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Literatures without a Fixed Abode. Figures of Vectorial Imagination Beyond the Dichotomies of National and World Literature

1. World Literature and Mobile Specialization

In his 1952 festschrift essay with the programmatic title “Philologie der Weltliteratur” (“Philology of World Literature”), Erich Auerbach – author of *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (*Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*), composed between May 1942 and April 1945 in his Istanbul exile – sketched the outlines of a philology that in the wake of the Second World War would elucidate the “profound changes in the general condition of life”,¹ and afford “insight into their total significance”² and suggest ‘the practical consequences’ to be drawn therefrom (Auerbach 1967: 302). Important for this German-Jewish emigrant – who starting in 1947 taught Romance languages and literature at different renowned universities in the United States – was a critical development of Goethe’s concept of *Weltliteratur* (world literature), which, as Auerbach well knew, was in large part conceived by Germany’s national poet as a foil to the dominant concept of national literature.³ Goethe’s remark of 31 January 1827 was paradigmatic: “Nationalliteratur will jetzt nicht viel sagen, die Epoche der Weltliteratur ist an der Zeit, und jeder muß jetzt dazu wirken, diese Epoche zu beschleunigen” (Eckermann 1981: 211).⁴ There can be no doubt that it was Erich Auerbach’s concern, against the backdrop of the historical events of his time, to make his own contribution to a new era of world literature.

In doing so, he was conscious of the fact that historically speaking the “epoch of Goethean humanism” (Auerbach 1967: 302) had been

1 “eingreifende Veränderung der allgemeinen Lebensvoraussetzungen”.

2 “in ihrer ganzen Bedeutung erkennen”.

3 See Meyer-Kalkus (unpublished paper).

4 “National literature has not much relevance today, the epoch of world literature is now dawning, and everyone should do what he can to accelerate its arrival”.

very short-lived and that there were large and perhaps irreconcilable differences between the amount of knowledge that the author of *Faust* personally possessed and that which the state of research had attained by the mid-twentieth century:

Was Goethe am Ende seines Lebens von den Literaturen der Welt, vergangenen und gegenwärtigen, zu Gebote stand, war viel im Verhältnis zu dem, was zur Zeit seiner Geburt davon bekannt war; es ist sehr wenig, verglichen mit unserem gegenwärtigen Besitz (Auerbach 1967: 302).⁵

But how can any future philology do justice to this steadily growing mountain of facts, to what already in Auerbach's time was a tremendously expanded store of knowledge, if philology should wish to treat that which – based on its claim to be an “historical discipline” – it must recognize as the “inner history of the last millennia”, namely “the history of humanity's successful progress toward self-expression” (Auerbach 1967: 303).⁶ The unmanageable flood of data long ago heightened the pressure toward specialization in the area of philology:

Wer sich nicht konsequent auf ein enges Spezialgebiet und auf die Begriffswelt eines kleinen Kreises von Fachgenossen beschränkt, der lebt in einem Getümmel von Ansprüchen und Eindrücken, denen gerecht zu werden nahezu unmöglich ist. Und doch wird es immer unbefriedigender, sich nur mit einem Spezialgebiet zu befassen; wer heute etwa ein Provenzalist sein will und nichts anderes beherrscht als die einschlägigen Teile der Linguistik, der Paläographie und der Zeitgeschichte, der ist kaum auch nur noch ein guter Provenzalist (Auerbach 1967: 303).⁷

Thus did Erich Auerbach state the central dilemma confronting not only philology, the arts and humanities but also the natural sciences. He recognized at the same time that if philology did not wish to cede a good bit of its social relevance, then specialization in solely one disci-

5 “The amount of world literature, both past and present, at Goethe's disposal toward the end of his life was great in relation to what was known at his birth; it is very little by comparison with what we presently possess”.

6 “die innere Geschichte der letzten Jahrtausende [...] die Geschichte der zum Selbstausdruck gelangten Menschheit”.

7 “Those who would not severely restrict themselves to a narrow and specialized field and to the conceptual world of a small circle of specialist colleagues, live amid a turmoil of claims and counterclaims and impressions to which it is nearly impossible to render full justice. And yet it becomes increasingly less satisfying to occupy oneself with only a single specialty; whoever today would be a specialist in Provençal studies and has mastered nothing more than the pertinent contemporary history and the relevant linguistic and paleographic aspects, can hardly even be called a good Provençal specialist”.

pline would be insufficient. The necessity for a – as we today would formulate it – transdisciplinary orientation spanning various specialty fields was thus proclaimed; and this at the same time draws attention to the fact that already in Auerbach's time the pressure to specialize was of a double nature. For on the one hand it obliged scholars to undertake research *within* the constantly differentiating or – as Auerbach often stated it – ramifying disciplines, while at the same time there also existed pressure toward forms of specialization that endeavored to *cut across disciplinary boundaries*. How else could Auerbach himself have been able to tackle so self-evident and yet at the same time so bold and even audacious a project⁸ as an investigation into “The Representation of Reality in Western Literature?”.

Specialization is therefore – in an extension of Auerbach's proposed “Philology of World Literature” – to be interpreted as a *mobile* concept, as a term of movement, and not exclusively as disciplinary “ramification” and a disciplined one-way street. Or as Auerbach formulated it during his teaching stint at Yale:

Es handelt sich also um Spezialisierung; aber nicht um Spezialisierung gemäß den überkommenen Einteilungen des Stoffes, sondern um eine jeweils dem Gegenstand angemessene, und daher immer wieder neu aufzufindende (Auerbach 1967: 309).⁹

Thus does specialization have not only a progressive metaphorical function in proceeding from the “general” to the “particular”, from the “broad” to the “narrow”, or even from the “superficial” to the “deep”, but it can carry out the most diverse movements so long as these are adequate to the specific construction of the object and are verifiable in their discursive design. And the specializations making for creative and innovative scholarship are precisely those that cut across the “conventional divisions of the material”. For scholarly creativity – according to brain specialist Wolf Singer – can be described as the capacity “to see together what has never been seen together before” (Singer 2003: 108).¹⁰ But specialization in an area not yet seen together (and not merely written together) in its entirety demands an

8 See Ette (2004a: 57-96).

9 “We are speaking here of specialization; though not according to conventional divisions of the material but rather a specialization that is always appropriate to the respective object and which is therefore always to be newly discovered”.

10 “etwas zusammenzusehen, was bisher noch nicht zusammengesehen worden ist”.

equal measure of flexibility with regard to the objects and the methods of researching them, and still more relational mobility as well as a mobility that **puts** things into a relation with one another.

Auerbach – who was born in Berlin in 1892 and died in the U.S.A. in 1957 – deeply regretted that precisely that “which earlier epochs ventured to determine, namely man’s place in the universe”,¹¹ had long been “remote” from the research agenda of his time (Auerbach 1967: 310). Thus may one without exaggeration assert that this scholar of Romance languages and literatures was preoccupied with achieving a *world* consciousness¹² in the fullest sense – a world consciousness whose emergence would be assisted by Auerbach’s concept of a philology of world literature. This also explains why in the last section of his essay Auerbach issued a programmatic call for a philology that was not restricted to a one-sided specialization or one that was understood as such:

Jedenfalls aber ist unsere philologische Heimat die Erde; die Nation kann es nicht mehr sein. Gewiß ist noch immer das Kostbarste und Unentbehrlichste, was der Philologe ererbt, Sprache und Bildung seiner Nation; doch erst in der Trennung, in der Überwindung wird es wirksam. Wir müssen, unter veränderten Umständen, zurückkehren zu dem, was die vornationale mittelalterliche Bildung schon besaß: zu der Erkenntnis, daß der Geist nicht national ist (Auerbach 1967: 310).¹³

Unmistakable in this passage is the degree to which the experience of exile, of “separation”, entered into the concepts and research of a scholar whose most important work emerged from the experience of

11 “was frühere Epochen wagten, nämlich im Universum den Ort der Menschen zu bestimmen”.

12 See Ette (2002) as well as (2004b). Erich Auerbach was well aware of the semantical multi-layeredness of the “world” concept, and rightfully pointed out the “great task of making people conscious of their own history; and yet this is so very insignificant, even a renunciation, when one calls to mind that we are not only on earth but in the world, in the universe” (“große Aufgabe, die Menschen in ihrer eigenen Geschichte ihrer selbst bewußt zu machen; und doch sehr klein, schon ein Verzicht, wenn man daran denkt, daß wir nicht nur auf der Erde sind, sondern in der Welt, im Universum” [Auerbach 1967: 310]).

13 “In any event, our philological homeland is the earth; the nation can no longer make that claim. Certainly the most precious and indispensable thing that the philologist inherits is the language and culture of his nation; yet it can only be effective in its separation therefrom, in its surmounting of it. Amidst changed circumstances, we must return to that which the pre-national medieval culture already possessed; we must return to the realization that the mind is not national”.

migration and exile and was only successful because this forced change of place in the universe made him particularly sensitive to both the world-relevant and worldwide dimension of literature.¹⁴ Erich Auerbach knew full well the extent to which any philology so conceived would be necessarily exposed to the “tumult of claims and counter-claims and impressions” (“Getümmel von Ansprüchen und Eindrücken” [Auerbach 1967: 303]), while being simultaneously aware that the renunciation of such a transversal and transdisciplinary definition of the task of philology would ultimately bring about its implosion, its uncreative surrender and descent into meaninglessness. For renouncing to the tumult of claims could only imply renouncing to any claim of its own of being effectual beyond ever more narrowly drawn disciplinary parameters, as well as to the claim of investigating the current place of man in the universe. It was here that Auerbach felt an obligation to “the passionate disposition that drives an albeit small number (as always) of gifted and original young individuals to take up philological-intellectual history”,¹⁵ and he had no doubt as to its “significance and future” (“Sinn und Zukunft” [Auerbach 1967: 302]).

The meaning and consequences of Auerbach’s ground-breaking attempt to plot a new direction for philology can be as little overlooked as his partial misreading (from our present-day vantage point) in the sphere of literature and culture – a misreading which, from an U.S.-American postwar perspective, was completely understandable, but which presupposed a rapidly increasing planetary homogenization that entailed the phenomenon of “our earth, which is the world of world literature”,¹⁶ becoming ever “smaller” and experiencing a diminution in “variety” (Auerbach 1967: 301). The author of *Mimesis* knew himself to be in accord with his contemporaries as well as with contemporary scholarship when he expressed his fear that a global de-differentiation process might iron out and remove any cultural distinctions and developmental processes. What others greeted as a desirable standardization was seen by Auerbach as a fundamental threat to cul-

14 See the work of Edward Said in connection with his translation of Auerbach, namely Auerbach (1969).

15 “leidenschaftlichen Neigung, die nach wie vor eine zwar geringe, aber durch Begabung und Originalität ausgezeichnete Anzahl junger Menschen zur philologisch-geistesgeschichtlichen Tätigkeit treibt”.

16 “Unsere Erde, die die Welt der Weltliteratur ist”.

tural diversity – in particular when it came to world literature. For “thousands of reasons known to everyone”, asserted Auerbach, “the life of people everywhere on the planet” was becoming standardized and was marked by the same “modern ways of life” that had their point of origin in Europe (Auerbach 1967: 301). But did life and ways of life actually grow ineluctably more uniform on a global scale? The half century since the publication of Auerbach’s pioneering essay has shown us to what degree the still observable homogenization process is accompanied and counter-balanced by an opposing development of cultural heterogenization. This highly complex double movement has made the question as to the coexistence of different cultures in the world **the** (survival) question of the twenty-first century. Today there is no real call for us to inure ourselves to Auerbach’s notion “that on a uniformly organized earth only a single literary culture – indeed, in a comparatively short period of time, only a few literary languages, soon perhaps only one – could remain alive” (Auerbach 1967: 301).¹⁷ Would this analysis correspond to actual developments, then in fact “the notion of a world literature would at once be realized and destroyed” (Auerbach 1967: 301).¹⁸ The reduction to a Singular would take the place of concretely experienced diversity.

Such a viewpoint, of course, is not in itself sufficient. Against the backdrop of the current fourth phase of accelerated globalization, it is necessary to keep in view the manifold world-literary developments and to focus above all on those dynamic processes that have gone largely unobserved or have been considered irrelevant and **marginal**, enfolded as they are within the hitherto bipolar and antagonistic distinction between world and national literature. For the question as to what can be preserved of the diversity should not be directed at the rather static concept of national literature, whose process is considered chiefly as a relatively autonomous (national) history that is to be addressed and dealt with by individual disciplines specializing therein; but rather, in the face of an immobile administrative philology, it is necessary to depict as fundamentally complex processes of movement

17 “daß auf einer einheitlich organisierten Erde nur eine einzige literarische Kultur, ja selbst in vergleichsweise kurzer Zeit nur wenige literarische Sprachen, bald vielleicht nur eine, als lebend übrigbleiben”.

18 “[wäre] der Gedanke der Weltliteratur – in einem höchst reduzierten und Goethe fernen Sinne – zugleich verwirklicht und zerstört”.

those literary networks that cut across linguistic, national and disciplinary lines and which are no longer adequately represented by individual philologies, particularly when they devote themselves to a single language or literature. The complexity of these literary networks cannot be carved up into a sum of its individual parts,¹⁹ for the movement, the vectorial component, cannot be “filtered out”.

But such movement and network processes are not simply to be classified as *a* national literature or **the** world literature.²⁰ Placed next to (and sometimes in opposition to) the Singular – i.e. the supposed singularity and static identity – of such concepts, we have to develop dynamic concepts of movement within the framework of mobile specialization. Thus, in what follows, our concern is not with a philology of world literature but a relational investigation within the framework of a philology of world literature. World literature, however, can be seen as neither the sum of national literatures nor as a world literature solely shaped by homogenization processes. National literary, linguistic, and disciplinary lines of demarcation should neither be lost sight of nor expunged from the investigation; world literature, in its vectorial multi-dimensionality, should be conceived within a discontinuous and post-Euclidean fractal space. Important in the context of a (yet to be configured) fractal geometry of world literature are not so much the boundaries and lines of demarcation as the methodologies and communication forms, and less the territorial than the trajectorial and vectorial dimension from a transregional, transnational and transareal perspective. From such a precise, multivalent and simultaneously mobile vantage point, one could succeed in seizing the new differentiation processes as well as the continuing de-differentiation processes in such a way that between (and beyond the sharp contrasts of) homogenization and heterogenization the creative scope of world literature in its vectorial dimension is recognizable. Then the philologies would transcend the mere administration of literature and make a contribution to helping define man’s place and existence in the universe.

19 According to Friedrich Cramer, apart from relative unpredictability and a basic irreversibility of all processes, fundamentally complex systems possess the character trait “that the whole is more than the sum of its parts” (see Cramer 1996: 223).

20 The problems entailed by such a procedure can be seen in the rather carefree Francocentric study of Pascale Casanova (1999).

2. Dialectic of Enlightenment as a Dialectic of Homelessness

In Auerbach's "Philology of World Literature", it is not contingent that he concludes his reflections on the "world" concept – falling back on Hugo von St. Viktor – with the theme of exile – "mundus totus exilium est" (Auerbach 1967: 319).²¹ And it was with great care that in the opening pages of what is certainly his most successful book today he chose to recall the figure of Odysseus who – particularly from the perspective of Auerbach's exile in Istanbul at the time – betrays a self-portrait of the Jewish *émigré*. For Odysseus embodies the exile experience of being driven hither and thither in a broken, fractal space while yet still in possession of that last glimmer of hope for a possible homecoming, that re-acknowledgment of one's person whose trigger is his very wounding and injury – "The Scar of Odysseus" (title of the famous first chapter of *Mimesis*).

Almost exactly contemporaneous with Erich Auerbach's reflections on *Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* was Max Horkheimer's and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*), written between 1941 and 1944, and 500 copies of which were distributed in the latter year "to friends" before these "Philosophische Fragmente" ("Philosophical Fragments") could be published as a book under its definitive title in 1947 by the Amsterdam *émigré* press Querido.²² Not only in their first excursus "Odysseus oder Mythos und Aufklärung" ("Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment") but also in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* are present the travel movements of the Homeric hero, whose figure often appears where one might have least expected it. Time and again Odysseus, who is constantly plunging into new adventures with his companions, comes to the fore and presents himself – as for example "in the face of the Sirens" as a "premonitory allegory of the dialectic of Enlightenment" (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 41).²³ According to Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Odyssey* is "testimony to the dialectic of Enlightenment" (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 50)²⁴ and in its sundering of epic

21 See also the entry "Exil", in *Auerbach-Alphabet* (2004).

22 See Habermas (1986: 277). For the story of the work's composition from November 1941 to May 1944, see Habermas (1986: 278-281).

23 "ahnungsvolle Allegorie der Dialektik der Aufklärung".

24 "Zeugnis [...] von der Dialektik der Aufklärung".

from myth finally denotes a loss, the singing of the “Wanderings of Odysseus” already being the “wistful stylization of that which can no longer be sung”,²⁵ and the “hero of the adventure” proving himself as the “ur-specimen of precisely that bourgeois individual whose quintessence arose from this self-assertion of an integrated epic and myth, whose original prototype was the wanderer” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 50).²⁶ Hence – and here one can find many surprising parallels to Auerbach’s reading of the Homeric epic – “the venerable cosmos of the meaning-filled Homeric world”²⁷ is revealed as “achievement of ordering Reason, which destroys the myth using the rational order in which it [the myth] is reflected” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 50).²⁸

This stimulating new interpretation and reading of the figure of cunning Odysseus, which was likely owing “primarily to Adorno” (Habermas 1986: 287) is of major significance for our analysis. If Auerbach reads the *Odyssey* as at once a complement to and in contrast with the *Bible*, Horkheimer and Adorno read the adventure of Odysseus against a historical-philosophical backdrop that is placed – to no lesser degree than the Holy Writ – in a “world-historical and world-historical-interpretive connection” (Auerbach 1982: 19).²⁹ This, just like the worldwide claims of this philosophy, is obvious from the fulminating start of the book:

Seit je hat Aufklärung im umfassendsten Sinn fortschreitenden Denkens das Ziel verfolgt, von den Menschen die Furcht zu nehmen und sie als Herren einzusetzen. Aber die vollends aufgeklärte Erde strahlt im Zeichen triumphalen Unheils (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 9).³⁰

Against the background of an historical and historical-philosophical situation in which “not merely the activity but the purpose of science and scholarship has become questionable”³¹ entirely like “the restive

25 “sehnsüchtige Stilisierung dessen, was sich nicht mehr singen läßt”.

26 “Urbild eben des bürgerlichen Individuums, dessen Begriff in jener einheitlichen Selbstbehauptung entspringt, deren vorweltliches Muster der Umgetriebene abgibt”.

27 “der ehrwürdige Kosmos der sinnerfüllten homerischen Welt”.

28 “Leistung der ordnenden Vernunft, die den Mythos zerstört gerade vermöge der rationalen Ordnung, in der sie ihn spiegelt.”

29 “einen weltgeschichtlichen und weltgeschichtsdeutenden Zusammenhang”.

30 “In the widest sense of progressive thinking, Enlightenment has always aimed at removing fear from the lives of people and setting them up as masters. But the fully enlightened earth is irradiated with Calamity Triumphant”.

31 “nicht bloß der Betrieb sondern der Sinn von Wissenschaft fraglich geworden [ist]”.

self-destruction of the Enlightenment”,³² which has long been evident, the authors in their foreword dated “Los Angeles, California, May 1944” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 7) attempted to elaborate more clearly that “germ of retrogression”³³ which was contained within Enlightenment thought itself and “which today occurs everywhere” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 5).³⁴ This germ is the reason why humanity “has sunk into a new kind of barbarism” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 1).³⁵

Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s work on myths³⁶ as work on the return of the Enlightenment in the form of mythology and of civilization in a barbaric guise parallels ideas of Walter Benjamin’s as they appeared in his “On the Concept of History”, which in 1941 was saved for posterity by Hannah Arendt and placed in the possession of Adorno:

Es ist niemals ein Dokument der Kultur, ohne zugleich ein solches der Barbarei zu sein. Und wie es selbst nicht frei ist von Barbarei, so ist es auch der Prozeß der Überlieferung nicht, in der es von dem einen an den andern gefallen ist (Benjamin 1980a: 696).³⁷

Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s *Dialektik der Aufklärung* positions itself within “the – despite Hitler – continued theoretical work of German emigrants” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 7)³⁸ and thus blazes the trail for a kind of reading in which *The Odyssey* is not limited to being one of the “earliest representative testimonials to bourgeois-occiden-

32 “rastlose Selbstzerstörung der Aufklärung”.

33 “Keim zu jenem Rückschritt”.

34 “der heute überall sich ereignet”.

35 “in eine neue Art von Barbarei versinkt”.

36 In the sense of Hans Blumenberg (1979).

37 “It is never a document of culture without it being at the same time one of barbarism. And as it itself is not free of barbarism, so too is the process of its being passed down from generation to generation not free”. This quotation takes on an odd coloring when one applies it to “Prozess der Überlieferung” (“Process of Tradition”) itself, whose historical-philosophic theses played such an important role in the development of the Frankfurt School. For the circumstances surrounding Hannah Arendt’s handing over of the suitcase containing Walter Benjamin’s manuscripts to the office of the Institute of Social Research (the former Frankfurt School, now having been established in New York), see Young-Bruehl (2000: 241sq.).

38 “der trotz Hitler noch fortgesetzten theoretischen Arbeit deutscher Emigranten”.

tal civilization” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 6).³⁹ The so-interpreted theme from *The Odyssey* is itself interwoven with these reflections – like Benjamin’s theses – in fragment form. The “inner proximity of the material to the destiny of mankind after two world wars” (Frenzel 1983: 564)⁴⁰ left its stamp not only on literature but on philology as well as philosophy, on both philologists and philosophers.

It is therefore not surprising that Horkheimer (born in 1895 in Stuttgart as son of a Jewish industrialist) and Adorno (born in 1903 in Frankfurt am Main as son of a Jewish wine wholesaler), who both left Germany after Hitler’s rise to power and eventually reached the United States after having passed through various way-stations *en route*, were, like Erich Auerbach, attracted to the peripatetic figure (*Bewegungs-Figur*) of Odysseus as a point of reference in a series of constantly changing life-constellations. For in their own peregrinations, the figure of Odysseus symbolized a certain hope. The “trembling castaway” in his own way “anticipates the compass”,⁴¹ and his “powerlessness, to which no part of the sea remains unacquainted”,⁴² simultaneously aims at the “disempowerment of power(s)” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 53).⁴³ Also in these formulations there exists in the figure of Odysseus a double self-portrait – without being reduced of course to a merely autobiographical reflection. For Odysseus embodied for Horkheimer and Adorno a “knowledge wherein exists his identity and which allows him to survive” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 53),⁴⁴ so that as a “knowing survivor”⁴⁵ he is simultaneously one “who most daringly abandons himself to the threat of death, which makes him hard and strong” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 54).⁴⁶ The peripatetic figure of the knowing Odysseus is above all a mythic, larger-than-life figure of survival (*überlebensgroße Überlebensfigur*) providing a link to the “Old World”.

39 “[eines der] frühesten repräsentativen Zeugnisse bürgerlich-abendländischer Zivilisation”.

40 “innere Nähe des Stoffes zum Schicksal der Menschheit nach zwei Weltkriegen”.

41 “zitternde Schiffbrüchige [nimmt] die Arbeit des Kompasses vorweg”.

42 “Ohnmacht, der kein Ort des Meeres unbekannt mehr bleibt”.

43 “Entmächtigung der Mächte”.

44 “Wissen, in dem seine Identität besteht und das ihm zu überleben ermöglicht”.

45 “wissend Überlebende[r]”.

46 “welcher der Todesdrohung am verwegensten sich überläßt, an der er zum Leben hart und stark wird”.

The Homeric hero stands not only for a knowledge of life but still more for a knowledge that serves as prerequisite for survival in the happenstance existence of the exile, while simultaneously upholding the claim of contributing something decisive to the disempowerment of power. But no less decisive is the fact that it is “homesickness”⁴⁷ that gives birth to Odysseus’ adventure. One’s homeland is formed in league with settledness and fixed possessions (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 85), but for Horkheimer and Adorno it is not held captive to this notion of settledness (in contradistinction to the nomadic life); for according to them, one’s “homeland is having escaped” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 86),⁴⁸ and furthermore:

Rede selber, die Sprache in ihrem Gegensatz zum mythischen Gesang, die Möglichkeit, das geschehene Unheil erinnernd festzuhalten, ist das Gesetz des homerischen Entrinnens. Nicht umsonst wird der entrinnende Held als Erzählender immer wieder eingeführt (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 86).⁴⁹

Just as in escape, there is an element of later **having** escaped, so also is the homeland preserved in the endless wanderings of exile. Even the recitation of dreadful events, “as if they were intended for purposes of entertainment”,⁵⁰ simultaneously makes for “that first emergence of horror”⁵¹ whose memory is kept intact (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 86). It is first in having escaped that a homeland is again made accessible; however, there remains no access to one’s initial condition, to one’s “original” heritage and homeland. Only then can Odysseus, marked and marked out by his scar, emerge as the home-coming homeless one and as the homeless home-comer – as the personification of an unending dialectic of homelessness. He becomes the “model for a modern epic of homelessness as counterweight to fascist glorifi-

47 See Horkheimer/Adorno (1986: 85): “Daß der Begriff der Heimat dem Mythos entgegensteht, den die Faschisten zur Heimat umlügen möchten, darin ist die innerste Paradoxie der Epopöe beschlossen” (“That the idea of homeland is opposed to the myth, which the fascists wish to pass off as homeland – herein resides the chief inner paradox of the epic”).

48 “Heimat ist das Entronnensein”.

49 “Speech itself, language and its contrast to mythical song – the possibility of retaining the memory of the experienced calamity – is the law of Homeric escape. It is not for nothing that the escaped hero is always introduced as the narrator”.

50 “als wäre es zur Unterhaltung bestimmt”.

51 “[läßt] zugleich das Grauen erst hervortreten”,

cation of a cultural heritage such as the homeland mythology”,⁵² just as exile would become the “*conditio sine qua non* of modern existence” (Segler-Meißner 2003: 75).

Certainly the exile experience of *homo migrans*⁵³ is as old as humankind itself, and certainly *homo sacer* (Agamben 2003a) has always been numbered among the essential states of human experience, part and parcel of the *conditio humana*. And yet there is good reason to see migration and homelessness as specific to human existence and life-knowledge in the modern era. In this connection, one may fall back in a general way on Friedrich Nietzsche, who in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Gay Science)* – and primarily with reference to European modernity – linked homelessness with the disappearance of the Ideal and the transvaluation of all values. Notwithstanding, for Nietzsche the notion of “European” was inseparable from that of homelessness and migration:

Es fehlt unter den Europäern von Heute nicht an solchen, die ein Recht haben, sich in einem abhebenden und ehrenden Sinne Heimatlose zu nennen, ihnen gerade sei meine geheime Weisheit und *gaya scienza* ausdrücklich an’s Herz gelegt! Denn ihr Los ist hart, ihre Hoffnung ungewiss, es ist ein Kunststück, ihnen einen Trost zu erfinden, aber was hilft es! Wir Kinder der Zukunft, wie *vermöchten* wir in diesem Heute zu Hause zu sein! (Nietzsche 1988: 628)⁵⁴

The expatriation from today, from the present, opens here a temporal dimension that can be linked with the experience of a ruptured and discontinuous time that – in the words of Hugo von St. Viktor – has turned all the world into exiles. And why should this not apply to precisely that continent which was beholden to the myth of *Europa*, of a displaced and ravished migrant, the homeless place that Europe had become?

52 “Modell einer modernen Epik der Heimatlosigkeit als Gegenentwurf zur faschistischen Glorifizierung der Wurzellosigkeit wie der Heimat-Mythologie”.

53 In the words of Klaus Bade (2000: 11): “There has been ‘homo migrans’ as long as there has been ‘homo sapiens’; for wanderings are as much a part of the *conditio humana* as are birth, procreation, sickness and death”.

54 “Among Europeans today there is no dearth of those who have a right, as a mark of distinction and in an honorable sense, to call themselves homeless – it is to them I expressly impart my secret wisdom and *gaya scienza*! For their lot is hard, their hope uncertain; it is no mean feat to devise consolation for them – but what use is it! We children of the Future, how we would *wish* to have a home in the here and now!” (see also Ette 2001).

But critical to our approach from this perspective is the dialectic of homelessness which runs throughout Horkheimer's and Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and which is the unmistakable thrust of both this book and Auerbach's *Mimesis*. This dialectic grew from the epoch-specific experience of two world wars, but above all from an anti-Semitism that via National Socialism pursued the so-called Final Solution of the so-called Jewish Question and which in their "concluding" chapter Horkheimer and Adorno endeavor to explore. Did not Walter Benjamin, in the eighth of his historical-philosophical theses – half a century before Giorgio Agamben –, unequivocally argue the idea that,

Die Tradition der Unterdrückten belehrt uns darüber, daß der "Ausnahmestand", in dem wir leben, die Regel ist. Wir müssen zu einem Begriff der Geschichte kommen, der dem entspricht. [...] Das Staunen darüber, daß die Dinge, die wir erleben, im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert "noch" möglich sind, ist *kein* philosophisches. Es steht nicht am Anfang einer Erkenntnis, es sei denn der, daß die Vorstellung von Geschichte, aus der es stammt, nicht zu halten ist (Benjamin 1980a: 697).⁵⁵

But if the historical concept must be changed – a concept which declares a state of emergency that phenomenon which has long been the norm and with a view to those far-reaching legal, philosophical and bio-political consequences which, in turn, according to Giorgio Agamben, paradoxically characterize the state of emergency (*stato di eccezione*) as a paradigm of political rule in the modern era⁵⁶ – then, as a logical consequence, any history of literature that proclaims everything a state of emergency that is not in conformity with what is seen as the universal schema of national literature, must be fundamentally rethought and altered. For not "only" in the political, bio-political and economic spheres but also in those of culture and more specifically literature, have persecution and exile, diaspora and migration – still stubbornly dismissed as states of emergency and relegated to those

55 "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history that corresponds to this rule [...]. The astonishment that the things we are experiencing in the twentieth century are 'still' possible is *not* of a philosophical nature. Such astonishment is not at the beginning of an insight unless it is one that stems from an untenable idea of history".

56 Agamben (2003b: 10): "[...] lo stato di eccezione si presenta come la forma legale di ciò che non può avere forma legale".

certain conceptual pigeonholes especially created for them – long been the rule in a worldwide context. It is no coincidence that the fact of the exception becoming the rule and of homelessness becoming a prime point of reference in life, in reading and in writing, is to be understood more clearly within the sphere of warring conflicts and the totalitarianism of the twentieth century, of international anti-Semitism and the Shoah. Insight into the fact that *Entronnensein* – as formulated in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – cannot be separated from the knowledge that Horkheimer gave word to in 1944, namely that, “actually anyone could be in a concentration camp”.⁵⁷ Both are products of an epistemological process based on the perception of a historical situation and both – in the Benjaminian sense – at first portray a “picture” that “flashes in the moment of its recognition”⁵⁸ (Benjamin 1980a, from the fifth thesis) or “at the moment of danger”⁵⁹ (Benjamin 1980a, from the sixth thesis). That this “flash” occurred almost in the exact same “moment” for thinkers as diverse as Auerbach, Adorno, Benjamin and Horkheimer⁶⁰ is as little owing to chance as the fact that Walter Benjamin chose to depict History using a soon-to-be famous “picture” that was apposite for a still “unredeemed humanity” (Benjamin 1980a: 694)⁶¹ namely a “picture of Klee’s, whose title goes by the name of ‘Angelus Novus’” (Benjamin 1980a: 695):⁶²

Der Engel der Geschichte muß so aussehen. Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor *uns* erscheint, da sieht *er* eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel

57 See Habermas (1986: 281).

58 “Bild [das] im Augenblick seiner Erkennbarkeit eben aufblitzt”.

59 “im Augenblick einer Gefahr aufblitzt”.

60 For the familiarity with and closeness to Walter Benjamin of the authors of *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung*, with a view to the historical-philosophic interrelation of myth and the modern era, see Habermas (1986: 282sq., 286sq.).

61 “[nicht] erlösten Menschheit”.

62 “Bild von Klee, das Angelus Novus heißt”.

wächst. Das was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist *dieser* Sturm (Benjamin 1980a: 697sq.).⁶³

Like Adorno and Horkheimer and Auerbach, Benjamin chose a figure in motion (*Bewegungs-Figur*); albeit for his Angel of History – in contrast to Odysseus – the way back, the path leading to an original paradise, to the homeland, is debarred to him and has become unviable. And yet his gaze is as little averted from it as is that of the crafty Greek. Both figures are driven by storms while still having a point of orientation. Yet whereas the home-coming homeless one is still granted the possibility of a final homecoming to Penelope's loom, and his erratic and disconnected wanderings describe a rondo pattern, in (and with) Benjamin's eyes Klee's angel is only granted the possibility of movement toward a stormy future that is a regression into the future without any return, erratic while yet still as linear as a one-way street.

The philological and world-literary reflections of Erich Auerbach, the critical philosophical-scientific fragments of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno as well as the historical-philosophical and progress-critical theses of Walter Benjamin show to what extent the dimension of homelessness in the mid-twentieth century powered certain insights and in how fundamental a way writing and thinking and even life itself had for the longest time been informed by a homelessness that in the sphere of ever more brutal wars and mass expulsions, of anti-Semitism and the Shoah, had become the rule. That the generation-specific experience of authors like Hannah Arendt, Victor Klemperer and Werner Krauss has, as it were, been continued in a transgenerational way since the end of the twentieth century (the century of migrations) within changed historical and socio-cultural circumstances is hardly surprising when one considers that their experience is indissolubly linked with just these new circumstances and life-contexts. The dialectic of Enlightenment still operates as a dialectic-

63 “The Angel of History must appear so. He has turned his countenance to the Past. Where a chain of events appears before *us*, he sees only a single catastrophe that unremittingly piles rubble upon ruins and flings them at his feet. He would like to linger, wake the dead and piece together that which has been destroyed. But a storm blowing from Paradise catches his wings and is so strong that the angel cannot fold them. The storm drives him unceasingly into the Future, to which his back is turned, while the heap of rubble before him grows Heavenward. That which we call Progress is *this* storm”.

tic of homelessness. Odysseus and the Angel of History have in a sense disappeared, even if at the end of the twentieth century these wandering figures have been newly constituted. If one's homeland is *Entronnensein*, then escape is a way and, in fact, many ways to configure and **picture** one's homeland, to capture it in a (motion) picture.

If one can understand the state of emergency as a normative case and the concentration camp as a bio-political paradigm of modernity, then homelessness – in a time when the storm continues to blow the Benjaminian Angel of History before it and ever further afield from Paradise – has become a very harsh experience for those with no fixed abode. Even when investigation of the supposed state of emergency in the sphere of literature in a time of post-colonial theory construction increasingly encompasses phenomena such as diaspora and exile, migration and transmigration, it will still be a good long while before the literature of homelessness – or rather, the literature with no fixed abode – will be understood and recognized as more than just a peripheral, marginal element in world literature. Not only the concept of history but also the concept of that which is linked to the historical idea in a fundamental yet complex way – namely the concept of literature – must change if an adequate understanding of literary writing in the twenty-first century is to be achieved. For there is no doubt that this literature will have increasingly to be conceived and understood as literature without a fixed abode. The wings of the Benjaminian angel are still spread wide and the storm has increased in force. It may well be that not only the present concept of history but that of literature and philology as well are no longer sustainable.

3. Literatures without a Fixed Abode

Within the globalizing but by no means egalitarian literary networks of the world – they are rather stamped with strong asymmetries – literature without a fixed abode is assuming a wider and increasingly important dimension. At the end of a century that was marked by dramatic migrations of an unprecedented scale, and on the basis of multifarious expulsions due to war, famine, economic and ecological catastrophes and as a result of political, racist and sexual persecution, there have been developments that have also, step by step, trans-

formed the mapping of world literature in the passage from the twentieth to the twenty-first century and which continue to transform this literature at an accelerated rate. Intercontinental infrastructures and transnational labor markets, fundamentalist religious wars and “ethnic cleansing”, globalized money markets and mounting numbers of economic refugees along with other phenomena too numerous to mention have all brought about the situation in which previous centers have not only been relegated to the periphery but the former peripheral areas have long since shifted to the center and become culturally active there. However, the globalization of democracy and justice – as opposed to the globalization of that “Calamity Triumphant” alluded to by the authors of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 9) – in an age of migration and interdependence has yet to arrive.⁶⁴

The metropolises have become focal points of multicultural, intercultural and transcultural movements, by which the various kinds of cultural juxtaposition can be understood, the manifold types of established exchange between sharply distinctive cultures, and the diverse forms of a sort of nomadic interaction running athwart different cultures. Even if such phenomena cut across and overlay one another, it is important and in fact unavoidable in any investigation of world literature that one tease out conceptually the various movements of cultural juxtaposition, cooperation and entanglement. For otherwise one runs the danger – with regard to the metropolises as well as world literature – of not only conflating the opposed movements of cultural homogenization and heterogenization but of underestimating their complexity.

In all of these processes one is obliged to take into account that political and cultural crosscutting is not seldom accompanied by the invariable crosscutting of languages. Citing Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben draws attention to the fact that rupture of the “continuity” between human being and citizen, between nativity and nationality, between one’s birthplace and one’s people – which in the twentieth century was increasingly visible and irrefutable – has plunged the “fiction of origin”, in the context of modern nation-building, into a crisis (Agamben 2003a: 140). Refugees, stateless persons and mi-

64 See the very different approaches of Höffe (1999), Albert (2002) and Fraser (1997).

grants shake the assumptions of a process of identity formation based on the nation-state that is predicated on the “naturalness” and “self-evident” character of supposedly homogeneous cultural, religious and linguistic communities. It was and is precisely in the sphere of literature that the creation of imagined communities as well as their discursive erosion play a significant role.

For quite some time now the mother tongue which someone has been “born into” no longer automatically means that this will be the language which a certain author actually uses in their long-term literary endeavors or if only from time to time. As one can migrate to another nation, so too can one migrate into a foreign national literature. Affiliation with two or more “national literatures” or writing in various languages serially or simultaneously is no more unusual than a change of citizenship or the possession of several passports at once. For quite some time now such phenomena have no longer been rarities, even if they may differ in degree and kind in the various literary regions of the world. It is precisely in zones of dense globalization that these developments are emerging on such a massive scale that the construction of homogeneous “national” culture and literature appears not only antiquated, but as a conscious ideology of re-nationalization. But what does this all mean in a world where the nation can no longer – in the sense of Erich Auerbach (1967: 310) – be the “philological homeland?”

We are dealing here with developments that give Goethe’s concept of “world literature” a completely new meaning, a meaning that unquestionably lies beyond not merely the nation-state but national literature as well, even if this latter concept continues to guide the whole apparatus of production, reproduction, distribution and reception. World literature is less settled and has increasingly adopted a nomadic template for thinking and writing. This vectorization of literary production also corresponds to what for the longest time has been an increased spatial and sometimes intercultural and transcultural mobility from the side of literary criticism and scholarship. In this respect, as previous examples have shown, since at least the mid-twentieth century the United States has for various reasons become not a melting pot (or even the salad bowl) for immigrants so much as a “meeting point” and platform for diverse developments in the worldwide literary network. In a certain sense, the U.S.A. has inherited the mantle of

France and in particular Paris, or, as Henri Michaux once put it, “la patrie de ceux qui n’ont pas trouvé de Patrie” (Michaux 1956).⁶⁵ Persuasive testimony to this fact is the enormous number of intellectuals, writers, scholars and scientists throughout the world who have had short or extended stays in U.S.A. or who live on both sides of the Atlantic or Pacific.

Writing that has no fixed abode and transcends national boundaries – and which in no way questions the existence of these boundaries, as it succeeds not infrequently in multiplying them – expands the concept of national literature through the growing presence of a literature that one often subsumes under that highly unsatisfactory rubric of “migrant” literature. In an article published in the U.S., regarding a Spanish translation of the German-language novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* (*Life Is a Caravansary*), which among other honors was awarded the Austrian Ingeborg Bachmann Prize in 1991 and whose author, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, was raised in Turkey –, Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo, who had forsaken his native Barcelona to make his first home in the Arab world, stressed how for many years he had been at pains to draw attention to the fact that soon a significant portion of German literature would be written by Turks, a major part of French literature would be penned by those from the Caribbean and the Maghreb, and a large share of English literature would be authored by Indians and Pakistanis (Goytisolo 1994).⁶⁶ For a good long while now this fact has been incontrovertible, even if the general consensus among national literary institutions of scholarship and the media is to dismiss such developments as peripheral phenomena.

One can today affirm that Goytisolo’s prognosis has indeed proven out in an amazingly short period of time and that it describes an important – if by no means sole – reality of contemporary writing at the start of the twenty-first century. Languages, according to Emine Sevgi Özdamar in an interview on the occasion of her receipt of the Kleist Prize, “are like instruments, you make music with them, vary them” (Özdamar 2004).⁶⁷ She added:

65 Here quoted from Casanova (1999: 49).

66 See also Ette (2004a: 227-252).

67 “[Sprachen] sind ja wie Instrumente, man musiziert mit ihnen, kann abwechseln”.

Von Nationalstolz kriege ich Allergien. Es reicht doch zu sagen, ich bin da oder dort geboren. Mehr nicht. Überhaupt, man müßte mindestens zwanzig Pässe haben, man weiß ja nicht, welches Land sich als nächstes mit welchem verfeindet. Oder einen Weltpaß. Oder keinen (Özdamar 2004).⁶⁸

In a lecture at Berlin's "Haus der Kulturen der Welt" on her novel *Les nuits de Strasbourg* – composed in French in 1997 in the U.S.-American state of Louisiana and whose action takes place within two different time frames in French-Alsatian-German Strasbourg – the Algerian-born writer Assia Djébar asserted:

Without a homeland, without need of a heritage: for at least twenty years I enjoyed my nomadic existence, I felt comfortable and sometimes even at home in Barcelona, Venice, Freiburg im Breisgau, or in the metropolises of northern Europe, arriving in Paris, which I wished to discover [...]. When a man or woman comes to Europe from the south and writes European literature, is that not a kind of reverse "exoticism"? The counterpart or parallel of the "Orientalism" craze among Europeans would for us be "Occidentalism" – why not? (Djébar 1998).

Here the fact has been signaled that for some time now European literature has no longer been the *chasse gardée*, the private preserve, of Europeans. Assia Djébar's avowal that her "writing longs for *other places*" (Djébar 1998) in no way implies a desire to relocate in terms of literary terrain, but rather to create a literature that is not solely **defined** by its terrain and its re-territorialization. The rebellion here against time-honored lines of demarcation is patently obvious; although (or for the very reason **that**) her writing deals intensively with certain specific places, for example Strasbourg during the period of its evacuation by French troops from September 1939 to June 1940, thus tackling a subject that has been largely avoided in both French and German literature. That is why literature without a fixed abode is not to be simply removed from consideration, for it cuts across traditional territorial lines as inherited from the nineteenth century in the spheres of literature and philology.

It is no accident that the development adumbrated by Goytisolo and inimitably personified by Djébar has accelerated its pace since the end of the twentieth century. This, however, should not deceive us

68 "I am allergic to national pride. It's enough to simply say that I was born here or there. Nothing more. You would really have to have at least twenty passports – one never knows what country is going to be the enemy of what country next. Or a world passport. Or none at all".

into thinking that national literary categories, ascriptions and exclusionary mechanisms have disappeared or will be disappearing any time soon. And it is precisely the literary authorities and other people involved in the literary trade who will continue to make things difficult for authors like Emine Sevgi Özdamar, whose work is sometimes not regarded as belonging to the sphere of Turkish literature by Turks; or José F. A. Oliver, whose writing is often not arrayed in the ranks of Spanish literature by Spaniards; or Amin Maalouf, whose books in the Arab world are sometimes not considered Arab literature. Authors whose work can be classified as literature without a fixed abode are the preferred objects of national literary (and now and then nation-state) expatriation. The instances of such are legion.

Those authors who dispose of no permanent residence in a territory supposedly their “own” often have a difficult time evading such exclusionary mechanisms. For both habitual cultural and literary border-crossers – frequently branded as border-**violators**, as smugglers or spies, as vagabonds, nomads and mercenaries, as freebooters, refugees and double agents – and inhabitants of the borderlands have always had problems being recognized in those countries where they were currently residing. Therefore it is little wonder that representatives of literature without a fixed abode – in contrast to those authors who at first glance can be easily subsumed under a single national literary rubric – are considered suspect and smack of the subversive.

And yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to dismiss migratory literature as well as other forms of literature without a fixed abode as “exceptional cases” and thereby disincorporate them. Moreover, national institutes of cultural foreign policy such as the Goethe Institut and the Instituto Cervantes have long recognized that literary “nomads” allow them to score points abroad and publicly demonstrate (and put to the test) the openness of their own societies. Until now, though, philologies have not formulated any satisfactory concepts that do justice to phenomena and developments that for some time now have been widespread within the international literary enterprise.

Our discussion of Erich Auerbach’s thoughts concerning a philology of world literature should demonstrate that the conceptually contrasting notions of “national literature” and “world literature” – inherited from the nineteenth century – are no longer adequate in addressing those phenomena that in the wake of the totalitarianism, wars

and persecutions of the twentieth century – and in particular the Shoah – have fundamentally changed the “normality” of the bases of thinking and writing and have made migratory writing into an international mass phenomenon. The conceptual lines of demarcation that Auerbach seismographically registered in his essay, against the background of his own life-experience, are in need of change and mobile specializations that can do justice to the vectorial imagination of literary writing processes and the dynamic dimension of artistic production at every level. Goethe’s famous pronouncement that “national literature has not much relevance today”⁶⁹ and that the “epoch of world literature” is now dawning (Eckermann 1981: 211)⁷⁰ is not to be simply adopted uncritically as a guideline to the changed conditions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, but is to be creatively transformed and adapted to these conditions. It is now time, in light of the fourth phase of an accelerated globalization, to bring the diverse products of world literature into relation with one another, to set them in conceptual motion by embracing literature without a fixed abode and thereby focussing attention on mobile, dynamic and transient figures in the context of a fractal, discontinuous and, as it were, post-Euclidean geometry of literature.

This means not only that in the future we should direct our chief attention more determinedly to the translation and transmission of literature and from this “external” perspective of movement to then enlightening the putative authorities of the various (national) literary realms; it also means that the respective literary languages and territories should be regarded as places for the immigration of “foreign” languages and “foreign” cultures, places in which the “foreign” becomes part of one’s “own” while still not losing its “foreignness” within one’s “own”. It is especially important to investigate how such displaced elements become established and how the host (literary) language – in the sense of Walter Benjamin’s reflections on “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” (“The Task of the Translator”, Benjamin 1980b) – is transformed and enriched. To judge such processes solely as a sign of cultural homogenization **or** hybridization testifies rather to conceptual impoverishment. One of the important tasks of contem-

69 “Nationalliteratur [...] jetzt nicht viel sagen will”.

70 “Epoche der Weltliteratur”.

porary philology should be to document and fathom the dynamics, latitude and patterns of movement between both poles in a more precise way.

The observable increase in the volume of literature without a fixed abode has led to the situation – without the fact of it being broadcast hither and yon – that all aspects and elements of literary production have been set in motion in a far more radical and lasting way than ever before and that we are experiencing a general vectorization in every respect, including the area of national literary structures. Since in the post-modern era the temporal bases of our thinking and writing have, in comparison to the modern era, become weaker, while spatial concepts and thinking have increased in significance, today our attention should be focused on movement and migration as seminal traits of world literatures. A fully elaborated Poetics of Movement, however, has yet to emerge. Such an endeavor, though, would be very worthwhile, for it could bring to light, in all its complexity and variety, the vectorial imagination that lies behind much of today's writing.

For a good long while now, vectorization has comprised not only the themes and content of literature, their various presentations and representations of movement, but also their adoption by a wide spectrum of readerships on a global scale. This means that we can no longer, in an unreflective way – and this is by no means “only” a phenomenon of non-European and/or so-called post-colonial symbolic production – territorialize our cultures, but we must rather vectorize them and understand them as cultures in motion.

With its various overlays of space and movement, world literature allows one to observe and playfully test inclusionary and exclusionary processes, traditions and breaks with traditions, as well as the sequence of multicultural, intercultural and transcultural events, from various perspectives simultaneously. World literature mediates a world consciousness that accords with the state of affairs of our time, and it places at our disposal a certain life-knowledge that reductionist mappings – in which homogeneous cultural blocks stand hostilely opposed to one another and suggest a “clash of civilizations” (Huntington 1996) – are disclosed as the self-fulfilling prophecy and ideology of a strategy for achieving hegemony, an insistent extension of politics by other means.

It is no coincidence that Horkheimer and Adorno see in the peripatetic figure of the crafty Odysseus the embodiment of a “knowledge that founds his identity and allows him to survive” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 53).⁷¹ During a period when the Enlightenment had taken a surprising turn into totalitarian violence, this configuration of survival knowledge that must reorient itself and learn new ruses emerged through those movements performed by the “knowing survivor” (Horkheimer/Adorno 1986: 54) as someone who is driven about within the Homeric world of alien and yet familiar powers. In the hermeneutics of this peripatetic figure of the migrant, a survival knowledge (*Überlebenswissen*) is stored that is not necessarily due to any authorial intention or even consciousness, but is accessible to us even today and can be adapted from outside of its original context. My thesis is that the figures in motion (*Bewegungsfiguren*) described by this peripatetic figure Odysseus are precisely those which facilitate the process of translation and adaptation; that within them exists an itinerary or grid of movement structured along lines of space and time which can also be employed as a spatial model of understanding within the context of other time-space settings and which can be adopted as life-knowledge within the narrative structure of one’s own life. The Scar of Odysseus can symbolize the fact that such cannot succeed without injury and loss.

In this way, the reception and adoption of life-cum-survival knowledge itself brings forth a certain life-knowledge – and herein lies a good part of the political potential of literature – that can be placed in the effective service of society. A more intensive approach to literature without a fixed abode in the context of world literature can demonstrate that out of this social function new areas of knowledge and spheres of activity for the various philologies can arise that may be developed as soon as a predominantly static disciplining of philological disciplines is reduced in favor of mobile forms of specialization. If one can succeed in understanding the present phase of accelerated globalization as an extension of the earlier historical sequence of accelerated and decelerated phases, and if one is able to recognize in the current ordering of knowledge the history and thus plasticity of **currents** of knowledge, then one can achieve a new grasp

71 “Wissen, in dem seine Identität besteht und das ihm zu überleben ermöglicht”.

of literary and cultural processes within a fractally configured space of movement that transcends not only the Goethean dichotomies of national and world literature. Seen against the contemporary historical and world-cultural background of the beginning of the twenty-first century, our considerations here in critical extension of Erich Auerbach's challenging reflections will hopefully make a contribution to a philology that has a distinct life-knowledge orientation.

4. Figures of Vectorial Imagination in the Shoah Literature

The historical development of literature without a fixed abode experienced a rapid increase in the twentieth century – in the sense of the previously largely taboo treatment of anti-Semitism, the Shoah and totalitarianism (and these beyond the context of National Socialism as well) as related themes⁷² – that represents still today one of the most important traditions of these *littératures sans domicile fixe*. Even the establishment of the state of Israel and the affiliated project of a kind of global re-territorialization have in no way succeeded in weakening the importance of these traditions. Rather, additional waves of emigration and immigration were triggered in the Middle East, the worldwide consequences of which can still be seen today.

At the end of Hannah Arendt's study of the *univers concentrationnaire*, she came to fear that "concentration camps and gas chambers" (Arendt 1991: 942) would continue to endure far beyond the brief life of National Socialism and other totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century:

Just as in today's world totalitarian tendencies can be found everywhere and not only in those countries with totalitarian rule, so too could these central institutions of total power very easily survive the toppling of all those totalitarian regimes with which we are familiar (Arendt 1991: 943).

Insofar as this survival (at least of concentration camps) throughout the twentieth century into the present day in diverse regions of our world has become an established fact – as numerous studies show – and insofar as the concentration camp itself can with good (if not uncontested) reason be termed a "bio-political paradigm of the modern

⁷² Hannah Arendt was the first to break the taboo in her today still fascinating book *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft* (1991).

era”,⁷³ then it is understandable why Shoah literature has become a transgenerational as well as transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon. Neither did the existence and infamy of concentration camps begin or end with the inhuman atrocities of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, Dachau and Mauthausen. The *univers concentrationnaire* did not cease to exist with liberation of the camps.

With the imminent deaths of the last survivors of the National Socialist concentration and extermination camps looming in the next several years, present discourse on the Holocaust and Shoah has increasingly focused on the notion of eyewitness testimony.⁷⁴ All discussion and research axes that concern themselves with the world of the concentration camp would appear to intersect here. Paul Celan’s often-cited verse “Niemand zeugt für den Zeugen” (“No One Bears Witness to the Witness”) has become a point of reference for a debate concerning the approach to and legitimacy of eyewitness reports that is far from being brought to even a preliminary conclusion. Giorgio Agamben’s statement that today, from an “historical viewpoint”, we know “how the final phase of extermination transpired” in even the “smallest detail” (Agamben 2003c: 7), stands in opposition to his own reference to the fundamental conundrum that emerges with the question, “What of Auschwitz remains?”: “The impossibility of bearing witness, the ‘gap’ in human speech must therefore collapse in on itself so that another impossibility of attestation can take its place – namely one that has no language” (Agamben 2003c: 35).

But beyond this conundrum, the analysis of figures on the move (*Bewegungsfiguren*) can throw an entirely new and different light on the construction of testimonial discourses in the Shoah literature, highlighting fruitfully those dynamics that leave their stamp upon literature without a fixed abode. For these hermeneutic figures of movement introduce a spatial model of understanding that reveals – on the strength of the aesthetic dimension of these texts – a cognitive function beyond the “impossibility of attestation”, a cognitive function that can be intersected but not thwarted by the conundrum of attestation. In the following section, using four examples, we will investigate various

73 This is the title of the third and concluding portion of Agamben’s *Homo sacer* (Agamben 2003a: 125).

74 See the extensive overview of research per this theme in the second chapter of Segler-Meißner (2003).

figurations of the concentration camp along lines of vectorial imagination, thus allowing aesthetic access to this attestation which lies beyond a solely referential function. Consequently, the following brief analyses proceed from the conviction that in the testimonial discourses (*Zeugendiskurs*) one is able to locate a generative discourse (*Zeugungsdiskurs*) and process for literature without a fixed abode.

4.1 *Albert Cohen, or the Prefiguration of the Concentration Camp*

Let us first examine a short text by Albert Cohen (1895-1981), a text which until now has garnered little critical attention.⁷⁵ Cohen is one of the outstanding Francophone authors of the twentieth century as well as being one of the most difficult to classify – in many respects. He was born on the small Greek island of Corfu in the Ionian Sea and grew up amid the Venetian dialect of the local Jewish community. Driven away from the island by fear of future pogroms, Cohen's parents settled their family in Marseilles. It was only after Cohen completed his university studies in Geneva that he exchanged his Ottoman passport for a Swiss one. Helvetic citizenship enabled him to not only visit relatives in Alexandria and to work at the "Bureau International du Travail" in Geneva, but also, as a Francophone writer, to flee the Germans and gain entry into England when the British consul in Bordeaux recognized him as the author of his famous novel *Solal*. Later, as an international diplomat, he succeeded in devising a passport for stateless persons and having it internationally recognized. He was no less proud of this passport success than he was of his novels penned in a language that was not his maternal one; novels that he authored under a name into which he had discreetly slipped an "h" upon acquiring his Swiss passport (as a resident of Geneva he became a citizen of Mellingen in the canton of Aargau).⁷⁶

The life-experience of this progenitor of a stateless passport doubtlessly left its stamp on his literary oeuvre. For similarly complex, "internationalized" careers (often in grotesque exaggeration) can be found in the figures of Cohen's stories, plays and novels. What makes these pieces so readable is not only the language, clothes and physical

⁷⁵ See my extensive analysis in Ette (1999).

⁷⁶ For a biography of Cohen, see the monograph by his friend Gérard Valbert (1990).

descriptions of the characters, but above all the spatial sketches of life histories that turn into travel accounts. With the assistance of their movements in space, Cohen lays before his readers the map, as it were, of their personalities.

This is precisely the case with a haunting scene that appeared in Cohen's 1972 book *Ô vous, frères humains*, and which may have been a crucial key to his literary oeuvre. Decades before, just months after the war's end in 1945, Cohen had published this scene in two parts in the influential exile periodical *La France Libre* under the title "Jour de mes dix ans" (Cohen 1945a/b).⁷⁷ The following reflections are devoted to this germinal scene and genuine literary creation of Cohen's.

"Jour de mes dix ans" appeared on Cohen's fiftieth birthday and was the first publication in *La France libre* to carry his own name and not the pseudonym "Jean Mahan". The text is divided into a total of thirty-seven short sections, each bearing a separate heading. The first section is called "Souvenirs d'enfance", a title which is adjusted forthwith to read "souvenirs d'enfance juive" (Cohen 1945a: 193). Without here undertaking a detailed analysis of the text's characteristic use of both the first and third-person singular, one can assert that presented here is not the solipsistic individual seated in front of a mirror and looking backward into his past; rather, the narrator paints a picture in words that doubtless many other Jews would recognize. On the protagonist's tenth birthday and on his way home from school, he approaches a street-vendor hawking an all-purpose spot remover, who, after careful inspection of the young boy, tells him to be on his way:

Toi, tu es un Youpin, hein...tu es un sale Juif, tu es avare hein, ton père est de la finance internationale hein, tu viens manger le pain des Français hein, eh ben nous, on aime pas les sales Juifs par ici, c'est une sale race (Cohen 1945a: 193).

It is no accident that this key scene possesses not only an individual component but a collective dimension as well. For so too did Alain Finkielkraut – born in Paris in 1949 and an attentive reader of Cohen – begin his (self-)critical and sometimes provocative piece on the Jewish self-image and the Jewish construction of identity, using Jean-Paul Sartre's *Réflexion sur la question juive* to inform a similar depiction of

77 An abridged version appeared in September of that same year in the journal *Esprit*.

one's identity as a Jew being precipitated exogenously; it is first under the gaze of others, beset by a flurry of epithets, that the *juif imaginaire* is "born".⁷⁸ And in alike fashion does Albert Cohen's "Jour de mes dix ans" also portray a moment of birth that transforms the boy on his tenth birthday into a Jew; the trap limned by Finkielkraut – "obligation de penser le judaïsme en termes de moi et d'identité" (Finkielkraut 1980: 215) – claps shut.

Symptomatic is the fact that Cohen's keynote scene of a person's coerced transformation into a Jew takes place on the street among a public that raises not a single voice in defense of the child. All of them are familiar with anti-Semitic propaganda and would appear to approve of it. In this open space there is no counter-discourse, the defenseless protagonist is abandoned to the exclusionary mechanism of the blond aggressor. The historical background to this episode, which forms the nucleus of "Jour de mes dix ans", was bled into the text and conveys the anti-Semitic atmosphere of a Marseilles that in 1905 was still caught up in the furor of the Dreyfus Affair; and the *camelot* does not forget, amidst the platitudes of his anti-Semitic discourse, to allude to it.⁷⁹

For the young boy, harshly excluded from the community, now begins a "migration" that after several short respites will find its (temporary) end in the last portion of the tale in the boy's parental home. After approaching the circle of spectators crowding around the street-vendor, there then follows a diametrically opposed, nonautonomous movement that casts the boy out of the community and into society at large. The youth wanders through the streets of Marseilles, walks along walls that double as Wailing Wall, and aimlessly traverses the indifferent crowd like a *juif errant*.

In the next section, "Un camp de concentration en miniature", the protagonist makes his way to the railroad station, whose trains – as is often the case in Cohen's work – symbolize the transportations into the concentration camps, a fate which also threatened the Jews of Marseilles after the German occupation of the *Zone libre*. The locus of this concentration camp *en miniature* is the train station lavatory, the place

78 Finkielkraut (1980: 10): "Crève, sale Juif!".

79 This historical and mental-history dimension in *Ô vous, frères humains* is buttressed with additional details from the everyday life of that time, but which we are unable to explore here.

to which the boy in his desperation retreats – and which one imagines to be rather unsuitable as a transitory space – so as to protect himself from the threatening outside world. The little boy has been driven from the community and already assigned his place in the (as of now still virtual) concentration and death camps, whose existence Cohen was first to learn of in English exile, and which he himself had been able to narrowly escape. The adult Cohen's later knowledge of this fact informs the situation of his ten-year-old protagonist, whose transformation into a Jew in Marseilles during the Dreyfus Affair shows the career of the Jewish people in their *errance*, while prefiguring the concentration camps in a projection that oscillates between 1905 and 1945, between recounted time and the time of recounting.

In the text itself are several “sequels” to the keynote scene in the streets of Marseilles. Repetition of the street-vendor's accusatory words quickly segue into a portrayal of the boy, who, with the help of his five fingers – standing for the five figures of Cohen's novel – stages a private performance that transforms the lavatory, that “camp de concentration en miniature”, into a venue of self-reflection and art. The protagonist lets his fingers dance about as the author himself has the figures in his series of novels dance to his plots. In the concentration camp itself the sphere of art is placed in opposition to the unbearable *errance* in a hostile external world and is a critical factor in warding off thoughts of suicide. Contained within Cohen's prefiguration of the concentration camps is the notion that the work of the artist is an expression and tool of the intractable will to live as well as one's survival-knowledge.

Naturally this fleeting interior space – a kind of transit camp – can offer only momentary refuge. The toilet attendant is impatient with the boy for having spent so much time in the station's privacy, and after she drives him out his aimless wandering begins anew. The narrator historically surcharges this episode, and, as in the case of the “Wailing Wall”, it passes over into a culturally encoded collective history. Once more, from a short story emerges a long transgenerational history: “J'allai. Mon héréditaire errance avait commencé” (Cohen 1945b: 287). Shambling along the city's walls, for the first time ever, this definitive *juif errant* is able to decipher the words scribbled on them – “Mort aux juifs!”. Then the protean protagonist – skillfully emplaced *en passant*, as it were – goes from being an outcast to being a member

of the Chosen People, in the truest sense “recognizing” himself as he passes by the mirror of a jeweler’s shop and presents the reflection with his compliments (Cohen 1945b: 292). The abject exile has become a “prince de l’exil” (Cohen 1945b: 292).

At the end of the text and the protagonist’s *errance*, this banished Chosen One returns to his parental home (and thus to the safe haven of inherited history): “ô doux ghetto privé de mon enfance morte” (Cohen 1945b: 294).⁸⁰ Ensuing the death of childhood in the birth of a Jewish identity defined as an ostracized member of the Chosen People, the boy’s return to his parental home gives his aimless wanderings and his stay in the “concentration camp” a rondo form that makes sense of the youth’s transformation into a Jew. In his dialectic of homelessness, the Jewish Odysseus has indeed found his way home – and the way to his own writing.

4.2 *Emma Kann, or Writing in the Concentration Camp and the Foreign Homecoming*

Emma Kann was born in 1914 in Frankfurt am Main. Several months after her *Abitur*, the Jewish Kann left Germany in September 1933 for England. In 1936, likewise overcoming myriad obstacles, she arrived in Belgium, and in 1940 fled before the invading German army into France. In the summer of that same year she was interned for some four weeks in the concentration camp of Gurs at the foot of the Pyrenees, which she was soon able to leave as a result of the chaotic situation pursuant to the French capitulation. After fleeing France in 1942, Kann reached Havana by way of Casablanca, and in March 1945 she was permitted entry into the United States, where she began to write in English in 1948 and where she lived – predominantly in New York – until her return to Germany in 1981. It was only with her reentry into Germany, as she noted in 1986, that she “returned to her mother tongue” (Kann 1986: 679).

Emma Kann’s path through life is inseparable from her numerous lyric works, which have hitherto been published only piecemeal in a few volumes of poetry. In the year of her flight from Germany she

80 Albert Cohen’s Geneva home was secured against the outside world through multiple locks and bolts. As many have testified, it was only with great reluctance that he ever left the seclusion of his dwelling.

composed (but only decades later published) the poem “Heimatlos” (“Homeless”, 1933), wherein the condition of exile found its initial literary expression in her verse:

Die Hügel sind nah, und das Meer ist mir nah,
 Doch die Heimat ist mir so fern.
 Es trennt mich von ihr nicht nur Hügel und Meer,
 Das überbrückte ich gern.
 Es trennt mich von ihr ein viel tieferer Schlund,
 Als die kreisende Erde ihn kennt.
 Es ist ihr Haß und es ist ihre Wut,
 Was von der Heimat mich trennt.
 Ich könnte nach Hause. Es ist nicht so weit,
 Auf der Karte nicht so weit fort.
 Doch zu Hause ist meine Heimat nicht mehr.
 Fremd bin ich den Menschen dort.
 Fremd bin ich dort und fremd bin ich hier
 Und nirgends bin ich bekannt;
 Und wandre ich auch über Hügel und Meer,
 Ich finde kein Heimatland (Kann 1986: 67).⁸¹

Recurrence of the central lexemes “Heimat” (homeland) and “Haus” (home), “fremd” (alien) and “fern” (remote) underscores the loss of one’s homeland as indicated in the poem’s title; a homeland from which one is separated not by natural barriers but by historical experience, not by spatial distance but by an affective distancing from hate and rage. The resulting chasm that emerges between “home” and “homeland” appears as a process of alienation on a truly global scale: there is no way leading out of exile. The aimlessness of the wandering self suggests a homelessness that leads to a de-territorialization for which – to adduce Auerbach’s concluding quotation of Hugo von St. Viktor – “mundus totus exilium est” (Auerbach 1967: 310). The self has not found a homeland in *Entronnensein*, in its having escaped, yet this functions as a point of departure for an *errance* that results in

81 “The hills are near and the sea is close by./ Yet the homeland is so far away./ We are divided not only by hills and sea –/ These I would gladly traverse./ We are divided by a much deeper abyss/ Than the orbiting earth can know./ It is their hatred and rage/ That keeps the homeland and me apart./ I could go home. It is not so far./ On the map it is not so remote./ Yet my homeland no longer exists at home./ I am to the people there an alien./ I am an alien there and an alien here./ And nowhere am I known;/ And even should I wander over hills and sea,/ I will not find a homeland”.

an abstract, interchangeable landscape – as shown in the tri-iteration of the words “Hügel” (hills) and “Meer” (sea).

In 1940, in those poems composed in the Gurs concentration camp, the movement abroad became a movement determined by others.⁸² Added to the homeless and aimless one in these poems is the irresolute one that drives the self forward, drives the self before it. The vastness of the world, as it appeared in the poem “Homeless”, emerges in contrast to the spatial restrictions of the camp: the state of siege under which the ego finds itself leads to the creation of spaces of resistance that find their actual refuge beyond thought in the physical body of the self: “Dein Name darf nicht ins Gehirn,/ Dort schüfe er nur Schmerz” (Kann 1986: 69 [“An Jemand Fernes”]).⁸³ The loss of a homeland space is followed by the loss of both a future and a past as illustrated in the poem “Frieden Im Krieg” (“Peace In War”), written shortly after Kann’s release from the camp in 1940 (made possible by the collapse of France) and first published in 2004:

Das Gestern starb. Das Morgen starb.
Das Sehnen vertrieb das Denken,
Und zwischen Tod und Tod genießt
Es was die Stunden schenken (in Ette 2004a: 193).⁸⁴

According to Emma Kann, in a letter of 16 October 2003, the poem with the characteristic title “Der Vagabund” (“The Vagabond”) was “probably written shortly after [my] release from Gurs”.⁸⁵ In its second and final stanza, the poem stresses the absence of home and homeland, underscores the importance of landscape in the fascination it holds for the self, while yet discerning a final goal for all these wanderings:

Ich hab kein Haus, das mit mir geht,
Und keines, das im Fernen steht.
Ein hoher Berg, ein grünes Feld,
Ein schöner Blick sind meine Welt.
Doch ein Ziel hat auch meine Fahrt:
Die Freiheit, die mein Geist sich wahrte (Kann 1998a).

⁸² See Ette (2004a: 191).

⁸³ “Your name may not enter the brain,/ For there it would only produce pain”. This poem numbers among those composed in the Gurs concentration camp.

⁸⁴ “Yesterday died. Tomorrow died./ Sight banished thought,/ And between death and death it enjoys/ What the hours grant it”.

⁸⁵ Letter from Emma Kann to the author (16 October 2003).

At the latest, it is here in this passage that the dialectic of homelessness – after a process of de-territorialization – transmogrifies into what can with good reason be designated as a writing without a fixed abode. Escape, deportation, internment, release and renewed flight this time not to France but out of France and Europe into the New World – this carved a path, as it were, between the poems, a path that in the three-stanza poem “Auf dem Meer I” (“At Sea I” from 1942; [Kann 1998b]) understands the Atlantic crossing, the existence of the self on the ship, to be a dying of “yesterday” (“Gestern”) and “tomorrow” (“Morgen”), surrendered to a movement “driven by good and bad fortune” (“durch Glück und Unglück treibend”) in which soon “my ego will lose itself in space” (“mein Ich im All verliert”). This theme of drifting about on the ocean and through space, in the **outer** space of an essentially uninhabitable and a-ecumenical world is also a theme present in the 1941 poem “Wir Lebten Einst Auf Einer Erde” (“Once We Lived On One Earth”), in which the **one** world has broken up into fragments. Here, the second stanza:

Bis das, was uns als Erde einte,
In Stücke fiel. Die Rinde sprang.
Nun treiben wir auf Weltenscherben
Allein des Schicksals Weg entlang (Kann 1986: 70).⁸⁶

In an English-language poem composed in the United States in 1973, “The Land of My Childhood” is reprised once more as a theme in a similar way to the poem “Heimatlos” in which this land is not seen as a geographic entity, as a “shard of the world” (“Weltscherbe”) but is regarded as omnipresent in its affective dimension: “Hatred and fear are always present,/ And one wrong step will set them free” (Kann 1986: 74). A single false move can unleash the (self-)destructive movements and injuries of the past; it can reopen old wounds and scars.

The poems of Emma Kann are testimony to a will to survive that flows over into a survival-knowledge in the same measure as one’s own movement – and the act of being moved in both a spatial and emotional sense – can go from an aimless state to one with an itinerary that has homecoming as its goal. Naturally, that homecoming can

⁸⁶ “Until that which united us as one earth/ Fell apart in pieces. The crust cracked./ Now we drift alone among the world’s shards/ Following the path of fate”.

no longer be to a distant land of childhood; rather, the homecoming is to a language that has become foreign to oneself while at the same time becoming an inhabitable and revived homeless homeland. The 1981 poem “Heimkehr zur deutschen Sprache” (“Homecoming to the German Language”) is language reflecting on language in the context of a foreign homecoming:

Wenn ich zur deutschen Sprache zurückkehre,
 Ist es nicht die Sprache, die ich kannte,
 Als ich dies Land verließ.
 Noch fügen sich Worte zu Sätzen
 Wie damals, wie immer.
 Doch die Quellen, aus denen die Worte steigen,
 Die unsichtbaren, haben sich verändert.
 Altes Gestein zerfiel.
 Taten, Leiden, Gedanken
 Schufen ein neues Geröll.
 Regen fällt nieder.
 Wasser steigt wieder empor
 Durch veränderte Schichten (Kann 1986: 75).⁸⁷

Once more it is the images of hills and sea, of land and water that appear integrated into a natural cycle of life. Yet the seemingly immutable is exposed to a process of erosion that is as irreparable as life itself. The de-territorialization of the homeland into language suggests that one’s mother tongue is closely allied with “The Land of My Childhood” and does not in fact transcend time and place. The homecoming of Odysseus is a foreign homecoming. More: it is a homecoming to something of one’s own *as* a foreigner. Emma Kann’s writing is the ceaseless attempt to pursue the dialectic of homelessness through “altered strata” and give it a linguistic expression in which survival and *Entronnensein* become the sole conceivable homeland and the only homeland which one can write.

4.3 Max Aub, or the Concentration Camp Lists

Max Aub was born in Paris in 1903 to a German father and a French mother, neither of whom practiced the Jewish faith of their forebears.

87 “When I return to the German language,/ It is not the language I knew/ When I left this land./ The words still string together as sentences,/ As they did then, as always./ Yet the springs from which these words arise,/ The invisible ones, have changed./ Old rock decomposed./ Deeds, suffering, thoughts/ Created a new scree./ Rain falls down./ Water rises once more./ Through altered strata”.

In 1914 the “boche” and his family were forced to flee France and settle in Valencia. Young Max learned Catalan and Spanish and early on adopted the latter as his literary language. He was active at various levels on the side of the Spanish republic in the *Guerra Civil*, and after his flight from France he was twice interned in the concentration camp of Le Vernet d’Ariège (from 30 May to 30 November 1940, and again from 6 September to 24 November 1941)⁸⁸ and was later shipped in a cattle transport to the Algerian work camp in Djelfa, from which he successfully escaped to Mexico via Casablanca in 1942. He became a Mexican citizen in 1955. At the center of Aub’s entire literary output is a single, ambiguous word, one which always went back to his experience of internment: *campo*. The ambiguity of this term,⁸⁹ which reflects the camp experience from always new perspectives, opened a writing space that developed within the camp itself and later left its stamp on all of Aub’s writings in exile. Aub’s journal *Diario de Djelfa* underscores not only the fact that these poems were written down in the concentration camp at Djelfa on the Atlas plateau⁹⁰ but also makes plain to all its readers that this writing in the concentration camp was necessary to the author’s survival, and that otherwise he would have found the strains of this extreme situation unbearable (Aub 2001: 93).

Max Aub’s oeuvre can be understood as a writing of movement that paradoxically concentrates itself in the concentration camp. After the French consul in Mexico rejected Aub’s application for an entry visa into that country whose capital had been his birthplace, in an open letter dated 22 February 1951 to French president Vincent Auriol the exiled writer did not petition for aid, but rather for justice:

En marzo de 1940, por una denuncia, posiblemente anónima, fui detenido, a lo que supe después, por comunista. Conocí campos de concentración –París, Vernet, Djelfa–, cárceles –Marsella, Niza, Argel–, fui conducido esposado a través de Toulouse para ser transportado, en las bodegas de un barco ganadero, a trabajar en el Sahara y otras amenidades reservadas a los antifascistas (Aub 2002: 112).

Crucial for him was that he was still being handled along the lines of those index cards and lists that were drawn up on him by the police of the Vichy government: “Ya sé que estoy fichado, y que esto es lo que

88 For the exact circumstances, see Soldevila Durante (1999: 43).

89 See Ette (2004a: 202sq.).

90 See Aub (2001: 93).

cuenta, lo que vale” (Aub 2002: 113). Aub leveled the charge that France was still continuous with Vichy and the “archivos de una policía fascista” (Aub 2002: 115). It was high time that the country came to grips with its past and distanced itself from the “monstruosa manera de entender policíacamente al mundo” (Aub 2002: 116).

Not only in Franco’s Spain but in republican France was Max Aub forced to experience how the old lists survived and retained their coercive power. Consequently, lists were also to be found in his literary grappling with the concentration-camp experience. The writing done in internment was soon followed by a post-internment writing that was clearly under the influence of the *univers concentrationnaire* and ascribed to it a very special function.

Doubtless one of the most fascinating twentieth-century literary depictions of life and survival in the concentration camp is Aub’s *Manuscrito Cuervo: Historia de Jacobo*, a “frictional” tale⁹¹ told from the perspective of the raven Jacobo. In 1952, a year after his open letter to the French president, *Manuscrito Cuervo* appeared in Aub’s own periodical *Sala de espera* and then was published in its final form in 1955.⁹²

Without going into the highly complex (and list-riddled) structure of this “raven manuscript”, it should be emphasized to what degree this raven’s report on the world of the concentration camp quite consciously employs imagery from the universe of the “concentrationists”.⁹³ For in a highly concentrated way, human destinies flare up briefly before they vanish into the darkness of the (hi)story. Accordingly, in the chapter “Algunos hombres,” some of the concentrationists reemerge from the anonymity to which they were consigned by the nameless terror of persecution and destruction in the era of twentieth-century totalitarianism.

Right from the beginning of the chapter, the raven Jacobo notes that there are some six thousand internees in the camp, most of whom do not know why they are being held prisoner (Aub 1999: 154).⁹⁴ Thereupon the raven narrator proceeds to choose at random certain

91 For the term “friction”, see Ette (1998: 308-312).

92 The following citations are from the critical edition of Aub (1999).

93 Aub (1999: 96): “Concentración, es decir: Lo más aquilatado, la médula, lo más enjundioso”.

94 The guards are as ignorant of the reasons as are the internees.

index cards documenting internees of the concentration camp in southern France during June 1940 – a ploy not untypical of Aub, whose characters tend to suddenly pop up and then disappear just as quickly. In a telegram-style prose, the author brings to light a handful of lives and the singular ways in which they were disrupted. The arbitrary ascriptions of identity, but also the “travel movements”, make very clear how the dialectic of Enlightenment with its totalitarianism simultaneously unfolds a dialectic of homelessness that is no more strongly focused than in the concentration camp. Here are just a few excerpts from Jacobo’s list, which in turn refers to other lists:

Julien Altmann, relojero, treinta y cinco años, francés, después de haber sido alemán. Estatura regular, poco pelo, nariz larga, traje raído, ojos enrojecidos (Aub 1999: 154).

Jerzy Karpaty, Zapatero, húngaro. Pequeño, gordo, pero ya no tanto; con las piernas arqueadas. Sin complicaciones. Judío. Parlanchín. Tampoco sabe por qué está aquí, aunque supone que la policía halló su apellido en la lista de una *Amicale* de internacionales húngaros (Aub 1999: 155).

Ludwig Schumacher, químico, ingeniero químico, alemán. Joven, alto, fuerte. Refugiado en Francia desde 1933. Con todos sus papeles en regla, alistado en la Legión Extranjera, en trance de revisión médica (Aub 1999: 156).

Gonzalo Rivera Torres, español, cetrino, nariz corvina, pelo corvino, uñas corvinas. Mecánico. De los pocos que no protestan. Comunista. Se pasa el tiempo cantando. Su única preocupación: conseguir una guitarra. A los dos días de llegar a París, salido de un campo de concentración del sur de Francia, le volvieron a agarrar. Está de vuelta (Aub 1999: 156sq.).

Jan Wisniack, checo, mal encarado, tuerto, sin oficio ni beneficio conocido, hombre de malas pulgas. Setenta y dos años. Andaba por el mundo, para verlo – según dice (Aub 1999: 157).

Franz Gutmann, dicese luxemburgués; peletero. Denunciado por su mujer como alemán. El no le quería conceder el divorcio, a pesar de los cuernos (Aub 1999: 158).

Paul Marchand, pintor, belga, a lo que él dice: amigo personal del rey Leopoldo III. Alto, gordo. La amistad que pregona no le favorece con las autoridades, que tildan, actualmente, al soberano belga de traidor (Aub 1999: 159).

Héctor y Francisco Girardini italianos, *hermanos gemelos*, gordos, bajos, con barba, frente despejada, gafas, un poco al estilo de los enanos de Blanca Nieves, los detuvieron a los dos porque no sabían a ciencia cierta quién era el *sospechoso*. Dicen que uno es anarquista. Ellos no dicen cuál (Aub 1999: 166).

The cunning of this list consists in the fact that not only the absurdity and caprice of totalitarian rule but also the open-ended nature of the list is presented the reader, who himself could also conceivably be catalogued in a movement that – in consideration of the individual lives of those interned – unfolds in a highly varied and irregular manner; yet still, on the whole, in a linear direction. It is the movement of a story that sweeps everything along with it irrespective of the native land and goals in life of the various camp detainees in this catalogue of lives. The emergent movement and perspective is comparable to that of Benjamin's Angel of History, which in its backward-sweeping movement sees rubble being heaped at his feet: destroyed lives caught up in the vortex of a history whose dialectic knows only the homeland of *Entronnensein*. Like the Angel of History, the writer has no time to wake the dead and piece together that which has been destroyed (Benjamin 1980a: 697sq.). For the writer, too, the barely achieved *Entronnensein* is the sole homeland that is still conceivable in a world that has in large part become one big concentration camp. Is this not the real answer to the question as to what remains of the totalitarianism, wars, persecution and collaboration of the twentieth century?

4.4 *Cécile Wajsbrot, or the Post-figuration of the Concentration Camp*

In her 1999 essay *Pour la littérature*, Cécile Wajsbrot (*1954) draws attention in no uncertain manner to that great watershed in the twentieth century which was of major significance for French literature but which for a very long time was blithely passed over by the French:

Entre Balzac, Flaubert, le Breton du *Premier Manifeste* et Robbe-Grillet, il y a un abîme, il y a 1939-1945, l'horreur du nazisme, la première bombe atomique, l'extermination systématique des Juifs d'Europe et le silence autour; l'Occupation en France, Vichy, la collaboration, et puis l'épuration, notamment dans le milieu littéraire et artistique, ce qu'elle a permis de dire et ce qu'elle a permis de taire, ceux qui ont payé et ceux qui ont continué, comme avant, comme si de rien n'était (Wajsbrot 1999: 23).

Despite the distance in time and variant perspectives, the accord this finds with Max Aub's attestation of 1951 is remarkable: throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and even to the present day, France and its intellectuals have mostly refused to face the fact that "la société

française des années cinquante, soixante, et soixante-dix – et on pourrait continuer jusqu’à aujourd’hui – a choisi de fermer les yeux, et de tourner la page, pour passer à autre chose” (Wajsbrot 1999: 23). In contrast to the literature of other countries such as Germany or Russia – where not only did contemporary witnesses come to grips with this period but also those who were born “dans l’ombre portée du souvenir” – French literature has studiously glossed over the fact that our epoch had its genesis in the Second World War and that everything including the “monuments aux morts” – but of course not including the literature – reminds us of this truth (Wajsbrot 1999: 25). In French literature the inquiry has just begun: “Notre scène originelle, c’est Vichy, et comme toute scène originelle, elle gît dans la pénombre d’un inconscient qui ne demande qu’à l’oublier” (Wajsbrot 1999: 27). But in every traumatic ur-scene – says Cécile Wajsbrot in a diction peppered with psycho-analytic jargon – a repression mechanism is at work, a “refoulement” that continues to have reverberations in the sphere of literary theory (Wajsbrot 1999: 27).

In 1990, in his important book on the collective coming-to-terms of France with the German occupation and with French collaboration during the Second World War, Henry Rousso spoke of the trauma of Vichy and the Vichy “syndrome”.⁹⁵ In her own study, Silke Segler-Meißner notes that it was “only decades after more than seventy thousand Jewish compatriots had expired in concentration camps, that they were officially mourned” (Segler-Meißner 2003: 53).⁹⁶ And Geoffrey Hartman’s study interprets this psychological repression as a kind of collective self-defense mechanism that fifty years post-facto was still in evidence, and with many French Jews still today being subject to a similar mechanism (Segler-Meißner 2003: 53). It certainly remains a question as to what degree such mechanisms of psychological repression can be integrated into the deplorably homogeneous image of a “Europe without Jews”⁹⁷ – and not only with respect to the French

95 See Rousso (1990).

96 “um die über 70.000 jüdischen Mitbürger, die in den Konzentrationslagern ums Leben kamen, hat man erst Jahrzehnte später offiziell getrauert”.

97 Approaching the matter from a completely different perspective, Bernard Wasserstein invoked the specter of a “Europe without Jews” in a period that was witnessing a *Vanishing Diaspora* – the title of his 1996 book, with the subtitle “The Jews in Europe since 1945”. In this work he puts forward the thesis that perhaps the most important repercussion of the Holocaust was that postwar Jewish life

situation. In this regard Cécile Wajsbrot makes her position quite clear, being in favor of a literature that must meet the challenge of careful inquiry into the emergence of National Socialism and the inhuman consequences of totalitarianism contained within the sphere of literature itself.

In her plea for literature, the French author emphasizes that in the final analysis it is only the work that counts – “L’œuvre est ce qui compte” (Wajsbrot 1999: 58) – since the “raison d’être des écrivains” as well as the “raison d’être de la littérature” lies in the inimitable “vision du monde” that is elaborated within a specific literature (Wajsbrot 1999: 59). But it seems to me that such a view demands from literature – and **for** literature – the aesthetic shaping of a life-knowledge that in its multi-dimensionality and polysemy develops a vital and socially responsible relationship to the various aspects of life and survival.⁹⁸

Of critical importance to Wajsbrot – who for several years now has been dividing her time between Paris and Berlin – is the preoccupation with that historical period which, as portrayed in our discussion, would be the point of departure and reference for a tradition that should be regarded as essential to the worldwide development of literature without a fixed abode. For even in terms of the very concepts of exile and diaspora, what developed out of two World Wars and the persecution and murder of the Jews at mid-century has left its stamp on the literature and philologies that have emerged in strengthened form since the beginning of the twenty-first century and the concomitant fourth phase of accelerated globalization. Without due consideration of the Shoah, it is as little imaginable that we can gain an adequate understanding of literature without a fixed abode as it is that we should reduce such literature to this sole perspective and tradition.

In view of her poetics of literary works, it only made sense in Cécile Wajsbrot’s search for answers to the question “What of Auschwitz remains?” that she should not limit herself to the essay but would

has been characterized by an obsession with survival. Beyond the borders of Israel, and particularly in the open societies of the West, the strong pressure to assimilate has greatly diminished the chances that there will be any collective survival of the Jews (see Wasserstein 1999: 327sq.).

98 Wajsbrot (1999: 49): “Quelque chose, la déportation, l’exil, la guerre, la catastrophe. Et quelqu’un l’a vécu et survécu”.

make resort to other narrative and representational forms. Appearing in 2004 at the same time as her novel *Le Tour du lac* (Wajsbrot 2004), was her slim volume *Beaune-la-Rolande*. From the very first paragraph of the first section (of five) of *Beaune-la-Rolande*, the narrator leaves no doubt that the ensuing treatment of the theme of concentration camps and Jewish persecution in France will present a wide array of peripatetic figures and will be informed by both linear and cyclical notions of time:

Le vide de la route prolonge le silence des rues, le dimanche est le pire des jours et ce dimanche, le pire des dimanches, l'autoroute Chartres-Orléans est devenue Nantes-Bordeaux mais c'est bien tout ce qui a changé, et les années défilent comme les kilomètres, une à une, fastidieuses, et le printemps varie sans ombre, s'étirant vers l'été, s'attardant en hiver, on quitte l'autoroute puis la route s'étend, droite, coupant un paysage monotone, plat, impitoyablement horizontal (Wajsbrot 2004a: 7).

The pitiless advance of time, whose implacability is yet further augmented by the interspliced cycles of weeks, years and seasons, corresponds to the no less inexorable horizontality of a topography without any point of reference in the third dimension. The landscape becomes a landscape of transit, a place of passage that takes one along the highway among the rest of the traffic to a better place. And yet within this landscape of transit, unrolling along the highway, as it were, another transit can be sensed, a transit that heads into the past, a transit *camp* that was “utilized” for refugees of the Spanish Civil War: Beaune-la-Rolande. This place suddenly takes the place of everything: “rien n'existe d'autre que la mémoire, le souvenir, la commémoration” (Wajsbrot 2004b: 8). Is Beaune-la-Rolande – as one might assume from the annual official discourse – hence nothing more than a *lieu de mémoire*?

In the hopelessness of her “sur la route” existence (Wajsbrot 2004b: 8), the first-person narrator is simultaneously trapped and complicit in a genealogy that links her with her grandmother. Although she has lost her voice (“la voix”), she sets out on her journey (“sa voie” [Wajsbrot 2004b: 12]), a journey through the “shadows of memory”, as it reads in *Pour la littérature* (Wajsbrot 1999: 25). This journey is painful at both the individual and collective level, and in *Beaune-la-Rolande* it leads to the narrator doubting (and despairing) whether in France, “dans ce pays”, there exists anything approaching a

“mémoire collective” that goes beyond the commemorative plaques (Wajsbrot 2004b: 53).

The imaginary “Voilà” (Wajsbrot 2004b: 8) – perhaps never even uttered by her grandmother – reveals to the first-person narrator her obligation to have a closer look at that phenomenon from which most others have averted their gaze (Wajsbrot 1999: 23), but above all to follow the grandmother’s voice and her journey as well as the journey of the grandfather she never knew, a grandfather who under the Vichy regime was taken into custody by a simple *billet vert* and subsequently transported, interned, deported and killed. The search begins, but soon ignorance and helplessness infiltrate the text: “De mon grand-père, je ne sais rien, seulement qu’il est mort à Auschwitz” (Wajsbrot 2004b: 14). The work of memory can no longer reconstruct, but simply construct in an ambiguous fashion those words employed by the anonymous loudspeaker voice to inform the women waiting out front of the barracks of the arrest of their menfolk: “Que disaient-ils exactement, ils vont partir, on les emmène, ils vont travailler dans un camp, ils sont momentanément détenus, retenus, transportés, déportés, concentrés, quels mots employèrent-ils?” (Wajsbrot 2004b: 10). Literature captures all these virtual and simultaneously real voices⁹⁹ and weaves them together in a way that ensnares history and allows the literary text to form. Thus commences a long and never-ending trip (“début d’un long voyage” [Wajsbrot 2004b: 10]) for the narrator.

The fact that the narrative voice is merged with authorial biography lends greater complexity to what from the beginning is a recognizable intermeshing of various time frames (of the May days of the year 1941 and more than half a century of May-days every year after that) and travel movements. This entry in the *Journal* of the book is dated Paris, 12 September 1990:

Je suis née en 1954 – la guerre était finie depuis neuf ans. Le mari de ma grand-mère est mort, déporté à Auschwitz. Avant d’arriver là-bas, il avait passé un an dans le camp de Beaune-la-Rolande, qui se trouve près de Pithiviers. Je n’ai pas connu ce grand-père mais ma grand-mère m’a raconté abondamment, et sans doute très tôt, les chambres à gaz, les camps,

99 One can only make note here of the importance of these voices; see the successful acoustic staging of an initial draft of this text in a radio play by *France Culture* (“Atelier de Création Radiophonique”), which was broadcast in July 2003 under the title *Beaune-la-Rolande: La Cérémonie*. I would like to thank Cécile Wajsbrot for providing me with a recording of it.

l'arrestation, la police venue la chercher avec ses deux enfants, le passage de la ligne de démarcation, tout, et je porte ces images d'un autre temps, d'une autre vie, sans pouvoir m'en débarrasser (Wajsbrot 2004b: 15sq.).

The specification of time and space enfolds the narrator in the tale she is telling, yet still without the narrator being equated with the “real” author external to the text, even if the book’s jacket blurb does speak of the “grand-père de l’auteur” (Wajsbrot 2004b: jacket blurb) and in an allusion to the author’s own name there is mention of the fact that in Poland no one requires an explanation as to how to pronounce the name of the unnamed narrator in the story (Wajsbrot 2004b: 42). The “frictionalization” of the narrative voice – produced through the oscillation between fiction and diction – turns this voice into a bearer of life-knowledge that is introduced as knowledge about a life whose existence can no longer be directly testified to but only through reference to the grandmother: “une vie qui n’est pas la mienne mais dont l’ombre varie avec les heures” (Wajsbrot 2004b: 16). With the means at its disposal, literature attempts to establish this shadowy realm beyond official days of remembrance.

But soon, owing to topographical and climatic conditions that are introduced, the death camp Auschwitz is superimposed on the concentration camp Beaune-la-Rolande: “une portion d’Europe centrale transplantée à cent kilomètres de Paris” (Wajsbrot 2004b: 21). Auschwitz is everywhere and nowhere: “Auschwitz ne se trouve pas en Pologne, c’est un lieu indéfinissable qui est partout et nulle part” (Wajsbrot 2004b: 55). In this literary treatment the *lieu de mémoire* is no longer to be localized but has multiplied, is ubiquitous. Everything is set in motion and evades static assignment.

So it is hardly surprising that the narrator feels a greater affinity not to settled persons (“sédentaires”) but to those who have been deported, who are refugees, the migrants – “ceux qu’on appelle les sans-papiers” (Wajsbrot 2004b: 20). The deportation of the unknown grandfather; the annual journey of grandmother and granddaughter to the concentration camp of Beaune-la-Rolande; the trip of the granddaughter and the narrator to Auschwitz as well as Cracow, Warsaw and Vilnius; the deportations, forced migrations and voluntary journeys – all these combine with restless, erratic and peripatetic figures to produce (if one will pardon the phrase) a kind of *littérature sans-*

papiers. It is no accident that the preparations of the suffering narrator for her visit to Auschwitz (in the *Journal* entry dated Cracow, 7 May 1990) are linked to a conversation with the Polish poet Baranczak, who immigrated to the United States in 1981 and has now returned to Poland for the first time. The prefiguration of the concentration camp that has the ten-year-old boy¹⁰⁰ in Albert Cohen's *Marseilles* experiencing a concentration camp *en miniature* is linked through the post-figuration of the camp with the fate of migrants on the cusp of the twenty-first century: "tous les réfugiés, à Sangatte ou ailleurs, et tous ceux qu'on refuse, tous les Kurdes débarqués à Fréjus, les Polonais qu'on emprisonne parce qu'un feu s'est déclaré dans une chambre étroite" (Wajsbrot 2004b: 31sq.). The list of the nation-state's exclusionary mechanisms is long.

Here the inherited model of movement from the Shoah literature is conjoined with the vectorial imagination of a literature nourished by the mutual overlay of migratory processes. In its post-figuration, the concentration camp becomes a focal point for worldwide movements that intersect and overlap in time and space. Thus does the *univers concentrationnaire* become a bio-political as well as literary paradigm of a writing that knows well the dialectic of homelessness: swept away like Walter Benjamin's *Angelus Novus*, who cannot and will never close his eyes.

But that is precisely the task of literature – and the task of philology. In this text criss-crossed with migrations, we follow the angel of a history that traces a movement between the Polish town of Kielce (which the grandfather left because of the pogroms) and Paris, Beaune-la-Rolande, Compiègne and Auschwitz, but also between Paris, Berlin-Wannsee, Warsaw and Vilnius – a movement which connects itself up with the vectors of other deportations and migrations without ever being able to dissolve itself in later streams of refugees.

Out of the survival of the concentration camp into the present day and out of the concomitant phenomenon of a homeland characterized

100 The mother of the narrator in *Beaune-la-Rolande* is also ten years old when the French police try to arrest her along with her brother and mother; but as if by some miracle, these remaining members of the family are spared, and the family genealogy – and thus that of the narrator – remains intact (Wajsbrot 2004b: 31sq.).

by precarious and tentative *Entronnensein* has emerged a literature without a fixed abode, a literature which one can neither label a national literature nor world literature, however one wishes to define the terms. This *littérature sans domicile fixe* – whose imagination is predominantly vectorial in nature – long ago established itself in the gray zone between a national and a global literature. In an unobtrusive manner, *Beaune-la-Rolande* – which is always jumping back and forth between France, Germany and Poland – evades the seemingly self-evident national paradigm. And thus do not only the author's travels, but also the movements of her writing link France with Germany and Poland in a way that connects the literatures of these countries with one another in a period characterized by a dialectic of homelessness. For amidst the silence of the Sunday streets, which marks the beginning and end of *Beaune-la-Rolande*, a literature that has overcome its settledness has also succeeded in establishing a homeland in *Entronnensein* that – in Erich Auerbach's sense – lies beyond the nation. The Shoah literature finds its way into the literature without a fixed abode, whose strength is not attested to and generated by a certain place but through a movement, through the literature itself – in search of the places and movements of the human being in the universe.

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