



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Skirting the abyss

Citation for published version:

Watson, JR 2022, 'Skirting the abyss: Eastern European space and the limits of German Holocaust memory', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, pp. 1-23.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2022.2116545>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1080/17504902.2022.2116545](https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2022.2116545)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Skirting the abyss: Eastern European space and the limits of German Holocaust memory

Jenny Watson

To cite this article: Jenny Watson (2022): Skirting the abyss: Eastern European space and the limits of German Holocaust memory, *Holocaust Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/17504902.2022.2116545](https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2022.2116545)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2022.2116545>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 01 Nov 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Skirting the abyss: Eastern European space and the limits of German Holocaust memory

Jenny Watson

Chancellor's Fellow, Department of European Literatures, Languages and Cultures, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland

ABSTRACT

This article discusses some of the ambivalences that arise in Western efforts to represent Eastern Europe in the context of Holocaust memory. Focusing on German-language literature, I examine how tropes of boundlessness, violence and contamination derived from the pre-WWI colonialist vision of 'the East' reassert themselves in various eras of representation, including recent works inspired by contemporary historiography. While the embrace of 'discoveries' about the history of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe signals an appetite among the German-speaking public to do away with historical ignorance, these discursive continuities suggest that the appetite for alterity is undiminished. The adoption of the term "Bloodlands" from Timothy Snyder's book of the same name is a case study in how fresh perspectives on Holocaust history can be decontextualized and co-opted, contributing to an imaginary landscape that is remarkably unchanged in the German context.

KEYWORDS

German literature; memory; colonial; landscape; popular culture

Germany is frequently cited as a country with a highly developed relationship to its national history of violence and oppression. The discourse of '*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*' – coming to terms with the (Nazi) past – has exceeded national and linguistic boundaries to become a watchword for historical responsibility and the German government's investment in reparative justice through education is often praised for exceeding that of most other nations.¹ While the handling of Holocaust memory in German institutions and party politics may appear as a gold standard in comparison to the USA's ongoing minimization of the legacy of slavery, or the UK's suppression of its colonial history, discourses around Germany's 'success' as a memory collective elide significant tensions within the nation's memory culture.

In particular, the institutional and public acknowledgement of certain dimensions of German historical guilt, such as the concentration camp system and deportation of German Jews, often disguises the depth of discomfort surrounding other aspects of the Nazi genocide that are even harder to reconcile with the national self-image. These more troublesome memories include things like mass killing by members of the

CONTACT Jenny Watson  jenny.watson@ed.ac.uk

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

armed forces, civilian awareness of and indifference to genocide as it was happening and the trade in confiscated Jewish property. These facets of the Nazi genocide, united by the theme of intimacy, occupy the margins of collective memory despite being directly relevant to the experience of Germans in the heart of the Nazi empire.²

In the following, I will discuss the role of Eastern Europe as a symbolic space for displacing this kind of intimate violence, and examine how colonial-era stereotypes of Eastern Europe, including those used to justify Nazi occupation policy, have endured in post-war representation. In particular, I will examine the widespread adoption of the term 'Bloodlands' in German popular discourse as a representative example of this kind of displacement. The term is becoming a popular metonym for Eastern Europe in the German-speaking world precisely because it is used in ways that mirror established, colonial tropes of the region as homogenous, vast and unknowable, and of Eastern European space as inherently violent. Literary texts that engage with the term tend to depict Eastern European spaces in ways that continue the discursive displacement of German agency in and proximity to genocidal violence despite their often stated aim to contribute to a more nuanced discourse on the Nazi past. These continuities between colonial-era tropes denoting alterity and present-day efforts to depict the Holocaust in 'the East' reveal the limited ability of German and Austrian public memory discourse to move beyond the east-west divide and embrace Eastern European lives as grievable.³

Eternal novelty: the discourse of discovery and the dynamics of forgetting

In scholarship and public debate, the discourse of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is generally discussed in terms of the gradual revelation of information about the Third Reich and its crimes in historiography, journalism and cultural products since the war. Events such as the forced tours of camps organized by the Allies in 1945, the war crimes trials of the late 1950s to late 1960s, and the publication of key texts such as Hannah Arendt's dispatches from the trial of Adolf Eichmann in the *New Yorker* (1963) are frequently cited in this context alongside cultural milestones including the showing of the US television series *Holocaust* (1978) on German television and the release of *Schindler's List* (1993). However, although these cultural 'watersheds' may have defined public discussions in their era, their function in contemporary memory discourse is highly ambivalent.

While these moments undoubtedly provided and continue to provide an important opportunity for collective reflection, their identification as moments of revelation or discovery is exemplary of ways in which the highly complex and variable forms of knowledge about the Holocaust possessed by the German gentile population during and after the war have been obscured. The false dichotomy of 'known' and 'unknown' implicit in this rhetoric of newness both homogenizes the experience of the bystander population and facilitates a myth of ignorance and innocence that reasserts itself at such moments. Potentially more revealing when it comes to this cultural timeline is the failure of certain topics to attract *sustained* attention or occupy significant space in cultural memory even after they reach public attention.

The mass shooting campaigns carried out by a variety of Nazi organizations on and behind the Eastern Front are one facet of the Holocaust repeatedly characterized as 'unknown' or 'forgotten' in German public discourse, despite having been recorded and represented many times previously. Perpetrators of the mass shootings were

prosecuted at Nuremberg and in trials as late as 1978, and the massacre at Babi Yar in particular has been represented in many cultural products that had a considerable reception in Germany: Yevgeny Yevtushenko's 1961 poem, set to music by Shostakovich (1962) reached a wide international audience; the TV series *Holocaust* (1978), watched by around half the adult population of Germany on its release in April 1978, made its characters witnesses to the massacre; the popular US documentary *Winds of War* (1983, shown on the ZDF network in 1986) depicted both the crime and its cover up by the Aktion 1005; the traveling Wehrmacht exhibition of the mid-1990s brought images of the mass shooting to the public in museums all over Germany and Austria.⁴ Nevertheless, Babi Yar, and the wider history of mass shootings during the Holocaust, which account for the murder of around two million of Europe's Jews, continue to be presented as a lesser-known or forgotten aspect of the Nazi period. The persistence of novelty is evident also in the reception of international hits *Everything is Illuminated* (Jonathan Safran Foer, 2002; German edition 2003) and *Les Bienveillantes* (Jonathan Littell, 2006; German edition 2008), as well as recent literary works, including Katja Petrowskaja's *Vielleicht Esther* (2014) and Chris Kraus's *Das kalte Blut* (2017). Each has raised the profile of the history of the Nazi genocide beyond the concentration camp, and led to features in major newspapers explaining the history they represent as one likely unknown to many readers. The massive reaction to *The Kindly Ones* (2006) (German: *Die Wohlgesinnten*) and its depiction of Einsatzgruppen atrocities from the perspective of the perpetrator revived the discussion of atrocities on the Eastern Front a decade on from the Wehrmacht exhibition, which had approximately 900,000 visitors.⁵ Yet there is still little sign of the so-called Holocaust by bullets losing its status as one of the 'unknown' sides of Holocaust history.⁶

One explanatory framework for understanding the marginal status of mass shootings in German collective memory and cultural imagination derives from the practical constraints on their remembrance. The massacres took place beyond German borders; they were at least notionally top secret operations; there were too few survivors for a survivor literature to emerge in the same way as it did around the concentration camp system; access to archival information and to the sites themselves was limited for westerners by the strict border regimes of the Cold War.⁷ However, substantial research demonstrates that the Holocaust in the East was known to large numbers of German people beyond the immediate perpetrator collective, which in itself is estimated at over 200,000 people.⁸ In their book *Der Holocaust als offenes Geheimnis* ('*The Holocaust as an Open Secret*'), Dieter Pohl and Frank Bajohr use civilian diaries, accounts taken from captured German soldiers, and local Gestapo archives to examine the spread of knowledge about the Holocaust. They identify soldiers, male and female armed forces support staff, and contractors as primary witnesses and even willing spectators to the atrocities, and demonstrate that the spread of rumors from person to person as well as in soldiers' letters meant that a significant proportion of the German population knew of the mass shootings well in advance of reports of massacres and gassing appearing in the allied press in 1942.⁹ Allusions to the mass shooting of Jews and partisans in the literature and film of the early post-war indicate an expectation of reader familiarity with the topic, although most texts do not depict the atrocities themselves. Theodor Plievier's bestselling novel *Stalingrad* (1946), written on the basis of testimony from captured German soldiers during the author's stay in the Soviet Union, presents characters

from the SS and the Wehrmacht baggage division who speak about their experience of shooting sick camp inmates, 'eine Kugel hinter die Ohren und vierzehn Fuß tief unter die Erde und kalk rüber!' ('a bullet behind the ear, fourteen feet deep and lime over the top!'), and remember driving past anti-tank ditches filled with civilian corpses.¹⁰ Hans Werner Richter's *Du sollst nicht töten* (*Thou shalt not kill*, 1946), features a scene in which one of his protagonists, a customs officer in occupied Poland, stumbles across Jewish women who have been murdered outside their own home by German forces.¹¹ The 1946 film *Die Mörder sind unter uns* ('*The Murderers Are Among Us*,' Wolfgang Staudte) follows returned army doctor Hans Mertens as he wrestles with PTSD and his anger regarding a massacre of civilians carried out by his regiment in 1942, although the massacre itself takes place off screen. Other texts thematize similar topics, such as the film *Morituri* (Eugen York, 1948), which follows escaped concentration camp inmates and civilians as they are hunted by SS soldiers in the dying days of the war in Poland. Willi Bredel's 1949 story 'Das Schweigende Dorf' ('The Silent Village') concerns the cover-up of a massacre in which SS guards and German villagers murder and bury over seventy Jewish women and children in a mass grave following their escape from a prisoner transport train.¹² Jewish survivors, including many refugees who had spent the war as evacuees in the USSR and then traveled extensively through the former Nazi-occupied territories on their way to the West, testified to their experiences as soon as they could, with an estimated 350 titles printed in Germany by 1949, adding to the 110 accounts of imprisonment in the KZ published abroad in German before the end of the war.¹³ These texts by Jewish writers were, however, largely ignored by the non-Jewish German public; Primo Levi's *If this is a man* was the first survivor account to achieve notoriety, in the late 1950s.¹⁴

In light of the wealth of evidence that large sections of the gentile German majority knew about mass shootings and other aspects of the Holocaust as they were happening, and the existence of numerous cultural products that alluded to or represented them in a variety of ways, I propose that the reasons for the persistence of a rhetoric of novelty around the topic are more complex than lack of information or the paucity of survivor or bystander testimony. In particular, I suggest that the history of mass shooting has a particular, inflammatory effect on the nebulous collective guilt that Dan Diner calls the 'erratic backdrop' of German self-understanding.¹⁵ Face-to-face killing – in this case the shooting of Jewish civilians and children by members of the German armed and security forces – presents a dimension of intimacy between killer, victim and witness that is profoundly unsettling to the sensibilities of 'denazified' Germany.¹⁶ To kill in this manner once is appalling – and many more literary texts contain isolated incidents of this nature than describe mass killing – but to do so two million times renders ludicrous the notion that perpetrators, and by connection the German people, could have been unaware of the scale of what the regime was doing, consistently powerless to resist its pressures or free of personal guilt. The abstract conceptualization of killing as automated or impersonal that arises in the (erroneous) consideration of the gas chamber as a technologized form of killing or the orchestrated neglect of starvation as something other than 'hands-on' cannot persist when confronted with millions of individual pulls of a trigger. The distance between perpetrator and act, and therefore between society and crime, collapses. This form of intimate violence – and thereby accounts of such violence – fall into the category of what Sarah Colvin has called 'inaudible' or 'unlistened to'

stories.¹⁷ As Roma Sendyka also argues in the case of the ‘Holocaust by bullets’ and visual art, it is the social and aesthetic pre-conditions that determine whether certain images and events are ‘overlooked.’¹⁸

This history of intimate violence poses problem to representation and audibility regardless of where in the Nazi empire it took place, and the representation of phenomena such as the death marches, forced labor in German cities and massacres perpetrated by Western European civilians remains under-researched. The frequently cited East–West divide in Holocaust history and post-war memory has allowed intimate violence to be framed as an Eastern phenomenon in Western memory culture, with the November Pogrom of 1938 presented as an exceptional event.¹⁹ The encapsulating image of the Holocaust can be summed up as a train disappearing eastwards; even the Stolpersteine (stumbling stones) project – one of the most celebrated commemorative campaigns in Europe – ultimately marks absence rather than violence or death itself.

‘The East,’ then, is centrally important to the conceit of distance outlined above: put simply, it is the space into which people disappeared. And, now that greater attention is being paid to the region since 1989, a space that allows the discourse of novelty to be renewed. Just as the symbolic function of the gas chamber as a technologized and therefore impersonal form of killing departs from the reality of its use as an instrument of mass murder, the symbolic East can quickly parts ways with the actual geography of the Nazi-occupied territories and the events that took place there. In the German-speaking context especially, the nature of representations of the Holocaust in the East is also very much determined by the construction and reproduction of Eastern Europe as a familiar *imaginary space*, and in particular as the space onto which the German colonial imagination was projected throughout the 19th and early twentieth century. The threat of invasion, engulfment and destruction of the colonizer resound throughout texts of the early post-war, and these tropes recur even in more recent texts aimed explicitly at de-mystifying the history of Nazi occupation. The reception of the work of Timothy Snyder provides a recent example of how conceptions of space that tally with these tropes of ‘the East’ may appeal to the German-speaking audiences.

(Re-)Discovering ‘the bloodlands’: a bloodlands-effect in the German-speaking world?

One of the most prominent recent historical interventions to combine the ‘eastern’ and ‘perpetrator’ turns has been Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands* (2010), which explores the special vulnerability of Eastern European countries due to their double or triple occupation by the Nazi and Stalinist regimes, and the collapse of the nation-state as a precursor to genocide.²⁰ Critical of partial, Western-dominated Holocaust remembrance, Snyder’s book has had a profound impact across Europe and the US, and focused fresh attention on intimate killing during the Holocaust in Eastern Europe; Jan T. Gross speaks of the ‘Goldhagen-like urgency’ with which *Bloodlands* has been ‘inserted’ into historical discourse.²¹ In Germany, the book has sold upwards of 35,800 copies and Snyder has become a sought-after public intellectual.²² In offering a ready ‘catch-all’ term that includes phenomena such as mass shooting, ‘Bloodlands’ offers potential for these historically disavowed aspects of the Nazi genocide to find a new place in public memory discourse. However, as I shall explore, it also appeals to

homogenizing and estranging tendencies within the German-language discourse on Eastern Europe that may obstruct this shift in awareness.

Unlike ‘shatterzones,’ coined by Thomas Bugge to describe the borderlands between the Germany, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman empires in the period around the First World War, ‘rimlands,’ used by Mark Levene to describe regions on the imaginative and geographical periphery of the European and Russian worlds, or ‘The Lands Between,’ used by Alexander Prusin to discuss the region stretching from Estonia to Moldavia in the period 1970–1992, Snyder’s term is not immediately connotative of concrete political conditions or pre-existing imagined communities.²³ It instead evokes a fairly unbounded region indelibly marked by mass murder,²⁴ a timeless transformation rather than historically contingent situation. Historians in Europe in particular have criticized the term’s rhetorical amalgamation of diverse historical and social contexts, erasure of nuance and exclusion of other geographic spaces subject to the same processes it describes.²⁵ In his emphatic critique of *Bloodlands*, Jürgen Zarusky identifies how a lack of methodological transparency and attention to nuance means that Snyder’s book appears to reveal a pre-existing landscape; the region emerges as a real, previously undiscovered ‘Heart of Darkness’ rather than a rhetorical construction.²⁶

Zarusky’s allusion to colonial literature – and he notes that the blurb to the German edition of *Bloodlands* called it a ‘journey into the Heart of Darkness’ – is not coincidental.²⁷ Although intended to create a geographical category that focuses on the experience of victims of multiple occupation, the metonym ‘blood’ has a dehumanizing effect. By implicitly makes these people interchangeable with their body parts, it amalgamates land and inhabitants in a fashion common in colonial discourse, which in turn normalizes their deaths as a corollary to their origins in an inherently violent space. The resonance with Nazi rhetoric of ‘blood and soil,’ although no doubt intentional as an indictment of Nazi propaganda, reinforces the primacy of the perpetrator as the transformer of land whilst also evoking tropes of heroic martyrdom and the historical significance of bodies in the context of German nationalism.²⁸ Monica Black’s excellent *Death in Berlin* examines how the belief in claiming and consecrating territory through the spilling of German blood were accompanied by the exclusion of Jews from burial grounds and paranoia around Jewish bodies contaminating the earth.²⁹ The metaphor of contamination recurs in the literary texts that take *Bloodlands* as their point of departure, as I shall discuss. Overall, the sense of irreversible marking and transformation by blood evoked in the term ‘Bloodlands’ (and, to some extent, the title of its sister volume *Black Earth*) speaks to an essentialism at odds with Snyder’s overall approach and particularly resonant with pre-existing conceptions of space in the German cultural context.

The term ‘Bloodlands’ has been taken up with remarkable regularity in Germany and Austria since 2011. The term has ‘grown wings’ and emerged as a buzzword not only in public discussions of history in newspaper editorials but in the literary and marketing spheres. An article on the hundredth birthday of Stanisław Lem says that he ‘spent his early years in the “Bloodlands”.’³⁰ Reporters use the term as a synonym for the Jewish Pale of Settlement³¹, for Poland, Ukraine and Belarus,³² and for the Memelland in the work of Johannes Bobrowski.³³ The flyleaf of Jan Himmelfarb’s multigenerational family novel *Sterndeutung* (‘Astrology,’ 2015) reads: ‘What does it feel like, when one can’t give one’s precise place of birth, when one was already condemned to death, as a

Jew during the Holocaust, in the East, somewhere in the Bloodlands?’³⁴ One reporter even refers to the ‘bloodlands of Syria,’ suggesting a parallel use as a synonym for terms like ‘killing fields.’³⁵ This eager adoption of the term is not only the result of its accessibility and utility (and status as a ‘catchy’ English loanword) but, I argue, a result of the relative neatness with which it maps onto pre-existing rhetorical structures and the imagined landscape of ‘the East.’ Both in terms of Cold War era ideas of the Eastern Bloc as an inaccessible and homogenized space of communist oppression, and in terms of the longer history of Eastern Europe and Russia as Western Europe’s ‘Other,’ in many circumstances ‘Bloodlands’ tends to reinforce a discourse of distance, alienation and alterity, essentializing Eastern Europe as a region of death and violence in ways similar to German colonial rhetoric and the ideology of National Socialism. If the German cultural repertoire may be particularly inclined to such amalgamations, then historians’ concerns about the impact of *Bloodlands* may be more justified in the case of the German-speaking world than elsewhere.

Historians including Larry Wolff and Kristin Kopp have explored the central importance of Eastern Europe in the formation of Germany’s self-image as a Western country, civilizing force and colonizing nation.³⁶ Nineteenth century texts such as Gustav Freytag’s *Soll und Haben* and Theodor Fontane’s *Effi Briest* are prime examples of how Poland was shaped using the ‘overarching European colonial idiom’ for colonized space, while the many travel accounts by German visitors to Poland and other regions to the east of Germany provide a wealth of examples of how the image of ‘the East’ affected perceptions of those spaces.³⁷ Two main tropes emerge in both fiction and non-fiction descriptions of the region: boundlessness and violence.

Much as Europeans depicted Africa as the ‘dark continent,’ an abyss beyond the reach of European knowledge, Eastern Europe was frequently described in terms of an unknown, boundless and unknowable space.³⁸ This boundlessness contained both the potential for self-realisation and the threat of engulfment common to male colonial fantasies.³⁹ In German depictions of the East, this boundlessness is characterized by ‘a topos of uniformity and endlessness’ that stands in contrast to the impulses of measurement, delineation and domestication expressed in fantasies of Germany as civilizer.⁴⁰ Landscapes such as the steppe, with their associations of vastness, historical tribal warfare and continuity with Asia, became a focus of estrangement, with Eastern Europe referred to as ‘Halb-Asien’ (Half-Asia) in popular discourse.⁴¹ The logical counterpart to the boundlessness of the region was the threat of it over-spilling the boundary with the West, as in the image of a Slavic ‘flood’ waiting to engulf Germany and extinguish civilization.⁴² Typically colonial fears of boundary loss found expression in discourses about public health, hygiene and threats to the ‘social body’ of the German nation.⁴³ Nazi propaganda would later rely on similar imagery of barbarian hordes ‘flooding’ Western Europe in its demonization of the Red Army.

Histories of violence in the region, including the Hun invasion, the wars conducted by Western powers against the Ottoman Empire and antisemitic violence in the Russian Empire were all coopted into a vision of Eastern Europe as inherently violent, a tendency enhanced by the First World War. While German atrocities perpetrated during the war, and in the brutal civil war of 1918, was ‘camouflaged’ in popular discourse after the establishment of the Weimar Republic, the German public was ‘fascinated by violence, civil war, and cultural conflicts,’ with a ‘voyeurism’ regarding atrocities committed by other

nations tying into the depiction of violence as a stereotypical quality of the ‘non-Western Other.’⁴⁴ Atrocities committed by various belligerents in the Balkans before, during, and after the First World War had been covered avidly in the western press, and condemned as a sign of barbarity in the region.⁴⁵ Similarly, the coverage of antisemitic violence in the Russian Empire led to pogroms coming to be regarded as ‘no less a fixture in the region than impassable winters or promiscuous drunkenness.’⁴⁶ Soldiers returned from the Front with accounts of so-called ‘ghetto Jews’ that confirmed antisemitic prejudices at the time and reinforced paranoia about the invasion of Germany by ‘Ostjuden.’⁴⁷ The viciousness of fighting on the Eastern Front also meant that a new ‘mindscape’ of the East emerged in which nineteenth century fears of boundlessness and hostile terrain were heightened into a vision of the contemporary landscape as horrific, desolate and actively antagonistic.⁴⁸ A novel written by a veteran in 1919 describes the reaction to this landscape during wartime:

This was Russia. Like a spectral concept the word stood before their souls. Three days and three nights had passed, and the picture was still the same. Then the uncanny feeling strengthened in them against the land – becoming an unconscious, vague hatred, which blazed up in their hearts, which they felt but did not think. A hatred against the size of the land, which had swallowed them, as a big fish swallows many smaller ones, and which held them here against their will.⁴⁹

The suffering of local populations was ascribed to their being products of this uncivilized and dehumanizing landscape, while the earth itself took on racialized and ethnicized properties of primitivism and degeneracy.⁵⁰ The perception of the region as an ‘anachronistic space’ meant that soldiers envisaged the land as containing the history of perceived political instability, human suffering and historical warfare.⁵¹ Soldiers wrote about the soil as ‘breathing’ or ‘trembling’ with memories of mothers unable to feed their children, ‘unsung melancholy hero-songs, unspoken whispering words of fear, withheld wild cries of battle,’ and the region’s ‘bitterest, bloodiest tragedies.’⁵² This landscape and its people demanded German intervention in order to be rid of these nightmarish qualities. Elements of this constellation of stereotypes and prejudices were absorbed and reshaped in National Socialist propaganda and endured long after the Second World War.

Entering the abyss: depictions of the eastern front after 1945

Post-war German literature has been dominated by efforts to understand and process the Second World War and the implications of the Nazi regime’s actions for the average German citizen. While these efforts have often been feted as exceptional, a survey of post-war literature reveals the many lacunae present in the literary discourse of memory and unacknowledged prejudices that shape the perspective from which the past is interrogated. The recent, often uncritical, deployment of the term ‘Bloodlands’ in German literary discourse, is reminiscent of the framing of Eastern European space in fictional texts from the early postwar by authors, who, although horrified by the Nazi regime, did not acknowledge the biases that they shared with that system of thought.

A notable feature of writing about the Eastern Front from the immediate post-1945 period – and here I will discuss several texts from the period 1945–60 as illustrative of the tradition – is the continued function of these tropes of inherent Eastern European violence and desolateness despite the destruction wrought by Nazi forces. The

homogenization of 'the East' as a single, vast space, in which geographical specificity and regional differences are reduced or erased is unchanged. 'Osten' or 'Russland' are used as general terms for an entire region while soldiers and prisoners alike disappear eastwards in the stories as if they are falling off the edge of a map. Fears of being consumed are a prominent feature of these early texts, which respond to the scale of the Eastern Front and the landscapes German soldiers encountered in much the same terms as those describing the Eastern Front in the First World War. Three main settings, the steppe, the forest and the marsh, are most commonly evoked and each of these landscapes give rise to fantasies of dissolution and engulfment redolent of colonial literature. In particular, they are associated with fears around abandonment and solitary death connected to the post-WWI German fixation on improper burial as a form of erasure and degradation.⁵³ Fears of dying unburied pervade the texts, as the soil itself represents a predatory or threatening element and the land of 'the East' is represented as blood-drenched and hungry for German life. German bodies, and German deaths have been added to the 'whispering' of the landscape.⁵⁴

In Theodor Plievier's novel about the German defeat at Stalingrad, the land around the city gains a kind of agency, drinking streams of blood, consuming the fallen and transforming into a landscape of death, a single 'Gräbersteppe' ('steppe of graves').⁵⁵ The dead merge with the landscape when their bodies are abandoned or buried by artillery shelling, but also as the snow covers them, making them appear as 'birch logs' indistinguishable from the natural world.⁵⁶ In Hans Werner Richter's *Du sollst nicht töten* (1946), a similar image of the dead as trees arises in a protracted scene set in a forest: the archetypal German landscape. Injured men lean against the trees, appearing to become one with them as they are covered by snow drifts. Here again, the fear of engulfment is a prominent theme, summarized in the saying: 'Rußland frißt Menschen' ('Russia eats people').⁵⁷ The main distinction from representations of landscape in the classical quasi-colonial framing of the nineteenth century is that bodies are frequently represented as not only engulfed but dismantled in the space; the heightened awareness of the body as material that had been brought about by the mass dismemberment and mutilation of soldiers during the First World War influences the perception of mass death in the Second World War.⁵⁸

In Heinrich Böll's early texts *Kreuz ohne Liebe* ('Cross Without Love,' written 1946, published 2002), *Der Zug war pünktlich* (1949; *The Train Was on Time*, 1956), and *Wo warst du, Adam?* (1951; *And Where Were You, Adam?*, 1955), the East is characterized as a space of literal and figurative darkness: dirty, deprived and marked by ignorance and violence. Although rural scenes, such the expanse of the steppe landscape, arouse a mixture of awe and excitement for his protagonists as they did for colonial fantasists and WWI soldiers before them, the narrators of the stories consistently recoil from the low-roofed houses and narrow streets of the towns and villages they pass through, and from the poverty they witness: 'Dunkel und arm und drohend liegen die dürrtügen Hütten am Wege' ('the meagre huts along the roadside lie dark, poor and forbidding').⁵⁹ The space of Poland, Romania and Hungary are presented as disordered, chaotic and doomed to destruction, the colonial Other of Germany's rational space.⁶⁰ Place-names, where they do appear, likewise function as metonyms triggering fear and disgust; the protagonist of *Kreuz ohne Liebe* encounters a town on the German-Polish border, 'deren Name allein wie ein gähnendes Loch ins Leere ist' ('whose name alone is like a gaping hole into nothingness').⁶¹

In *Der Zug war pünktlich*, place names take on a peculiar prominence as symbols of the narrator's growing conviction that he is about to die. Regions and cities with prominent Jewish histories become buzzwords capturing a sense of horror without direct reference to its source. Galicia, in particular, is a place whose name is dark and terrifying; even though he is not certain where it lies geographically, the word 'Galizien' evokes a 'leise schneidenden' ('softly cutting') knife and a snake 'mit blitzenden Augen, die sanft über die Erde schleicht und schneidet, die die Erde entzweischneidet' (with flashing eyes, that gently slithers and cuts across the earth, that cuts the earth in two').⁶² Clearer images accompany some of the names of towns and cities the narrator lists as he runs through his mental picture of Poland. Czernowitz (Chernivtsi) and Lemberg (Lviv) are given particular attention as cities of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. He imagines them as spaces of crumbling grandeur, in which narrow, gloomy streets are indistinguishable from others in the region yet also unmistakably Polish thanks to their dilapidation and the presence of Jews, encapsulated in his equation of the name Czernowitz with the phrase 'Juden und Zwiebeln' ('Jews and onions').⁶³ The gathering darkness that accompanies his journey east is concentrated in images of the cramped streets and low houses of the Jewish areas, which suggest decay, lifelessness and a doomed battle for survival against the forces of nature.⁶⁴

While the recitation of these names in the wartime setting gestures towards the unfolding Nazi genocide, this alignment of desolation and Jewishness in *Der Zug war pünktlich* is also indebted to the narrator's pre-existing vision of Eastern Europe, stereotypes of the 'Ostjuden' as a downtrodden, mysterious and poverty-stricken people, and the history of antisemitism in Poland prior to the German invasion. The narrator makes allusions to the history of anti-Jewish terror in the region, in particular Galicia, Lemberg (Lviv) and the Polish-Ukrainian borderland region of Wolhynien (Volhynia), 'alles dunkle, düstere Namen, die nach Pogrom riechen' ('all dark, dingy names that smell of pogrom').⁶⁵ The fact that Böll's protagonist evokes a longer history of anti-Jewish violence suggests a perception of contemporary Nazi terror in the region as one in a long line of persecutions, rather than an exceptional event. Even though the narrator is not presented as an adherent of Nazi beliefs, this framing implicitly connects the violence and darkness of the region to its Jewishness, recycling antisemitic tropes of Eastern Jews as poor, dirty and weak.⁶⁶

As in the case of those soldiers who recoiled from the war-stricken ghettos they entered as liberators, Böll's protagonists are limited in their capacity for sympathy by the fear and disgust the Jewish spaces of Poland provoke in them. The essential Eastern European Jewish space for the narrator of *Der Zug war pünktlich* is the narrow street of cramped, dirty houses, which appear as spaces out of time and natural sites of violence and destruction. The landscape itself seems to be opposed to the settlements, which are variously presented as under threat of being crushed by the trees around them or dangerously exposed to the elements, at times the sky itself threatens to collapse ('zusammenstürzen') on them.⁶⁷ The protagonist in *Kreuz ohne Liebe*, meanwhile, is haunted by a feeling of barely suppressed foreignness that threatens to consume him: 'Finster und unheimlich ist es hier ... Die Fremde, diese bössartige Fremde lauert hinter jeder Ecke' ('it's dark and uncanny here ... The strangeness, this evil strangeness, lies in wait around every corner').⁶⁸ Böll's most explicit representation of the Holocaust, in his 1951 novel *Wo warst du, Adam?* likewise presents an ambivalence between the impulse to present Jewish suffering and the use of antisemitic tropes.⁶⁹

While less inclined to open antisemitism and more likely to represent mass killing as systematic rather than limited to isolated incidences, contemporary fiction differs little in terms of their representation of space from the early post-war texts I discuss above. In Ralf Rothmann's 2015 novel *Im Frühling sterben* ('To Die in Spring'), two underage SS recruits Walter and Fiete fight for survival on the Eastern Front during the final months of the war. The character's designation of the setting, in the Transdanubian Mountains of Northern Hungary as 'wilderness' and a 'soldier's cemetery' covered in nothing but 'coffin wood' is reinforced by the depiction of nature as indifferent and obliterating, unaffected by the human suffering taking place thanks to the war. The dead are eaten by animals or buried in shallow graves, truckloads of injured soldiers 'plunge' into ravines, bodies lie undiscovered and the winter forests offer insufficient cover from air raids. The land appears hostile and alien, with the threat of engulfment and obliteration presented as a greater destructive force than Nazi violence. Like Böll's narrators sixty years earlier, their terror regarding deployment to 'the East' is validated not so much by experiences of fighting as by the depiction of Eastern European space.

In summary, the urgency with which the postwar authors sought to represent the Eastern Front and communicate the horror of warfare, including the suffering of local populations, is accompanied by a reliance on tropes and stereotypes that predate the caesura of 1945. The representation of Eastern Europe as unknowable, vast, homogenous and inherently violent has endured in the German literature of memory and is foundational to canonical works that set the tone for post-war engagements with the Holocaust and the memory of the Eastern Front. The irony inherent to this adoption of historical tropes – that they contributed to the emergence of that horror in the first place – is largely unacknowledged and more nuanced depictions of the spaces and people of Eastern Europe have tended to come from authors with direct biographical connections to Eastern European countries or from authors inspired by works by authors outside of Germany. The mainstream post-war literature of memory has done little to challenge homogenized visions of the East, or the metaphysical relationships between bodies, death and landscape established in colonial discourse and Nazi rhetoric.

Discourses of distance: Germany's Eastern Europe since 2010

The term 'Bloodlands' appears with increasing frequency in German-speaking discourse, from dust-cover synopses of popular fiction to newspaper review columns, where it often stands as shorthand for an ill-defined geographical space *and* a metonym for the broad theme of 'unknown Nazi history,' very much within the framework of perpetual rediscovery outlined above.⁷⁰ If 'Bloodlands' describes something novel and titillating – and many of the phrasings in which the term appears appeal to a sense of exoticism – then it also offers a symbolic category that is profoundly unchallenging to existing discourses of *'Vergangenheitsbewältigung.'* While previously the focus on deportation as the primary Western memory of the Nazi genocide brought with it an idea of people disappearing off the edge of the map into the imaginative chasm of 'the East,' the 'Bloodlands' metaphor provides a means to talk about the history of the Holocaust in the East *without* disrupting or deconstructing that imaginative precipice. In fact, when removed from Snyder's careful analysis, the essentialist associations of blood and soil contained within the term lend themselves to identifications of Eastern Europe as inherently

violent, bypassing its diverse political histories, regional identities and cultures to focus on suffering and death *without* centering the perpetrator as the instigator of that suffering. The discursive pattern of alienation, homogenization and the erasure of German agency visible in the early post-war works discussed above is not replaced by heterogeneity and attention to specificities but refined into a neat epithet and a typifying image of that space as alien, timeless, and violent.

The term in its popular usage in Germany also creates a sense of discursive control over interventions on the Holocaust that focus on Eastern Europe and center Eastern European identity and experiences, containing historical information within a horizon of expectation. By providing a ready category for literature, film and historiography, it domesticates even as it ‘uncovers.’ An article in *Die Welt* on Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk talks about how he ‘found’ the Bloodlands on his trip from Poland to China, recorded in his 2014 book *Wschód* (‘East’; *Der Osten*, 2016), evoking the recovery of a lost world (or a visit to a tourist attraction) rather than the discovery of a new perspective on the borderlands of Eastern Poland.⁷¹ Photographer Christian Hermann’s local history project in Ukraine, Poland and Belarus is reported on in an article entitled ‘Bloodlands: Photos of Traces of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe,’ as if it were Jewish life rather than Nazi genocide that created that imaginary space.⁷² The huge impact of the book and the fact that journalists, authors and publishers use the term as shorthand for thematic interests to such an extent means we have reached a point where I believe we can talk about the emergence of ‘Bloodlands’ as an established metaphor mirroring the function of synecdoche ‘Auschwitz’ in the same context. It is a ready image that contains and homogenizes a range of experiences, events and trajectories in a way that reinforces the imaginative divide between spaces of exception and the perpetrator or bystander collectives.⁷³

Although interest in Eastern European experiences of the Second World War and less-remembered aspects of the Holocaust by no means began with the publication of *Bloodlands*, there has been a marked increase in such engagements since 2010. Newspaper commentators have remarked upon the upsurge in interest in the countries ‘that wound up between Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia,’ and the number of works on the subject entering book prize shortlists. *Die Welt* columnist Richard Kämmerlings identifies Katja Petrowskaja’s *Vielleicht Esther* (2014), *Der Schatten des Fotografen* by Helmut Lethen (‘*The Photographer’s Shadow*,’ 2014) and Robin Detje’s translation of William T. Vollman’s *Europe Central* (2005) as part of a contemporary glut of texts concerned with the Holocaust in Eastern Europe.⁷⁴ A number of authors have even made direct reference to Snyder’s text, or similarly impactful contemporary works such as Father Patrick Desbois’s *Holocaust by Bullets*, as inspiration for their work or discussed it in the texts themselves. Austrian Martin Pollack’s *Kontaminierte Landschaften* (‘*Contaminated Landscapes*’) from 2014, based on his lecture series at the Centre for Minorities in Graz and the Graz Academy, Bernd Ohm’s crime novel *Wolfsstadt* (2015), set in early post-war Munich, and German author Navid Kermani’s *Entlang den Gräben* (2018; *Along the Trenches*, 2019) are among the more prominent examples.⁷⁵

Kermani’s book, the end-product of a series of articles commissioned by news magazine *Der Spiegel* on the culture of contemporary Eastern Europe, explicitly takes *Bloodlands* as a primary point of departure. Kermani acknowledges wryly that the book ‘auf meiner Reise fast so etwas wie ein Reiseführer geworden ist’ (‘has become almost a

sort of travel guide on my journey’).⁷⁶ The book adopts a similar critical position to Snyder’s work, emphasizing Western ignorance regarding the Holocaust beyond the concentration camp, and the marginalization of Eastern European perspectives. In particular, Kermani criticizes German memory culture and the distance it sustains from the ‘reality’ of the Nazi genocide.

The preponderance of the genocide against the Jews [‘das eigentliche Völkermord’ – ‘the true genocide’] had taken place in the East, where you didn’t look if you were growing up in the German West. As an adolescent in Germany you learn the numbers, of course. But it is something else again when you encounter the ghosts of the people murdered at every step.⁷⁷

This focus on spatiality and the physical encounter with sites of mass murder is central to the book, and Kermani contrasts the (implicitly unsuccessful) efforts to render the Holocaust tangible in Germany with the apparently inescapable presence of death in the East. Reflecting on a visit to the 9th Fort in Kaunas, Lithuania, he writes: ‘If there were ‘stumbling blocks’ in the asphalt in Kaunas, or in Minsk, Lviv, Odessa, Brest, Riga, they would not be isolated paving stones – half the city would be paved with gold, like the New Jerusalem [‘der himmlische Jerusalem’ – ‘heavenly/celestial Jerusalem’].⁷⁸

Bombastic analogies aside, this image of Stolpersteine covering whole city districts betrays a sense of boundlessness that is carried throughout the book’s representations of Holocaust sites. Installed outside the former homes of people imprisoned or killed during the Holocaust, Stolpersteine are square, cobble-stone sized blocks, ten-centimeter on each edge, which even in Jewish-majority neighborhoods with dense populations, would likely not extend more than a meter or two from the buildings with which they were associated. By suggesting that the golden stones would cover whole cities, Kermani’s metaphor exaggerates scale and simplifies the history of Nazi occupation in these places, homogenizing Eastern European space and experience. The population of pre-war Minsk, for example, was around 30 per cent Jewish, although the Jewish population increased by tens of thousands in 1941 as refugees fled to the city ahead of the German advance.⁷⁹ Up to 150,000 Jewish people were in Minsk when it was captured, of whom as few as a third were locals.⁸⁰ Tens of thousands of people arrived having fled the mass shootings in Eastern Poland, particularly from the Bialystok area, 350 km west of Minsk. After the establishment of the Minsk Ghetto, and the beginning of the mass killing ‘actions’ against those imprisoned there, Germans shipped in new Jewish prisoners, including approximately 25,000 from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. The complexity and diversity of individual trajectories vanishes in this image, as does the extent of the chaos and disruption wrought by the Nazis in the region. Commemorating the people who died at Minsk using Stolpersteine would require installing them not only in the city itself but across numerous villages, towns and cities of Eastern Poland and Belarus. More relevantly to Kermani’s impulse to confront German memory, in the case of those deported from Western Europe, the stones may already exist and have failed to prevent German ignorance.

The cities of gold image has a clear and laudable political intent: to confront German readers with the scale of the genocide in the East. However, in oversimplifying the multicultural histories, complex wartime events and contemporary realities of the cities he lists, Kermani’s vision risks turning them into static, symbolic objects that encapsulate

rather than expose: quasi-memorials upon which to project German collective mourning practices. The reference to the afterlife in the phrase ‘himmlische Jerusalem’ also contributes to a conflation of the imagined Stolpersteine – as markers of life and former habitation – with markers of death and burial. Their presence implicitly becomes a direct encounter with the dead, although, in many cases, the Nazis and their allies murdered the Jewish inhabitants of these cities elsewhere. Rendering the cities themselves as surrogate grave sites replicates patterns of representation in which Eastern Europe is conceived of as marked by death in the German imaginary. The cities’ names become symbols, echoing the deployment of the Galician city names as symbols of alienation in Böll’s early work, and simply provide substitutes for the metonymic function of ‘Auschwitz’ in existing memory culture. The ‘cities of gold’ idea also resonates strongly with the colonial imaginary, activating associations with the mythologized ‘lost cities’ of South America and related connotations of adventure, discovery and unreality. Minsk, Lviv, Riga, Brest and Odessa are neither ‘lost’ and mysterious nor static historical sites to be ‘discovered’ by German eyes. Although Kermani’s flight of fancy communicates a sense of urgency related to correcting German ignorance, it also inadvertently reinforces a vision of Eastern Europe landscape as alien, deadly and unknowable that is neither new nor conducive to breaking down imaginative distance.

In a passage that describes a visit to Ponary Forest outside Vilnius, where the Nazis murdered 100,000 people, including 70,000 Polish and Lithuanian Jews, the vision that emerges is once again one of absence and the search for symbolic traction via existing practices of representation. The sense of haunting resonates with tropes of the supernatural that render death threatening, even though the Jewish victims whose burial site this is are conceived of as absent from the scene.

Although literally nothing is left of the murder victims except their number, you grow dizzy with each step, almost as if you were sinking into the ground. The background noise we hear from the nearby motorway would not sound eerie in any other place; aside from that, complete silence; not even birds twittering. But, most of all, we meet no other people. Although Paneriai was one of the first major sites of the Holocaust, we are the only visitors on an ordinary morning.⁸¹

The sense of abandonment in the scene places Kermani in the position of discoverer, standing in contrast to the implicitly uninterested local population, and the ignorant German one. Although he recognizes that is the knowledge of the history of the site that renders sounds there ghostly, the lack of bird song – frequently referenced in relation to Holocaust killing sites – lends credence to this perception of ghostliness. Fear is definitely present in the scene, despite the focus on historical investigation. The statement ‘only the numbers remain,’ a reflection of the Aktion 1005 destruction of the original mass grave, also appears to be the author’s attempt to reassure himself, especially when considered alongside the dizziness that overcomes him when entering the site. The recourse to the supernatural, and subtle preoccupation with the threat presented by the dead, finds its climax in the image of engulfment by the land; the illusion of sinking into the earth. The non-Jewish observer momentarily fears falling into the grave, although whether it is the dead or the landscape itself that might desire to draw him in remains unclear.

This tendency to rely on frameworks of supernatural haunting and danger is common to attempts to bring German-speaking audiences to a greater appreciation of Holocaust

history. In Austrian writer Martin Pollack's *Kontaminierte Landschaften* ('Contaminated Landscapes,' 2011), the author speaks of encountering grave sites in terms of darkness and implicit knowledge of the presence of death. Although his work is novel in that it also focuses on Western Europe, and sites of mass killing in Austria in particular, its image of Eastern Europe is resolutely undifferentiated. Pollack talks about the 'nameless landscapes, in the sprawling forests and marshes, the steppes, that belong to the area known as the *Bloodlands*,' calling for an expansion of the term to include Austria, Slovenia and Hungary.⁸² He describes Central, East Central and South East Europe as being 'übersät' – 'strewn' or 'littered' – with mass graves, and discusses landscape in terms of an opposition between deceptive 'innocence' and 'contamination.'⁸³ Pollack is exceptionally self-critical when it comes to his investment in idealized visions of Austrian and Slovenian landscapes, and energetically argues for the inclusion of Western Europe in this framework of contamination by violence. His report of digging in his own back garden and uncovering SS cutlery exemplifies the 'dig where you stand' philosophy of 1980s history workshops and anticipates recent works such as Josef Winkler's *Lass dich heimgehen, Vater, oder Den Tod ins Herz mir schreibe* ('Take the Blame, Father or Death Be Writ into My Heart,' 2018), which reverse the standard narrative of haunting to focus on the grave sites of Nazi criminals as a disturbing presence in landscape. Winkler's novel concerns the discovery of the improvised burial in 1945 of the Aktion Reinhardt leader Odilo Globocnik on the autobiographical narrator's family farm and the implications of the 'contamination' of the family's crops through the presence of the corpse. However, despite the political intent of Pollack's book, the use of contamination as a rhetorical device for talking about the presence of the bodies of Jewish murder victims, and the consistent amalgamation of people and spaces in terms of boundlessness, namelessness and dispersal speaks strongly to historical views of Eastern Europe as Western Europe's dark and unknowable counterpart, and of fears of invasion and contamination by the colonized Other. Attempting to extent this 'dark continent' of death into Western Europe by including killing sites such as Rechnitz may trouble the border between the 'known' West and the 'abyss' of the East but it does so by attaching alterity and estrangement to those sites, rather than concretizing and demystifying their counterparts in the East.

The Eastern European turn in Germany's literature of memory

The work of authors who came to Germany as children during the mass emigration of Jews and members of German minorities from Russia and other former Soviet countries represent the notable exception to this overall trend. Authors of this revitalizing 'Eastern Turn' have created space for an increasingly diverse approach to the Nazi past, bringing Eastern European perspectives to bear on dominant post-war memory narratives. The sensation of 'falling off the edge of the map,' frequently in evidence in works of the early post-war or by authors without family connections to Eastern Europe, is increasingly counteracted by vibrant and nuanced depictions of historical subjectivity and granular local history in works including Katja Petrowskaja's *Vielleicht Esther* (2013; *Maybe Esther*, 2018) and Natascha Wodin's *Sie kam aus Mariupol* ('She Came From Mariupol,' 2017). Kiev-born Petrowskaja's novel reflects the personal history of her great-grandmother, who was executed at Babi Yar, while Wodin's text examines the history of her parents' families in Odessa and her mother's experiences as an Ostarbeiter in Germany.

One example of this departure from the established image of the East comes in approaches to space and its depiction, with geographic specificity and concrete depictions of everyday life and environments functioning as a form of resistance to the erasure and homogenization of Eastern Europeans experiences. As simple an impulse as to include addresses, as in Monika Maron's *Pavels Briefe*, or geographic coordinates, as in Jenny Erpenbeck's *Aller Tage Abend* (2012; *The End of Days*, 2014), stands in marked contrast to the use of place names as abstract ideas and symbols of fear and violence in Böll's early work, for example.⁸⁴ This highly local, documentary-style approach to historical social relations and contemporary memory is reflected in the work of other children and grandchildren of refugees who settled in Germany after the mass expulsion of German minorities, such as Hanna Sukare's novel *Staubzunge* ('Dust Tongue,' 2015), about minority Germans living in close proximity to Chelmno extermination camp, and Markus Berges's *Die Köchin von Bob Dylan* ('Bob Dylan's Chef,' 2016), about minority Germans in the Odessa region who bear witness to mass shootings of their Jewish neighbors.⁸⁵ While the discourse around flight and expulsion of German minorities has historically been dominated by conservatism and anti-communist sentiments that occasionally border on revisionism, these authors focus on the complexity of interethnic and political relations from a markedly progressive, self-critical standpoint.

In paying close attention to specific historical details and present nuanced, original depictions of locations and the experiences of local people in countries including Poland, Ukraine, Russia and Lithuania during the war, these works are rather exceptional. They address topics such as German minority complicity in the Holocaust, the complex allegiances of different political and social communities, the biases of German soldiers and the messy complexity of postwar Jewish and non-Jewish relations, meaning that they disrupt both the tidy narratives of post-war denazification and contemporary perspectives on Eastern Europe. In making spaces of 'the East' real places, and exploring the connections between those places and present-day Germany and Austria they also create a sense of transnational connectedness that contributes to the dismantling of imaginary barriers between east and west.

Conclusion

Rather than drawing a straight causal link between *Bloodlands* and recent literary works that adopt quasi-colonial tropes to portray landscape in the context of the Holocaust, it is more accurate to see the effusive reception of the book, and the enthusiastic deployment of the term, as reflecting the ambivalence inherent to the German literature of memory. The undeniable thirst among the German-speaking public to (re)discover and understand the history of the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe, is accompanied by a profound discomfort regarding venturing beyond the relatively stable and normalized content of institutionalized commemorative culture, and the process of discovery itself. Uncomfortable historical information – especially regarding phenomena that underscore the intimate violence of the Holocaust and the implication of civilians in Nazi genocide – is emotionally and cognitively 'discharged' through the reassertion of distance. In the case of representing the intimate violence inherent to the Holocaust all over Eastern Europe, the availability of the term 'Bloodlands' may represent hope that aspects of the Nazi genocide marginalized from the literature of memory have

found a point of orientation that will secure their wider acknowledgement. However, the metaphorical transference of violent intent, danger and contamination onto the landscape and the soil also appeals to historical preconceptions of the region rooted in a colonial sensibility and has the potential to allow the act of killing to recede from the reaches of imagination. Continuities in German representations of ‘the East’ demonstrate one way in which frameworks of distance and alterity reassert themselves even when authors and historians are dedicated to drawing attention to the real Western biases in Holocaust remembrance. Each of the works I have discussed represent valuable and urgent contributions to German and Austrian memory discourse yet it remains to be seen whether the proliferation of new works will lead to any significant change in the cognitive landscape. The mechanisms of containment and distancing that have established ‘Auschwitz’ as a synecdoche for the Holocaust may well act upon the new term ‘Bloodlands’ so that its origins in the context of a specific historical analysis are obscured in favor of a new monolith. The future development of this discourse will no doubt influence the German-language literature of memory and its potential to shift from established paths and ‘audible’ stories, although it remains to be seen whether space will emerge to discuss the endurance of this literature’s colonial gaze with regard to Eastern Europe.

Notes

1. On the perception of Germany as a guiding example in memory culture, see Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*. For a critique of German complacency and Vergangenheitsbewältigung, see Czollek, *Desintegriert euch!* or (in English) Potter: ‘I’m not your token Jew.’
2. While scholars such as Joanna Bourke have tended to use “intimate killing” or “intimate violence” as term denoting hands-on killing within close spatial proximity, I use the term “intimate” in an effort to evoke emotional, moral and imaginative proximity in phenomena such as mass expropriation and awareness of genocide. Thus “intimate violence” may include alongside *proximity* (intimate contact) connotations of *familiarity* (intimate knowledge), *interpersonal connection* (intimate relationship) and proximity to the *domestic* (intimate surroundings). Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*.
3. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 33–4; Butler, *Frames of War*, 1.
4. Wilke, “Holocaust’ als Medienereignis,” 14; Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 116. Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 140. Although the Wehrmacht did not carry out the shooting at Babi Yar, it was included in the exhibition because various levels of the Sixth Army were involved in planning and logistics for the massacre and its leadership gave the SS and Security Police a free hand to carry it out. See Gerhard Hirschfeld et al, *Bericht der Kommission*, 54–6.
5. A barrage of reviews praising and condemning the novel appeared in the weeks following the publication of the translation, ultimately leading the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* to set up a historian-led online ‘Reading Room’ for its readership that ran to thousands of entries in its three-week existence. See: Theweleit, Klaus. “On the German Reaction;” Hausmann, “Littell dans le « Reading room ».” Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 140. Altmann, *Das Unsagbare verschweigen*, 144.
6. The term was popularized by Patrick Desbois’s *The Holocaust by Bullets*, 2008. Jürgen Zarusky identifies the reaction to *Bloodlands* in Germany as further proof that ‘there is no established historical consciousness about (the war on the Eastern Front) and its impact on the people of the former Soviet Union,’ arguing that there is also no ‘encompassing empathy for all the groups persecuted by National Socialism.’ Zarusky, “Sowjetische Opfer,” 243.

7. On limited artistic responses see Sue Vice, "Beyond Words," 89, 97.
8. Bajohr and Pohl, *Holocaust als offenes Geheimnis*, 9.
9. Bajohr and Pohl, *Holocaust als offenes Geheimnis*. On spectators see e.g. Klee, Dressen and Riess, "The Good Old Days," 126–7. On soldier letters see Kipp, "Letters of German Soldiers." On the ca. 500,000 German women who served in the Eastern Occupied Territories see Lower, *Hitler's Furies*.
10. Plievier, *Stalingrad*, 54, 55.
11. Richter, Du sollst nicht töten, 11.
12. Bredel "Das schweigende Dorf," 49.
13. Gross, "A Colonial History of the Bloodlands," 591. Roth and Feuchert, "Einleitung," 10–11.
14. *Ibid*, 11–12.
15. Diner, *Beyond the Conceivable*, 219.
16. *Ibid*, 227.
17. Colvin, "Unerhört?" 446–9.
18. Sendyka, "Holocaust by Bullets."
19. Confino, *A World Without Jews*, 4.
20. Snyder's comparative approach has proven controversial among historians and other commentators, who view it as opening the door to a false equivalency between the Soviet and Nazi ideologies. See Beyrau, "Snyders Geografie." Weiner, "Timothy Snyder. Bloodlands." Evans, Richard J. "Who Remembers the Poles?"
21. Gross, "A Colonial History of the Bloodlands," 493.
22. Figure taken from correspondence with publisher C.H.Beck.
23. Bartov and Weitz, *Shatterzones of Empire*. Levene, *Annihilation: The European Rimlands Volume II, 1939–1953*. Prusin, *The Lands Between. Conflict in the East European Borderlands*.
24. Zarusky, "Timothy Snyders 'Bloodlands'," 5.
25. Baberowski, "Once and For All," 145–8. Evans, "Who remembers the Poles?" Weiner, "Timothy Snyder, Bloodlands." Zarusky, "Timothy Snyders 'Bloodlands'," 2.
26. Zarusky, "Timothy Snyders 'Bloodlands'," 3.
27. 'Timothy Snyder nimmt den Leser mit auf eine Reise ins Herz der Finsternis.' The book cover also describes the memory of mass killing during 1933–1945 as 'disappearing into the darkness behind the Iron Curtain' and of history 'reclaiming a lost territory in the East.'
28. Jürgen Zarusky criticizes Snyder for focusing on Poland as the main nation of the 'Bloodlands' and styling Poles as the 'true martyrs' ('eigentlichen Märtyrer') of the 'bloody Earth.' Zarusky, "Timothy Snyders 'Bloodlands'," 28.
29. Black, *Death in Berlin*, 70–89, 95, 155–6.
30. 'Lem verbrachte seine Jugend in den "Bloodlands"' Braun, "Die Realität der Fiktion. Zum 100. Geburtstag von Stanislaw Lem."
31. 'Kermanis Reise führte ihn mitten durch den jüdischen "Ansiedlungsrayon" der Zarenzeit, die "Bloodlands" des Zweiten Weltkriegs, entlang dem Riss zwischen Ost und West, wo der Kalte Krieg längst nicht zu Ende ist und im Donbass zum heißen Krieg wird.'
32. Review of *Der Hauptmann* (Robert Schwendtke, 2018): '(Deserteur Herold (Max Hubacher) errichtet in den "Bloodlands" des Krieges ein brutales Regime;' 'in einer kargen apokalyptischen Winterlandschaft, die an von dem amerikanischen Historiker Timothy Snyder beschriebene "Bloodlands" in Polen, Weißrussland und der Ukraine erinnert.' Schröder, "Mörder mit Kindergesicht."
33. 'Bobrowski bedichtet sein "Sarmatien," die "Bloodlands" Osteuropas, wie Timothy Snyder sie genannt hat.' Kämmerling, "Der Deutsche, der an der Ostfront zum Dichter wurde."
34. 'Wie fühlt es sich an, wenn man den eigenen Geburtsort nicht genau angeben kann und wenn man bei der Geburt schon zum Tode verurteilt war, als Jude während des Holocaust, im Osten, irgendwo in den Bloodlands?' Fly-leaf text of Jan Himmelfarb's *Sterndeutung*.
35. Käppner, "Die vergessene Kriege."
36. Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*; Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.
37. *Ibid*, 35.

38. Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 185–6.
39. Noyes, *Colonial Space*, 185. McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 24–7.
40. Surynt, *Gustav Freytags Polen*, 280; Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*, 35.
41. Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*, 104.
42. *Ibid.*, 101.
43. McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 26, 47. Conrad, “Internal Colonialism in Germany,” 257.
44. Poole, *Wasteland*, 121–2; Van Hoesen, “Weimar Revisions,” 204.
45. Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction*, 137
46. Zipperstein, *Pogrom*, 3. On exculpatory narratives of Polish antisemitism among German perpetrators see e.g. Christopher Browning’s *Ordinary Men*, 147.
47. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, 143–5.
48. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 151–2.
49. Jungfer, *Das Gesicht der Etappe*, 16– 19 quoted in Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 152.
50. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 154–5.
51. McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 30.
52. Published correspondence of the Prussian Army High Command, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg-in-Breisgau, Schirokauer, “Der deutsche Soldat,” (November 15, 1916). Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 155.
53. Black, *Death in Berlin*, 154.
54. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front*, 155.
55. Plievier, *Stalingrad*, 141, 223.
56. *Ibid.*, 201.
57. Richter, *Du sollst nicht töten*, 140.
58. Poole, *Wasteland*, 11.
59. Böll, *Kreuz ohne Liebe*, 288.
60. Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*, 86.
61. Böll, *Kreuz ohne Liebe*, 238.
62. Böll, *Der Zug war pünktlich*, 23–4, 36–7.
63. *Ibid.*, 23–4, 71–2. Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*, 25.
64. *Ibid.*, 23–4.
65. *Ibid.*, 24.
66. *Ibid.*, 32. Haehnel, “The Black Jew,” 245. Conrad, “Internal Colonialism,” 257. For a reading of antisemitic tropes in Böll’s early work, see Schlant, *The Language of Silence*, 30–6.
67. Böll, *Der Zug war pünktlich*, 41.
68. Böll, *Kreuz ohne Liebe*, 288.
69. Schlant, *The Language of Silence*, 30–6.
70. Fly-leaf text of Jan Himmelfarb’s *Sterndeutung*. Seiler, “Verloren in der Ukraine.”
71. Martin, “Ich begriff.”
72. Iken, “‘Bloodlands’: Fotos der Spuren.” Christian Herрман’s blog ‘Vanished World’: vanishedworld.blog.
73. Lagerwey, *Reading Auschwitz*, 18n.
74. ‘Spätestens seit Timothy Snyders Büchern “Bloodlands” und “Black Earth” interessieren wir uns verstärkt für die Länder, die zwischen Nazideutschland und Stalins Russland gerieten ...’ Posener, “Auf der Suche.” Kämmerlings, “Buchpreisträger.”
75. The term ‘der Graben’ has a broader meaning than the English ‘trench,’ referring to almost any disturbance of the earth e.g. earthworks, ditch, or manmade depression. It therefore encompasses not only trench warfare but the many burial sites Kermani visits, and even the buried reactor at Chernobyl. For a discussion of this ambiguity, see Watroba.
76. Kermani, *Along the Trenches*, 44.
77. *Ibid.*, 37. Original: ‘Der eigentliche Völkermord an den Juden fand dort statt, wo man nicht hinblickte, wenn man im Westen Deutschlands aufwuchs: im Osten. Gewiß lernt man als junger Mensch in Deutschland die Zahlen. Aber es ist noch einmal etwas anderes, wenn

- man auf Schritt und Tritt den Geistern der Ermordeten begegnet.’ Kermani, *Entlang den Gräben*, page not available.
78. Ibid. Original: ‘Würde man in Kaunas Stolpersteine in den Asphalt einlassen, oder in Minsk, Lemberg, Odessa, Brest, Riga, dann wären nicht einzelne Flecken, sondern halbe Städte aus Gold – golden wie das himmlische Jerusalem.’ Kermani, *Entlang den Gräben*, page not available.
 79. Epstein, *The Minsk Ghetto*, 90.
 80. Jewish virtual library <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/minsk-belarus-virtual-jewish-history-tour>.
 81. Kermani, *Along the Trenches*, 43. Original: ‘Obwohl also von den Ermordeten buchstäblich nur die Zahl übrigblieb, wird einem bei jedem Schritt schwummrig, fast so, als sackte man selbst ein. Von der nahen Autobahn hören wir ein Grundrauschen, das an jedem anderen Ort nicht so gespenstisch klänge, ansonsten völlige Stille, kein Vogelgezwitscher. Vor allem aber treffen wir keine anderen Menschen. Obwohl Paneriai einer der ersten großen Schauplätze des Holocaust war, sind wir an einem gewöhnlichen Vormittag die einzigen Besucher.’
 82. Pollack, *Kontaminierte Landschaften*, 56. Original: ‘namenlosen Landschaften, in den weiten Wald- und Sumpfgebieten, den Steppen, die zu jenen *Bloodlands* gehören.’
 83. Ibid, 31, 55.
 84. Erpenbeck, *Aller Tage Abend*, 122, 162, 181, 192, 282. Erpenbeck’s mother Doris Kilius was from Rhein in Masuria (East Prussia) and her father was born to German exile parents in the Soviet Union.
 85. Sukare’s mother and maternal grandmother are both from Łódź. Berges’s maternal grandmother is from a German-speaking village near Odessa and fled to Germany in 1943.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research was conducted with the support of the Leverhulme Trust, grant award number ECF-2018-139.

Notes on contributor

Jenny Watson studied German and Dutch at the University of Sheffield (2007-2012) and completed her PhD at Swansea University in 2017. Her thesis focused on cultural memory of the Second World War in the work of Herta Müller. From 2019-21 she was a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Edinburgh with a project entitled “Restless Earth: Extra-Concentrationary Memory in post-1945 German literature”.

Bibliography

- Altmann, Eva Mona. *Das Unsagbare verschweigen: Holocaust-Literatur aus Täterperspektive. Eine interdisziplinäre Textanalyse*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2021.
- Alon Confino, *A World Without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
- Aschheim, Steven E. *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

- Baberowski, Jörg. "Once and for All: The Encounter between Stalinism and Nazism. Critical Remarks on Timothy Snyder's 'Bloodlands'." *Contemporary European History* 21, no. 2 (2012): 145–148. doi:10.1017/S0960777312000082.
- Bajohr, Frank, and Dieter Pohl. *Der Holocaust als offenes Geheimnis: Die Deutschen, die NS-Führung und die Alliierten*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006.
- Bartov, Omer, and Eric D. Weitz, eds. *Shatterzones of Empires. Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.
- Beyrau, Dietrich. "Snyders Geografie." *Journal of Modern History* 10, no. 3 (2012): 306–314.
- Black, Monica. *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Böll, Heinrich. *Der Zug war pünktlich*. 1949. Reprint, Munich: dtv, 1987.
- Böll, Heinrich. *Kreuz ohne Liebe*. 2002. Reprint, Munich: dtv, 2006.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013.
- Braun, Jutta. "Die Realität der Fiktion. Zum 100. Geburtstag von Stanislaw Lem." *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 12. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/zum-100-geburtstag-von-stanislaw-lem-die-realitaet-der-fiktion/27597866.html>.
- Bredel, Willi. "Das schweigende Dorf." In *Das Schweigende Dorf*, edited by Willi Bredel, 5–53. Rostock: Carl Hinstorff, 1949.
- Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2009.
- Christopher R. Browning. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013).
- Colvin, Sarah. "Unerhört? Prisoner Narratives as Unlistened-to Stories (and Some Reflections on the Picaresque)." *Modern Language Review* 112, no. 2 (2017): 440–458.
- Conrad, Sebastian. "Internal Colonialism in Germany: Culture Wars, Germanification of the Soil, and the Global Market Imaginary." In *German Colonialism in a Global Age*, edited by Geoff Eley, and Bradley Naranch, 246–264. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Czollek, Max. *Desintegriert euch!*. Munich: Carl Hanser, 2018.
- Diner, Dan. "On Guilt Discourse and Other Narrations." Reprinted in *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust*, 218–230. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Epstein, Barbara. *The Minsk Ghetto 1941–1943: Jewish Resistance and Soviet Internationalism*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2008.
- Erpenbeck, Jenny. *Aller Tage Abend*. Munich: Knaus, 2012.
- Evans, Richard J. "Who Remembers the Poles?" *London Review of Books* 32, no. 4 (2010): 21–22.
- Gross, Jan T. "A Colonial History of the Bloodlands." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 15, no. 3 (2014): 591–596. doi:10.1353/kri.2014.0047.
- Haehnel, Birgit. "'The Black Jew': An Afterimage of German Colonialism." In *German Colonialism, Visual Culture, and Modern Memory*, edited by Volker Langbehn, 239–259. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010. doi:10.4324/9780203856901.
- Hausmann, Frank-Rutger. "Le roman sur l'holocauste Les Bienveillantes de Jonathan Littell dans le « Reading room »." In *Un retour des normes romanesques dans la littérature française contemporaine*, edited by Wolfgang Asholt, and Marc Dambre, 149–167. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010.
- Himmelfarb, Jan. *Sterndeutung*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2015.
- Hirschfeld, Gerhard, Friedrich Kahlenberg, Omer Bartov, and Cornelia Brink. *Bericht der Kommission zur Überprüfung der Ausstellung „Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944*. Hamburg: Stiftung Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, 2000. Accessed 15 December 2020 http://www.verbrechen-der-wehrmacht.de/pdf/bericht_kommission.pdf.
- Iken, Katja. "'Bloodlands': Fotos der Spuren jüdischen Lebens in Osteuropa." [Bloodlands: Photos of the Traces of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe]. *Der Spiegel*, 26 September. www.spiegel.de.

- spiegel.de/geschichte/bloodlands-fotos-der-spuren-juedischen-lebens-in-osteuroopa-a-1229912.html, 2019.
- Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (New York: Granta, 1999).
- Jungfer, Victor. *Das Gesicht der Etappe*. Berlin: Fritz Würtz, 1919.
- Kämmerlings, Richard. "Buchpreisträger. Mit Stanišić aus dem Getto des Migrantentums." [Book Prize Winners. Stanišić leads the way out of the ghetto of migranthood]. *Die Welt*, 13 March. www.welt.de/125781175, 2014.
- Kämmerlings, Richard. "Der Deutsche, der an der Ostfront zum Dichter wurde." [The German who became a poet on the Eastern Front] *Die Welt*. 9 March. <https://www.welt.de/kultur/literarischewelt/article163540459/Der-Deutsche-der-an-der-Ostfront-zum-Dichter-wurde.html>, 2017.
- Kansteiner, Wulf. *In pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006.
- Käppner, Joachim. "Die vergessenen Kriege [The Forgotten Wars]." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23 October. <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/syrien-jemen-bergkarabach-krieg-1.5092096>, 2020.
- Kermani, Navid. *Entlang den Gräben: Eine Reise durch das östliche Europa bis nach Isfahan*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2018.
- Kermani, Navid. *Along the Trenches: A Journey through Eastern Europe to Isfahan*. Translated by Tony Crawford. Cambridge: Polity, 2019.
- Kipp, Michaela. "The Holocaust in the Letters of German Soldiers on the Eastern Front (193944)." *Journal of Genocide Research* 9, no. 4 (2007): 601–615. doi:10.1080/14623520701644424.
- Klee, Ernst, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess. *"The Good Old Days." The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders* Translated by Deborah Burnstone. . New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1991.
- Kopp, Kristin. *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012.
- Kramer, Alan. *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Lagerwey, Mary D. *Reading Auschwitz*. London: AltaMira, 1998.
- Lawson, Tom. "Review of *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*." *Reviews in History*, December 15, 2016. <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/2036> doi:10.14296/RiH/2014/2036.
- Levene, Mark. *Annihilation: The European Rimlands Volume II, 1939–1953*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Liulevicius, Vejas Gabriel. *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Lower, Wendy. *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*. London: Vintage, 2013.
- Martin, Marko. "‘Ich begriff, dass der Osten auch ein Grab war.’ Andrzej Stasiuk macht „den Osten“ erfahrbar" [‘I realised that the East was also a Grave.’ Andrzej Stasiuk Makes “the East” Tangible]. *Die Welt*, February 23. www.welt.de/152547398, 2016.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Neiman, Susan. *Learning from the Germans: Confronting Race and the Memory of Evil*. London: Penguin, 2019.
- Niven, Bill. *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Noyes, John K. *Colonial Space: Spatiality in the Discourse of German South West Africa 1884–1915*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Plievier, Theodor. *Stalingrad*. 1946. Reprint, Cologne: Kiepenhauer und Witsch, 2018.
- Pollack, Martin. *Kontaminierte Landschaften*. Vienna: Residenz, 2014.
- Poole, W. Scott. *Wasteland: The Great War and the Origins of Modern Horror*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2018.

- Posener, Alan. "Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Stadt. Eine filmische Hommage an Polens jüdisches Erbe" [In Search of the Lost City. A Cinematic Hommage to Poland's Jewish Heritage]. *Die Welt*, November 11. www.welt.de/148456721, 2015.
- Potter, Nicholas. "I'm not your token Jew" [Interview with Max Czollek]. *Exberliner*, August 23. <https://www.exberliner.com/features/people/max-czollek-interview/>, 2019.
- Prusin, Alexander. *The Lands Between. Conflict in the East European Borderlands, 1870–1992*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Richter, Hans Werner. *Du sollst nicht töten*. 1955. Reprint, Berlin: Ullstein, 1962.
- Roth, Markus, and Sascha Feuchert. "Einleitung." In *Holocaust, Zeugnis, Literatur. 20 Werke wieder gelesen*, edited by Markus Roth, and Sascha Feuchert, 7–29. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018.
- Schlant, Ernestine. *The Language of Silence. West German Literature and the Holocaust*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Schröder, Christian. "Mörder mit Kindergesicht. 'Der Hauptmann im Kino'." *Der Tagesspiegel*, March 14. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/der-hauptmann-im-kino-moerder-mit-kindergesicht/21071008.html>, 2018.
- Seiler, Sascha. "Verloren in der Ukraine" [Lost in Ukraine] Review of Markus Berges's *Die Köchin von Bob Dylan*. *LiteraturKritik.de*, June 6. Available: <https://literaturkritik.de/id/22152>, 2016.
- Sendyka, Roma. "Holocaust by Bullets: Expanding the Field of Holocaust Art," EHRI Blogpost, <https://www.ehri-project.eu/holocaust-bullets>.
- Surynt, Izabela. *Das "ferne," "unheimliche" Land. Gustav Freytags Polen*. Dresden: Thelem bei w.e.b., 2004.
- Theweleit, Klaus. "On the German Reaction to Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*." Translated by Timothy Nunan. *New German Critique* 106 (2009). 21–34.
- Van Hoesen, Brett M. "Weimar Revisions of Germany's Colonial Past: The Photomontages of Hannah Höch and László Moholy-Nagy." In *German Colonialism, Visual Culture, and Modern Memory*, edited by Volker Langbehn, 197–219. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010. doi:10.4324/9780203856901.
- Vice, Sue. "'Beyond Words': Representing the 'Holocaust by Bullets'." *Holocaust Studies* 25, no. 1–2 (2019): 88–100. doi:10.1080/17504902.2018.1472878.
- Watroba, Karolina. "Navid Kermani's *Entlang den Gräben* (2018): Remapping Eastern Europe." In *Tracing German Visions of Eastern Europe in the 20th Century (Edinburgh German Yearbook 15)*, edited by Jenny Watson, Michel Mallet, and Hanna Schumacher, 262–83. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2022.
- Weiner, Amir. "Timothy Snyder. *Bloodlands*." *Cahiers du monde russe* 53, no. 4 (2012). <http://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/7904>.
- Wilke, J. "Die Fernsehserie "Holocaust" als Medienereignis." *Historical Social Research* 30, no. 4 (2005): 9–17.
- Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization in the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Zarusky, Jürgen. "Timothy Snyders 'Bloodlands' Kritische Anmerkungen zur Konstruktion einer Geschichtslandschaft." *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 60, no. 1 (2012). Reprinted *Studia Litteraria et Historica* (Krakow) 1 (2012), 1–32.
- Zarusky, Jürgen. "Sowjetische Opfer von Krieg und nationalsozialistischer Verfolgung." In *Erinnerung an Diktatur und Krieg Brennpunkte des kulturellen Gedächtnisses zwischen Russland und Deutschland seit 1945*, edited by Andreas Wirsching, Jürgen Zarusky, Viktor Ischtschenko, and Alexander Tschubarjan, 227–246. Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2015. doi:10.1515/9783110405033-020.
- Zipperstein, Steven J. *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History*. New York: Liveright, 2018.