die ersten, einer Vertreibung nachfolgenden Generationen befanden, welchen Ängsten, Verletzungen, Einschränkungen sie sich ausgesetzt sahen (ibid. 130).

His argument explicitly classifies her feelings in the non-fictional contemporary discourse of trauma and memory studies, which represents the specific 'metafictional' aesthetics[12] of the text. Concerning

12 The aesthetics of 'historical metafiction' are characterized by the application of intra- and extra-textual references to the historicity of the fictional story, for instance by integrating

the perception and the aftermath of the experiences of violence and resulting losses, Draesner's novel clearly frames the topic of transgenerational transmission (Sütterlin 169). The postmemory perspective of Simone shows a conflict of identity that is predominantly caused by an unspoken "lost direct link to the past" (Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory", 111).

Through the character of Esther, the novel also reflects the aspect of generational transmission on the level of a second generation of postmemory. According to Philippe Codde, the structure of postmemory as Hirsch frames it is not limited to the witnesses of the Holocaust and their children, but can be extended to all generations that come after a traumatic turning point in history (Codde 676). Center stage in contemporary literary depictions are often therefore perspectives of the third or fourth generation of descendants instead of those who witnessed the history of violence themselves. Though the descendants are shaped by the past experiences of their ancestors, they live in a greater temporal distance to the historical event. One of the strengths of Draesner's novel is to bring all these different perspectives together in one work.

The novel shows that the subsequent generation has other ways of dealing with the past than their parents and grandparents. In the character of Esther, the novel reflects a kind of a supersaturated attitude towards the historical experience of flight and expulsion: Reacting to what seems to be an omnipresent topic in cultural discourse, the granddaughter of an expellee ironically starts a webpage which she calls "Antimigrations-Blog" (Draesner 491). Being aware of her family's history, her attempt to connect denials of migration ("Migrationsleugner", ibid.) illustrates a distance to the historical case of the resettlement of the German population in Silesia. At the same time

autobiographical elements or documentary material (Gansel and Zimniak 2010). According to the theoretical framework of Linda Hutcheon 'historiographical metafiction' points the mediated character of historical knowledge in postmodern historical fiction (Hutcheon 1988). See also Ansgar Nünning's modification of Hutcheon's theory and his understanding of 'historiographical metafiction' (Nünning 1995). While this is characteristic of most of the generational novels from the last three decades, Draesner's meta-reflection of the postmemory discourse itself goes one step beyond.

it becomes clear that Esther is trying to understand her own affiliation with the history of the family.

In contrast to the relationship between Eustachius and Simone (father and daughter), the interactions and dialogues between Eustachius and Esther (grandfather and granddaughter) depict a potential communication beyond the trauma. Still affected by the past experiences of her family, Esther focuses on the present needs of her grandfather. When she takes care of him in the final state of his dementia, she comes to the following conclusion:

> In diesen Situationen fühlte ich immer klarer, dass Opas Gegenwart und Zukunft mir wichtiger waren als Phantasien über seine Vergangenheit, egal, welcher Art (ibid. 527).

She is able to understand him as a person, although she is aware of the uncertain and fragmented elements in his life-story. In the end, Esther becomes the closest witness of his incomplete memories and also finds ways to connect the grandfather's life-story with her own. In skipping one generation, the transgenerational transmission between grandfather and granddaughter shows potential for understanding the family history, including traumatic experiences and without neglecting its cracks.

Transcultural Legacies of the History of Violence

In line with the multigenerational perspectives on the past, the novel connects two different cultural perspectives on forced migration in Lower Silesia. While the history of the Grolmann family depicts the expulsion of the German population, the history of the second family illustrates the events from the Polish perspective. In doing so, the novel performs what Friederike Eigler marks as "legacies of multiple relocations – including the expulsion of Poles from Poland's former Eastern territories" (Eigler 2014 8) and broadens the perspective on a transnational memorial culture.

The mother of Boris Nienalt, Halka, arrives in Wrocław, the former Breslau, as a teenager with her parents in May 1945, immediately after the end of the war. At that time their hometown, the eastern Polish city Lwów, became part of the Soviet territory as a consequence of the Polish

'Westverschiebung' and the population was resettled in the former German territory. When the family arrives, the city is still characterized by the destructions of the war and a violent atmosphere of revenge against the former German occupiers. They move into a flat that was obviously left in a hurry by the German inhabitants, a family named Schönfließer. Here, two family histories overlap in the topography of the destroyed Wrocław / Breslau as a former and a new homeland. Halka remembers a scene, where she finds her mother Grazyna mourning the fate of the Schönfließers and their losses:

> Als Mamuś wieder einmal im Fotoalbum der Schönfließers blätterte, riss ich es ihr weg, zerriss die aufgeschlagene Seite, es traf die unschuldige Anngegret, die nicht unschuldig war, hier war niemand unschuldig, »unschuldig« war eine zerbombte Kategorie, und schüttelte Grazyna, wütend nun auch auf sie, aber sie weinte nur wie ein Kleinkind, das man nicht schütteln soll" (Draesner 466)

The newly arrived are surrounded by the lost world of the former inhabitants. Whereas Halka feels the need to destroy the family photographs and to get rid of the memories of suffering under the German occupation, Grazyna's behaviour demonstrates empathy for the losses of the enemies. By juxtaposing two histories of broken life-lines the city Wrocław / Breslau becomes a site of memory in both the German and the Polish family histories. Beside the attitude for blaming the German perpetrators for the atrocities of the war, the resemblance of losses "constitutes a microcosm of European history in which the suffering of the German and the Polish histories are equated and flight and expulsion is represented as a common European catastrophe" (Ortner 104).

In the dialogue between the two descendants Simone and Boris, these experiences are reflected against the backdrop of a globalised memorial culture in the 21st century. Based on theories of the 'transnational turn', like Michael Rothberg's theory of a 'multidirectional memory', the idea of the transcultural implies "crossreferencing" (Rothberg 3) spaces of memory as well as hybrid forms of cultural identity. Although Jessica Ortner claims that Draener's novel has a "false symmetry that represents both Boris' and Simone's ancestors as equally victimized and

guilty" (Ortner 104), the text shows the awareness of an interconnected history of violence. The postmemory exchange between the descendants Simone and Boris allows them to look beyond a binary structure of victims and perpetrators. On a microlevel their relationship exemplifies the dialogue between two narratives of cultural memory. In this way, the interaction between Boris and Simone demonstrates what Aleida Assmann calls 'dialogic memory', which combines a variety of cultural perspectives and tries to construct a common interpretation of the past (Assmann 2006 193).

Thus, Draesner's novel depicts a quest for a transcultural memory among the generations of postmemory. Simone's and Boris' life-stories are inextricably linked with the family's history of forced migration. Boris declares his identity as a hybrid of more than one cultural background which attempts to transcend the national boundaries of remembering the past. He also reminds Simone of the multiethnic background of her unpacked family history. In this way, the transcultural exchange between the two characters is intentionally brought about by Boris, the bilingual border crosser, who is trying to understand his family history and his identity as a product of the multiple entanglement of the German, Polish and Silesian cultures.

Against the backdrop of the fourth generation, represented by the characters Esther and Boris' daughter Jennifer, the novel reflects on the topic of transculturality and migration in a broader social sense. On this level the text also refers to the hybrid structure of origin and belonging, especially in the character of Jennifer. Raised by her grandmother Halka, she feels connected to the German and the Polish culture: 'Bei ihr war ich Dżenusia, sie drückte mich von oben bis unten und sagte »ljubow nie kartoschka«, auf Ostpolnisch-Russisch, »die Liebe ist keine Kartoffel«' (Draesner 418). The symbolic reference to the 'Kartoffel' as a colloquial stereotype of German identity in Polish language illustrates the interconnectedness of the two cultural backgrounds.

Regarding fictions of generational memory, recent approaches in literary and cultural memory studies claim that migration as one of the most life-shaping experiences which is bound up with the issues of

remembering the German past in the 21st century.[13] Many examples of contemporary literature refer to movements of migration, especially through the depiction of memorial sites in central and eastern Europe (Haines). The history of the family in the novel is linked with the experience of flight, forced displacement and the shift of borders. The narrated conflicts of identity show how the history of violence in the 20th century reveals questions of home and origin in a globalised world, and how the different generations find ways of coming to terms with issues of connection and identity. Both of the two young women, Jennifer and Esther, are depicted in interaction with their female friends: Jennifer with the Russian Natascha, Esther with the Pakistani Pawani. The two friendships demonstrate on a micro scale reasons for and effects of global movements of migration and contextualise them within the history of the migration of the German population during and after WWII. Esther's and Pawani's game to find 'eine Vertreibungs-Leugnungs-Geschichte mit befriedigendem Ende' (Draesner 516) makes light of and deconstructs the burden of coping with the family history. The character of Esther shows on the one hand the sensitive awareness of the grandfather's trauma, but on the other hand also a less emotionalised approach to the atrocities of WWII. By juxtaposing various experiences of forced migration, the text relocates the history in the present and sheds light on contemporary reflections in a 'postmigrant society'.[14]

Summary

The structure of a 'shared memory' appears in the novel on two levels: First, in depicting how the family represents an important social framework for the transmission of traumatic experiences and memories. The experience of dealing with the history of violence is rooted in various forms of familial intergenerational transmission as well as forms of displacement. The members of the third and the fourth generation after the historical turning point of WWII appear more and more detached from binary victim and perpetrator positions. Shared memory also

13 See e.g., Erll 2017 or C. Assmann 2018.

14 The term understands migration as an open-ended process, which points diversity as the main characteristic in immigration societies (Hill and Yildiz 2018).

manifests itself in the literary junction of two different, partially conflicting family memories of the events of loss and migration. The novel shows the dialogical structure of transnational remembering, in which the overlapping yet distinctive parts of the collective memories are revealed and negotiated.

Sieben Sprünge vom Rand der Welt therefore represents acts of transmitting traumatic experiences and remembering collective history in transgenerational and transcultural settings. The novel illustrates forms of shared memory, both on the level of the small collective of the family in terms of transmitted legacies of the past, and on the level of collective history as a shared form of suffering from the loss of homeland. As an example for postmemory fiction, the novel tracks and cracks open the blank spaces of the family histories, predominantly from the descendants' perspectives, who already know and reflect their post-datedness to the events. Draesner's text contributes to crucial questions of remembering the history of violence in the 21st century by taking into account different generational and cultural experiences. Center stage in these literary depictions are forms of transmitting and narrating the past as well as the awareness of the multiple interrelations of memory and migration. Without blurring perspectives of victims and perpetrators, the fictionalization of the family creates space for a postmemorial dialogue, revealing future structures of remembrance.

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