

might be, it is very effective as a cipher of that which is connecting certain people in one way or another.<sup>6</sup>

The imagination of collective identity leads to social inclusion and exclusion, even to the point of forced rejection or annihilation of others.<sup>7</sup> In this context, the idea of similarity (introduced by Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich into the field of Cultural Studies)<sup>8</sup> can add another twist to the debate: Usually, collective identity is defined via the criteria of common heritage, shared traditions, common language, and the practice of certain ways of acting and living. With the exception of the issue of language and of different ideas of history and cultural memory, the central European region (in our case Czechia, Germany, and Austria) shares—at least partly—many criteria. Therefore, we quickly realise that this geographic area does not only have many national differences, but also a great number of transnational similarities.

The present volume focuses on various aspects of mutual representation in Czech, German and Austrian literatures and cultures from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until today. Eleven case studies examine the topic from various methodological perspectives. Written by scholars in Czech and German studies from Czechia, Austria, Germany, Belgium, France, Poland, and the USA, the chapters of the volume reveal that the topic of Czech-German-Austrian relations opens larger theoretical questions that can be placed within the theoretical framework of postcolonial studies, studies of cultural transfer, sociocultural theory of translation, and feminist and gender studies. Clearly, the volume cannot claim to cover the Czech-German-Austrian relations over two centuries in their entirety; it approaches the topic through case studies highlighting some of the most important milestones of these complex relations.

In the first chapter of the volume, Peter Deutschmann links the process of increasing nationalisation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the accelerating processes of modernisation. Recalling Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, he reads the language conflict and the increasing nationalisation in Bohemia as a side effect of modernisation. He explains the importance of language na-

6 Ebd.: 300. [Kursivsetzung in der Vorlage]

7 Ebd.: 298. Vgl. auch Niethammer 2000.

8 Vgl. Bhatti/Kimmich 2015.

tionalism in the conflicts between Czech speakers and the German speaking population of the Habsburg Empire, and their connection with increasing industrialisation, which demanded higher mobility and consequently multilingualism on a high level, as well. This growing antagonism also has reflections in the field of literature, as Stefan Simonek proves with the example of the Czech modernist movement's reception of Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Writers such as Karel Toman, Josef Svatopluk Machar, and František Xaver Šalda are much more interested into the literary trends from Paris, than those from the capital of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Although they mention Hofmannsthal here and there, they do it in a way that devaluates or re-evaluates his works. The third chapter shows how language nationalism heated up during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Jan Budňák investigates this growing gap between the ethnic groups in analysing the volume of essays entitled *Tschechen* [The Czechs], published in 1920 by the German national, later National-Socialist author Karl Hans Strobl, a so-called Sudeten German. Budňák traces how the discourse moves from language to the ideology of races. Strobl, who constructed national categories in a very polarizing way, could not prove these crude ideas himself in the examples he gave. Although the contradiction of his argumentation is visible, he continued to insist on these nationalistic dichotomies.

While the first section of the volume addresses the separation of the ethnic groups, the second section shows that this process was paralleled by attempts of dialogue. Karel Čapek's novel *Obyčejný život* (*An Ordinary Life*) was published in 1934 after Hitler had committed to "solve" the Sudeten German question definitely, and in this connection had already announced the programme to annex the Czechoslovakia. The uneasy relationship between the Czechoslovakian state and its German minority is the backdrop of this novel. Thomas Ort reads Čapek's text about a Czech-German couple as a form of advocacy, to keep together the fragile, ethnically split state. The bi-national couple with the Czech husband dominating the German wife is important, as this gender related metaphor will be frequently used in Czech fiction for the depiction of the German other. During the period of the communist dictatorship, Czech writers use German topics and examples from German literature to subversively undermine the official German canon of literature as well as the official

historic narrative of distinction. Zbyněk Fišer chooses examples from Czech poetry and prose, as well as from poetry translated from German, in order to prove that in the underground, German literature was interpreted differently than the bogeyman image dictated by the political powers. Already during WWII, poet and journalist Josef Hora countered the raging Nazi-terror by recalling the highlights of German civilisation when he translated poetry by Goethe, Schiller, Lenau, and Chamisso. At the end of the 1940s, young poet Egon Bondy developed a surrealist method he called “total-realist method”. He also used the German language in his clandestinely published works. In works by Jiří Kratochvíl (most of them were published only after the fall of the communist regime), outsiders fight for their survival in an authoritarian society, and German topics are mentioned in passing. Gertraude Zand analyses the specific role played by German language and literature in the early works by Egon Bondy. She reads the poet’s preference for language games, his intense reception of the poetry by Christian Morgenstern, and his self-stylisation as “fascist”, “Marxist”, and “Jewish” as a provocation against the Stalinist dictatorship. No question, these texts could only be published clandestinely in his own underground publishing house Edice Půlnoc [Midnight Edition] during the 1950s.

Many writers de-constructed the artificial and binary oppositions between Czechs and Germans by emphasizing the fluid nature of collective identity and the problematic nature of national belonging. This topic is central in the works (and lives) of Wilma Iggers and Ota Filip. Anja Tippner analyses the difficult construction of ethnic identity by German speaking Czech-Jewish writer and literary scholar Wilma Iggers. She fled from the Nazi-terror to North America and lived a life between the USA and Germany after the war. In the double autobiography written with her husband Georg Iggers, *Zwei Seiten der Geschichte. Lebensbericht aus unruhigen Zeiten* (2002, Two Sides of a History. Autobiography from Unquiet Times), she reflects on the relations between Czechs, Jews, and Germans. Ania Gnot takes a post-colonial perspective to analyse the changes in the social and national relations from the beginning of the war: She reads Ota Filip’s novel *Cesta ke hřbitovu* (1968, Lane to the Cemetery) as a warning against the danger of misusing national antagonisms and connects them with the transition from colonialism to post-colonialism.

The final section of the volume focuses on the literary representation of the expulsion of the German-speaking population from Czechoslovakia at the end of WWII and closes with a contribution on writer Michael Stavarič who was born in Brno in 1972, fled as a child with his parents to Austria where he became one of the best-known writers of the country. Karolina Čwiek-Rogalska highlights that the trauma of the expulsion has been a topic in Czech literature not only since the Velvet Revolution (e.g. in the works of writers, such as Kateřina Tučková, Radka Denemarková und Jakuba Katalpa), but already since the late 1940s when writers such as Anna Sedlmayerová und von Václav Řezáč preconfigured this topic. Based on theories from anthropology (in particular the idea of post-memory by Marianne Hirsch), Čwiek-Rogalska suggests categorising the treatments of the expulsion in Czech literature into three generations. Xavier Galmiche asks the question why Reinhard Jirgl's novel *Die Unvollendeten* (2003, *The Unfinished*) has not been translated into Czech. This postmodern chronicle of the expulsion from the northern Bohemian city Komotau/Chomutov, with its highly subjectified orthography, depicts the experience of expulsion from the perspective of four generations of women, none of which finds peace nor a way to work through the family's displacement. In contrast with this, Stavarič affirms his transcultural biography; according to him, the development of his creative potential is routed through his personal experience of hybridity. In his 2017 novel *Gotland*, he reflects on this hybridity in the form of overlays on the level of the narration, content, as well as on the level of genre. These imbrications represent some of today's formations of hybrid identity.

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