

1998 (*Taghaus, Nachthaus*, 2001) and Sabrina Janesch's *Katzenberge* (2010) as "postmemorial spaces" that reference historical place and hold present those uncanny dimensions of the past that continue to shape the real and imagined geographies of Europe (154). While both novels translate the political into the poetic realm, thereby contributing to the reconfiguration of European topographies, they—other than Bienek's tetralogy—omit the prominent role of Jews in the regions they narrate and thus a central dimension of Eastern Europe's history and culture.

Eigler's book is a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the complex histories of German flight from Eastern Europe as rendered in contemporary literature. The author's detailed and nuanced interpretations, and especially the comparative perspective she includes here with at least one Polish text, provide much fodder for thought. They gesture toward a comparative, transnational approach to reading literature that can serve as an example for other scholars of German Studies in a broader European framework.

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**Heimat, Loss and Identity: Flight and Expulsion in German Literature from the 1950s to the Present.**

By Karina Berger. Oxford, Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2014. viii + 227 pages. \$97.95.

**Representations of Flight and Expulsion in East German Prose Works.**

By Bill Niven. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014. 219 pages. \$85.00.

The monographs by Karina Berger and Bill Niven, both British scholars, are important contributions to a burgeoning field of cross-disciplinary scholarship in German Studies that examines the legacies of flight and expulsion, i.e., the forced migration of approximately 12 million ethnic Germans at the end of World War II. The two studies should ideally be read together: both cover the period from the 1950s to the present, but Berger's *Heimat, Loss and Identity* focuses primarily on better-known West German literature while Niven's *Representations of Flight and Expulsion in East German Prose Works* examines, as the title suggests, a large body of mostly lesser-known East German texts. Berger provides a critical analysis of popular and elite literature. The broad scope of her study combines a consideration of historical and political contexts with much-needed attention to aesthetic and literary aspects. Niven's book complements Berger's focus on West Germany and successfully challenges the widely held view that the topic of flight and expulsion was largely taboo in East Germany. Both studies illustrate in different ways the central role of literature for changing approaches to—and broadening views of—Germany's 'difficult past,' i.e., National Socialism, World War II, the Holocaust, and flight and expulsion at the end of the War.

Berger's *Heimat, Loss and Identity* is comprised of an informative introduction, four chronologically organized chapters, a brief conclusion, and a bibliography followed by a very brief index (mostly of names and titles discussed in the book). The introduction provides useful information on the historical events and the shifting public discourses on the German past—including the attention to German wartime suffering—as well as an overview of the main literary trends and the state of scholarship.

While most scholars focus on the recent upsurge of novels that address flight and expulsion, Berger examines literature since the 1950s and is thus able to identify both continuities and changes over the past sixty years. To delimit the scope of her study she employs the term “expulsion novels” and defines it topically: literature that references the historical events preceding, during, and following the arrival of Soviet troops and the “ensuing hostilities, flight, experience of terror and revenge” as well as texts that address the physical and psychological effects of these traumatic experiences (13). This is a helpful descriptive definition, but it is important to keep in mind that the term itself cannot easily be translated into German as it is closely related to “Vertriebenenliteratur,” a term that carries negative connotations, evoking a body of literature driven by nostalgia at best and revanchist agendas at worst. It is one of Berger’s most significant accomplishments that she dispels many of these stereotypes by looking carefully at the early expulsion novels and by showing that they are often more nuanced than generally assumed, especially when viewed within the dominant discourses of the time.

While memory studies often distinguishes between private and public memory discourses, highlighting the discrepancy between what Harald Welzer calls “private album” and “public lexicon,” Berger makes a compelling argument that, in the context of literary studies, it is more “appropriate to distinguish between elite and popular discourses” (12). Texts that fall under the latter category are closer to mainstream worldviews and more likely to focus on private memories, including German wartime suffering. Berger devotes equal attention to ‘popular literature’ and to ‘elite literature,’ i.e., texts by established authors that adopt refined or innovative literary styles and that often include responses to public memory discourses or self-reflexive dimensions.

Four chapters form the main part of the book; each provides contextual information on the changing political landscape and shifting public discourses on the Nazi past, followed by in-depth analyses of selected expulsion novels, some ‘popular’ and some ‘elite.’ Chapter One focuses on the early post-war period that saw an upsurge of fictional and autobiographical texts dealing with the recent past. Berger examines novels by authors most of whom are little known today, including Ruth Storm, Ernst Wiechert, Kurt Ihlenfeld, Gertrud Fussenegger, and Ruth Hoffmann. While these early novels all portray German suffering, they do not promote territorial claims regarding the lost homes in the East. Furthermore, while the emphasis is on German victims of flight and expulsion and on religious or universalizing language, some of these early texts also begin to address Germany’s responsibility for the war and issues of individual guilt. Significantly, Berger observes no conspicuous differences between elite and popular discourses regarding representations of German wartime suffering in the 1950s.

In Chapter Two, Berger looks at novels that appeared during the far more politicized period of the 1970s and 80s, a time when dominant public discourses moved away from German victimhood and focused on Germany’s responsibility for the war and the Holocaust. She examines novels by Christa Wolf and Siegfried Lenz as well as popular fiction by Christine Brückner and Leonie Ossowski. While these two groups of texts track to some extent the diverging discourses on the past during this period, Berger also finds a surprising degree of overlap: the popular novels often focus on idealized notions of Heimat, but some also show critical awareness regarding the historical reasons for flight and expulsion. On the other hand, the novels by Wolf

and Lenz are highly aware of these larger historical contexts but nevertheless include empathy for the victims of flight and expulsion. As Berger maintains, both kinds of texts have therefore contributed to coming to terms with the past and have done so in ways that, until recently, scholars and literary critics have largely ignored.

The focus on the changing reception of Walter Kempowski's work in Chapter Three provides further evidence for this lacuna. Kempowski was considered a conservative author of popular literature, much of which dealt with private memories of the Second World War and flight and expulsion. Although his literary style remained largely constant over four decades, the reception of his work changed noticeably with the appearance of the first volume of *Echolot* in the early 1990s. According to Berger, this sudden success of *Echolot* and the delayed recognition of Kempowski's work by scholars and critics indicate a major shift in public discourse, i.e., a growing willingness to consider aspects of German culpability and suffering.

Against the backdrop of this broadened approach to the Nazi past and a renewed interest in the long-term effects of flight and the loss of *Heimat* in contemporary literature, Berger discusses recent novels by Hans-Ulrich Treichel, Reinhard Jirgl, Angelika Overath, and Olaf Müller in her final chapter. As Berger observes, the authors' nuanced and critical engagement with the past is linked to issues of identity and belonging in the present, and many of these narratives include meta-critical dimensions regarding the role of individual and social memory. Seen in isolation, Chapter Four largely confirms existing scholarship, but Berger's major contribution lies in providing a much broader context for assessing these recent literary developments.

In sum, *Heimat, Loss and Identity* provides an assessment of literature on flight and expulsion (and on the long-term effects of these events) that is both comprehensive and nuanced. Its only drawback—the scant attention to the situation in East Germany—is more than remedied by Niven's book.

Niven's *Representations of Flight and Expulsion in East German Prose Works* provides ample evidence that East German authors addressed memories and post-memories of flight and expulsion throughout the four decades of the GDR's existence. A historian with a keen interest in the role of literature in society and politics, Niven is well positioned to look at this large body of hitherto little-examined texts. While it is true that expellee organizations were prohibited and public discourse on these issues was tightly controlled in the GDR, literature functioned as an alternative public sphere, providing room to address these politically sensitive issues. This should come as no surprise if one considers that many GDR authors were born in the former German East (according to Niven, approximately 80 to 100), and that expellees made up 20–25% of the post-war population in both German states.

Indeed, because of the wealth of pertinent literature, Niven limits his study to prose works and does not consider other genres or media. Thematically, he examines texts that focus on the “portrayal and framing of flight and expulsion and their impact” (7) and excludes works that focus on life in the former German East prior to loss of home and forced migration. Perhaps the most important aspect for the overall direction of this study is Niven's decision to focus neither on issues of censorship nor on the noticeable absence of certain topics, but instead on what the works under discussion do in fact address and accomplish: an exploration of the historical circumstances of

flight and expulsion and of the role of German guilt, especially concerning the atrocities committed against Poles and Jews. However, despite the effort to avoid preconceived notions of literature in the GDR, Niven adopts the (Western) term “expulsion” over the (Socialist) term “resettlement” (*Umsiedlung*), as he finds the latter term too vague.

Beyond the introduction that lays out the state of scholarship and the overall approach as summarized above, *Representations of Flight and Expulsion* includes five chapters, a bibliography, and a comprehensive index of names. The first chapter addresses the main characteristics of the literature under discussion while the remaining four chapters are organized in a roughly chronological manner, beginning with examples of “reconstruction literature” of the 1950s and early 1960s (Chapter Two), continuing with “literature of retrospection” and “of revisiting” of the late 1960s and 1970s (Chapter Three), novels “reassessing integration” of the 1980s (Chapter Four), and concluding with East German prose works after unification (Chapter Five).

Despite Niven’s stated intent to focus on what this literature accomplishes, he addresses one of its most obvious lacunae, namely the lack of critical depictions of Soviets and, instead, the attribution of rapes perpetrated by Soviet soldiers to Nazi propaganda. Referencing Birgit Dahlke’s argument that the taboo of addressing rape became a “symbol of repression” toward the end of the GDR, Niven argues that it had taken on this role in a few cases much earlier (39, 42). He acknowledges ideologically motivated misrepresentations when it comes to Soviet characters, in particular in the context of rape. In a compelling reading of *Kindheitsmuster* later in his study, he shows how Wolf cautiously addresses the “discursive limits” of GDR literature and the “irreconcilability of truth and loyalty” (109).

The chapter on “Reconstruction Literature” (*Aufbauliteratur*) focuses on how the figure of the refugee turns into an “ideal character upon whom to project the integrative and progressive power of socialism” (53). Against the backdrop of unsuccessful integration of expellees into West German society, novels of the 1950s and early 60s such as Hans-Jürgen Steinmann’s *Stimmen der Jahre* (1963) illustrate how refugees in East Germany overcome challenges and become meaningful members of GDR society. Along similar lines, these novels portray the GDR as the “truly progressive homeland (Heimat)” (49) in contrast to both West Germany and the lost Heimat in the former German East.

Tracing subsequent literary and social developments, the remainder of the study shows how GDR literature grew increasingly skeptical of this early model of successful integration. Beginning in the late 60s, many authors explored the continued social and psychological effects of the loss of homeland, the traumatic experiences of flight and expulsion, and difficulties in integration—closely tied to their new neighbors’ hostility and prejudices. In the 1980s, this critical reassessment continues, for instance in novels by Ursula Höntsch-Harendt (*Wir Flüchtlingsskinder*, 1985) and Harald Gerlach (*Jungfernhaut*, 1987), and extends in some cases to the political actors at the end of the war, especially to the role of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, some novels begin to transcend a national perspective by considering European processes of displacement, especially the situation of Poles, with the effect that they are no longer exclusively portrayed as victims of Nazi crimes. The concluding chapter shows how these trends intensify in the post-unification period. Authors like Reinhard Jirgl, Harry Thürk, or Elisabeth Schulz-Semrau openly portray the brutalities—including

multiple rapes—many expellees suffered, and the idea of successful integration is exposed as a myth even when it comes to members of subsequent generations who were born in the GDR.

However, as Niven points out, even a novel like Jirgls *Die Unvollendeten*, which portrays the suffering of expellees at the hands of Czechs, continues to display a principal trait of East German literature by adopting a position of “critical empathy” (170), i.e., a position of relative emotional distance that insists on the primacy of German guilt.

Overall, Niven’s study breaks new ground in its comprehensive discussion of East German prose that tackles the ideologically fraught events of flight and expulsion and the “long shadows” these events cast into divided Germany, the post-unification period, and beyond. It says a lot about the long-lasting avoidance (if not taboo) in scholarship, historiographical and literary alike, that studies like Niven’s—as well as Berger’s—appear only now. Of course such an ambitious study is bound to have some shortcomings, e.g., the cursory and mostly critical references to West German literature that do not do justice to the range of existing texts—as clearly shown in Berger’s book. But this weakness should not distract from its major accomplishment: the wealth of East German literature Niven unearths changes dominant views on GDR literature and provides a broad basis for future research projects. Taken together, Niven’s and Berger’s books would provide the ideal foundation for comparative studies of East and West German literature and their respective discursive contexts. In brief, both Niven’s and Berger’s studies are must-reads for German studies scholars interested in post-war and contemporary German literature and culture.

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### **East German Cinema: DEFA and Film History.**

*By Sebastian Heiduschke. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. x + 196 pages + 12 b/w illustrations. \$28.00.*

Sebastian Heiduschke has produced a fine introduction to the cinema of East Germany that is aimed at a general, English-speaking student audience without previous exposure to the films of this now-defunct socialist country. Throughout one senses the didactic impetus to assemble a watchable and instructive group of films to confront students with key dimensions of film production and culture under state socialism in the GDR. In this regard the book’s succinct discussions—most of the chapters clock in at about eight pages or less—fully accomplish what the author sets out to do. Heiduschke succeeds admirably in tying in the relevant cultural debates and historical events as well as intermittently looking beyond the GDR to international contexts.

In the book’s shorter first section, Heiduschke concisely situates the DEFA studio as a state institution, identifying defining moments in its history and the cultural history of East Germany. This first section also addresses the tenuous status of entertainment in politicized production schedules—important given the emphasis on genre films in the book—and outlines DEFA’s relationship to the film industry in West Germany and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The section ends with a brief consideration of the cinematic legacy of East Germany following its demise. On the whole this introduction is balanced and informative and about as comprehensive as