LITERARILY TV: TELEVISION, VOICE, AND IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN AND ENGLISH TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

to the Department of Philosophy and Humanities

of Freie Universität Berlin

by

Dorothea Trotter

Berlin, 2020

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. phil. Cordula Lemke

Second examiner: Prof. Dr. Michael Gamper

Date of defense: 29 March 2021

ABSTRACT

Television and culture have an intricate relationship that is often depicted in transnational literature, yet one generally ignored by scholars. While one must acknowledge the saturation of media in this technological age, and that writing about human experience cannot realistically be done without acknowledging the myriad media with which people come into contact, television references should be seen as an important literary device in literature that features transnational social groups, consciousness, aesthetics, and themes.

Utilizing a cultural studies framework and theories from intermedial, television, transnational and postcolonial studies, in *Literarily TV* I focus on questions of identity and the representation of people and television media in literature. By examining Monica Ali's *Brick Lane,* Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man,* Olga Martynova's *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* and Jenny Erpenbeck's *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* I show several variations for the use of television references in novels that feature the sites of contestations between culture, identity, and media. These texts expand upon our conceptions of collective memory, trauma, and belonging, and encourage shifts in power that reconfigure our understandings of identity, authenticity, and ambivalence.

In my analyses, I focus on references to popular television, sports broadcast, and news reporting within the various functions of television as entertainment, informant, and educator. This work reveals specific realities surrounding the situation of migrants and/or transnational people, people who have migrant backgrounds, are part of a minority ethnic group, and/or are marginalized in different ways. These uses include but are not limited: to mapping out contact

zones between different cultures; encouraging intercultural interaction or belonging; and revealing the interconnected relationship between representation and television. In addition, I explore how television reflects codes of history, engages collective memory, and mediates epistemology.

ABSTRAKT

Das komplexe Verhältnis von Fernsehen und Kultur wird in der transnationalen Literatur häufig dargestellt aber von Forschern selten zur Kenntnis genommen. Durch die zweifellos anerkannte Erkenntnis der medialen Durchdringung in das Leben der Menschen im gegenwärtigen technologischen Zeitalter, die sich zwangsweise in einer realistisch glaubhaften literarischen Darstellung dieser Leben widerspiegeln muss, können Fernsehbezüge als wichtige literarische Mittel im transnationalen Kontext bezüglich gesellschaftlicher Strukturen, Bewusstsein, Ästhetik und Themen fungieren.

Indem ich Gebrauch von einem Cultural Studies *Framework* und von Theorien aus der Intermedialitäts-, Fernseh-, transnationalen und postkolonialen Forschung mache, konzentriere ich mich auf Fragen der Repräsentation der Identität von Menschen und der Darstellung von Fernsehmedien in der Literatur. Ich beziehe mich auf Monica Alis *Brick Lane*, Zadie Smiths *The Autograph Man*, Olga Martynovas *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* und Jenny Erpenbecks *Gehen, ging, gegangen* und zeige auf mehrere Variationen für die Verwendung von Fernsehreferenzen in Romanen, die die Orte der Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Kultur, Identität und Medien aufweisen. Diese Texte erweitern unser Verständnis von kollektiver Erinnerung, Trauma und Zugehörigkeit und regen zu einem bezüglichen Umdenken unseres Verstehens von Identität, Authentizität und Ambivalenz an.

In dieser Arbeit, *Literarily TV*, analysiere ich Referenzen zum Unterhaltungsfernsehen, Sportsendungen und Nachrichtensendungen innerhalb der Funktionen des Fernsehens als Unterhaltungs-, Informations- und Erziehungsmedium, um bestimmte Realitäten über die Situation von Migranten und/oder transnationalen Menschen, Menschen mit einen Migrationshintergrund, die Teil einer ethnischen Minderheit sind und/oder auf unterschiedliche Weise marginalisiert werden zu erläutern. Eingeschlossen aber nicht begrenzt auf diese Verwendungszwecken gehören u.a.: die Abbildung von Kontaktzonen zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen, die Förderung der interkulturellen Interaktion oder Zugehörigkeit, die Aufdeckung der miteinander verbundenen Beziehung zwischen Darstellung und Fernsehen und die Diskussion darüber, wie das Fernsehen kodierte Geschichte reflektiert, das kollektive Gedächtnis einbezieht und Epistemologie vermittelt.

To my parents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book, which derives from the dissertation I wrote to complete the requirements for a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at Freie Universität Berlin, owes its existence and any possible excellence to many direct and indirect benefactors and advisors.

I am grateful to the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School, part of the German DFG, for the funding, structure, and workspaces to complete my project during the three years I was a member. In particular I thank the administrative team including Rebecca Mak and Anita Alimadadi, the Principle Investigators of the FSGS who lead the interdisciplinary colloquia and classes I attended, in particular Irmela Krüger-Fürhoff, Irina Rajewsky, and Cordula Lemke, and the members of my year, especially Astrid Hansen, Marion Maurin, and Elena Stingl. A special thank you for Troels Anderson, who mailed me almost all my research material from our joint office when I was unexpectedly stuck in the U.S. after the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, and to Katharina Warda, who showed me what it means to be an academic with empathy, creativity, and determination.

Thank you to my wonderful first advisor and supervisor, Cordula Lemke, for believing in my project from its humble beginnings as a presentation in an intermediality seminar to its completed form, as well as for her astute insights, consistent support, and providing great working relations.

Also an earnest thank you to Michael Gamper, who stepped in almost last-minute as second marker and head of my examination committee to ensure I could submit and defend in a timely manner in my discipline. I am grateful for his expertise and insights for my project. Thanks also to Andrew James Johnston and Nina Tolksdorf, who agreed to be on my committee and for their challenging questions during the defense—reflecting on them further has resulted in some of this book's changes.

Thank you also to Georg Witte, who was my second supervisor for most of the process. I am grateful for our conversations and his questions during the defense and the AVL colloquium he led, the members of whom I also have to thank, especially Alexandra Ksenofontova, who was a wonderful mentor to me for the entirety of my time at the Freie Uni.

Thank you to the members of the English colloquium I attended 2016-2020, headed by Cordula Lemke and Stephan Laqué, in particular Sophia Jochem, Laurel Braddock, Muyi Liu, Lucky Issar, and Ji-Soo Kweon.

I owe a large part of any accomplishment in the chapter on *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* to Andrew Webber's exceptional supervision in my time at University of Cambridge from Jan. to June of 2019. I am indebted to the German Graduate Research Seminar, the University of Cambridge Nationalities and Identities Research Seminar, the support of Fitzwilliam College, and the Erasmus student-exchange program. These were integral to the development of my

chapters on *Brick Lane* and *The Autograph Man*. Special thanks to Nicholas Courtman, from whose FSGS-Cambridge collaboration I continue to benefit.

Some further thanks go to John McLeod for the conversations we had and his valuable advice from Dec. 2018; Andrea DeCapua for being first reviewer and editor for sections of my dissertation and supplementing Cordula's valuable publication and career advice in the months following submission; Claudia Dunlea for her insight into the German university system and calming me down in the most panicked of moments; the known and anonymous reviewers of the manuscript when I was still thinking about publishing with Routledge; and Routledge editor Jennifer Abbott for believing in this book and offering me a contract. Grateful acknowledgement is made to Penguin Random House LLC for the use of the television doodle from *The Autograph Man,* Copyright 2002 by Zadie Smith.

Thank you to all my friends (some mentioned above) for their shared enthusiasm and thoughtful support; they were always there to talk about or distract from my work when I needed them. I especially want to thank Olivia Valdés for her great friendship, for so long. Sharing the ups and downs of our academic trajectories, despite different schools, disciplines, and life changes, has been incredible.

My love to my brother, Genya, who made the first year in Berlin less lonely, and who reminded me that I needed to get to work in the beginning, so that I could make it to the end.

And finally, thank you to Evelyn and Jim Trotter, to whom this book is dedicated, without whom it may not even have been written, and whom I love very much.

Dorothea Trotter, November 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: TURNING ON THE DISCUSSION 1
1 Overview of the Chapters 5
CHAPTER ONE: WRITING TELEVISION 13
1 Intermedial 13
2 Transnational 16
3 Transnational Intermediality 21
4 Cultural Studies 26
5 Television 28
5.1 Global impact and spread 30
5.2 Sports 31
5.3 Society 34
5.4 Polysemic, polyphonic 38
CHAPTER TWO: "AND SHE SAID 'TURN IT ON'": TELEVISION AS EXPRESSIVE IMPETUS IN MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE* 45
Introduction: "This is England" 45
1 Responding to 9/11 48
1.1 The racialization of Muslims in the media 52
1.2 "You will see what happens now" 59
1.3 Repetition 63
2 The Falling People 64
2.1 Agency 65
3 Television as a Window 72
3.1 Comfort 74
3.2 Integration 76
4 Responding to *Bolero* 76
4.1 Reversing the gaze 79
4.2 Claiming agency 85
5 Creating expression 92
5.1 Televisual 94
5 Conclusion 99
CHAPTER THREE: "CAUGHT BY MOVING FILM": BELONGING WITH TELEVISION IN ZADIE SMITH'S *THE AUTOGRAPH MAN* 103
Introduction: Navigating Twenty-first Century Identities 103

1 Mediating Othering 111
1.1 Television as escape 111
1.2 The allure of celebrity 114
1.3 Gaze of the other(s) 116
1.4 Racialization 118
1.5 Racist media 121
1.6 Representation and watching selves 124
1.7 Double-Consciousness 126
1.8 Intermedial situatedness 130
2 Belonging With 132
2.1 Letters 133
2.2 Repetition 136
2.3 Fluidity: Meeting 138
2.4 Belonging 140
3 Death and Impermanence 142
3.1 Empty media 143
3.2 Mediating the dead 149
3.3 Mediating the living 152
3.4 Rituals: Kaddish and wrestling 153
3.5 Gestures 159
3.6 Voice 160
4 Conclusion 161
CHAPTER FOUR: "GREGORS ANDERES BLAU": TELEVISION, MEMORY, AND SILENCE IN OLGA MARTYNOVA'S *SOGAR PAPAGEIEN ÜBERLEBEN UNS* 165
Introduction 165
1 Sounds and Sights 170
1.1 The time-banner 171
1.2 Mediated metaphors: Blog versus television 173
2 Metonymies of Mirrors and Windows 175
2.1 Frames 178
2.2 Flags 181
3 The Subjectivity of Perception 186
3.1 Color and emotion 186
3.2 Subjective significance 188
3.3 Community 190
4 *Erinnerungsdiskurs* 193

4.1 Memory and dialogue 194
4.2 Holocaust memory in the USSR 196
4.3 Ein Sommermärchen 198
5 Trauma 201
5.1 Apophasis 202
5.2 Voicing multiple narratives 203
6 *Schweigen* 207
6.1 Censorship 208
6.2 E-mail 211
7 Conclusion 213
CHAPTER FIVE: "GAB ES EINEN FERNSEHER?": REFRAMING WITH/OUT TELEVISION IN JENNY ERPENBECK'S *GEHEN, GING, GEGANGEN* 217
Introduction 217
1 Frames 222
1.1 Richard's characterization 223
1.2 "Wir werden sichtbar" 228
1.3 Doubting image 230
1.4 Migrant framing 233
2 Rethinking Frames 238
2.1 Richard's changing perspective 238
2.2 Shifting associations 241
2.3 Osarobo: upsetting expectations 243
3 Death of Television 246
3.1 Names 247
3.2 Tatort *and hegemonic order* 252
3.3 Afterlife for television 258
4 "Giving Voice" 261
4.1 Silence 261
4.2 Testimony 267
4.3 Karon: Listening 270
4.4 Rashid: Telling 273
5 Conclusion 279
TELEVISION ITERATED: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS 283
WORKS CITED 291

INTRODUCTION: TURNING ON THE DISCUSSION

"whatever the equation, there is always television" - Andrew Anthony

It happens in nearly every single book since the 1950s. A scene is set, a character is in a room, and there is either also a television in that room, or someone is watching it. Most readers skim over the television, waiting for the next bit of scenery setting, plot development, or character dialogue. However, it takes only a closer look to realize what goes missing from the text when those few words describing audio-visual content are taken away. While initially feeling as technologically savvy as referencing a smart phone now, the television in literature has evolved into a steadfast prop, changing little despite the changes to its form, content, and broadcasting mechanisms over the past seventy years. There is some variation to this set-up, with screens appearing in shop windows, around stadiums or wrestling rings, or even in the hands or on the laps of individuals; however, in light of the changes to what we call "watching television," more questions should be asked about what these references mean.

Since the rise of electronic media, literary works increasingly made use of intermedial strategies that expand upon the ancient art of referencing visual media in poetry and prose. It began with radio, and then came film; however, these media are different than television, which will always be a delimiter of private and public space as well as fact and fiction, and it is inevitably bound by national and/or capitalist interests. In Europe, most countries have a national TV public broadcasting model that stands in contrast to the commercial broadcasting system in the US. However, this "public service" ideal, while not treating television as a for-profit industry, still can be targeted as a potential instrument of nationalist integration and citizen homogenization. Despite the apparent transnationalization of television through streaming, IP tracking and control of access from across national borders continues to restrict national broadcasts to national audiences.

The literary writer who evokes the television evokes a powerful medium indeed. Yet despite the fact that the word "television" describes a myriad of complex technological, industrial, and cultural designs, it often receives no more description than a toaster, napkin, or other props of the narrative. At the same time, the content rarely gets left uncommented, often informing characterization in some way, if not guiding the plot's trajectory. The audio-visual medium that is both a source of entertainment and information has various manifestations when given textual form.

This book, *Literarily TV: Television, Voice and Identity in Contemporary Transnational Literature* (hereafter: *Literarily TV),* provides the results of an investigation into the undeniable link between intermedial reference and transnational poetics; and in looking at a select group of contemporary German and British literary texts, it should quickly become clear how television references can be used as literary devices in contemporary fiction to illuminate forms of belonging and representation—and thus also changing conceptions of national identity—within literature on a global scale. Looking at inter/medial constellations in the UK and in Germany, the media forms, the ways these forms affect communication, and the cultural products of intermedial references in contemporary fiction, my book also contributes to a deeper understanding of the effects of television references on creations of identity, voice, and representation.

Through the technological advancements of the past one hundred years alone, the scales of time, space, and the number of interactions between people and their ideas have changed. Human migration has been a part of the human experience dating back to prehistoric times, yet this, too, has changed as a result of technological improvements in transportation and communication as well as the way in which physical spaces are claimed in the name of an imagined community and bound by both invisible and physical borders. Placatively, one could say we as human beings are all interested in belonging to something

bigger than ourselves, but what this means and how it is enacted varies from person to person and group to group.

Transnational identity both renders borders and other boundaries between nation-states inconsequential and throws them into sharp relief.[1] To belong to more than one nation is to feel like a stranger and a neighbor in one place at the same time. Imaginative works of poetry and prose have taken experiences of inclusion and exclusion, negotiation and declaration, and crafted these into verbal forms that not only contribute answers about how to navigate two or more ways of being,[2] but they are also enjoyable to read. The novel form in particular seems especially suited for articulating the social, polyphonic reality of existence in the post-industrial world.[3]

As more of the novels on the "new literature" shelves come out, increasingly written by non-native and second-generation migrants, or even explicitly transnational, it is ever more difficult to keep upholding the nineteenth century construct of national philology. At the same time, it is hard not to notice the way these novels feature television in conspicuous ways, and not just because television is omnipresent and a part of everyday life and routines for many people. In literature, where nothing can be taken for granted, television can create different meanings through its functions as communications medium, informant, and entertainment, and these meanings are multiplied in today's multicultural and transnational spaces.

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[1] Bill Ashcroft describes the clear distinction between the concepts of "nation" and "state" that make up the "nation-state": a nation is a historical, multi-ethnic cultural complex; a state is a political, geographical, legal structure ("Transnation" 84). "The concept of transnation exposes the radical distinction between these two entities" (84).

[2] 'Ways of being' via Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin are similar to cultural systems as per Nick Smelser, where "culture is a grouping of elements, values, norms, outlooks, beliefs and ideologies, knowledge and empirical assertions […], linked with one another to some degree as meaning-system" (Smelser 37).

[3] The explicit studies on the novel form by M. M. Bakhtin and Georg Lukács can be supplemented by further considerations of the form as necessary to the poetic considerations about life, such as Novalis, who recognizes "ein Leben, als Buch" and Friedrich Schlegel who sees the potential for the novel as reflecting the essence of life in its chaotic form, similar to Walter Benjamin who reads the novel's potential for crisis parallel to that found in life.

Due to changes in world order and technological advancements in the form of personal computers, mobile internet access, and Web 2.0, and changes in academia and research institutions, a swarm of new disciplines have arisen over the past thirty years that can answer questions about the relationship between literature and television, and literature and society. *Literarily TV* is indebted to several of these: transnationalism, television,[4] intermediality, memory,[5] and forced migration (refugee studies). Harkening back to some of the trailblazing theorists in the fields of cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and media, the intersection of transnationalism and intermediality, in particular, can reveal the meanings that intermedial references to television elucidate for the literary representation of multicultural, marginalized, and/or transnational identities.

Although large strides have been made in recent years in the fields of intermedial studies, intermedial television studies, and transnational literary studies, few intersections have been explored between studies of transnationalism and intermediality. There remains an open question as to how looking more closely at these overlaps can contribute to understanding transnational literature. *Literarily TV* presents some of these understandings, based on the potential in intermedial references for highlighting gaps between sign and meaning, challenging the interplay of fact and factuality, and revealing the intricacies of our encoding and decoding mechanisms in different contexts. Television references to news, crime shows, and live sports can compel readers of transnational novels to question the historical and cultural conditions under which certain conventions and codes are constructed, and to reconsider relationships between the media and between members of a community.

Literary studies continue to benefit from the discussion raised in media studies by foregrounding hybridity, diaspora, and cosmopolitical relations. My work has been to

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[4] Although studies that could be called television studies were done since the 1960s, the 1990s are when they emerged as an identifiable entity (Gray and Lotz 2).

[5] According to Astrid Erll in *Kollektives Gedächnis und Erinnerungskulturen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005), memory studies has experienced an "unprecedented […] boom" since the 1990s.

recognize and expand upon the trend to make intermedial description inherent to the literary discussion of the different kinds of migration, because I believe that by looking more closely at these references, we can continue to answer how modes of narration about identity are influenced by transnational movements.

By looking at Monica Ali's *Brick Lane,* Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man,* Olga Martynova's *Sogar Papageien überleben uns,* and Jenny Erpenbeck's *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* I discuss several possibilities for the use of television references in novels that feature transnational social groups, consciousness, narrative forms, and themes. These texts expand upon our conceptions of collective memory, trauma, and belonging, and encourage shifts in power that reconfigure our understandings of identity, authenticity, and ambivalence.

In examining these novels, I analyze references to both popular television and news reporting, within television's functions as entertainment, informant and educator, to reveal certain realities about the situation of migrants and/or transnational people, people who have migrant backgrounds, are part of a minority ethnic group, and/or are marginalized in different ways. These uses include but are not limited to: mapping out contact zones between different cultures, encouraging intercultural interaction or belonging, revealing the interconnected relationship between representation and television, and discussing how television reflects codes of history, engages collective memory, and mediates epistemology.

1 Overview of the Chapters

Contemporary authors describing migration, cultural identity, and belonging rely on television's global impact and spread, the significance of (international) televised sports events, the intimate relationship between social change and technology, and television's polysemic nature to create the meanings in their texts. I build upon this understanding throughout *Literarily TV* in the individual analysis of several novels, navigating the related

theories of "otherness," hybridity, subjectivity, memory,[6] authenticity, and voice, not only in different textual contexts (books that have not been looked at quite this way before), but also in two different cultural, linguistic, and national contexts. In reviewing novels that exhibit particularly productive television references, German and British texts provide one of the most interesting comparisons between contexts of national broadcast and commercial television, nationhood, colonial history, and media studies. Germany's differing history of national citizenship, and differing imperial and colonial history compared to Britain's—and the resulting variance in thinking about new English literatures versus new German ones—as well as epistemological versus communicative concerns in media, means that these theories have a difference resonance for understanding intermedial references.

Literarily TV is organized into five chapters, a theoretical chapter explaining the challenges and the potential in looking at the intersection of transnationality and intermediality, and four case studies that provide example and detail of applying this framework. Each of the post-2001 novels were written by authors who directly or indirectly rely on specific televisual characteristics, methods, and techniques in their use of various kinds of intermedial reference. The novels are discussed in the context of migration, transnationalism, and intercultural interaction, and it is taken for granted that they are a product of multicultural societies that are heavily influenced by televisual texts and mass media.

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[6] Some notes on memory in particular that make it worth further discussion in this context, is the belief that "our consciousness, as thinkers from St. Augustine to Hume and Locke, from Rousseau to Freud and Damarion have suggested, is held together by a narrative of memory" (Walder 2). Part of this narrative "could be a visual representation or image that becomes the only remaining, half-remembered trace of the point at which the past of an individual connects with the wider, collective pasts of family, society and history" (2). Voice and memory may connect in interesting ways as well. The intermedial references may be especially necessary for describing traumatic experiences, perhaps due to their ability to create an emotional distance, while at the same time not losing temporal distance. As a result, this project may presuppose the need of intermediality in contemporary literature due to the nature of memory, as well as television's role in the construction of modern collective memory, with implied differences between national and transnational reconstructions of the past (Fiske and Hartley xv).

Specifically, these four works, which happen to be written by people identifying as women,[7] are well-known. The works (or the authors) represent significant turning points in European literature for considering the state of national philology and migration in and to the Global North. Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* is eponymous with New English Literatures and considered influential for the way it addressed minority identities in contemporary England. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is famous for providing a subaltern voice in British literature, centering a novel on a Muslim migrant woman. Olga Martynova is celebrated for challenging what it means to be a German writer and her masterful intercultural poetics, and Jenny Erpenbeck is recognized as spanning the bridge between post-war, *Wende,* and millennial German literature.

Not only do I find the intermedial references important in these texts—and I provide extensive interpretation of the meanings that can be elicited by studying the texts under this hitherto unused focus—but I believe they can reveal a list of uses for intermedial reference in transnational literature that warrants further study. If audio-visual media can be interpolated in transnational texts in productive ways, it goes without saying that similar findings can be made about newest digital media and the effects of media convergence. Across these texts I show how television reference in literary texts can address ambiguous effects of colonization and displacement (*The Autograph Man* and *Gehen, ging, gegangen)*, talk back to a technologically determinist viewpoint (*The Autograph Man, Sogar Papageien überleben uns, Gehen, ging, gegangen)*, suggest agency for marginalized people (*Brick Lane, Gehen, ging, gegangen)*, provide continuing understanding of framing (*Brick Lane, Gehen, ging, gegangen, The Autograph Man*), catalyze characters to engage with the conditions of their

[7] While it cannot be overlooked that the texts I have selected are exclusively written by women, the possibility of particular aesthetic, contextual, or authoritative choices made by the authors because they are women remains am open and necessary question for further research. Women, as an historically marginalized group may be wont to identify other forms of marginalization and argue for intersectionality.

belonging (all four), serve as a site for intercultural learning (all four), mediate cultural memory (all four), and disrupt national frameworks (all four).

I begin with Monica Ali's *Brick Lane,* which introduces one of the primary themes of *Literarily TV*—the implications of media events experienced through television and their role for collective memory and fueling or healing collective trauma. Some famous media events include Prince Charles' and Diana's wedding and the fall of the Berlin Wall that were able to excite audiences removed from the cultural context,[8] or the Challenger crash that that shocked international viewers. The September 11th terrorist attacks were another such event, albeit instigated from outside the hegemonic culture that primarily broadcast it. Arguably, there was a paradigm shift about society, cultural interaction and politics after 9/11, extending as far as to refigure national identity, that I argue is reflected in writers and their writing. Unlike many novels written in response to 9/11, most notably Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), transnational literature that references 9/11 intentionally, or by virtue of the perspective, deflates the oft-upheld binary after 9/11 between 'self' and 'other.'

Brick Lane highlights the multicultural spaces of London and complicates the discussion of how 9/11 heightened the sense of a contemporary global culture that, as media scholar Jakob Linaa Jensen points out, "has become hypervisual, where comprehending what is perceived is beyond our capacity to understand as reference points and conventional cultural indicators are dislocated from their traditional locales" (Jenson qtd. in Chopra and Gajjala 61). Ali's references to the 9/11 terrorist attacks open up a reception of articulations of specifically Muslim and migrant identity, and in this chapter, I discuss *Brick Lane's* references to look at the way characters are depicted to navigate new cultural codes via televisual texts. The references to televised ice-skating in the novel make primary individual

[8] Zadie Smith comments on this in Chapter Nine of *White Teeth,* when the Iqbal and Jones family watch it on television together.

articulations of Nazneen, the central figure of the novel, possible. In this text one can learn about the utterance and the "other," the personally persuasive voice of the individual, and the forces that catalyze new meaning. The references are used to discuss media framing of minorities and how the television can be used as an integrating medium. These references also help discuss how migrants in the diaspora balance memory and new experiences, and how, in navigating new semiotic codes, one can begin to add to them.

In Chapter Three on Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man,* I continue the discussion of the media framing of minorities, but I step away from the focus on migration. *The Autograph Man* is, perhaps, the most obvious selection for this book given its heavy focus on television in various forms, but its transnational nature is more discrete. I examine *The Autograph Man's* references to wrestling, videos, and news to discuss processes of identity formation and interpersonal interaction that necessitate study as societies become more diverse. Specifically, Smith's second novel illuminates the relationship between personhood and the media that, among other things, unmasks the myth of a correlative relationship between representation and inclusivity in television and film. Thus, she examines continuing tensions in representation and belonging in British society.

Smith addresses the joint challenges of multiple cultural belongings and technological advances in digitalization and streaming in the twenty-first century. As a result, the novel is quite postmodern, interested in revealing the semiotic codes behind identity, media, and reality and how these are only constructions. It offers television as a solution, but also part of the source of tensions. The closer look at television at the cusp of its medial dominance in a society that oscillates between nation and trans-nationhood reminds the reader that innate questions of representation will continue to haunt our literature, even as the products of television become more and more inclusive.

In order to see how television can be used in novels that have different “politics of displacement” (Hausbacher, *Poetik* 11) and different constellations of mutli-perspectival narration, as well as whether differing conceptions of television are be reflected in these works, this book includes studies of two German texts. In Chapter Four on Olga Martynova’s *Sogar Papageien überleben uns,* I discuss a transnational constellation that moves on from traditionally diasporic and expressly idealistic to look at direct cultural exchange in the context of international sporting events, literary conferences, and war. Martynova’s style is, like *The Autogragh Man,* another shift away from realism, and I discuss her use of television references to discuss memory, trauma, and media in the context of changing borders, post-WWII guilt, and conflicted belonging. *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* looks at language and television as media of memory and continues to look at the conventions of these media across national borders. In this chapter I explain how Martynova uses television references to show how individuals negotiate subjective experience to remember, debate human experience, and create a transnational dialogue on the basis of the ineffable.

Cultural memory, intercultural interaction, and what can be said, or heard, reappears in the final chapter where I focus on Jenny Erpenbeck’s *Gehen, ging, gegangen* to round out my somewhat trailblazing effort to discuss the range of meanings in television references for transnational literature. As will become clear by this point, the possibilities are not exhausted across four case studies, but some patterns do coalesce based on television’s functions and how they are fictionalized. Looking at *Gehen, ging, gegangen* provides the opportunity to discuss a very recent development in academia for research in the representation of refugees in literature and mass media. Distinct from exile, voluntary migration, and other migration contexts, refugees in the twenty-first century have simultaneously been made hyper-visual and mute in their treatment by the media, as highlighted by Erpenbeck.

In Erpenbeck's novel, one is also able to see the various actors and their limits in the production of these representations, and the possibilities available in the textual medium to show a more complete understanding of the experience of displacement. Her references to television news are used to integrate facts about the global migration of people, specifically the migration of people from several northern African countries to Germany, to then present a definitive alternative to what many still consider a homogenous German identity. This diffuse conception comes at the backdrop to other television references that seem to threaten to render the television obsolete, thereby making room to challenge representations of seeing, knowing and speaking.

Through these texts, it becomes clear that the intermedial references expand the representational mode of television, as well as add something to the text. Uncanny recognition and representational destabilization provide new opportunities for aesthetic perspectives and epistemological framing. In short, my objective in *Literarily TV* is to show the productive discussions made possible by looking more closely at the television references in literature in general and contemporary transnational literature in particular. Intermedial references used by transnational authors have intention and purpose, and they can reveal differences in feelings of inclusion and exclusion, assimilation and integration in twenty-first century European societies. In light of the constantly shifting media attitudes, both on creator and audience sides, and the shifting demographics of our societies and relationship to concepts like nations and borders, this book is designed to contribute to the conversation started by these authors about how to navigate these changes.

CHAPTER ONE: WRITING TELEVISION

1 Intermedial

An interest in television references found in literature technically belongs to intermediality studies, since the focus is on a phenomenon that occurs inter—between—media. While intermediality as a field is still quite young, formally established by French Canadians and Germans in the 1990s, and still rather Germany-centric,[9] intermedial studies have been widely pursued in Communications Studies, comparative literary studies and Media Studies (including Interart Studies) before that. Moreover, the philosophical and scholarly interest in the interaction between two or more media has a longer history still. Associating script with painting or music with drama or storytelling has no clear historical starting point, and recorded instances of ekphrasis, the rhetorical pieces of verbal art to describe a visual art dating back to antiquity, are the oldest and most common forms of intracompositional reference.

Referring to television in the textual medium is another example of intracompositional intermediality, which is also just one branch of the "umbrella term" used to describe the wide range of activities looking at how visual and spatial arts, music, literature, communication media, and other media interact with one another (Rajewsky "Intermediality" 44).[10] Often commented on, the examples of graphic designs, black or empty pages, or an absurd number of hyphens and asterixis in Lawrence Sterne's *The Life and*

[9] Like a few of the disciplines drawn upon in this book, such as transnationalism, intermediality, and the term it derives from, the discipline is still better known in the German academic context (Voigts, Rajewsky), but it can just as easily take root in the anglophone sphere.
[10] In Rajewsky's typology, "intermedial reference" makes up one of three basic categories along with "media combination" and "media transposition" ("Intermediality" 51-52). In Werner Wolf's typology, intermedial reference is found under "intracompositional intermediality" (as opposed to "extracompositional intermediality" and this is further divided into implicit and explicit references with evocation, formal imitation, and (partial) reproduction as finer distinctive sub-categories (Wolf 134-147).

Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman[11] are worked with differently than Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's ekphrasis in "Laocoon," a film adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, or episodic writing in the style of a situation comedy—and these are just a fraction of possible examples of intermediality in a literary studies context. The work of Irina O. Rajewsky, Werner Wolf and others to propose typologies and distinguish between different types of intermediality has done much to fine-tune the discussion of how to approach intermedial examples and discuss its practical applications, analyses, and theories of practice.

Specifically, to study intermedial phenomena can mean to look at the aesthetics of the media involved, their technical historical production, and from a position of discourse analysis (Mecke and Roloff 14-15). This involves either looking at the way media interaction affects the constructions of beauty or taste, which detracts from a work's potential moral or didactic role, or looking at media interaction discursively. The latter method draws upon the medium's social-situatedness, constructedness, and ideological influences, to a similar degree as looking at material production would. The various methods of intermedial study have distinct bodies of theoretical literature and modes of examination, but this does not stop the field from continuing to be diffuse. As Jürgen Müller emphasizes, by virtue of being a field that looks at transgressed boundaries and a subject with countless layers of medial representations, it is difficult to conceive of the field as one of a "geschlossenen wissenschaftlichen Paradigmas [closed scientific paradigm]" (J. Müller 17). At the same time, in order to work with it, one must still delineate the boundaries one is considering.

To focus on television references in literature in this book means to discuss thematic references to the medium as well as the verbal descriptions of the sounds and images emitting from the television set. In the following chapters, I also consider the partial reproduction of

[11] I would argue his is the first example of intermediality in the English novel because of his copious use of textual marks and printing strategies that emphasize visuality over orality. Admittedly, it is easy to make this claim since it is also one of the first English novels.

the signifiers of the source medium, for example the words said in a sound bite, or the actual shape and design of the television (as found in *The Autograph Man*), as well as implicit references to the conceptual design and structure of the signifiers of television as evoked by the textual medium. I especially consider the program being broadcast, such as news, a show, or a live sports event, how it is transmitted, and how it is depicted in the novel. In these considerations, sometimes the discourse and methods of the television and/or program are thematized, and sometimes they are imitated.

However, in distinguishing between thematization and imitation, the latter of which Rajewsky calls "system contamination" (*Intermedialität* 118), I heed her warning: merely mentioning another medium in a different medial context does not warrant the use of the label "intermedial reference." According to Rajewsky, to justify this label, the text must imitate or at least evoke the formal and structural features of another medium through the use of the media-specific means of the text. In this case, the "als ob" characteristic, the illusion that television is present in the text, is what is important (Rajewsky "Intermediality" 51-52). The moments in which the illusion becomes apparent help reveal the "perceptible medial difference between two or more individual media" (62). The two media in comparison throw the borders of one another into relief. This allows for the discussion of the effects of the one medium on the other. In particular, border crossings through the negotiation of the singular medium within different framing conditions make the ambiguities of these borders more visible.

I extend my interest in intermedial reference beyond this narrower approach, and many of the references I discuss do not necessarily create the illusion of the television in the text. However, I agree that if an intermedial reference is used in its proper sense and not just as a remediation of an already recognized medium, but rather evoking this medium with a specific strategy or proposing a new aesthetic possibility, then this reference can push against

the previously understood boundaries of the medium. Therefore, the intermedial reference introduces the possibility of a breach between the boundaries. This is, perhaps, the most exciting possibility for its use in transnational literature, since it can provide a space for the play of appropriation, a reconstruction of the medium's singularity, and the challenge of hegemonic structures, including that of the textual medium.

2 Transnational

Despite an impression of inattentive fashion-following as the term becomes more and more frequently used, [12] transnational is the most accurate label for the novels I am interested in, which contain textual positionings within nations and local spaces, but with perspectives, stories, and movements that transcend and challenge national borders. Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, China, Eritrea, the German Democratic Republic, Germany, Ghana, Great Britain (specifically England), Libya, Niger, Nigeria, Russia, the Soviet Union, and the USA; the nations and unions evoked in the creation of the characters from the novels I discuss in *Literarily TV* are a veritable global spread. They feature former ancient kingdoms, empires, two defunct states, former colonies, and independent nations, most of which not even 100 years old. Considering the range of nations involved provides a synchronic look at the success and failures of nations, but also forces confrontation with the extra-national. By choosing novels with characters with migrant histories, the analysis can automatically orient itself outside the national borders of where the characters reside. Therein lies the immediate justification for studying these novels as transnational.[13] However, as in Rajewsky's case for

[12] The term itself has been in use at least since Randolph Bourne's first use in 1916. In his essay, Bourne describes the USA as a model of how a country can be influenced by multiple cultures. He also commends the ability of immigrants to preserve ties to their homelands and continue to build constructive lives in the US. In this way, discussions of transnationalism tie in closely with discussions of diaspora, which is Roger Brubaker's emphasis.

[13] Furthermore, all the texts are written by authors living between cultures: Ali, Bangladesh and England; Smith, the UK and the U.S.; Martynova, Germany and Russia; and Erpenbeck, the German Democratic Republic Federal Republic of Germany and the reunited German GDR/FRG/reunited Germany. However, I also would argue that the label "transnational" would not necessarily cause readers to only think about the authors living between cultures.

intermediality, just because borders are mentioned, does not mean they are crossed, made irrelevant, and/or questioned.

Transnational literary studies do look in particular at the most obvious form of border crossing, migration, in itself a simple word for a highly complex set of relationships to geographical location informed by reasons for leaving, methods of travel, rights to entry, living, and working, and the individual context of each person (Ha). Furthermore, while the term migration is bound in some ways by its conceptual focus on the nation, defining itself by that which it seeks to transgress, transmute, or transfer, it also provides possibilities for thinking about literature that moves across languages as well as cultures, and that are unbothered by the hierarchy of canon (world literature), or less interested in colonial heritage, leaving the center-periphery model of postcolonialism behind (Ashcroft qt. in Wiegandt 10).[14]

Transnational texts present characters who self-identify as diasporic, migrant, or exiled, or who are marked by migration, hybridization, and globalism—even if, arguably, everyone is marked by globalism today. Key to my discussion, however, is the notion of inhabiting a national space with transnational tendencies. The characters measure themselves by their national boundaries—boundaries that the authors often resist as well.[15] Transnationalism seems to offer, as Bill Ashcroft suggests, new conceptions of utopian dimensions of literature that can be found by thinking *beyond* border crossing as the symbol of hope (75).

[14] For this reason, I look toward another term than "migration literature." *Fringe Voices* in 1999 provided a trail-blazing English collection of essays discussing Germany as a multicultural society. In comparison, a more recent publication *Schluss mit der Deutschlandfeindlichkeit* (2012) did in Germany what *The Good Immigrant* did in 2016 in featuring personal essays by authors who have been made to feel "othered" as writers, artists, and citizens. With this, both works seem to underscore a certain marketing of difference (Cheeseman in Taberner, *Globalisation* 14). Most recently the collection *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum* (2019), which does something similar. However, these anthologies are just one branch of so-called Migration Literature, as discussed in the latest book of critical essays *Migration und Gegenwartsliteratur* (2020).

[15] The transnationality of the characters often coincides with the transnationality of the authors and even if this is not explicit, the assumption is often transferred to the interpretation of the characters, resulting in other assumptions, such as of language use, which Saša Stanišić criticized in his "Three Myths of Immigrant Writing"

In Europe, literature seeks to escape the baggage left by its nationalist and imperialist enterprises, whereas scholars in the Global South, even as they debunk the project of the nation, point out the ways in which nations are what unify people with cultural, ethnic, and regional differences, and how the national project in many regions has been key to resisting rule and influence by former colonies. To some extent, nation can be seen as an inevitable, and positive thing. There were, after all, enough reasons for the German principalities to fight for unity in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, nations have also been the justification for violent expansion, exploitation, suppression, and exclusion. This becomes most clear in the discussion of postcolonialism, which shares some similarities to transnationalism, but distinguishes itself from its sister-term in considering the results of colonialism and constructions of race, class and gender, and its intersections,[16] with an anticolonial agenda often lacking in transnational texts.

In the British context, the terms postcolonial and transnational often seem interchangeable, until one considers a novel like *The Autograph Man.* This story takes place in a postcolonial society, but avoids any explicit colonial connections and becomes a deterritorialized postcoloniality as opposed to explicitly marking itself by the historical conditions of postcolonialism.[17] In contrast, *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* set in Germany, looks at Germany's underwhelming colonial history and the way it formed Berlin's city landscape and current migration patterns.[18] Likewise, *Brick Lane,* whose main character comes from a region that was a British colony for 247 years, utilizes ambiguous postcolonial critique. However, given that both postcolonialism and transnationalism arise out of "politics of

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[16] Race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, [...] they come into existence in and through relation to one another" (McClintock 5).

[17] Terms borrowed from Katharina Deifel's discussion of Eva Hausbacher's distinction between transnationalism and postcolonialism (Deifel 43)

[18] Unfortunately for the interest of having a critical post-colonial inquiry in Germany, as Dirk Göttsche points out, the German colonial status is always seen as the deviation from the French, Spanish, Portuguese and English norm (12). Even in their introduction to *Migrant Cartographies,* Sandra Ponzanesi and Daniela Merolla consider Germany similar to Italy in that the "relative brevity of the colonial expansion" means that they have different histories of African migration and African literature in Germany (Ponzanesi and Merolla 32).

displacement" (Hausbacher, *Poetik* 11), they share common discussion points of imaginary geographies, alternative conceptions of place, multi-perspectival narration and language mixing, as well as heteroglossic conceptions and characters who are often presented as hybrid.

Even while there are many overlaps between transnational, multicultural, migration or post-colonial literature, [19] specifically in their theories about nationalism, multiculturalism, identity, hybridity, third spaces, and heterogeneity, transnationalism seems especially productive for the discussion of new constellations of individual positioning within societies that collectively strive for harmony within differentiation. It assumes that the nation is heterogenous, people can be multinational, and that people will find connections and identify variably based on movement and cultural interaction.[20] In a way, transnationalism seems most comparable to Wolfgang Welch's transculturality,[21] which also does away with the conception of single cultures in its considerations about cultural identity. Welsch claims that culture is "characterized to the core by mixing and permeation" (Welsch 67), and identity is made of different elements that interact with some groups based on some similarities and other groups based on others. Through interaction, one also learns that the facets thought to only exist within the borders of one national culture can "go beyond these, are found in the same way in other cultures" (68).

Given my interest in identity and belonging, in *Literarily TV* I contribute to the ongoing discussion of how the nation is defined by its ambivalent attitude towards the heterogeneity within its state's borders, seeking to homogenize those it includes and to

[19] Sometimes referred to as New English or Anglophone literature, in order to address the spread of English language texts that stem beyond England.
[20] An obvious starting point for this today is by looking at Homi Bhabha's ground-breaking essays on the third-space and hybridity
[21] Note that "globalism" is not one of the suggested terms, primarily because it seems ill-suited for the literary context (Susie O'Brian and Imre Szeman in Matz 171), focusing more on economic trends or discussing a standardization of culture rather than the heterogeneity of culture.

exclude those who do not meet certain criteria of belonging. This means looking stories that emphasize cultural diversity, translation, and mixing of people to show the tremulous root of nation. The continual focus on nation means that transnational literature continues to ask questions about citizenship and belonging, particularly the way that citizenship and socio-cultural belongingness are not mutually inclusive. In turn, the novels discussed in this book meet most of the criteria in proposals, such as the anthropologist Steven Vertovec's, for marking transnational phenomena: interest in transnational social morphology, type of consciousness, mode of site of political engagement,[22] and reconstruction of place or locality (Vertovec 447). Monica Ali's representation of the Sylhet community in England, Olga Martynova's representation of former-Soviet intellectuals in Germany, and Zadie Smith's representation of Jewish people in England all refer to social groups spread across more than one nation and diasporic communities. Smith addresses, indirectly, the African diaspora to the Americas, and Erpenbeck discusses the contemporary African diaspora, though refugees and other migrants to Europe are differently displaced than the descendants of slaves in the Americas.

Kai Wiegant, who most recently extends Vertovec's criteria to literature, [23] expands upon the focus on modes of cultural production and avenues of capital, and points out that to look at transnational literature means one also looks at transnational theme and aesthetics, and transnational tendencies in reception, marketing, and critical perspective (Weigandt 3). To an extent, an authors' use of intermedial reference to television, especially television news

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[22] Though I agree here with Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who states there is no "apolitical scholarship" (334) since these objects of study are inscribed in relations of power.

[23] Wiegant, Gutjahr, and Welch: See Kai Wiegandt's introduction to the recently published *The Transnational in Literary Studies: Potential and Limitations of a Concept,* for a more thorough discussion of transnationalism compared to the other terms as well as its critiques (13-15), and for further suggestions for a taxonomy of transnational literary studies. Others who have addressed the "transnational turn" include Paul Jay, Stuart Taberner's edited *Transnationalism and German-Language Literature in the Twenty-First Century* (2017) and Doerte Bischoff's *Handbuch Literatur & Transnationalität* in 2019. However, Bischoff provides more of an outline of previous uses of the term in cultural anthropology and sociology (7-10) than providing, as Wiegandt does, a series of patterns in the discussion of literature called transnational (see also page 24).

and live events, involves transnational styles and practices, which may automatically make for transnational aesthetics in these texts, such as in the news narratives in Erpenbeck. Ali looks at 9/11 as a global media event with different responses based on the local context. Smith compares British and US American television, while Martynova compares US television to that which was produced and broadcast in the Soviet Union; and both address hotel room television watching, which is a motif in itself worth exploring, and connects to the fact that narrative forms of television have in themselves become transnational: soap opera, news, sport, quiz shows, and music videos are found in the television programming of most countries.

3 Transnational Intermediality

To focus on the television as a transnational theme opens up the discussion at the core of *Literarily TV,* which is to determine what meanings television references make in transnational literature. Due to a lack of a systematic assessment of television references in literature, or of intermedial references in transnational and postcolonial literature, it seems necessary to continue examining conspicuous experimental intermedial aesthetics (Rippl and Neumann 9), and to show some representative examples of intracompositional, intermedial television reference aesthetics, and the ways in which they contribute to the semiotic systems of television and transnational societies.

Pointing out these gaps is not to say that postcolonial, and in turn transnational topics have not regularly been addressed in media or intermedial texts over the past 30 years.[24] In

[24] Rippl and Neumann have done much for outlining the current situation of intermedial studies within postcolonial studies. See Chapter 2 of their latest book *Configurations Verbal-Visual Configurations in Postcolonial Literature: Intermedial Aesthetics* (pp 13-33). One should also acknowledge in this body of postcolonial intermediality the names Asunción López-Varela Azcárate and Suzuko Mousel Knottand, as well as Laura Beck and Julian Osthub who published the collection *Postkolonialism und (Inter-)Medialität* in 2016. However, few of these scholars look at television, and even fewer about intermediality and transnationality. Kai Wiegandt hints at one example with Jahan Ramazani's *Transnational Poetics,* when he cites Ramazani's discussion of how Ezra Pound and Serhman Alexie use "transnational juxtapositions of sound and image" (Wiegandt 6), and there is a 2011 collection of essays put out by Hilaria Gössmann, based on the VW-Research Project "Interkulturelle Begegnungen im Spiegel von Literatur und (Fernseh)film, ein deutsch-japanischer Vergleich," yet this is not enough to begin addressing the various uses of intermedial references to television in

particular, the television medium seems indispensable to narratives about migration, serving as a medium for assimilation as well as a site of representation, for better or worse. Ien Ang, Stuart Hall and other cultural studies scholars who have focused in television have actualized this in their work, discussing identity politics, cultural identity, ethnicity, nationalism and globalism in their studies of media audiences and determination of hegemonic structures in heterogenous societies. Scholars who have pursued similar questions in more pointed postcolonial inquiry have contributed to knowledge about the impact of new media on postcolonial diasporic communities, migrants and people in the Global South. For example, Sandra Ponzanesi and members of the Postcolonial Studies Initiative often distinguish between applying theory to media texts as they have been applied in literary textual analysis, and performing the work of identifying medial influences and effects on identities, epistemologies, and affects in postcolonial texts. [25]

Within the burgeoning discipline of postcolonial media studies, intermediality has also become a topic. In 2015, Gabriele Rippl suggested the need for a systematic investigation into the "conspicuous visual aesthetics and intermedial and ekphrastic nature of many postcolonial and cosmopolitan literary texts" (128). This was somewhat rectified with her and Birgit Neumann's *Verbal-Visual Configurations in Postcolonial Literature* (2020), which dedicates individual chapters to the analysis of primary texts written by contemporary and transcultural writers. However, even here they acknowledge that the attempt is "evocative rather than exhaustive" (246). Still, with what has been written to date, one can already draw a few conclusions about the use of intermedial references in both postcolonial and transnational literature. Primarily, intermedial negotiations contribute to new aesthetic

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these kinds of texts beyond transferring some of that which has been said in the postcolonial context and applying them to intermediality in transnational literature as well.

[25] See also Lucia Krämer's and Kai Merten's collection *Postcolonial Studies Meets Media Studies* in 2016, and the work of Sandra Ponzanesi, as well as others of the Postcolonial Studies Initiative, who regularly publish articles and arrange conferences for the discussion of postcolonialism meet media studies, with Ponzanesi focusing on cinema and more recently on digital media.

forms and trigger metarepresentational questions (Rippl, "Postcolonial Ekphrasis" 129). These kinds of references can thus help "overcome otherness" (130), while also raising questions about representation that make readers reconsider the relationship between identity, media, and culture.

The texts I discuss in *Literarily TV* perform in various ways the same work as the texts under examination in Rippl's and Neumann's new book. *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* and *Gehen, ging, gegangen* construct or negotiate media boundaries and the limits of the seeable and sayable (9); *Brick Lane* and *Gehen, ging, gegangen* discursively model new ways of seeing—with *Brick Lane* providing moments of creative interference and meta-representational reflection—while *Gehen, ging gegangen* does this in a more ethically inflected way; and *The Autograph Man* breaks open dualisms and makes room for new conceptualizations of 'us' and 'them' (10). These parallels in discussing intermedial reference in postcolonial and transcultural literature point to similarities among intermedial references in transnational literature, which indicates it may one day be possible to create the typology at some point of intermedial reference in postcolonial/transnational literature that Rippl and Neumann suggest.

Rippl and Neumann note that the majority of investigations have been confined to specific regions or individual authors, primarily with the intention of disrupting a hegemony of vision, via "turning the colonial gaze," "counter-visions" and "gazing" or "staring back" (21). They also all contribute in some way to the 'revisioning' of postcolonial or third spaces via their collaborations and interactions of different media and the process of meaning-making (Rippl 131), through which they can "bring to the fore the heterogeneity and plurality of meaning making and, in a wider sense, reflect the essential impurity and—to use a central concept of postcolonial studies—hybridity of all cultural formations" (Neumann "Intermedial" 514). Of course, such conceptions of plurality of meaning-making are part of

the postmodern condition, and this phenomenon in visual texts in particular may even be an effect of the significance of visual texts and the processes of representation.

Many studies have been done about a particular theme or topic (such as love, belonging or alienation) across multiple media—usually literature, film, and television (one rarely deviates from this order)—but this reflects a transmedial discussion as opposed to an intermedial one, and makes it similar to the *vast* array of scholarship on adaptation from literature to film or television. If the intermedial reference is intracompositional, the discussion usually centers around an event in isolation, such as the body of research around the use of references to the 9/11 television broadcasts. In the case of 9/11, the interest derives in part from its having been a "media event," which I will discuss in the next chapter.[26] Otherwise, television in literature is still often seen as an undignified medium and a reference point for the negative effects of mass media, as proliferated by Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School and other early theorists of mass media. [27] Eckart Voigts points out that the US postmodernists brought about the "paradigmatic change" to this conception of television, and thus made the productive discussion of television in literature possible (309). According to Voigts, authors, such as Don DeLillo of *White Noise,* took particular advantage of television to reproduce and "thus re-shap[e] a text" (309). They use intermedial reference and thematic discussion to expose the language games aspect and perspectival, plural, and diverse nature of knowledge; though relatively little has been done with such possibilities of interpretation. [28]

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[26] Sonia Baelo-Allué explains how the the 9/11 Attacks were a global media event, perhaps the first of its kind, and that the "visual impact of the attack as presented on television screens around the world" plays a role in how people cope with the event and what took place afterwards.

[27] The Frankfurt School were notable early critics, with Adorno warning about the "nefarious effects of some of [the socio-psychological] implications of television" in his 1954 essay "How to Look at Television." Also, Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht, for example, were interested in turning media from distributive apparatuses to communication apparatuses. Consider a large part of their exhibit at the Berlin Akademie der Künste October-January 2017-18: Benjamin and Brecht: Thinking in Extremes.

[28] Some notable examples of the discussion of television references in literature: one of the oldest being the articles in Julika Griem's 1998 edited collection *Bildschirmfiktionen : Interferenzen zwischen Literatur und neuen Medien,* namely Klaus Schenk's look at medial references in German lyric of the 1960s and 70s, Paul

To extend this postmodern potential for extending meaning through television references to postcolonial and transnational literature is not that far a stretch; transnational literature also understands knowledge as plural and diverse. At the same time, postmodern fiction marked intermediality as an aesthetic device (Voigts 307), and in postcolonial contexts, diversity hardly ever occurs without a hierarchical influence, and so must also be examined for ideological content. I look at both. The results in *Literarily TV* may give the impression that I am not interested in the way that the formal and structural aspects of the television are replicated in the textual medium, because I place a large emphasis on the personal development of the characters and the ways in which the aesthetic dimensions of television open up new possibilities for personality development and social participation. However, these elements become vital to those understandings.

I maintain that spaces of in-betweenness have long been interesting to postcolonial scholars who have noticed their role, as Homi Bhabha suggests, to carry "the burden of the meaning of culture" ("Cultural" 157) and open up these spaces on multiple levels of signification. For transnational texts in particular, intermedial references may challenge readers to complicate their usual ways of seeing and understanding themselves as seen, [29] reflecting the postcolonial commitment to dissecting the ways in which representation,

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Goetsch's reflection on references to the First Gulf War, the "Fernsehkrieg am Golf," and Julika Griem's look at television as a medium of historical narrative; Kathrin Ackermann and Christopher F. Laferl's collection *Transpositionen des Televisiven* (2009), which features two chapters looking at television referenced in literature;"Serialität als Intermedialität" by Michaela Wünsch in *Heterotopien Perspektiven der intermedialen Ästhetik* (2013); the television device of advertisement in novels discussed in Marcus Hahn's "Nach der Werbung geht der Roman weiter" in *Paratexte in Literatur, Film, Fernsehen* (2004); Lydia Rainford's "How to Read the Image? Beckett's Televisual Memory" in *Literature and Visual Technologies*, (2003); and Natalie Binczek, Till Dembeck, and Jörgen Schäfer's edited volume *Handbuch Medien der Literatur, Literature's Media* (2014), which features a solitary article on the relationship between television and literature, and focusses primarily on the adaptation of literature: "Literatur im Fernsehen/Fernsehliteratur" Gregor Schwering. It may be noted that most of these examples are in German, reflecting, perhaps, a higher focus on intermediality in Germany.

[29] This acknowledges the traditional framework in terms of cultural domination where the 'self' is conceived as the as the active, speaking, seeing subject while the 'other' is projected as the passive, seen, and usually silent object. Said explains this specially in terms of the West versus the Orient, but W. J.T. Mitchell extends this to all contexts of cultural domination in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (1994) (cited in Neumann and Rippl 23).

including that of television in a literary text, is done in terms of power relations and is always conducive to “theorizing about the limits of representation itself” (Clifford, “Partial” 10). This leads into the last piece of this book’s theoretical framework, which draws on the cultural studies claim that meaning relies on the particular arrangement of signs and cultural codes. [30] For cultural studies scholars, television programs are texts for study that allow one to observe the codes and conventions of society as well as how we perceive reality with the understanding that culture is both meanings and values, and how these are practiced and /or mediated. For this reason, it becomes especially interesting for discussing cultures in flux.

4 Cultural Studies

Television also has always had a special relationship to the material existence often called the “real.” On the one hand, television’s representational signification processes and “live” aspect often give the impression of mirroring reality, or providing a window onto the world.[31] On the other hand, vision and sight are not a neutral basis for knowledge making, and as philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy says, reality and the world are always being made rather than given. Thus, television will only ever be a constructed re-presentation of the world. Still, we continue to call television an “essentially realistic medium because of its ability to carry a socially convincing sense of the real” (Fiske 21). The only reason this is convincing is because the viewers have been taught the codes to recognize this sense of the real, and can still behave as conscious structures authenticating this reflection of the ‘real’ (Hall “Two Paradigms”).

The paradox in saying that television cannot present an unmediated reality is that reality is *always* mediated. As cultural studies scholar Chris Barker states, the “media’s

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[30] Cultural Studies are quite similar to the German *Kulturwissenshaften,* which draws similar conclusions about the field of literature as constructed representations of work and life, manifested via constant newly reflected signifying. In the discipline of *Kulturwissenschaften,* literary studies can simultaneously be examined as an independent cultural product as well as in cooperation with culture, history, and social sciences.

[31] See Fiske’s critique of the transparency fallacy in *Television Culture* (20). I also expand on this concept in the proceeding chapters.

selective and value-laden representations are not 'accurate' pictures of the world. Rather, they are best understood as the site of struggles over what counts as meaning and truth" (35). This derives from the understanding that representation in any form is meaning making and not mere reflection of the material world. Meaning and what counts as "truth" has arguably always been fractured, but examining media representations and pinpointing the differences in observation allows one to identify the points of struggle and the perspectives used, as well as the issues at stake. Television narratives designed via frameworks and conventions of depicting a certain perspective of reality, also controlled by various interests involved in the production and distribution, can still reveal these sites of struggle and encourage the critique of assumptions, frameworks, and conventions.

Such "sites of contestation," as discussed in postcolonial studies, are often the in-between spaces between cultures and identities that can, when allowed to remain ambivalent, lead to creative new formations of identity and feelings of belonging. While medial borders can be blurred, some ontological and epistemological differences are retained, leaving sites of contestation in the discussion of the depiction of these media: Who is seeing what? And how? These sites seem therefore especially open to further consideration of the questions about minorities and those who tend to be marginalized culturally or racially, and how their voices and identities are represented.

However, as one sees in the various texts, audiences can actively deconstruct 'preferred' meaning "only when alternative discourses are available. Thus, the self can also become a site of struggle over meaning and significance" (Barker 345). This understanding derives from Stuart Hall's influential essay, "Encoding and Decoding in Television Discourse," where he speaks for the creative understanding of television codes and acknowledges that television texts can have many valid meanings. It is not necessary for media scholars to make the codes more effective or transparent. In fact, to do so would be a

political decision to enforce hegemonic codes, or an "unconscious collusion" with the dominant interests" (Hall "Encoding" 398). Instead, one must recognize that so-called 'misreadings' of the codes "signify, at the 'message' level, the structural conflicts, contradictions, and negotiations of economic, political, and cultural life" (396). One must look towards the misreadings to understand the forces at work.

5 Television

Over the course of *Literarily TV,* I look at four literary texts from several contexts and examine the references to television and those evoked broadcasts, and the representation of the television as texts within the literary one. It is therefore the study of the "translated" television-into-text as opposed to looking at television or text in its own medium form. Of interest is the functional and structural transformation the medium undergoes in the transference from medium observed in itself and within the other medium. So, for example in *The Autograph Man*, the interest lies in the way television and its media-specific concerns appear in the text, as well as the literary concerns that arise because of the inclusion of a translation of television into the text, or—in light of the cultural question—the effect of cultural influence on the television as it appears in the text.

As stated earlier, this book focuses on various intermedial phenomena under the scope of intracompositional reference: the source medium is always television, the medium being examined is always text.[32] This is not to say that the two media are not both also mixed media, as explained by W.J.T. Mitchell (260), and an important point to make as per Rajewsky ("Border Talks" 52), but that there are elements of each individual medium that render it distinct from the other and that allow for the identification of one within the other. So, when an author references television, they emphasize the audio-visual sounds and images as opposed to the visual, linguistic text. In general, television texts are defined by the need of

[32] The one exception are the doodles in *The Autograph Man.*

two senses to have the full experience of them as they were designed: aural and visual, and they rely on all five semiotic systems, as outlined by Geoff Bull and Michele Anstey, to be understood: linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial (82). In understanding film or television, one must account for the images shown (visual), the sequence of individual frames (visual), the changing body positions (gestures) and changing proximities of people and objects in the image (spatial), oral speech (linguistic), and other sounds such as evoked by what is happening on the screen or music (audio). All of these sensory modalities of meaning make up one aspect of the meaning structures that go into encoding a "programme as meaningful discourse," as Hall explains ("Encoding" 388).

More specifically, as one can derive from Yuri Mikhailovich Lotman's theories about the audio-visual medium film, "[e]very image on the screen is a sign," which can bear two meanings: "On the one hand, images on the screen reproduce some sorts of objects of the real world. A semantic relationship is established between these objects and screen images. The objects become the meanings of the images on the screen" (*Cinema,* 31). This reflects the icon-aspect of the sign, as C.S. Pierce would say. "On the other hand," Lotman continues, "the images on the screen may be augmented by some additional, often totally unexpected meanings. Lighting, montage, interplay of depth levels, changes of speed, etc. may impart to the objects additional meanings – symbolic, metaphorical, metonymical, etc." (31). Lotman's descriptions, especially the augmentations, would underscore the sign's aesthetic emphasis, and this pushes the examination of the audio-visual sign more towards literature. At the same time, this would move it away from thinking about what really distinguishes television from film, which is its communicative function. However, Eckart Voigts states an early distinction to be made about television versus literature is that one can "roughly define literature as the aesthetic and imaginative uses of language and television as (uni- or multilinear) transmitted content, […] mainly technological" (307).

In returning to Rajewsky's "als ob" clarification, it is impossible for a television to pop out of the text when one opens the book; however, as I will show, texts are able to reproduce the form and effects of television in various ways. To understand this is to realize that one looks at textual signifiers, but decodes them based on understanding the semiotic scope of the source medium (television) and its signifiers (sounds and images), as well as the semiotic scope of literary texts and its signifiers (abstract signs of language). This decoding is what imbues the text with its meaning. Also, as Werner Wolf says for these kinds of references, "the decoding of intermedial references is part of the signification of the work in which such references occur and is therefore a requisite for an understanding of the work" (5). Thus, in order to decode the intermedial reference, one needs to understand how to recognize television, its processes of production and encoding, and then how to decode it.

Ultimately, one can ask what remains of television when one takes the text away to answer what has been retained or excluded in its intermedial encoding. Then, one can also ask what the use of the television reference gives the text, since the intermedial combination creates a new medium altogether. However, more specifically, in being text but also not, television references become a literary device worth interpretation via an understanding of both television and literature. Since readers of this book will likely be well-versed in literature, I will expand upon the television—what it does and represents—that I believe transnational authors draw upon when referencing television in their works.

5.1 Global impact and spread

The most obvious relationship between transnational literature and television is that both can be designed for global distribution via production methods and choices in format and language. New satellite technologies that made simultaneous real-time transmission to anywhere in the world possible adds to the feeling of global inter-connectedness, and the corporate structures built around these enterprises are economically globalized and

interdependent. However, although television, on the one hand, is inherently transnational, especially since broadcasting has become more international and global along with media trade, and new content production happens beyond national borders, broadcast television through the beginning of the twenty-first century in many locations continues to be local. National television broadcasting continues to remain relevant to the viewing diets of audiences in the UK and Germany especially, and authors may use it as a prop to show both exclusion and demonstrate integration or assimilation.

International communications scholar Mehdi Semati points out the way that global processes have altered our lives, in particular by "rendering our categories and concepts precarious" (Semati 89). Access to programs all over the world also creates challenges in thinking about the world as a system of societies, which only become complicated by the economic processes of globalism. Semati also explains in his work how the "rise of global networks, the material flow of all kinds across borders, and the radical interconnectivity of life in all regions across the globe have rendered the very concept of 'society' unstable'" (Semati 89). Media arts scholar John Ellis comments on this as well, implying that the local broadcast helps the viewer retain a sense of stability, helping one feel "bound into the private life of the nation" (Ellis 5). On the other hand, the international broadcast, through meaning that has been exported and removed from the physical context of the space of production, can cause a television program, especially news broadcast, to feel like an "alien and inexplicable series of events" (5). This may be a side-effect of bringing major public events into private spaces.

5.2 Sports

Televised sports, on the other hand, which have also become an integral part of global communication, have the potential to unite fragmented national audiences in front of their

screens. Especially in the case of the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup,[33] the sports events become symbolic confrontations between nations that contribute to the imagining of communities. Literary authors take advantage of this in their references, since are a prime example of global synchronic broadcasting, medially created affectual bonding, and indicate the reciprocity of national and international interest. David Rowe explains the unique relationship between sport and television means that both together produce something "immeasurably more significant than either party could have managed if operating in isolation" (2). This mutual arrangement results in larger audiences, increased revenue for athletes and, as Rowe cites Garry Whannel to say, aspects of nation-building projects. Sports are a means of addressing national interests and identity constructions.

The strong relationship between television, sports, and society becomes especially evident during times of revolution or resistance, such as the Black Power salutes in the 1968 Olympics, or Colin Kaepernick's kneeling during the playing of the U.S. national anthem at football games to protest police brutality against Black people. Athletes can use their appearance in televised sport events to bring awareness to socio-political situations that, to critics, seems to have little to do with sports. They can send political messages, and in turn become symbols of an ongoing political conversation, contributing to community and nation-building ideas and operating in the fundamental connection between sports and society.

Another aspect that affects this relationship between sports and society is that when the sports event is broadcast in public television, and not on a channel specified for sports, like in the US, then the event is framed by news or other political events. This happens particularly in Germany, where the two main public stations ARD and ZDF alternate in broadcasting international soccer games or Olympic events, and often arrange the news

[33] As Tomlinson says, "[s]tatistics are presented which indicate the grip of these sporting events upon the popular consciousness of peoples throughout the contemporary world" (583). There is empirical data for many of the claims I make here, some of which referred to by the scholars I cite, but also in extensive material. The relationship between sport, society, and television is a very busy academic subject.

broadcast in the half-time of the game. If it is a national team event, this framing can confuse the supposed objectivity of the political news, distorting the impression of factuality, and conflate it with national interests and political motives. David Goldblatt calls soccer, for example, a gauge of the nation, which he relates to the "unforgiving eye of television coverage" since television makes the spread of images possible, and television commentary provides some of the narratives that can be molded to discuss things like political progress, i.e., the wealth of nations, success of integration, partnerships and diplomatic relations with other nations.

Furthermore, in listing the developments that have led to global culture, one must include the emergence of global sport events, which are gaining prominence concurrently to the decline of the sovereignty of the nation-state. This same decline opens up nationalist anxieties and leads to a rise in movements to preserve specific ideas of what makes a "nation." In turn, sports have increasingly been used to enhance a collective focus on identity and belonging, while at the same time often becoming a site of xenophobic exhibitionism, especially in the context of the Olympics.

Sports events have a history of creating spectacles that make claims about local or national cultures and values. According to Alan Tomlinson, the opening ceremonies to the Olympic Games, fueled by the Cold War rivalry of the 1970s and 80s, became displays of asserting national identity and even superiority (585). The 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, benefiting from television's increased powers of projection, "set a standard and an expectation for spectacle" (585). In general, the transnational nature of the Games become an important part of mediating "tensions of a changing and threatened world order" (600). Arguably, as I will show in my discussion of *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* (Chapter 4), this can be extended to World Cup matches as well.

This is not to say the only sports of interest in these novels are the international sports competitions. Sports create spaces for interpreting meaning; televised sports take this one step further. Events become narrativized in their transmission to the screen and the rules and conventions will be played out on the screen and changed by the way the production processes control what is and can be shown. Replays, sports commentating, and selective camera focus on individual players can be shown to create a narrative of what happened beyond the actions on the field, pitch, court, ring, etc. The studio can highlight the heroic aspects of individual members on the team, or the team's interactions as significant to the win or loss in ways that remind one of television's theatrical potential, which Volker Roloff claims television cannot do without (Roloff 17). On the broader level, the television commentator can be recreated to emphasize the contextual importance of the game, who is winning against whom, and the narrative "us versus them," which seems indispensable to sports.

It is the work of authors to convey the multifaceted aspects of the relationship between sports, society, and television, and because of the work of bringing sports to the screen, I suggest references to televised sports in fiction feature a dialogism of fictionalization and multiple layers of intermediality, because the televised sport is already a double layer of the semiotic sphere that makes up sports, which are their own system of signs.

5.3 Society

The cliché metaphor for television as a "window on the world" was originally used to distinguish public from private space,[34] but by now it has become clear that television is inextricably bound to society via its communicative function. At the same time, while most contemporary media scholars have moved away from broadly agreeing with McLuhan's

[34] In *Make Room for TV,* Lynn Spigel, discusses television's iconic role as a "window on the world," as initially a marketing ploy (102). According to Spigel, television in postwar US, Spigel as "window on the world" was a part of the changing nature of social space, in particular of the "blurring or private and public space" (122).

famous statement, “the medium is the message,” there are certain undeniably determinist aspects about technology like television that affect an individual’s sense of the scale of the world. It started with the use of steam, gas, and electricity, and through the acceleration of human movement and ideas, people’s awareness of the world has changed.

Our way of looking at the world, our way of interacting with it, and our way of thinking and behaving is affected by the technology that we have access to, that we are exposed to, and that we use. Inadvertently, our behavior will be also affected by the technology others use, even if we do not use them ourselves. Thus, the influence of technology on the social behavior of individuals can have an effect on the community. At a banal level, one can see this in *Brick Lane*, where the reference to the 9/11 attacks through the television broadcast led to increased tensions in the north London community. Likewise, the protagonist’s watching the news in *Gehen ging, gegangen* led to his engagement in the refugee community in his neighborhood.

In his 1974 book *Television*, Raymond Williams attempts to provide a clear outline for understanding which are the specific causes and which are the effects in the relationship between technology and society, although as he notes, this is difficult to determine (3-9). Media and communications theorists, especially George Gerbner and his colleagues responsible for cultivation analysis theory, have attempted to quantifiably study more about the relationship between television and what is perceived about the factual world, “tests of the extent to which television’s versions of ‘the facts’ are incorporated or absorbed into what heavy viewers take for granted about the world” (Gerbner 184). In many of their studies, they come to the conclusion that television may very well affect people’s *perceptions* about the world, though it remains open how much television *changes* the world.

The textual medium, in contrast, clearly did change the world, according to Walter Ong. In his famous treatise *Orality and Literacy*, Ong pointed out the changes to societies

from one of the first technological advancements in media and human communication: writing. He insisted that "writing has transformed human consciousness" (Ong 77) and that people on the whole were more social, holistic, practical, traditional and context-bound before writing. Since information transfer from person to person could only happen orally, per sound, which is a fleeting medium,[35] the information had to be transmitted in a way that could be remembered by the other person, would be transmitted in a way that was contextual, general, ritualistic, and had to be something that was worth remembering.

Arguably, television functions in a similar way. In referring to television in their novels, authors not only bring in this secondary orality into writing, but they create a kind of double-orality, since writing also "can never dispense with orality" (Ong 8). At the same time, television is defined by its combination of audio and visual modalities, and so it retains the modern emphasis on the image. James Clifford calls this "the truth of vision," and claims that Ong, without bearing judgement on the value of writing over oral speech, though perhaps nostalgically partial to the latter, "argues that the truth of vision in Western, literate cultures had predominated over the evidence of sound and interlocution, of touch, smell, and taste" ("Partial" 11). This predominance of the visual has, since Antiquity in the west, resulted in a continuous comparison of the arts.[36] In short, the prevalence of visual media has long affected how people felt about media and the senses the media involve.

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[35] Ong believed that sound was something special because "[a]ll sensations take place in time, but sound has a special relationship to time […]. Sound exists only when it goes out of existence […] There is no way to stop sound and have sound" (31-32). Because of this, Ong says, sound is dynamic and implies movement. This adds, perhaps, to the impression that television as a medium tends to favor immediacy.

[36] See Evi Zemanek's chapter in *Komparatistik,* "Intermedialität- interart studies" for more on this (pp. 159-174), where she goes through the history of interart studies in the west, which has its roots in Antiquity with the comparison of painting and poetry, poetry and music. The comparison qua competition (*paragone*) experienced a revival during the Renaissance, and was picked up again in the 18th century by British poets as well as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing several centuries later in his 1766 essay "Laocoön," though Lessing was less interested in a hierarchy and more interested in discussing the technical differences between sculpture/the visual arts and poetry, See also Rippl and Neumann, pg. 22 for more details on this debate, though admittedly the discussion of Lessing's "Laocoön" is picked up in most intermedial theory texts, because he breaks down the differences in spatiality, temporality, and linearity.

This is perhaps most evidenced by the invention of the camera. Photography gave one a revolutionary means for representing people and things, implying a potential for the objectivity in the depiction of a person and inspiring the idea of retaining an impression of people and events long after they had passed. Later, as moving pictures were invented, a renewed interest in the relationship between reality, realism and an abstract "the Real" grew, as well as the phenomenological process of understanding individual shots in montage. The film in particular fascinated many modernists for the way that it captured bodies moving through space in real time. In the early twentieth century, during a time of rapid social and economic change, authors such as W.H. D. Auden, James Joyce,[37] Hans Fallada,[38] and the Pylon Poets[39] took on the challenge of expressing the new experiences brought by these new technologies and the media in literature. Within forty years, television brought a whole new scale to the relationship between realism and reality and gave rise to the idea of a global culture, as well as the impression that visual culture is the paradigmatic form of the twentieth century (Sturken and Cartwright 423).

Subsequently, many writers, playwrights, and critics have weighed-in on the new medium. One suggestion is that television brought new temporalities that may have affected community cohesion.[40] Television program schedules, combined with the already disciplinary character of time since the rise of industrial capitalism[41] meant that individuals had another external limitation of time to contend with for leisure and social activities. Referring to the historian Stephen Kern, television scholar Walter Uricchio also points out

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[37] *Finnigan's Wake* and the "Circe" and "Sirens" chapters in *Ulysses.* Irina Rajewsky notes "Die Entstehung des Films fiel somit in eine Zeit des Umbruchs. Autoren wie Döblin, Kafka, Joyce oder Dos Pasos versuchten, dem Nacheinander und Nebeneinander disparater Eindrücke des Films hervorzuheben" (Rajewsky *Intermedialität* 30).

[38] The first versions of Fallada's 1932 novel *Kleiner Mann, was nun?* features a lengthy passage in which the protagonist watches a Charlie Chaplin film and identifies himself with the main character in the film.

[39] British poets writing in the 1930s whose work dealt with technological modernity

[40] Torgier Fjeld makes the claim that Benedict Anderson believed that the effect of globalization, to which television contributes, may have "rendered the temporal linearity of nationalism obsolete"

[41] See Werner Bergmann's 1992 article for *Time & Society* "The Problem of Time in Sociology," pp 113 for more on this.

that "the infrastructures of simultaneity were crucial for such practices as the establishment of universal time," which is just one thing to consider in the conception of the national identity and the modern state,[42] according to various scholars.[43] These collectivities and the connectivity brought both by simultaneous temporality, but also new temporal ordering, can be extended to the broader social level of the nation. The relationship between temporality, society and television and its link to the nation seems retained in broadcast television that becomes disrupted in multi-broadcast, on-demand, and internationally produced television. The authors of the early twenty-first century may still be drawn towards the older broadcast television, since the producers of this medium still have an imaginary link to the public to which they broadcast, and it makes it easier to discuss social change and national identity or belonging.

5.4 Polysemic, polyphonic

A final aspect that transnational authors often draw upon with their television references is the basic understanding of the fundamentals of human communication systems. These can be broken down into strings of discourse in which multiple utterances, and/or speech acts occur,[44] conveying thoughts between addresser and addressee that go through various encoding and decoding processes embedded in a specific context. This context has been described by Lotman as a space in which the unambiguous systems can become "meaningful and functional," "perceived as one segment of the *continuum* of multifaceted,

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[42] Understand this with the caveat that it is very difficult to determine the impacts of a medium. Relationships are also expressed in terms of possibilities of the various different models. "Occupational peculiarities aside, the media technologies which have had such a central place in the construction of modernity can only be appraised if there is a systematic frame of reference for their articulation of time, space, event, and subject. [...] it is on being able to distinguish among the various strands of mediation which have contributed to the construction of modernity, and of being able to chart their various relationships and impacts" (Uricchio).

[43] See Benedict Anderson in *Imagine Communities*, who was one of the first to claim that nations introduced a new notion of time, inspired in part by Walter Benjamin's notion of Messianic time. See also Bergmann "The Problem of Time in Sociology" as well as Saulo B. Cwerner's article "The Times of Migration."

[44] While speech act theory originates with Ludwig Wittgenstein, and J. L. Austin and John Searle expanded on this in the 1970s, and are usually credited it with it, the concept of encoding and decoding applies to all media, including language.

multileveled, and variegated semiotic formations" (Andrews 32). I see this space as similarly described to Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's heteroglossia,[45] and both semiosphere and heteroglossia can be used to explain spaces outside of the language webs of understood signs. As Bakhtin said, "everything means, is understood, as a part of a greater whole- there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (*Dialogic* 426). Meaning created and found in the television program, as well as its representation, are both part of a greater whole and are socially constructed.

In semiotic systems, understanding the content of language is determined more by social conventions and collective understanding than by recognizing the form's similarity to the object, idea, etc. that it represents. Other media, such as photographs, are able to capture more directly the form of the object in its encoding (sometimes being a direct copy), and necessitate a smaller degree of social convention understanding. However, these codes also rely on a high degree of conventionality, and these can be reproduced in the medium of the text by the text. The text therefore continues to act as a representational or iconic sign. This allows expressions like poetic language to work more representationally, which in the context of *Literarily TV* extends the metalanguage of the television semiotic to television's system of representational signs in which the expression is more similar to the content. The reference included as an intermedial reference, for example in ekphrasis, will be described in a certain way to repeat the patterns of mechanisms of that medium, thus evoking the same kind of communication of content as the original medium.

Individuals play the primary role in the construction of meaning. Stuart Hall was particularly interested in the juncture of television and identity, noting how processes of mediation and representation affect assumptions about identity and affect a person's process

[45] One must note Oliver Lass' distinction of Bakhtin and Lotman between the need for embodied or human phenomena of communication

of becoming. Identity, according to Hall, is defined in terms of continuous heterogeneity, transformation, and difference ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 227), but the circumstances are always changing. This identity will affect how the individual understands the text. As a result of these processes, as Raymond Williams says, communication can lead to tensions. He states:

> Since our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings, and thence common activities and purposes; the offering, reception, and comparison of new meanings, leading to tensions and achievements of growth and change. (qtd. in Hall, "Two Paradigms" 1406)

As I hint at multiple times throughout this introduction, meaning is made, and the meaning made in a text will be as diverse as the experiences, ideologies, and perspectives—basically culture(s)—of creator and audience.[46] Once one completes the decoding of the television sign and figures out a new way to encode it for the text, one has to accept that the television sign is polysemic, and audiences produce new meanings.[47] Thus, as Hall states, "[…] the meaning […] cannot be fixed, single and unfilterable, but must be capable of signifying different values depending on how and with what it is articulated" ("Encoding" 391). The signifying element's combination with other elements can imply a preferred meaning, or it is possible as Lotman claims, to "skim off" various layers of meaning (*Cinema* 95). The more a person knows, the more they can "see."

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[46] Neil Smelser defines cultural systems (which I align with 'ways of being') via Pitirim Alexandrovich Sorokin: culture is a grouping of elements, values, norms, outlooks, beliefs and ideologies, knowledge and empirical assertions […], linked with one another to some degree as meaning-system" (Smelser 37).

[47] Active-audience theory refers to the notion that viewers are not passively exposed to a medium like television and taking in some preferred (by the producer) meaning, but rather they are actively producing meaning from within their cultural context. Describing television in this way acknowledges that it is a "socially and culturally informed activity, centrally concerned with meaning" (Barker 339).

This experience justifies to Ellis the claim that the “crucial ‘look’ for television is that of the television upon the world (Fiske 57). This means that the spectator in this instance is only a passive audience that grants complicity to the television, which chooses for the viewer how to see the world. In this way, television offers, as per Gerbner, a “centralized,” homogenizing system of storytelling (177), it also “provides a relatively restricted set of choices for a virtually unrestricted variety of interests and publics” (178). Yet as Fiske seems to counter-argue, at the end, the point to make here is that television still encourages a more diverse response than most other media. For example,

> the viewer who ‘glances’ is a much more diversified subject with a more diverse set of relations to the screen than is the cinema spectator who ‘looks’ or ‘gazes.’ Television’s thrust towards unity in diversity never totally achieves its object: the diversity is always there, both in ‘in the world’ that television looks at […] and in the relationships that its viewers take up with the screen. (Fiske 58)

These considerations of a fragmented audience and focus on relations can extend to considerations of what constitutes the “self.”

In discussing identity, I am interested in the processes of self-description and social ascription that affect self- and social-identity. I am also interested in subjectivity, the condition of being a person, and the processes by which a person becomes, which are also part of the project of cultural poetics and politics. According to Clifford, subjectivity is “the constant reconstitution of selves and others through specific exclusions, conventions, and discursive practices” (“Partial” 24). In turn, representation will always be implicated in the emergence of culture (19). If one takes that one step further in shifting culture as a focus of visons to an “interplay of voices, of positioned utterances” (12), then voices become vital to the representation of identity.

This understanding of voice has less to do with the tools of voice, and more to do with voice as a tool. In her article on voice for the *Handbuch: Medien der Literatur,* Cornelia Epping-Jäger nicely distinguishes between these two:

> With voice as a tool, the focus is on various functions that have been assigned to the voice in the course of its cultural history as a communicative and cognitive instrument: its indexical, its rhetorical and its media function. With tools of the voice, on the other hand, the focus is on the technical-medial expansions and upheavals that the human voice has experienced in the context of its media history. (Epping-Jäger, my translation 79)

What Roland Barthes calls the "grain of the voice" is more relevant to a conversation about the tools of voice, and thus also to a discussion of television, since it is the space of the "encounter between the language and a voice" (*Image* 181), and that which is actively mediated in the aural interactions between people. It is the material medium of language, and it compares to bodily mediation such as dance, which also becomes an example of voice in *Brick Lane*.

This phenomenon of sound that emits from the human body, thereby ensuring (embodied) presence and implicitly tied to (individual) being, is, as Dieter Mersch writes, inherently intermedial, since it involves sounds and material body (5). Audio-visual media tend to rely on the assumption of a unity between body and voice. Viewers will believe that what one hears is produced in the body one sees moving one's lips as though talking. While most of the time it is this way, people who have seen synchronized audio-visual media often experience the confusion of hearing a different voice for the same actor, or recognizing the voice of one actor in the use of another. Its codes of understanding involve the process as the resonance in the body leaves the body in sound waves.

Voice can serve as the bridge of intermediality between literature and television, since voice is a working medium that also mediates images, has a visual component, functions in representation, and can be transmitted through various technological means. Voice is a medium, and it is also mediated by the text in a visual representation of the acoustic phenomenon. This leads to interesting results in interpretation when combined with what writers and composition theorists call "voice" or "discourse," as per James Paul Gee's famous description of it as a "way of being in the world" (Gee 526). It too is connected to the idea of a singular source and expression of the mind, and can be used to make assertions that reflect one's perspective and positioning in the world.

Because each narrative today, especially in intercultural contexts, involves a diversity of concurrent points of view and voices, it continues to be necessary for thinking about 'writing culture,' or ethnographic writing. This kind of writing adheres to Bakhtin's conception of the novel as dialogic and within which individual voices are in conversation with some dominant discourses that it defines and against which it is defined. Clifford states that "once dialogism and polyphony are recognized as modes of textual production, monophonic authority is questioned […]. The tendency to specify discourses- historically and intersubjectively – recasts this authority" ("Partial" 15). This indicates another necessary argument to be made about intermedial references: just as the characters in the novel, who are presented parallel with television references, if not represented with the reference, resist assimilation to a dominant culture or cultural discourse, so too does the mediality provide potential resistance to the hegemonic form of the text.

Bakhtin distinguishes voices in the novel that are individual and direct, which anticipate the response to its enunciation based on what can be associated with the enunciation, and authoritative voices that form these responsive voices. From Bakhtin's writings, it seems as though there may be no such thing as a completely individual voice,

since the individual is always meant to struggle with past and present voices of parents, teachers, neighbors, friends, scholars, and anyone/thing that have formed the way the individual can use their voice to begin with. However, according to Bakhtin, there is a gap that can be negotiated between the individual's voice and authoritative discourse ("Topic" 580), and then "one's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another of dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of another's discourse" (584).

The struggle of discourse is apparent in migration literature as postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have famously pointed out, but in light of my project, it may be significant that a medium can also face a similar struggle in an intermedial reference. After all, the enunciative act, as Bhabha says, is the reinscribing, relocating "political claim to cultural priority [...] in the social institution of the signifying activity." It is meant to relocate these "sites of negotiation" (*Location* 177-78). Bhabha and Spivak help explain that there are thousands of overlapping voices in language, as well as power structures that control what can be said and who can say it in today's contexts. Aligned with the fact that television, as Marie Gillespie argues, is seen as representing "varieties of socially situated speech" and this "forms a nexus between language and the social world" (56), voice, language, and meaning remain a necessary focus for thinking about transnational literature and their television references. This becomes evident immediately when considering Monica Ali's *Brick Lane.*

CHAPTER TWO: "AND SHE SAID 'TURN IT ON'": TELEVISION AS EXPRESSIVE IMPETUS IN MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE*

Introduction: "This is England"

When Monica Ali's unpublished manuscript for *Brick Lane* was being passed around in the early 2000s, publishers and critics believed they had found an author who gave readers access to the Bangladeshi diaspora in London, particularly to the women in this community. Ali was praised for the slow-burning style (N. Walter) with which she introduces the protagonist, Nazneen, and her move to London following the arranged marriage to Chanu Ahmed, a member of the Bangladeshi diaspora in London. One follows Nazneen's slowly growing independence in their relationship, family life, and her affair with a younger man. However, Ali's appraisers were not surprised to see how the "unspoilt" (11) girl from Gouripur who grew into an independent woman affirmed the idea that westernized, enlightened London is the space a woman like Nazneen needs to claim independence from a fatalistic mindset and patriarchal binds found in the Bangladeshi Muslim community.[48] In short, rather than writing back against the British perspective of one of its former colonies, Ali fed into a dominant Western feminist point of view that migrants, especially Muslim women migrants, need European, urban spaces like London to become feminist and progressive. This conclusion and the negative portrayal of members of the Bangladeshi diasporic community did not sit well with the first- and second-generation Sylheti migrants

[48] This is not to say that all Bangladeshi women will experience this, or to assume a singular patriarchal kinship system, but rather to acknowledge the assumed primary power structures that occur as a result of certain historical, material and ideological circumstances in Muslim countries. Also, while the experience is not general, it is one that does affect Nazneen. See Chandra Mohanty's 1984 article "Under Western Eyes" for more on how to interrogate the idea of "Third World Women" (Mohanty's term) as a singular monolithic subject. I do not wish to fall into the trap of presenting Nazneen this way, but due to the pervasiveness of this model within Ali's own writing, parts of this text may be implicated.

who lived in estates surrounding the eponymous Brick Lane,[49] and so the novel that won Ali a spot on *Granta*'s list, Best of Young British Novelists, and the short list for the Booker Prize, was boycotted by that community, perhaps with good reason.[50]

Thus, a disclaimer seems necessary in writing about *Brick Lane,* since although it provides a previously unseen look at a minority ethnic community in London, the view seems, as Gurhpal Singh says, to underscore the voyeuristic mainstream "penchant for titillating tales of ethnic minority life" (qtd. in Gopal 107), rather than explore a way of life and the diverse possibilities for its enactment and representation. In the end, one could argue that the novel engages with, as Priyamvarda Gopal says, the "false oppositions of liberalism and authoritarianism, or communitarianism and selfhood" (113), where Bangladeshi culture at home and in the diaspora is seen as authoritarian and communitarian, while London provides the English alternative of liberalism and selfhood. However, the novel, in its solidly traditional, Dickensian even,[51] bildungsroman format,[52] provides various perspectives from across multi-generational migrants about integration and exclusion in England. Descriptions in *Brick Lane* about Bangladesh and England are rarely straightforwardly defining nor immutable, in turn preventing false oppositions from grasping a hold. In particular, television references throughout the novel remind the reader that one must engage with culture *as*

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[49] They boycott both the book and the movie based on it, causing a scandal that could be compared to the Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* scandal. For a small selection of the published commentaries and scholarship about this, see the *Guardian* articles "'You sanctimonious philistine' - Rushdie v Greer, the sequel" by Paul Lewis from 29 July 2006 and Ali's reaction "The outrage economy" from 13 October 2007 as well as "Monica Ali and the Suspension of Disbelief" by Melanie Mettler and Hasan Saeed Majeed's 2nd chapter from *Islamic Postcolonialism*.

[50] Nick Bentley comes to this same conclusion in his chapter "Writing Contemporary Ethnicities." One major critique has to do with the fact that Ali worked closely with the work of social economist Naila Kabeer, and yet presented a situation different than the one Kabeer observes in her study. As a result of this 2000 study about Bangladeshi women working in the garment industries in Dhaka and London, Kabeer concludes that "women appeared to have abandoned old norms in response to new opportunities" in Bangladesh more than in London (Kabeer qt. in Marx 201), yet Ali presents her London subject as the one who abandons old norms and her Dhaka subject (Nazneen's sister, Hasina) as the one held to the strict norms of purdah and suffering under it.

[51] "Nazneen's story unfolds in language that reviewers have found notable for its Dickensian description and 'satirical detachment'" (Marx 208). Harriet Lane may have been the first to make this claim in her review of the novel for *The Observer* 1 June 2003.

[52] It has been characterized as a bildungsroman, be it multicultural (Perfect) or post-global (López).

practice and language as a way of being that allows these communities to exist in flux, preserving their heterogenous margins.

Of the various discussions, presentations and publications about *Brick Lane* as a contemporary transnational or postcolonial novel and Nazneen's fate in the novel,[53] scant attention is paid to the role of the television or the intermedial references in the depiction of Nazneen's migrant experience. This is surprising, since the references in *Brick Lane* explicitly inform the analysis of the migrant narrative. They not only provoke implicit contemplation of the mediality of life and the way that people get their news and interact in contemporary society, but an interpretation of the multiple references in *Brick Lane* can reveal key insights into the role of the television in the lives and articulations of migrants.

The references inform two complementary strains of interpretation in the novel about Muslim British identity and transnational feminist identity and expression, which is reflected in the structure of this chapter. The reference to the televised report of the 9/11 Attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon opens up a reception of articulations of what it means to be (or just look like one could be) Muslim in the UK after September 11, 2001. It also "focuss[es] on identity crises created by trauma" (Gheorghiu 49), to borrow from Oana-Celia Gheorghiu's classification system for 9/11 texts. This is as opposed to being "explicitly political [and] expressing viewpoints on the attacks through techniques which borrow directly from mass media" (49). While Gheorghiu makes it an either/or statement, the relationship of trauma, personal and collective, to mass media *and* identity are key for *Brick Lane*. The 9/11 references are complimented by references to news programs focusing on

[53] Of the various examples (see, among others, Sudan Stanford Friedman, M. Mahmudul Hasan, John Marx, Angelia Poon, Michael Prefect and Lydia Efthymia Roupakia), Lydia Efthymia Roupakia is one of the select few who notes the prominence of television and internet in *Brick Lane,* and she concludes that they are used to "introduce fragments of the outside world into Nazneen's private family life" (651). Only a few years later and very recently (2018), Hasan extends this interpretation to describe how television "makes a bridge between the monoculture of the Bangladeshi diaspora in London and the lifestyle of mainstream London society" (69).

other historical and fictional events, and they reflect on trauma and community differently than references in other novels by white, non-migrant English writers.

The second part of this chapter discusses the role of television in migrant households, followed by close-readings of the ice-skating references in the novel that provide an intersectional layer for understanding feminist awareness and identity as a Muslim woman in the Bangladeshi diaspora in Europe. In reading it will become clear that both sets of television references to 9/11 and ice skating intersperse past memory with present multiculturality, and they address what it means to assimilate versus integrate. Together, these references inform Ali's representation of the drive for communication and assertion of one's individual voice and contribute to the overall discussion of challenges in communication and belonging for transnational people in contemporary Britain.

1 Responding to 9/11

As a novel about a Muslim minority in England, Ali took on the challenge of addressing 9/11 from a Muslim perspective, as opposed to the dominant western perspective portrayed in novels like Ian McEwan's 2005 *Saturday,* Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close,* Don DeLillo's acclaimed *Falling Man,* and Joseph O'Neil's *Netherland.* The September 11th Attacks were the most-deadly terrorist attacks in history,[54] taking the lives of 2973 people, and altering the lives of family and friends, people who lived and worked in the area, and first responders, many of whom are still facing long-term health effects, forever. Until 2010, the media devoted more resources to covering the attacks and their aftermath than to any other event in the media age (Monahan xii),[55] and this reflects in the amount of footage available for study[56]—and it has been studied extensively. As of 2018,

[54] Most deadly in terms of a single attack. The total numbers of deaths related to terror attacks all over the world still heavily outnumber the deaths in the United States.
[55] This may still be true, though the expansion of digital media and events in the second decade of the twenty-first century (US election campaigns, COVID-19) may have changed this.
[56] Two examples of the news coverage from that day:

tens of thousands of academic articles, conference papers, and books have been written both in reference to the events and subsequent media coverage, as well as secondary sources on the more than two hundred fictional works written. Approximately two-thirds of the latter were by US writers (Dawes cited in Gheorghiu 1).[57] Scholars debate the extent of the impact of the attacks and the resulting open-ended global "war on terrorism" (as coined by then-president U.S. George W. Bush),[58] but there was a clear quantifiable impact, especially in regards to an increase in the amount of coverage on Muslims and Muslim-Americans.

According to a Pew Research Report from 2006, coverage about terrorism in the US rose 135% in 2002-2005 versus 1997-2000, and there was a rise in reporting on foreign policy. However, as the PEW Research Center comments, "[w]hat is less obvious is the effect of the shift in coverage on the overall tone of the newscast," which had been noted to be more jingoist and binarized into an "us" versus "them" attitude. The same was true in the UK. The attacks solidified a perceived binary of a "Western" and a "Muslim" world, and the US became aware of a growing antagonism between those in cooperation with the US, long a dominant military and economic power, and those who quietly resisted, such as many nations in the Middle East. These tensions that existed before 9/11—most notably during the Cold War—but also as an extended response to colonialism through the middle of the twentieth century,[59] became heightened in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1990. With 9/11, latent antagonisms became outright antipathies. This adjustment in sentiments not only appeared in

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Birkin, Andrew. "9/11: British TV coverage: 09.46 - 09.56 EST" *Youtube.com.* 15 Aug 2007. www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDdgQ6QfRVM
Australian Associated Press. "September 11, 2001. Live TV Coverage Montage" *Youtube.com* 21 Aug 2011. Accessed 23 Sept 2018. www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HcX3iffQcI

[57] Oana-Cleia Gheorghiu's 2018 book *British and American Representations of 9/11* provides the most recent, relevant overview of representations of the Attacks in US and British fiction and the political and medial context in which they were published, and she cites many other scholars who have worked on 9/11 literature as well as the original coverage on *CNN* and the official "9/11 Commission Report" published by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States and empowered by Public Law on November 27, 2002. While it is an official government document, as Gheorghiu points out, and not scholarly peer-reviewed, the report is exhaustive and well documented.

[58] See Daya Kishan Thussu

[59] Modern terrorism and colonialism are inextricable connected.

the media, but were reinforced by them due to the way television media function as a discursive framework, and the way they conceptualized the difference between "self" and other."

In *Brick Lane*, the "other" is diversely made known and depicted in a wide range: second-generation and/or assimilated Bangladeshi-Brits; Nazneen's friend Razia, who feels pro-British enough to wear a Union Jack sweater all the time; "educated men" like Nazneen's husband Chanu (154), who picks up the Quran maybe once in the novel but can quote the Bangladeshi poet-hero Tagore by heart; Nazneen herself, who prays and feels ambiguously about pro-Islam advocacy; and the members of the local pro-Islam advocacy group, the Bengal Tigers, of whom Karim, Nazneen's eventual lover, is a leader, and which includes several members of the community who support jihad. Thus, while the novel still arguably presents a form of "media-friendly 'authenticity'" (Colebrook 46) of the Bangladeshi Muslim migrant as a collective entity,[60] I argue that Ali at least points towards how this group is constructed from a variety of different actors who themselves are impacted by a range of simultaneously existing and overlapping contexts.

Brick Lane is one of the first anglophone novels to incorporate the attacks into its story,[61] and Ali's use of the signifier makes a statement, not only about the strength of the images of the attacks as signifiers in literature, but also about the effects of the attacks on residents of postcolonial London and the relationship of the media and community in transnational spaces. The attacks did not make the British more postcolonial or transnational;

[60] This collective entity comes from, as Mohanty points out, presenting people, regardless of their differing positions in societies, via whether they are affected or not by Islam. This is collective entity is also opposed to the tendency, as outlined by Martyn Colebrook of South Asian diaspora writers and filmmakers in Britain to "'reject the centre' deliberately refusing the collectively singular identity with which they are traditionally affiliated" (45).

[61] Note that it came out in the same year as French writer Frédéric Beigbeder's *Window on the World* and the German *Hol mich einfach ab* by Gabriele Wohnmann. I include a longer, most complete list in Chapter One.

it only made the British come to terms with it more.[62] Not only did the terrorist threats force European countries, especially within the UK, to confront their colonial history that led to considerable impacts at home, but it ultimately opened Britain's eyes to the role their media and laws continued to play in marking difference.

Ironically, this marking of difference came after the turn of the millenium where the "right to difference" had been promoted and was being criticized for "diluting the fundamental nature of [the] nation and the Christian morality integral to it" (Julios 151). Critics of the multicultural policy argued that Britain was "allowing people of different cultures to settle without expecting them to integrate into society [...]. Often the authorities have seemed more concerned with encouraging the distinctive identities than with promoting common values of nationhood" (Davis qt. in Julios 151).

In *Brick Lane*, Ali writes back to this with the character of Mrs. Azad, the wife of Dr. Azad, Chanu's only friend in London.[63] Mrs. Azad considers the women "who spend ten, twenty years here and [who] sit in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English" the tragedy (Ali 89). She challenges the apparent attitude that "[e]verything should change for them. They don't have to change one thing." On the other hand, both assimilation or tolerance are unidirectional processes, in which only one group (or one grouping) are expected to change for the other. The women should not expect everything to change for them, nor should they expect to change everything. *Brick Lane* grapples with this difficulty and manages to address multiple perspectives, completing, as Ruvani Randsinha argues, the representation of "continuations of identity and nation [that] are refigured within a transnational context" (Ranasinha qt. in Loh 106). In its mediation, 9/11

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[62] Specifically, the attacks, as Lucienne Loh comments, "led to the definitional anxieties surrounding British literary culture's incorporation into the transnational and postcolonial" (117), which one sees in the discussion of *Saturday*.
[63] The reader is given to know she is "westernized" by her short skirt, smoking, drinking, lacquered nails and "eyes that were looking for a fight" (Ali 83)

creates that transnational context, but it is also the site of communal trauma and a tendency to revert to more insular belongings in community identity.

1.1 The racialization of Muslims in the media

When members of a Muslim minority in a country seek more cultural belonging with others like them, which in turn results in accusations of self-segregating or failing to integrate, it is sometimes a response to feelings of being excluded to begin with. 9/11 became a situation after which the English reverted to a renewed Islamophobia. Muslims in the UK, as Arjun Appadurai points out, often already felt as if they did not grow up as "full citizens" (Loh 118), and this has a long history in the western interactions with Muslims. It expands on Edward Said's original assertion that "even the earliest European scholars of Islam [….] were medieval polemicists writing to ward off the threat of Muslim hordes and apostasy. In one way or another, that combination of fear and hostility has persisted to the present day" (Said qtd. in Majed 167). While Said wrote that in 1995, it has persisted another 25 years through today. Muslims continue to be seen as a threat in Western societies, but as Said explained in his famous introduction to *Orientalism*, this "threat" is a "detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, regressions, investments, and projections" (Said 16). In the context of England in the late twentieth, early twenty-first century, the Muslim South Asian minority becomes the target of English projections of loss of religion, sense of community, and sense of its imagined-community in the nation.

This becomes especially clear in the representation of Muslims in the media, which Ali hints at through her references to the factual Oldham riots in May 2001 and the fictional Brick Lane riots closer to 2002. For the 2001 Oldham riots, set in the context of the fictional growing "leaflet war" between the Bengal Tigers and British nationalist group the Lion Hearts, Nazneen, describes how she and Chanu watch the "hooded young men, scarves wrapped Intifada-style around their faces, hurling stones, furious with the cars that they set

alight. Between the scarves and the hoods, it was possible to catch glimpses of brown skin" (Ali 226). The description of the images focusses on symbolic markers of these young men, Intifada-style scarves and brown skin, grouping them together under ethnic characteristics.

By highlighting skin color, the description links the supposed common descent of the young men to their actions, but one is given an incomplete picture of who they are, their grievances, or the nature of the riot. The passage makes visible something that could easily be overlooked, and gives the reader "glimpses" of difference, and aggressive "others." It points to the factual Oldham Riots as the worst ethnically-motivated riots in England since the Handsworth riots in 1985, but in its mediation sets up the racialized young men opposite the law enforcement officers, and ignores the Oldham equivalent of the Lion Hearts who killed 10 South Asian-British youths.

Nazneen recognizes the anger of the young men, but the objects of their anger do not make sense to her. She sees they are frustrated, but their only outlet seems to be the futile attacking of inanimate objects, the cars. The reference in the novel continues with the images of them in action and then the aftermath as "the camera swept across tedious deserted streets, enlivened now and then by the presence of the blackened carcass of a car" (227). Ali provides another one of her customary exoticizing metaphors,[64] this time likening the burnt car to the burnt remains of an animal sacrifice.[65] The juxtaposition of a carcass that enlivens a scene points towards the use of shocking images to make for interesting news, but it also implies a sympathy to the cause of the riots, since the otherwise dead-looking street in an impoverished section of northern England, indicated by the pot holes and the houses "packed together like teeth," gains some life through these displays of tension. Something that was hidden has been put on display, giving testimony to something that is wrong that needs to be made right.

[64] For example, Nazneen's mother who "had been ripening like a mango on a tree" (Ali 1)
[65] The divided sacrifice of the covenants as they happened in Abraham's day (Genesis 15:10)

This sympathetic view retains ambiguity, however, in Nazneen's encouragement for violence. For a moment, it seems that Nazneen agrees with her husband Chanu, that the rioters are protesting a nonexistent grievance, and that they should be subdued. She "wondered why [the police] did not simply take their lathis and charge. They would not have to beat all. Just a few would set the example" (226). This stands in contrast to the view the camera provided. The interaction Nazneen has with the images, especially her proposed violence, negate the passive figure she presents before this moment. It changes the understanding that she joins the pro-Islamic advocacy group the Bengal Tigers just to be near Karim, their de facto leader. The potential violence inherent in the images is offset by Nazneen's suggestion of actual violence, and it seems her encouragement was designed by the images. It becomes clear that moments like this complicate the experiences of Muslims in England before 9/11, but also invites one to think about longer-term causes of home-grown terrorism afterwards.

The reference to skin color recalls that prior to 9/11 Muslims were not protected by the same anti-racism laws as Jewish people and Sikhs since the 1976 Race Relations Law, and yet South Asians, approximately a third of whom are Muslim, were increasingly targeted by the xenophobia and racism that has become tied to Islamophobia. Since Brick Lane is housed by a majority of Bangladeshi Brits, Ali shows this play-out in the streets of her novel as well. Although the people had been living in London for more than thirty years, they suddenly faced persecution and hate crimes.

> A pinch of New York dust blew across the ocean and settled on the Dogwood Estate. Sorupa's daughter was the first, but not the only one. Walking in the street, on her way to college, she had her hijab pulled off. Razia wore her Union Jack sweatshirt and it was spat on. (306)

Markers of practicing the Islamic faith, such as a hijab or keffiyeh, suddenly made one a target for hate crimes. However, Ali brings this into the absurd by having a British symbol also be spit on, indicating that it was not the marker so much as the person wearing them. In *Saturday,* McEwan had commented on these markers too, such as burkas,[66] reflecting on their (for the main character Perowne) "farcical appearance, like kids larking about on Halloween" (McEwan 124), or the "visceral" reaction they cause in him, seeing it as "dismal, that anyone should be obliged to walk around so entirely obliterated" (124). People would be attacked for representing the Muslim threat that had been re-actualized on a broad scale. While McEwan extrapolates the results of 9/11 to the global level, Ali brings the reader in closer to local effects, and the individual cases that reveal how absurd this perspective was. Tellingly, Sorupa is on her way to college and Razia is wearing something explicitly pro-British. It reflects the perception that did not matter what kind of Muslim one was, or even if one was practicing. One merely needed to look Middle Eastern.

At the end of the novel, Nazneen gets caught in the streets looking for her daughter while the fictional riot happens on Brick Lane as "revenge for the revenge" (400), which reflects the cyclical nature of racist and anti-racist violence. She sees the other person in charge of the Bengal Tigers, whom she has nicknamed The Questioner, as he is filmed by journalists presumably, and later she sees him again on the television, this time in curious lighting: "picture was just in red and black; even the Questioner's face was shades of red and black" (401). It is significant, perhaps, that just as his words had been lost when Nazneen sees him on the street (399), "[h]is words were lost once more" (401). The images take over instead, portraying a version of the Bengal Tigers that viewers would be more likely to believe.

[66] McEwan presents two spellings here, "burkha" (124) and the more recognized spelling "burka" (125). Whether it is a commentary on foreign words, or not caring enough about it to spell it correctly, or just a mistake, is not clear. It could be that this was changed in subsequent editions.

The red and black coloring associates the Questioner with something negative, and this echoes the trend of the media that "very few of the more significant news stories of the past few years have not included Muslims in some form or another," but at the same time, "very few of the stories 'about Muslims' over this same time period have been about anything other than 'the War on Terror'" (Poole and Richardson 1). At this point, Muslims became depicted via a binary, either confirming the threat of the dangerous fundamentalist, or embodying the model citizen, assimilating peacefully into British society and expressing the same outrage at the fundamentalists as "everyone else."

The stark portrayal of the Questioner in demonic red and black may reflect the cameraperson's choice, or choices made in the editing room, but it reveals the distance between the mediated reality and the reality as experienced by someone at the scene, as well as the explicit demonization of certain figures in the media. While studies have been done to show that racial minorities tend to be treated more favorably "in the symbolic world of television" than in society (Fiske and Hartley 11), the news clearly operate via a framing principle about Muslims, which Ali emphasizes.

Framing relies on codes that clearly construct relations for the sign by which power and ideology are meant to signify. Ali explicitly demarcates Muslim encoding in the media before and after 9/11, which designates a specific producer or operator in the "encoding and decoding" model by Stuart Hall. The process of television encoding is an articulation of the connected but discrete steps in the cycle of meaning, with the encoding of meaning structured as one of those steps. Part of this framing includes choosing which topics to focus on for a particular group, and in effect lead the audience to associate that group with the topic. The impression given in *Brick Lane* is that one is to associate Muslims with riots and housing projects. At the same time, Chanu provides the rejoinder that one should recognize that everything is always framed.

> Whenever we are told something, before we receive it into our minds and hearts, we must put it to the test. We open a book, we turn a newspaper page, we allow the television and the radio to come into our homes. All the things we are told everyday—are they true? (354)[67]

Nazneen is asking about money Chanu has borrowed, but Chanu turns the question into much more. He sets up a parallel between the sciences, arts, and broadcast mediums and is keenly aware of their relationship to truth. With this, Chanu provides an interesting critique of realism. This moment falls in line with the ancient philosophical understanding recorded by Plato, who also challenged the relationship between the mediated representation of reality and an "unmediated" reality in the Allegory of the Cave. An idea is always mediated in its expression and representation. In the realist tradition, which is what Ali's novel follows, the text can be accepted as having an indexical function. However, at a metareferential level the text is asking us to question its presentation of realism. "Whenever we are told something, before we receive it into our minds and hearts, we must put it to the test" (354).

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[67] Moments like these in *Brick Lane* cause one to see the protests against the novel and against the film adaptation in new light. Ali provides metafictional ethical advice about the work of representation and in doing so makes the accusations by the protesters quite ironic, since the same argument Chanu makes about representation is the one that Ali makes about her book. See Ali's response to the *Brick Lane* filming protests in "The outrage economy"; though the relationship between Ali and authenticity is quite fraught.
What right does a British raised, barely able to speak Bengali woman have to write from the perspective of a young Bengali migrant to London? And yet N. Walter acknowledges that Ali seems to have "found, right at the beginning of her career and with absolute confidence, her own voice."
"The second bit of baggage to unpack comes with the label "authenticity" attached. Who is allowed to write about what? And whom? What right does a novelist have to explore any particular subject matter? Who hands out the licenses?" (Ali). These questions echo Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concerns in "Can the subaltern speak?"
It must be noted that the credibility of Ali's representation can and has been discussed using Spivak. In her chapter, "Monica Ali and the Suspension of Disbelief," Melanie Mettler locates the authenticity of the novel in three levels: textual authenticity ("the depiction of a particular setting and character in the novel"), authorial authenticity, and reader authenticity, "centering on the question of who is entitled to voice criticism" (164). According to Mettler, Ali's authorial authenticity is challenged by the fact that even though she is "BritAsian," she is not from Sylhet, Bangladesh like the characters in her book. The sense of authenticity is fueled by this lapse in authorial authenticity, and most of the negative reactions to Brick Lane, described as "violent" by Mettler, are because of this. Yet the textual authenticity seems sound and Mettler points out that the pressure on "authors of postcolonial background, particularly (young) women" to "qualify their writing by authenticity" is a bit much to expect (164).

The idea of narrow perspectives provided by the media, but removed from reality— is reinforced by another surreal moment where TV crews come to the Tower Hamlets apartment complex and want to film the aftermath of the riots, perhaps looking for similar scenes of "burnt out carcasses." Ali interrupts this tendency and works with the irony of the situation, commenting on the body language of people presenting themselves as ready to be photographed or filmed in ways that signify their lack of responsibility or "leaning forward slightly to indicate that they were looking forward to the future" (408), that responds to Chanu's claim about the backward-looking of television (401). The political and media response to such an event will usually be paradoxical and self-serving, which Ali portrays, showing the "behind the scenes." The camera crews notice how there is "nothing to film, so they filmed each other" (408). When they ask Nazneen if she "find[s] it hard to cope," her answer is a simple "no" (408), which visibly disappoints them.

Ali shows an idea of what the gap between encoding and decoding can look like, and the novel provides an extra layer for this distancing, placing the images of the Brick Lane riots on the screen amidst the context of a room prepared for moving, and the choices Nazneen and Chanu are about to make at this point in the novel with their impeding return to Bangladesh. Ali describes Chanu in a way that makes it clear how he wants to leave this representation behind, showing "how animated he had become, how full of life, and possibility, and promise" (401). He compares himself to that which is on the television, which he states, is "[e]ssentially […] looking backwards." The statement runs counter to how television is usually considered, which is at worst grounded in the present, and at best oriented towards the future. The text—written in the past-tense—reminds us that it, in its narration, is actually looking backwards, and Chanu along with it. Even if framing uses a backwards glance to how something was before, in order to represent it, most of the time the frameworks are already predetermined, or involved in predicting the response of the future. Nazneen is not swayed

from wanting to stay in London by what she sees, perhaps because she sees the multiple facets to living in London, not just the one closed in by the narrow perspective provided by the television.

Thus, Nazneen's choice to stay in London is seems indirectly connected to the television. However, I argue that Ali makes this connection explicit through a reference to the 9/11 attacks. It encourages an exploration of inner memories and dreams that help Nazneen find connection, and it creates a clear link between mediation and the ability to exercise free will.

1.2 "You will see what happens now"

As mentioned, *Brick Lane* gives the reader a relatively early chance in literature to see how 9/11 can be represented, but also specifically how the Muslim community responded. In particular, this instance in the novel, spread across three pages, is granted exclusivity in the singular use of the present tense instead of the simple past, to heighten the feeling of immediacy and importance. Such a tense also, as Jacques Derrida insists, provides more appropriate atmosphere for terror, since one knows what has happened in the past, and there is always the fear that "what might or perhaps will take place […] will be *worse than anything that has ever taken place"* (Derrida qtd. in Seidler 2). Arguably, what Ali presents is precisely that, though for Nazneen the attacks recall past terrors rather than become a new one.

Occurring closer to the end of the novel, after Nazneen and Chanu have started their family with a son and two daughters, though losing their son, and after the mental breakdown Nazneen has as a result of the pressure of her affair with Karim, the attacks precipitate the dénouement of the novel.[68] The reference starts with Nazneen's otherwise amiable, bumbling

[68] In this book with 21 chapters, there are clear breaks between the three parts of the novel. Chapter 6 ends with the death of Nazneen's and Chanu's firstborn, Raqib, and Nazneen's subsequent silence. Due to these clear breaks, I argue that Ali clearly envisioned her novel as a three-part exploration of Nazneen's character that follows the dramatic structure of exposition + rising action (Part I), climax (Part II), falling action + and dénouement (Part III).

husband, coming home early from work one day and shouting at Nazneen to turn on the television, the urgency unhidden: "Quick. Be quick!" (Ali 304). It is one of the rare times the reader sees Chanu actually want to watch the television; usually he chides his daughters for this. For him, the television was a source of comfort, like a fireplace, and he "liked to keep it glowing in the corner of the room" (22), reflecting what Jake Pitre calls the television's "distinctively domesticated quality." Drawing on Lynn Spigel's conclusion that television had replaced the unifying function of the fireplace in homes, Pitre describes that "there's an intimacy to watching television, a comforting security like a glowing hearth." To some extent, one could think the television reflects Chanu's efforts to integrate into British society, but he marks it as a form of low-brow entertainment, a marker of "white working-class culture," along with "pub, throwing darts, and kicking a ball (207). He wants it on, but does not watch it, and he may even avoid it, since it interrupts his home space, which is what Md. Mahmudul Hasan calls precisely "the only space in the diaspora where [Chanu] can have a complete sense of belonging" (61). Interference from outside would take this away. However, on September 11, 2001, the television is used to connect the Ahmed family to the rest of the global society watching these same images.

While watching, Chanu reacts as most people did that day recognizing it as an attack, exclaiming, "Oh God, […] The world has gone mad" (304). Nazneen, on the other hand, "glances over at the screen. The television shows a tall building against a blue sky. She looks at her husband" (304). She does not know how to react.

Since Nazneen does not recognize one of the World Trade Center Towers in this "tall building," the images are initially still iconic in the basic sense of the word—denotatively taking the face-value meaning—and there is less filter between the signs: tall buildings, airplanes, smoke, and blue skies, and the signified physical buildings and sky in New York City. The building does not mean much without knowing it is one of the World Trade Center

Towers, and for Nazneen they do not have the connotative meanings of hub for the US, and global, financial exchanges. The destruction of the towers in an attack are immediately interpreted as something bad that can only have severe consequences. Chanu tells his wife, the reader, and anyone who would listen that “This is the start of the madness” (304).

> Nazneen moves closer. A thick bundle of black smoke is hanging outside the tower. It looks too heavy to hang there. An aeroplane comes in slow motion from the corner of the screen. It appears to be flying at the level of the building.
>
> Nazneen thinks she had better get on with her work.
>
> “Oh God,” shouts Chanu. (304)

To most readers, who would recognize the context from the moment the plane is narrated coming in from the corner of the television, Chanu gives what seems the appropriate reaction. One understands why it seems as though the “television has enslaved him” (304). Nazneen, however, views it with a sense of detachment, able to even think of doing something else like taking care of mundane household chores. Ali manages to demonstrate how unaware of global politics, including international terrorism, a woman like Nazneen was. What immediately glued “half the planet” to their sets in *Saturday* (McEwan 15) can barely hold Nazneen’s interest. It is not until the “[t]he scene pays over.” […] The aeroplane comes again. The television shows it again and again” (304-5), that Nazneen invests more effort into understanding what is happening; she “leans forward, straining to comprehend.”[69] The repetitive pattern of the text reflects the repetitive images of the events that day, and as the words repeat, Nazneen—with her limited English—begins to understand.

> She works herself to the edge of the sofa. The words and phrases repeat and she begins to grasp them. Chanu covers his face with his hands and looks through his

[69] This also reminds us, as E. Diamond has pointed out, that “television is a very demanding mode of communication. Television’s information is ephemeral; there is no way for the viewer to go back over material” (qt. in Hartley and Fiske 4). Again, the repetition of the shots is a way of also giving the reader a chance to gain control over the image.

> fingers. Nazneen realizes she leaned so far forward she is doubled up. She straightens herself. She thinks she has understood but she also thinks she must be mistaken.
>
> The scene switches. "The Pentagon," says Chanu. "Do you know that it is? It's the *Pentagon."*
>
> The plane comes again and again. Nazneen and Chanu fall under its spell.

Still, the scene is surreal. When one of the Towers collapses,

> they see smoke: a pillar of smoke, collapsing. Nazneen and Chanu rise. They stay on their feet as they watch it a second, a third time. The image is at once mesmerizing and impenetrable; the more it plays, the more obscure it becomes until Nazneen feels she must shake herself out of a trance. Chanu limbers up his shoulders, holds out his arms and circles them. He blows hard. He says nothing. (Ali 305)

The rhythm of the text reproduces the sense of entrancement, the confusion, and the "impenetrability" of the events on that day, both underscoring and negating Edward R. Murrow's claim that television is the opiate of the masses. This time, the stupor into which television drew the viewer was not the "evidence of decadence, escapism and insulation from the realities of the world in which we live" (qt. in Carew 109), but rather a stark introduction to these realities. The spectacle, as John Fiske writes, "liberates from subjectivity. Its emphasis on excessive materiality foregrounds the body, not as a signifier of something else, but in its *presence*" (his emphasis, 246). Nazneen and Chanu have no control over their bodies, they just *are.*

Also, while Chanu seems to know what these attacks mean for the world, maybe even their community of Muslims in the western world, the world did not know yet. Ali attempts to bring across this unframed nature, the lack of a narrative. On the other hand, her comments

for Chanu bely her position in history. How else would Chanu know that everything would change? “You’ll see what happens now” (Ali 306). In Ian McEwan’s *Saturday,* one sees how the control over the image was lost on 9/11. However, many scholars, such as Douglas Kellner, consider the replays and repetition of the footage from 9/11 on the day and in the days afterwards precisely as a means of control, it was a way of “master[ing] a highly traumatic event” (44). This has, in part, to do with Sigmund Feud’s consideration of the relationship between trauma and repetition, and that repetition lends a feeling of gaining mastery over a situation (Reis 103).

1.3 Repetition

McEwan in *Saturday* also uses the repetitive nature of the attacks to identify the September 11th Attacks and the fact that the first crash was being reported on *while* the second plane crashed into the second Tower and reporters and viewers alike were confused if this was a replay or a second crash. The subsequent replays added a further layer to this initial repetition of the traumatic incident, and this is what McEwan inserts, this “watched again” (15), which makes the reference unmistakable.

The reiteration of the representation of 9/11 gives it its significance. One was exposed to multiple iterations of the same destruction, but each time magnifying the shock and the meaning that there were people dying on screen, a situation over which one had no control. One knew more than the people inside the buildings and yet was powerless to act as one saw smoke pluming from the North Tower, then: crash South Tower, news of the crash at the Pentagon, collapse South Tower, collapse North Tower, news of the crash in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and then the further collapse of building in the WTC Complex.

On top of this was the repetition of the coverage using replays and freezeframes, which allowed for the playing again of a part of the recordings of the events. Replays, or repeated live footage is common in live sports reporting, and the technology for interspersing them into live coverage is sophisticated. However, in this case, repeating something that

already had an iterative nature, plus the shock effect—perhaps only mitigated by some distance awarded via the screen—was heightened by providing further iterations and looking at parts of the images more closely. In the days after the attacks, members of the public, including psychologists, expressed concerns that the repeated showings could have a negative impact on viewers, especially on children, who did not always understand that they were replays (Silver). On the fifth anniversary, experts weighed in on the possible consequences of showing reruns. They did not want to add to the trauma.

2 The Falling People

In depicting 9/11 in *Brick Lane,* Ali focusses on how the image still very much controlled people, but only to a certain extent. The responses to 9/11 are individualized and while Chanu relates the events to the inevitable geopolitical impacts, the experience evokes a difference kind of trauma in Nazneen based on the zooming-in of some individuals. While McEwan describes "[w]atching death on a large scale, but seeing no one die" (16), Ali provides the corrective and describes a specific image, something that has since been "delet[ed] […] from the archive," as Kate Birdsall explains in her article "Frenzied Representation" (Birdsall 44).[70]

> When [Nazneen] returns to the sitting room there is something new to see. A small figure leaning out of a window; high up, maybe a hundred floors in the air, he reaches out and cannot be saved. Another figure jumps and at that moment it seems to Nazneen that hope and despair are nothing against the world and what it holds and what it holds for you. (Ali 304-306)

At this point the narration switches, copying the television, from the repetitive showing of the Towers to zoomed-in, grainy images of the "falling men," the falling people on 9/11. The

[70] She cites journalist Tom Junod who states that "the sight of the jumpers provides a corrective to those who insisted on saying what they were witnessing was 'like a movie,' for this was an ending as unimaginable as it was unbearable" (Junod qt. in Birdsall 42).

short passage about two of the estimated 200 who jumped/fell on 9/11 recalls for the reader the other well-known images from that day. Without context, such Birdsall writes, such an image "is almost soothing. It is, aesthetically speaking, beautiful" (41). Birdsall refers to the famous photograph by Richard Drew that first appeared on September 12, 2001, which featured "a single human, clad in black and white, seemingly suspended in midair against a metallic gray, black, and white series of vertical lines. The male figure occupies only the upper third of the frame and is perfectly aligned with the background" (41). The text in *Brick Lane* mirrors some of this aestheticism, evoking the somber, paradoxical relation between hope and despair (like the black, white and gray contrasts of the images) and the anaphora of "what it holds, and what it holds for you" reflecting the sequence of frames of the photograph of the fall. This guides the reader into the relation between visible sign and the process of decoding into what it signifies. For Nazneen the images become decoded into hopelessness and lead into an introspection about the kind of world that prompts the existential questions of being a person in this world.

2.1 Agency

Intradiegetically, Nazneen's thoughts about the falling men reiterate her thoughts about her mother, Rupban, who also committed suicide by falling.[71] Except Rupban falls on a spear when Nazneen is still young, and initially Nazneen is given to understand that it was a freak accident. "She has fallen" (Ali 31), but it was a trauma that never ended. Mumtaz, Nazneen's aunt, had found her sister and found it hard to cope with as well. "It looked…it looked as if she was still falling" (31), and this follows Nazneen to London, with her mother appearing in hallucinations during two personal crises. It also echoes in her first interactions with fellow members of the Bangladeshi diaspora when Nazneen is told about a woman who lived nearby who died after falling from the 16th floor of their building. Just as people instinctively asked

[71] Mental health advocates have pushed for a more sensitive understanding of the expression "committed suicide" due to the connection made between suicide and crime. I explain this connection a bit later.

when seeing the images on 9/11 whether people jumped or fell, Nazneen's new acquaintances, Razia and Mrs. Islam ask the same thing. They claim adamantly

> "But of course, it was an accident. Why say otherwise?" "A terrible accident," said Mrs. Islam. "But everyone is whispering behind the husband's back." Nazneen sipped her tea. […] She had not heard about the accident. She wanted to know who this woman was who had died so terribly. She formed some questions in her mind, phrased and rephrased them. (Ali 14)

To judge whether something that is an accident or suicide carries huge ramifications, not least for the legal ramifications and bureaucracy after a person's death, but definitely for the experiences of the people left behind. For people of faith, it is especially important to make the distinctions, since it is considered as sin in many religions including Christianity and Islam. When Drew's image was published, people made similar protests, of course they fell, "why say otherwise?" unwilling to face the possibility that people chose to jump rather than face death inside the buildings, or to address the taboo around suicide in US culture. They stated that that looking at such images was "ethically wrong and morally corrupt" (Birdsall 42), mainly, Birdsall posits, because "[w]e want to see only what we can immediately understand, not something that forces us into an extended ethical and aesthetical deliberation about viewing the final seconds of a man's life" (42). It seems, however, that Nazneen understands these men even better than the "accepted" footage of the airplanes hitting the Towers; she is able to view them beyond the level of image, inserting her thoughts into the decoding of what is happening on the screen. Perhaps, the text reminds us, because she has thought about these questions before, thinking later that evening about the woman about whom Mrs. Islam and Razia were talking.

> The woman who fell, what terror came to her mind when she went down? What thoughts came? If she jumped, what thoughts came? Would they be the same ones? In

the end, did it matter whether she jumped or fell? Suddenly Nazneen was sure that she had jumped. A big jump, feet first and arms wide, eyes wide, silent all the way down and her hair wild and loose, and a big smile on her face because with this single everlasting act she defied everything and everyone. (26)

Nazneen concludes that it *does* matter whether the woman jumped or fell, because it implies an agency that the woman could express in these last moments of her life, just like the people on 9/11. Nazneen decides that these people jumped, that it was suicide, and this creates a transcultural parallel of a single last act of defiance.[72] It would be dangerous to describe these moments as an articulation of independence, because that would flatten the complicated ethical questions of extremely personal choices, but Ali uses these moments as planted seeds for Nazneen declaring her independence from the communitarian ideology binding her as a married Muslim woman in the Bangladeshi diaspora.

Nazneen's ultimate decision to stay in London with her daughters while Chanu returns home to Bangladesh, without also marrying Karim, is catalyzed by her sister Hasina's confession that Rupban's death was also a suicide. Hasina had seen their mother testing the spears in the granary planning to deliberately kill herself (366). Rupban's resistance to accept her suffering when pressured to accept her husband's extramarital affairs without complaint is part of Nazneen's call to reposition herself in the world and her choices for action. The triple narration of suicide: through gossip, through watching it on television, and through the letter from her sister, creates a process of listening and working through the "distanced decipherment by another, which is, at best, an interception" (2124) according to Gayatri Spivak.

[72] In Susan Stanford Friedman's "Translational Migrations: Novel Homelands in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane,* she points out the uncanny parallels in *Brick Lane* to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway,* including the way that "Clarissa imagines—uncannily relives—Septimus's suicide and finds in her bond with his assertion of freedom the will to live her life fully" (34).

In her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak uses the suicide of a young woman, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, in order to show the epistemic violence perpetrated against the subaltern, such as Nazneen's mother, which is that "the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read" (2123). One can see the jump/fall of the unknown woman in *Brick Lane* as a similar kind of situation where the intentions of the woman remain unheard and unknown, but the jump becomes the moment of speech, and it provides a glimmer of agency in a situation that is so hopeless as to make the choice to jump. It does underscore the idea that women in these specifically Muslim households, were oppressed and considered failures unless they could bear children and take care of the home and husband. One could say they were forced to make such impossible choices. However, Ali manages through the complex connection of events, and through the mediation of 9/11 to encourage seeing what was otherwise not shown, but especially listening to voices that may not otherwise be heard.

The triple representation: on the television, in Chanu's reaction, and in the reflection on her mother's death point towards other ways of seeing. It is a means for, as Judith Butler argues, "recogniz[ing] and amplify[ing] a loss that otherwise is unthinkable and ungrievable" (*Precarious Life* xiv). Ali presents a connection between the subaltern and the Muslim minority in the west after 9/11 and the link for listening to both of them. This is not to say that Ali merely presents the "Muslim women [and people] in need of saving," something Lila Abu-Lughod criticizes as a contemporary trend (qt. in Butler 161), but rather points the reader to look more at the difficult paradox in valuing lives, that some lives are valued more than others.

In her 2004 response to the losses and grief following 9/11, *Precarious Life,* Butler clarifies the issue we have, as Victor Seidler also points out, with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. We "*turn our faces away* from the images we have seen almost daily since the invasion" (Seidler xxii). Butler explains this as a challenge to recognize that all lives are mournable.

This has to do with identification and representation that humanizes (Butler 145). She refers as an example to "triumphalist images that give us the idea of the human with whom we are to identify, for instance the patriotic hero who expands our own ego boundary ecstatically into that of the nation" (145). This corresponds to the heroic images of first responders on 9/11, which replaced "the falling men," a trend that continues to this day. In particular, fire-fighters became the "hero-protagonists" of the "public drama of 9/11" (Monahan xv). However, Nazneen does not see these, and she is not able to identify with the group who does. Instead she notices the falling people. This underscores Butler's point that "identification always relies upon a difference that it seeks to overcome, and that its aim is accomplished only by reintroducing the difference it claims to have vanquished" (*Precarious* 145).

As explained before, in order to identify, which is a way of creating meaning for oneself, one needs difference to identify oneself against, even while seeking to undo this difference. Stuart Hall explains this in language, that we "need 'difference' because we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the 'Other'" ("Spectacle" 235). Nazneen sees that she does not understand the significance of what is happening while Chanu reacts. This is not the same tragedy as the photo passed around at the Bengal Tigers meeting, which shows a dead young girl, and which Nazneen does understand (Ali 233). She belongs to the community that mourns the "half a mission Iraqi children [that] have died," not the falling people. However, in recognizing them, she finds a way to connect.

In responding to 9/11, one can see in Nazneen the necessary work of allowing the ambivalence inherent in a globally televised event to endure, and learning to negotiate the other responses, found across national borders, and the personal response. The repeated articulation of suicide draws out Nazneen's memory about her mother, and her mother's fatalistic, and ultimately unhealthy mental outlook towards life, pushing Nazneen to move

past that. Bruce Reis explains via psychoanalysis theory how repetition and memory are often posed in opposition to one another (Reis 57), but since the act of memory "recollection" is a repeated action, the two terms could be considered in terms of each other (64). Thus, repetition carries with it an inherent potential that it will lead to progress and the production of new forms (Reis 101),[73] and it ultimately opens up to witnessing, and we see how Nazneen's witnessing progresses through media: voice, television, letter.[74] The last, of course is also intimately connected with Nazneen's personal history, is the one that causes her to act.

In *Brick Lane,* the narration often moves from what can be seen on the television to Nazneen's connection of the event to her own situation and fate. The repeated traumas of the planes' impacts with the Towers and their subsequent collapsing are used to parallel Nazneen's repeated traumas: The story of her birth (she nearly dies), her mother's death, leaving home and coming to a foreign place where she knew neither customs nor language, and the loss of her first son. These are also iterations, albeit different than the replays of the planes hitting the towers, because they do not recall the previous traumatic event the same way, nor will the world ever be affected by Nazneen's traumas in the same way that individuals are affected by this trauma on such as large scale. In comparison to the repeated attacks, which symbolized an attack on US economic, political and cultural influence power, the repeated deaths, near-deaths, or ending of an old life to start a new one motivates Nazneen to push back against a fatalist discourse. However, it is a process that Ali represents within the smaller frame of reference.

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[73] At a more banal metaphorical level, the repetition of the three scenes of suicide are like re-runs of a television show, or the replication of the concept of the show for other stations in other countries or contexts.

[74] Note how Ali emphasizes the materiality of the letter after Nazneen reads Hasina's confession: "the paper was pale blue and light as a baby's breath […] lifted at the ends, cleaving to its folds […] creases" (367). These connected passages remind one that text, and therefore literature, as opposed to the visual or oral television media, may be the better site for responding to suicide, perhaps because there one need not repeat so much in order to commit the information to memory (Ong), and this is better for addressing the trauma that inevitably comes as a result of witnessing suicide.

According to Nazneen, “fate cannot be changed, no matter how you struggle against it” (10). Fate as expressed in *Brick Lane* plays a large role, and Nazneen’s learning to fight against discourse of fate as related to her upbringing and religion, so that she may develop a way of being and thinking outside this paradigm, is the driving force of the novel. It functions as a framework for her choices and beliefs about the best way to accept challenges, which is not to resist and accept what comes. Nazneen inherits this framework through her mother in the form of a story, which the reader also reads in the opening pages of the novel. Nazneen takes this framework with her to London, and later she uses it as answer to her daughters as well, for example when they ask her “Do you want to go?” (175). She does not say yes or no, because she is not ready yet to express her desires; she is willing to leave it up to fate. Yet by the end, she realizes she no longer wants to do that. She believes the falling people have also clearly expressed their rejection of fate.

The night after 9/11, Nazneen dreams of her village near Gouripur, dreaming of the “men, doing what little they can” (306). The memory, faintly nostalgic in the “algia” of “longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed” (Boym xiii), reminds the reader of what anthropologist James Clifford writes, that the “[d]iaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension” (“Diasporas” 257). Thus, the experience of watching 9/11 is key to understanding how people are reminded of the traumas in their own lives, which makes each reader ask the question of what “hope and despair” are “against the world” (Ali 306). In narrating Nazneen’s thoughts when she sees the people in the windows of the World Trade Center, the language here is a dialogism of the presentation and commentary on the victim’s fates, Nazneen’s fate, and Nazneen’s own utterance about the usefulness of the emotions hope and despair in her own situation as a migrant in London. In making this connection to the people on 9/11, who were faced with the incomprehensible, the woman

who jumped at the beginning of *Brick Lane* seemed to have even more agency, willing to stand up to fate and take her chance against the world and "all it can hold."

Margarita Estévez-Saá and Noemí Pereira-Ares refer to the "transcultural positioning"- which is the "need to approach the 'other' involved in the events and to accept difference and commonality, communication and silence, failure and success" (268). Nazneen's response is a result of her diasporic background, reminding the reader not only how context will affect how and what one sees, but also what it means to have a transnational perspective of a "western mediated event." While the attacks represented for many people a shifting of the world order, for one individual it represents the possibility for agency. The moment indicates the novel's larger theme of a relationship between television and agency in female, Muslim, diasporic life, as I will show in this next part.

3 Television as a Window

Ali's depiction of the television in *Brick Lane* reinforces the distinctions between personal and cultural, private and public trauma and experience. By the 1980s, the television was a firm fixture in every household in Britain,[75] and the Ahmeds are no exception. In *Brick Lane,* television serves as a medium for connection, entertainment, and information, but also of integration, despite its potential for exclusion, as I have shown. Television's role for connection is fairly intuitive, even while its role as an integrating tool into society is not. This, however, is picked up in most conversations about migrants, who in watching local television will be exposed to depictions of the local culture(s) as well as learn the primary language. In many narratives of migration, such as *Gehen, ging, gegangen* (as I will show), television is an axiomatic part of the inventory of migrants' fairly sparse households, including beds, tables, chairs, a refrigerator and a microwave. As a factual anecdote, when

[75] Note that in 1971, ten percent of homes still had no indoor lavatory or bath, thirty-one percent had no fridge, and sixty-two percent had no telephone, but only nine percent had no TV (Anthony). By the 80s, this was even less than nine percent.

Jim Estill, a Canadian millionaire, outfits the homes for refugees that he accommodates in Canada, he is loath to include televisions, since he sees them as a "waste of time," but he makes a concession, since "it's not a bad way to learn English" (Shenoy). Chen in Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet* (1982) also gets to know London through watching television. Though, of course, which London he gets to know is a question of representation.

In regards to the important role that television plays for first- and second-generation migrants, one can look more closely at Nazneen's and Chanu's daughters, Shahana and Bibi. Their attraction to the television comes from its ability to present access to a community from which they are cut off by their parents and home life.[76] With the references from the use of the television in the household, it becomes apparent that Shahana, Nazneen's older daughter, seems to have a particularly intense relationship with the television. The reader gets the impression that she becomes absorbed in it; it absorbs her and takes her away from this place she really does not want to be. Her physical proximity to the television is pointed out on almost every occasion (173, 217, 404).

Chanu is acutely aware of this influence, and wants his daughters to resist it. The television, which was a comforting source of feeling British at the beginning becomes the enemy, and the living room often becomes a battleground between father and daughter. From Nazneen's perspective, whenever Chanu would try and inveigh his daughters with a history of Bangladesh, "Shahana would alternatively hop about and lounge sullenly across an armchair. As soon as [Chanu] stopped speaking she would rush to the television and switch it on, and he would either smile an indulgence or pump out a stream of invective that sent both girls to the safe shoreline of their beds" (148). The metaphor of the shore evokes migrancy, and in a way, Chanu chases his daughters away from the source that integrates them more into British society back to their heritage of Bangladeshi culture and identity. For Chanu,

[76] For more on this, consider Marie Gillespie's 1995 *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change*.

television represents a threat to the home, which is the safe space in which they will be protected and accepted. For Nazneen, the "blurring of the boundary between public and private space" that television affords (Spiegel 117) is different.

3.1 Comfort

The television is referenced almost immediately in the novel, and initially used to define Nazneen's space, which is notably primarily domestic for most of the novel. Every outing is a transgression of leaving this domestic space, reinforcing the impression that Nazneen is suppressed. This could be seen as unnecessarily stereotypical, except that it is extremely common for married women in the Bangladeshi diaspora. Hasan explains that the "domestic condition" of "a patriarchal household […] reflects the cultural mores of Bangladesh society and upholds its gender norms," including *purdah* (60).

However, the novel makes a point of showing that it is not the cultural practice itself that causes this situation; it is being a Bangladeshi in London. "In all her eighteen years, [Nazneen] could scarcely remember a moment that she had spent alone. Until she married. And came to London to sit day after day in this large box with the furniture to dust, and the muffled sounds of private lives sealed away above, below, and around her" (12). Nazneen is stuck with and in boxes from which windows, be it metaphorical windows of television or literal ones, later provide an escape: the "large box" of the apartment in which she is sealed away (12), the shoe box in which she puts her letters from her sister Hasina in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and wardrobe she imagines has fallen on top of her (24).[77] These spaces confine Nazneen or her rebelling influences, like Hasina, and windows become an early metaphor for opening these confined spaces. Significantly, Nazneen is looking out the window, "lean[ing] into the breeze," when she thinks about the lady who jumped/fell (26).

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[77] See Section 2.1 in *Literarily TV* on *The Autograph Man* for more discussion of the letters.

On the other hand, there are moments when the outside world permeates the domestic space. "If she put her ear to the wall she could hear sounds. The television on. Coughing. Sometimes the lavatory flushing. Someone upstairs scraping a chair. A shouting match below. Everyone in their boxes, counting their possessions" (12). Yet while Nazneen notes the sounds of television around her, surprisingly, the television is not listed in Nazneen's inventory of the main room of her and Chanu's apartment a few pages earlier (9). This early, it is used to define the space of the other inhabitants of the house around her. There are more moments like the first one, inevitably somewhere a television is on, "hoot[ing] and applaud[ing]" (Ali 145). It even provides a source of comfort for Nazneen when in a final showdown with Mrs. Islam, the neighborhood usurer who has lent Chanu some money and keeps coming back for interest, Nazneen hears the "two faint pings, some mumbling, more applause" (370), likely of a game show. The medium and of the west's most popular programs stands in contrast to the remnant of Bangladeshi strong-arming that Mrs. Islam, the local usurer, represents, and while it the reference is purely to the auditory emissions of the television, it is used to remind Nazneen that although she is in an uncomfortable position, she is not alone.

That the television also reminds Nazneen that she is not alone links to television's function as a "window on the world" and exposure to the "outside world" from the privacy of one's domestic space, and this link is made early in the novel through Nazneen's gravitation towards an actual window. It is the first impression the reader has of her in Tower Hamlets in 1985, standing at the window and waving to a neighbor across the complex (6). Throughout the novel, Nazneen moves towards the window in various significant moments and one understands that it gives her a view to the outside world and the activities of the apartment complex and the people below.[78]

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[78] See also pp. 26, 47, 77, 273, 303, 387, 391, and 403

3.2 Integration

The text also suggests that Nazneen's ability to recognize the television is part of her integrating process. In fact, this emphasis on the aural mode reflects television's ultimate role in the novel and its function as an expressive impetus. In considering Fiske and Hartley's conception of the television as a "bard," who, classically, is as a "mediator of language, […] composes out of the available linguistic resources of the culture a series of consciously structured messages which serve to communicate to the members of that culture a confirming, reinforcing version of themselves" (65), one can discuss the mediation of conventions of seeing and knowing. In this case, the conventions are specifically British, and they are received by ears that may not yet have a sense of this "cultural membership" of people who participate in this "dominant value system" (67). However, as the novel continues, one sees the cultural membership growing. Nazneen may recognize part of what is shown as "a lunatic scramble of advertisements" (374), which at this point in the novel reveals Nazneen's television literacy. [79] This bardic function stands in contrast to the television's other functions of entertaining and informing, and it becomes very important again later.

4 Responding to *Bolero*

Ice-skating is multi-layered both as metaphor and symbol in *Brick Lane.* The motif appears in several passages that combine to create an impression of the agency of marginalized women in London in action, word and being. The sign is arbitrary, but its readability is important and the reader learns learn with Nazneen what the sign refers to and how to read its iterations. It extends from articulations of desire to a link to a possible suicide implicitly connected to feminist power (Nazneen thinks about the woman's choice in the evening after seeing ice-skating for the first time) and ends with the final line in the novel,

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[79] Nazneen also recognizes the material value of the television, as well. When she hears of the way her friend Razia's son sold their furniture, she wants to know if the television has also been sold, indicating her knowledge of its value. "And the television?" (294). It turns out that this, too, has been sold.

which was given in response to Nazneen's question about ice-skating in a sari, "This is England, you can do whatever you like" (415).[80]

Understanding the significance of ice-skating in the novel begins with the reminder that for almost all of it, Nazneen sees *televised* ice-skating. It begins with the first reference within the first few pages.

> Nazneen held a pile of the last dirty dishes to take to the kitchen, but the screen held her. A man in a very tight suit (so tight that it made his private parts stand out on display) and a woman in a skirt that did not even cover her bottom gipped each other as an invisible force hurtled them across an oval arena. The people in the audience clapped their hands together and then stopped. By some magic they all stopped at exactly the same time. The couple broke apart. They fled from each other and no sooner had they fled than they sought each other out. Every movement made was urgent. Intense, a declaration. The woman raised one leg and rested her boot (Nazneen saw the thin blade for the first time) on the other thigh, making a triangular flag of her legs, and spun around until she would surely fall but didn't. She did not slow down. She stopped dead and flung her arms over her head with a look so triumphant that you knew she had conquered everything: her body, the laws of nature, and the heart of the tight-suited man who slid over on his knees, vowing to lay down his life for her. (Ali 22-3)

From a denotative level, the passage presents Nazneen seeing a televised ice dancing competition. The camera shows both the couple, with zoom-ins on the woman and the men, as well as the audience. In the context of the text, the reader understands that this is the first

[80] "This is England" is a line rich with allusions. First of all, one can consider the 2006 British drama *This is England,* which takes a critical, if fictional look at the skinhead culture in England that originated in the West Indies but became adopted by the far-right, which "led to divisions in the skinhead scene." One could consider the 1985 The Clash song based on the same movement and state of England in 1983 in regards to the Falkland wars, as the 2006 movie.

time Nazneen has seen ice skating,[81] and they know she has a limited impression of London, England, and the rest of the world. In particular, Nazneen notices several aspects of the way the two are dressed that are sexually suggestive.

Nazneen's first impression of the act is romantic passion, which she can understand despite her unfamiliarity with the dress and the mechanics. Even though the man's "private parts stand out on display" and the woman's skirt "did not even cover her bottom,"[82] both suggesting she finds it indecent, Nazneen implicitly understands that the invisible force must be generated by the contact of the thin blade with the surface of the arena (which she does not recognize as ice), but also by the woman's control over her body. She also recognizes the performance as a powerful moment, just as she is able to interpret the dance as a story about conquering a lover (the phrase itself already cliché) and at the same time conquering the ice that she dances on to show this victory over the lover. Thus, so far, through Nazneen's gaze as остранение, or defamiliarization (from V.B. Shklovsky's 1917 "Art as Technique"),[83] one is able to recognize in Nazneen's "mis-understanding" the actions of the two ice-dances and the inherent effect of the commonly known winter Olympics sport event, despite the uncommon decoding act. Through Nazneen's focalization, the reader can see her understanding that the woman is claiming her absolute power over anything that could affect her—her body's ability, gravity, and the love of the man. This is also because while Nazneen has not seen this before, the reader probably has.

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[81] It is very clear that Ali means to create a diegetic frame of reference that excludes what anyone who has seen or heard of figure skating and ice dancing would know, since for Nazneen, this is supposed to be the first time she sees ice skating. Given the relative sparsity of ice-skating rinks in Bangladesh and the fact that the temperatures rarely drop below freezing, this is not a stretch.

[82] Clothing in figure skating was the topic of an article in *The Atlantic* in February 2018 that opened with commentary about French figure skater Maé-Bérénice Méité's fashion choice at the 2018 Winter Olympics: a unitard.

"It's hard to find a dress code so insistent on preserving a minimum level of taste anywhere in sports, save for maybe Wimbledon—which, in its official rulebook, dictates that "any undergarments that either are or can be visible during play (including due to perspiration) must also be completely white except for a single trim of color no wider than one centimeter."

[83] James Wood, as Alistair Cormack points out, refers to this as an example of "estrangement" (qt. in Cormack 709). See also Michael Woal for an exploration of how defamiliarization in television watching may work.

At the same time, framed by the "unpoilt" village girl, one thinks that Nazneen is responding unusually to the lack of decorum in dress found by this couple that would not be accepted in the Gouripur community. However, the reality is that even for a western audience, clothing in figure skating is a long-running controversial issue, where pants and unitards were unofficially unallowed in competition until 1988, when they were officially banned. It was not until 2004 where the "ISU stripped its official dress code of its provision requiring skirts specifically, and […] pants and unitards became fair game for competition again" (Fetters). One could develop further about the costume choices, but it is worth noting that, according to Ashley Fetters, it is "hard to find a dress code so insistent on preserving a minimum level of taste anywhere in sports, save for maybe Wimbledon" (Fetters).

On top of that, as Mary Louise Adams points out, this focus on girls and women in the sport is a relatively recent phenomenon. "It was not until the 1930s and 1940s, after several decades during which men and women participated in the sport on relatively equal terms […] that figure skating started to be seen as a 'feminine' sport" (Adams 5). Furthermore, Nazneen is not the first to notice the tension-releasing function of dance, nor the particular way the "spectacular dance of television also enacts and structures sexual tension" (Fiske and Harley 107). In fact, Nazneen has the same command over meaning as most people who would watch this. Ice dancing is only a specialized form of the culturally accepted—made more culturally acceptable through repetition in television—form of the culturally defined beauty of the female body (Fiske and Hartley 110).

4.1 Reversing the gaze

What is unique about Nazneen's perspective is her attention to the defined sex of the male form. Ali reverses both the idea of the dominant male gaze and Stuart Hall's understanding about the representation of minority ethnic people in the media. In Hall, the Black sprinter Linford Christie receives attention for his "lunchbox" ("Spectacle" 230), and Hall suggests via Frantz Fanon that the white interest comes as a result of white people being

“fixate[d] with the black man at the level of the genitals (Hall 230). Jacco van Sterkenberg extends this interpretation to note that “sport media not only represent Black masculinity as physically superior, but also as dangerous, hyper-masculine, animalistic and criminal (390), whereas “White athletes often remain relatively invisible and/or are associated with mental skills, like leadership, intelligence/tactical qualities and discipline” (391). In her gaze, Nazneen looks at the privates of the (presumably) white male rather than the other way around, and this reflects her perspective –what *her* eye is drawn towards—as opposed to a choice by the camera person filming.

At the same time, Nazneen gazes at neither the man nor the woman with the conclusion of hyper- or deviant-sexuality, or even the easy, comfortable pleasure of identification. Rather, her gaze is to be interpreted as naïve, unfamiliar with what “western” people can get away with when dressing. She does not engage with the dominant codes of understanding the female gaze as a counter-point to the male gaze, nor with the concepts of spectatorship developed in the 1990s that proposed, as Cartwright and Sturken explain, that “looking practices and pleasure in looking for any human subject are not tied to the spectator’s biological sex or social gender position” (132). For Nazneen, the spectatorship is specifically transcultural. Her gaze is tied to pleasure, but reveals a new possibility for discussing pleasure. Usually pleasure is considered “an entirely subjective, individual phenomenon, outside of the realm of social” (Casey et al. 194). Ali’s depiction both reminds the reader that pleasure is, despite being outside the realm of the social, bound up with questions of social order as well as that this social order is not always a single hegemonic construction. In Nazneen’s case, pleasure involves transgressing social order.

To reinforce this idea, Ali includes a South Asian-cinema intertext when Nazneen sees a wall of film posters "pasted in waves over a metal siding" (39). [84]

> The hero and heroine peered at each other with epic hunger. The scarlet of her lips matched the bandanna tied around his forehead. A sprinkling of sweat highlighted the contour of his biceps. The kohl around her eyes made them smoke with passion. Some invisible force was keeping them (only inches) apart. (39)

The hunger they feel, implied as desire for one another, is "epic"; the color red, sweat, contour of biceps, kohled eyes smoking with passion are all phrases that emphasize the heat of desire, and the sexual attractiveness of the woman and the man to anyone, not just each other. Here, due to an interpretive description of what can also simply be described as two people with a bit of color coordination looking at each other on a warm day, the reader is supposed to understand what Nazneen sees; the invisible force is equated with desire. The type at the foot of the poster "*The world could not stop their love"* (39, Ali's emphasis) is meant to reinforce Nazneen's interpretation. Those familiar with Bollywood plotlines would recognize this as a Bollywood (or Bangladeshi) romance movie reference, which often uses the star-crossed lovers motif of a couple that wants to be together but cannot due to political and/or social circumstances. The reader, who will likely be familiar with Bollywood, even if Nazneen would not necessarily have been, [85] will recognize such a love does not seem possible for Nazneen in her current situation, because she has no one for whom she feels such an unstoppable love, and especially if she adhered to the social codes or expectations of her community.

[84] The image recalls the shop windows in Brick Lane and in areas with a large South Asian migrant populations. Photo collections and eye-witness accounts depict a similar visual landscape of Brick Lane in the 1980s. For more on this, see Raju Vaidyanathan's photographic exhibitions.
[85] One cannot assume Nazneen would know this context, not just because one is given the impression that the only mass media she had access to in Gouripur was radio (Ali 251), but also because she does not go to the movies and South Asian cinema did not have a presence on British television yet (Puwar and Powar 42). The Bollywood romance as a genre began to gain popularity in the 1990s, which was a "big departure from the action and revenge drama which dominated in the 1970s and 1980s" (Chaudhuri 158).

This is something Nazneen seems to instinctively observe in the ice-dancing. By most interpretations, ice-skating is transnationally understood as both art and sport, with clearly gendered roles. Despite the appearance of effortlessness and freedom the dancers show on the ice, they follow strictly choreographed routines designed around rules designated by national and international competition. Required elements are broken up by footwork, all which earn a particular technical score for accuracy as well as an artistic impression score for the grace and fluidity of the movements. Ice dancers do not just want to send a message across, but they want to score the highest points possible with their craftsmanship. In competitions where the technical skill is marked, the literacy of this kind of viewing carries with it the expectation that it is dance as an art; the fact that it requires huge technical ability and still needs to look good is emphasized here. Yet, to score the points, especially in artistic expression, the routine must be understood.[86] In describing her ice dancers, Nazneen makes almost no mention of their athleticism. It is all artistry, reminding us that we only see the result of the encoding and decoding processes in creating, and not all the steps in between, unless we are trained for it.

It may be significant that ice-skating is one of the first television programs Nazneen is exposed to, and so she is faced with double newness. She must learn to take in the changing shots, the music of the program, the clapping of the audience, the sounds the blades make against the ice, the movement, speed and stillness in facial expression and body language, and the choreography with which the skaters/dancers complete the components of the program. Considering the verbs Nazneen uses: gripped, hurtled, clapped, stopped, broke, fled, sought, raised, rested, saw, making, spun, fall, slow down, flung, conquered, slid, laying down, one can see they alternate in movement and sudden stillness. The words Nazneen

[86] Note also a perhaps moot point in talking about Kestnbaum's semiotics in ice-skating in referring to its televised form, since "even the most serious competitions are often packaged with more emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of the skating-or of the female skaters- and on the pleasures of rooting for a home-country hero than on the technical details that determine the winners" and "viewers who look to television coverage for their understanding of skating are thus limited in their access to information about what makes skating competitions interesting as a sport" (vii).

choses indicate her interpretive choices, which lead her to understanding the man as "laying down his life for her" as opposed to, say, "capitulating to the exhaustion of trying to keep her near," which is how one could interpret the famous Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean *Bolero* routine (Kestnbaum 226),[87] Nazneen understands the dance the way she does, because this is where her interpretive process leads her. Since she is presented as inexperienced when she comes to London, and Chanu is her first lover, it is not clear which experiences frame her understanding. However, the art captures her and through her mother, Nazneen has seen the opposite of such a gesture. To a point, Nazneen identifies the dance via the difference to what she already knows.

In effect, ice dances are a remediation of the dances off ice, which means not only is it doubly new, but also doubly-mediated into television. Ultimately, she understands the source. As Ellyn Kestnbaum puts it, "[b]ecause of its origins as a means of performing social dances, most specifically ballroom dances, on the ice, the meanings that predominate in ice dance tend to be those inherent in the social dances from which the on-ice versions derive" (Kestnbaum 223). Perhaps the dance Nazneen sees reminds her of traditional dances in her village, but more likely it is the stark contrast to these dances that strikes Nazneen about the ice dancing, since men and women in Gouripur would probably not have danced together due to gender-based tensions. As Munjulika Rahman explains, the narratives of the dancers, who belong to non-dominant groups in terms of gender, class, or economic background, reveal obstacles they face because of dance's association with immorality, femininity, and supposed prohibition" (Rahman 28). I believe this complicates the presentation of Nazneen's desire,

[87] Torvill and Dean's 1984 gold-medal-winning free dance to Ravel's *Bolero* is probably the most well-known single program in the history of ice dance. In his article on *Brick Lane,* Alistair Cormack notes that "to anyone brought up in Britain in the eighties" and thus "for a large portion of Ali's readership, the scene is not simply comprehensible, but familiar, because it has already been widely disseminated" (709). Torvill and Dean were national starts, and they took "ice dance away from its social dance origins and towards the realm of art dance by employing less rhythmically predictable music, playing more individualized characters, and experimenting with body positions less rooted in the traditional ballroom dance holds" (Kestnbaum 228).

and while it retains the impositions of a patriarchal culture, the relationship between the male and female form is reversed from Laura Mulvey's explication of visual pleasure in cinema, where she determined that women in cinema were represented for the gaze of men (364).[88] Nazneen's gaze is more active than that of a cinema goer, and her interest in looking at the male, or female, form is not voyeuristic. In this case, the openness of the televised sport as a text allows for more interpretations beyond the status of uneven socially-constructed relationships.

Kestnbaum elaborates that the earliest ice-dancers sought to reproduce the "freedom of movement and freedom of male-female association" that could be found in the nineteenth century waltz, which had gained popularity for its whirling movement, close partner holds and capacity for improvisation (Kestnbaum 224). Furthermore, "[e]ven in dances in which sexuality is not foregrounded, the dance couple remains, inevitably, a *couple* expressing the mood of the dance and thus representing a world organized according to male-female dyads" (226). Thus, it is not surprising that Nazneen interprets the dance as a story about a relationship. Despite the unfamiliar nature of the couple's dress, or perhaps because of it, Nazneen recognizes the ice dance as an artistic expression of a couple's passion for one another, "every move they made was urgent, intense, a declaration" (22) but also of the ability for the woman to control the object of her desire.

In a way, Nazneen sees in the two dancers the reversal of her own situation, which means she creates meaning in a structuralist way. She only knows unequal relationships, where she feels taken advantage of, and in the next instance ashamed of herself for thinking this way. Speaking of her husband she wonders, "What had she imagined? That he was in love with her? That he was grateful because she, young and graceful, had accepted him? That in

[88] Note that Laura Mulvey's influential 1975 essay relies on the experience of cinema, which is, as many have pointed out (Roland Barthes, John Fiske etc.) a different experience than watching television Fiske 228). This becomes more relevant in the discussion of *The Autograph Man* in the next chapter.

sacrificing herself to him, she was owed something? Yes. Yes" (11). Rather than admit this to Chanu, she keeps it to herself, yet she still admires women who do not accept what they are given, like her sister Hasina.

Throughout the novel, Hasina provides a foil to Nazneen. She is described as being the more beautiful of the two sisters, but she is also infinitely more disadvantaged. "Made to suffer" the narrator says several times. "Such beauty could have no earthly purpose but trouble" (34). The blame is indirectly placed on Hasina's beauty that was destined to bring her trouble, but the reader knows, and Nazneen learns that the blame really lies on the social expectations on Hasina, and severe consequences for not fulfilling them. Already as children Hasina did not follow the same "tale"; she ran off with her lover, a man that she loved. Without her father's blessing, she loses that support network as well as has the unlucky experience that her husband beats her. Again, refusing to accept her circumstances, Hasina leaves her husband, but again, without the social support, she ends up in precarious situations. Although Nazneen is the one who dutifully goes into an arranged marriage, she ends up with a lover and a husband whom she loves. However, with Hasina the novel also shows that London is not the space where a woman automatically learns to lose a fatalistic mindset and reject what is given to them, because both Hasina and her mother demonstrate that. However, to claim this emancipation has far worse consequences in Dhaka and Bangladesh than they do in London.

4.2 Claiming agency

Nazneen may see someone like her sister in the ice dancer. Although gender, race, and sexuality are differently coded than she is used to, Nazneen interprets the emotions into her context. This becomes clear when one understands that Nazneen is less interested in the man than the woman, and her appreciation of the woman goes far beyond the bottom barely covered by a skirt. This woman's exhibition of *jouissance,* ecstasy, going to the limits,

becomes the expression of going beyond social control that Nazneen craves. She is primarily captivated by the woman's look at the end of the dance as a conquering one. She has conquered "her body, the laws of nature, and the heart of the tight-suited man who slip over on his knees, vowing to lay down his life for her" (Ali 23). Nazneen is drawn towards this experience, and the feeling of triumph is infectious. It inspires her ask for English lessons, and it is the same feeling Nazneen imagines later in for the woman who has fallen/jumped from 16 stories: "with this single everlasting act she defied everything and everyone" (26). These women present an alternative to Nazneen's existence: holding dirty dishes on her way to the kitchen, listening to her husband, and dissuaded from leaving the house or learning English.

The initial ice-skating reference continues with Nazneen learning the word in English and having trouble pronouncing it, which prompts Nazneen to ask her husband for English lessons.

"What is this called?" Said Nazneen.

Chanu glanced at the screen. "Ice skating," he said, in English.

"Ice e-skating" said Nazneen.

"Ice skating," said Chanu.

"Ice e-skating."

"No, no. No e. Ice skating. Try it again."

Nazneen hesitated."

"Go on!"

"Ice es-kating," she said, with deliberation.

Chanu smiled. "Don't worry about it. It's a common problem for Bengalis. Two consonants together causes a difficulty. I have conquered this issue after a long time. But you are unlikely to need these words in any case."

> "I would like to learn some English," said Nazneen.
>
> Chanu puffed his cheeks and spat the air out in a fluff. "It will come. Don't worry about it. Where's the need anyway?" He looked at his book and Nazneen watched the screen. (Ali 23)

Chanu takes a moment to point out his own superiority in having overcome a difficult pronunciation in English, but also preemptively challenges Nazneen's need to learn the words "ice-skating" or any English at all, for that matter, since it will come on its own and she will not need it anyway, presumably since she does not have to leave the house often. This is the "immigrant tragedy" as Mrs. Azad mentions earlier (83), the failure to assimilate, or even integrate. However, both Mrs. Azad and Chanu, to whom she is responding, fail to acknowledge the gender divide in how the immigrant tragedy plays out. These differences become obvious from Nazneen's perspective, however.

Nazneen is presented as wanting to learn English, and in trying to pronounce the words, she exercises her voice for the first time, so that the reader not only sees her powerful gaze, but also her voice exercised, literally. The exchange with Chanu highlights the physical difficulty in a difference of language, and the challenge of pronouncing something to which the mouth is not accustomed. To some extent, the repetition of the wrong word is a kind of writing/talking back to Chanu,[89] but also Mrs. Azad, since she refuses to get rid of her accent, her Bengali vocal coloring, when speaking English, or to assimilate completely. Ali gives various iterations of the term as a non-English speaker with oral patterns based on what a Bengali would say and throughout the novel Nazneen repeats this "mistake," "ice e-skating" (27, 112) becoming *her* use and effectively claiming validity for the mixed form. It becomes an early marker of the refiguration of her Bangladeshi identity within a transnational context that does not erase it, but rather creates a space for its expression.

[89] There are a lot of small moments (small acts, to acknowledge Angelia Poon's argument) of writing back.

I argue that the desire evoked by the ice-skating viewing leads to Nazneen's agency. Desire repeats in Nazneen's declaration that she "would like to learn English" (23) as well as soon afterwards where she makes her first outing alone (49). Critics often point to Nazneen's solo-outing as a moment of agency in the novel in their delineation of Nazneen's growing empowerment, but most of them fail to make the connection between the declaration "I would like to learn some English" (23), incited by the ice-skating episode, and the first time Nazneen has "spoken in English to a stranger" (43) during this outing. It becomes the first time she risks something, and she resists the urge to shout this at her husband—*"Do you know what I did* […]? *Did you think I could do that? See what I can do!* (45)—but her heart is "ablaze with mutiny" (45), a desire to rebel, and not just accept things. One could say the impetus to speak, brought on by the ice-skating, mobilized her desire.

Although Nazneen is described as subscribing to the fate of accepting things as they are, she is not totally non-defiant, and moments of restlessness or unwillingness to be dutiful or respond to social expectations become expressed via ice-skating. She does not like Mrs. Islam, and she rejects Mrs. Islam's offer to take care of the baby (67). Shortly thereafter, she *becomes* the ice-dancer she sees in a magazine.

During one of her moments of inactivity, Nazneen

> was looking at a magazine, an English magazine Chanu had left. There was a picture of a couple: ice-skaters. […] Her body was spangled, silver and blue. Her legs were as long as the Padma. She was a fairy-tale creature, a Hindu goddess. Nazneen fell, somehow, into that picture and caught hold of the man's hand. She was shocked to find she was traveling across the ice, on one foot, at terrible speed. The man smiled and said, "Hold on tight" (71).

This description takes a moment to describe the woman holding the man's hand, looking up, smiling directly at Nazneen, and then the woman becomes compared to a Hindu

goddess. This time, perhaps because it is in a magazine and not on television, Nazneen relays the scene metaphorically, comparing the female dancer to a goddess, or a "fairy-tale." Added to the list of exoticizing metaphors, one sees how this comparison allows Nazneen to identify with the person, and become her. The mystic power of the Hindu goddess, a consort of Vishnu, presents Nazneen with the frame and possibility of being something she is not while confined to the home with Chanu, or a practicing Muslim. Nazneen is so involved that she can notice the details of the man's suit. Her ability to translate the magazine image to the moving images she saw before, and then to her own action becomes a moment of agency as well. In contrast to the earlier reference, Ali has the woman rely on the man this time—practically to give her stability, since as Kestnbaum notes, women would often be given the more difficult steps, which would make her "more physically vulnerable and therefore dependent on her partner's physical support, thus replicating the social/economic structures" (Kestnbaum 226). However, here, the man is telling her to "hold on tight" (Ali 71), with a twinkle in his suit suggesting a twinkle in his eye, and a repetition of the word "tight" from the way the tights sat before, implying that he can give Nazneen something she could not experience herself. It is not that she depends on him as much as that she makes a choice to allow herself to be led to something unknown.

The transmedialization to her own physical experiences layers the feelings of desire from before. "She felt the rush of wind on her cheeks, and the muscles in her thighs flexing. The ice smelled of limes. The cold air made her flush with warmth from deep down" (71). The interaction between Nazneen and the other dancer allows for the evocation of physical sensation and smell, and the visceral, erotic desire hinted at in the first reference become more explicit, when Nazneen's own body becomes aroused. The feeling of being with a man and the smell of this moment are strong associations of desire for Nazneen; later, the smell of

limes becomes associated with her lover, Karim.[90] He is the middle-man for the clothing factory that gives Nazneen work, and as they have more and more contact when he brings her the pieces of clothing and takes them away again and at one point, she realizes that "the crisp smell of his shirt" was the "smell of limes" (199). Henceforth, he is associated with limes, even after Nazneen has decided that they can't stay together: "He still smelled of limes" (378).

The olfactory bodily sensation becomes a metonymy for erotic desire, but it is mediated in more than language and through the body. Its significance lies in the fact that it is the result of the individual and casually determined process of viewing and interpreting media. Mediation through the televisual experiences provide Nazneen with a form for understanding her other experiences, especially after she begins the transition from television as placatory to seeking out the tensions it usually helps to subdue. Nazneen seeks out ice-skating on television in the past as a way to make the days more than "tolerable" (Ali 27).

> Sometimes she switched on the television and flicked through the channels, looking for ice e-skating. For a whole week[91] it was on every afternoon while Nazneen sat cross-legged on the floor. When she sat, she was no longer a collection of the hopes, random thoughts, petty anxieties, and selfish wants that made her, but she was whole and pure. The old Nazneen was sublimated and the new Nazneen was filled with white light, glory. (Ali 27)

The sublimation describes an ecstasy again, but less erotic. In this instance, Ali describes the pleasure Nazneen feels as an escape from the "random thoughts, petty anxieties, and selfish wants" that make her Nazneen, but which also make it difficult for her to complete the tasks expected of her. This version of television watching is slightly disappointing compared to the

[90] Smell is just as important as sight for determining human attraction, especially for women (Herz and Inzlicht 359)

[91] This indicates that the competitions were likely part of an international competition

earlier one, since the television now is depicted as a woman's medium, designed for the watching/keeping company of women at home, and competing with their household tasks (Spigel, *Make* 75). It creates an ironic perspective on the notion that television is what led to Nazneen's loss of naiveté, and lends to her sense of agency, but it also highlights that television watching, especially something like sports, is openly semiotic and there is no one way of interpreting the program or the medium's effects. It also points out that television itself does not do anything; it is what Nazneen does with it.

By the end, Ali has Nazneen realize that she does not need the television on at all anymore. Previously, Nazneen asks herself "if she has a tiny, tiny skirt with knickers to match and a tight, bright top, then she would—how could she not?—skate through life with a sparkling smile and a handsome man who took her hand and made her spin, spin, spin" (228). Yet in the disillusionment Nazneen experiences in the last third of the novel, one finds a paradigm shift she has after her nervous breakdown[92]. After being disillusioned by her affair with Karim, Nazneen recognizes "the false smiles, the made-up faces, the demented illusion of freedom chasing around their enclosure" (302), realizes that these were only representations, and she asks that the television is turned off (302).

In turning the television off, Ali asks the reader to recognize other illusions connected to the body. At the very end, when Nazneen's daughters take her to the ice-skating rink for the first time, she realized that this fantastic, exotic smell that inspires so much desire is actually the smell of something quite mundane: furniture polish (414). To a point, one could infer this as another moment of agency on Nazneen's part, who rewrites[93] what could be seen as an ordinary British housekeeping tool into something exotic. By this point, she no longer yearns for the escape from her situation, and has experienced both true passion with Karim

[92] Nervous breakdown, or breakdown from nervous exhaustion is one way of putting it. The only instance in which she is diagnosed is by her husband, which is just one of the examples of the epistemic violence Chanu inadvertently uses.

[93] There are many small moments like this (small acts, as Angelia Poon calls them) of writing back in the novel.

and true love with Chanu. She is actualized in being a woman that does not rely on someone else, and therefore she is able to recognize, and reject, what was in the allure of an erotic escape. She also finally recognizes that changing her clothes would not change "her entire life […] as well" (228). Accepting that she does not need to change her clothes, that she can even skate in a sari, becomes, by the end, an affirmative statement.

5 Creating expression

Through Nazneen, Ali experiments with expression in other ways connected to the body. At one point, Nazneen asks herself if a walk can talk. That is, when she is on her way to openly meet Karim outside of the apartment for the first, and the last time, she notices a woman whose

> footsteps rang like declarations. […] The way the woman walked was fascinating. Nazneen watched her and stepped as she stepped. How much could it say? One step in front of the other. Could it say, *I am this* and *I am not this*? Could a walk tell lies? Could it change you? (376)

As from dance, steps can ring like declarations, and Ali evokes the expressive potential in movement. However, unlike a walk, dance relies on semiotic spheres of codes and practices of encoding and decoding to which one must be introduced through socialization and practice. The answers to Nazneen's questions are all "yes," if Nazneen or another viewer has the competence to decode them that way using the conventions of the genre. Of the things Nazneen asks, the assertion of identity "I am this" and "I am not this" seems most important to her. By the end, she can say: "I am the woman who steps onto an ice-skating rink in a sari.

The link between television, the body, and expression also becomes evident in the way Nazneen tries on clothes and tries ice-skating moves herself (112), reminding one of the studies completed by Marie Gillespie and others who note the relationship between Punjabi young adults in England, and the way television influences their experimentation with

clothing and talking. This is something one can also find the novel with Bibi and Shahana. As a female and first-generation migrant from the Bangladeshi diaspora, Nazneen's experiences are clearly different than that of her daughters, but Nazneen's relationship with television in the novel provides a similar interesting example for the integration process through television. She also takes the reader through the steps of learning through exposure, experimentation, and adaptation.

On the one hand, Ali gives an instance of oral expression, but later the reader is given an explicit connection between written language and desire. One sees this in moments where Nazneen directly metareferentially reflects on the process of writing in conjunction with the ice-skating. As in other instances in the novel, ice-skating appears in close-proximity to pivotal moments in Nazneen's life, such as when her son Raquib is about to die. Gone home after convincing herself that she has the power to save her son (113), Nazneen realizes she has to take care of a few things, including writing a letter to her sister. The act becomes catalyzed by her saying aloud (significant, because it evokes the embodied voice) "Ice e-skating" and "Torvill and Dean." Her familiar (mis)pronunciation of ice-skating and mention of two famous British ice-dancers seemingly get Nazneen started, perhaps because Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean won the ice dancing competition in the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics with perfect scores in artistic impression, and whatever Nazneen needs to produce now will emulate them. It is significant that Torvill and Dean became a household name in England after their win, and the evocation is a subtle nod to the way Nazneen increasingly orients herself between both British and Bengali models and memories.

> The thought of writing was always pleasant, but the process was painful. However much she thought of to tell, however the words flowed in her head as she performed her chores, despite the emotion that swelled and throbbed while the storylines formed, the telling was inevitably brief and blunt, a poor thing, stunted as a failed crop. (112)

Nazneen clearly does not have a way to express her desire. She describes writing as the challenge of taking the universal non-verbal system of concepts that underlie the formation of language,[94] and not only making it verbal, but giving it abstract form on paper. Yet this is not only tedious and dry—missing flow in both the rhythm and the medium—but rather painful, and less enjoyable than thinking about writing, which evokes the physical pleasure of sex with swelling and throbbing body parts. Interpreted via Roland Barthes' theory about pleasure and social control in *The Pleasure of the Text*, this thinking, before being constrained to a form that must be expressed, is a *jouissance* that resists ideological control, and Ali reminds that the writing, like all mediums, is a means of control. Still, she emphasizes that the play here is not with the reader, but with Nazneen's dialogical other, the voice that tells her it is ridiculous to dance around in her husband's pants. It is this voice that Ali constructs for Nazneen, which the reader is supposed to understand as her cultural and religious heritage, that is only weighing her down.

5.1 Televisual

The different medial form in television, however, suggests different possibilities for expression and control, especially in English (156), especially in England, since television was one of the only ways for Nazneen to learn the language or interact with the world outside of Brick Lane. References to the television in *Brick Lane* occur at two levels: aural, as I have shown, and visual. The aural modality is often used to establish the space of Tower Hamlets; however, the visual mode shines a light on its use by the residents of the complex and other inhabitants of London. When referring to an actual television in the apartment, it becomes defined by light. It more than just the light of a fire "glowing" in the corner (22). At another point while watching, it fills Nazneen with "white light, glory" (Ali 27). In one extensive

[94] As an interesting indirect intertextuality, McEwan well; it is the "pre-verbal language that linguists call mentalese" (McEwan 81)

passage, the television asserts itself against other sources of light and this is used to describe its influencing nature.

> The curtains were closed though it was not quite yet dark. The walls by the window held oblongs of rich light, neat cutouts pasted onto the wallpaper. From the television came feathery rays both bright and weak. The tall floor lamp against the back wall cast light up and down and into the television, where it made a picture of itself. Chanu's reading lamp was positioned on top of the trolley. Its yellow beam formed a circle which took in Chanu's book, his belly, his knees, and some part of his papers. Nazneen cleared and wiped the table, working in the last warm melts of sun which soaked through the thin gray curtains. The girls, in their nightdresses, drew their feet up on the sofa, caught in the misty glow of television. And Chanu sat beneath the yellow light, his face filled with shadows. (261)

The light of the television is written in contradiction to the other light sources in the room as both "bright and weak," extending its feathery rays and reaching the children but not Chanu or Nazneen. Each of the family members is written into a different source of light, and the light seems to define the activity they are performing. In his introduction to his 1964 *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan states that "the personal and social consequences of any medium- that is, of any extension of ourselves- result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs [...] by any new technology" ("Message" 107). Taking into consideration McLuhan's ideas about media as extensions of people, one could say that Ali sees these light sources as extensions of these characters, influencing the "new scale" they introduce to their actions and opinions, but Nazneen is relatively free to act unencumbered. Each light source reflects both how the characters spend their leisure time (and who has it) as well as the position of each family member.

The children, are the most contemporary generation and also the most impressionable, so they are "caught" in the "glow" of the most modern light source. Chanu is defined by the yellow circle of light created by a light bulb and his representation, surrounded by books and papers, reiterates that he is an "educated man." Nazneen, completing the chores of the domesticated woman, works within the most natural light source, as though this operation is the organic extension of her being; or her role is conflated with that of the mother innately connected to nature and natural energy. Of the four people, Nazneen is the only one not influenced by an electronic light source, and so hers is the only medium that still has a message, according to McLuhan (*Understanding* 8).[95] It indicates, perhaps, a natural ability to manipulate the medium possibilities of the light.

This relationship Ali has established for Nazneen with the television—combined with all the responses to television in the novel, including 9/11—provides a conclusive way of interpreting one of the most significant moments in the novel where Nazneen describes *"in love"* in the "English style" (360) to her friend Razia.

> So Nazneen began the conversation she had already rehearsed herself, and still she played both parts. Razia, who had not learned her lines, stayed quiet.
>
> "He lifts me up inside. It's the difference between…" She cast around. "I don't know. It's like you're watching the television in black and white and someone comes along and switches on the colors."
>
> Razia said, "Mmm."
>
> "And then they pull you right inside the screen, so you're not watching anymore, you're part of it."
>
> "Mmmm," said Razia again.
>
> Nazneen thought about that she had said. She was pleased. It was not an easy thing to

[95] "Electric light is pure information" (8).

describe.

'Is called *in love,* no?' said Razia.

[…]

'*In love,'* she said. 'It is the English style.' (360).

Nazneen manages to describe how her new lover made her feel like a part of life, rather than just an observer, by referring to another activity in which one is just an observer of moving visual images that can be changed through the click of a remote. The reference also draws on her previous experiences with television, ice-skating, and the emotions they caused. The explicit reference to the technical design of the television that allows one to change the pixels and their shade, highlights the medium of the source, which Nazneen is able to control. Although Nazneen knows it is dangerous to admit her affair, she finds a kind of joy in describing it this way as well.

Nazneen becomes both coder and decoder, but relies on these codes which she has come to understand and manipulate. Individual discourse can be powerful, and it will come together as a result of the combinations and enunciations opening the gaps in heteroglossia. As the metaphor of ice skating for language implies, both require an ability to adapt what one knows to what one does not know. Razia summarizes this as being the English version of love, since this kind of love, as described by Nazneen is affirming, as opposed to what would have been her fate if she had stayed in Bangladesh, according to the fate of her sister.

Nazneen begins to learn English, after Chanu disdainfully passes over the opportunity to help her learn, from Razia going to school to learn English, and through "television, the brief exchanges at the few non-Bengali shop she entered, the dentist, the doctor, [and] teachers at the girl's schools" (156). However, most of her English came from the girls, not through "lessons, textbooks, or Razia's 'key phrases,'" but through the simple demand "to be understood" by her daughters (156). Now it is Nazneen who wants to be understood, and she

teaches Razia her language of desire, which it seems is an "English" experience even Razia has not learned yet.

It is true that Nazneen learned it through Torvill and Dean, and in this, one is prompted to acknowledge, as Eckart Voigts points out, that television tends to take "the role of *leitmedium*- providing seminal, definitive narratives and myths that shape a nation's self-fashioning" (312). Arguably, Nazneen's enunciation is indicative of being molded by the English *leitmedium* which exposed her to these experiences that the rest of the nation (who watches the program) shares. However, Ali creates a figure who wants to show that this is not just being "in love" the English way, and she also did not just learn it through television. In mixing the visual and linguistic signifiers in her expression, she introduces plurality to the experience, and is able to express a much more complicated system of meaning within which to view Nazneen's love. This mixing is more elegantly described via Homi Bhabha's hybridity, as various critics, not least Alistair Cormack have pointed out. Through Nazneen's use, the ice-skating becomes a new transcultural form.

It may still be that "the transfer of meaning can never be total between different systems of meaning" (Bhabha qt. in Cormack 712), but it becomes clear through these medial references that media do have the capacity to carry the meaning of another. Nazneen's comparison of a black and white television to one where the color is switched seems to be a simple way to explain what Nazneen tries to express. By turning on color, Nazneen points out that the images are there, and the broadcast was being sent in color the entire time, but the television was not set properly, and all one has to do is turn on the colors. When Razia calls it "English," she suggests that this style of love exists in contrast to the style of love for Bangladeshi women, but it ignores the fact that Hasina also experienced this kind of love. The label reduces something beautiful, and accessible, back into something homogenous and different for a non-English migrant to assimilate to.

At the same time, meaning is always renegotiated.[96] A gifted, creative exposition defining alien world views "always has a free stylistic variation on another's discourse; it expounds another's thought in the style of that thought even when applying it to new material, to another way of posing the problem; it conducts experiments and gets solutions in the language of another's discourse" (Bakhtin, "Topic" 583). As I outlined in the introduction to *Literarily TV*, the process of becoming, according to Bakhtin, is "an ideological process [...] characterized precisely by a sharp gap between [the authority of discourse and its internal persuasiveness]" (580). Razia represents this authority of discourse here, but Nazneen experiments with it in order to navigate and respond to others in a way that is internally persuasive. One could conclude that the television and its new impulses push Nazneen into new ways of thinking and being, but especially of speaking and expressing herself. This representation of migrant responses to televisual programs suggests, perhaps, a similar trend in the lives of factual migrants.

5 Conclusion

By the end of the novel, ice-skating seems the most apt activity for Nazneen and her daughters to undertake. Although the suggestion that Nazneen will ice-skate successfully is left open, it is implied that she is ready to dance with speed, danger, thrill, just as she is ready to engage in her professional partnership with Razia, and become more active in life outside of her home and Brick Lane. Ali has developed Nazneen to the point that she is able to adapt to conditions that may result in a dangerous transgression of boundaries, represented by the ice-skating rink.

[96] It would be worth looking more closely at the displacements and realignments Nazneen goes through to renegotiate meaning. According to Bhabha, cultural negotiation is the hybrid site produced as a result of the dialogic process of enunciation, which "attempts to track displacements and realignments that are the effects of cultural antagonisms and articulations" (*Location* 177-78).

> In front of her was a huge white circle, bounded by four-foot high boards. Glinting, dazzling, enchanting ice. She looked at the ice and slowly it revealed itself. The criss-cross patterns of a thousand surface scars, the colours that shifted and changed in the lights, the unchanging nature of what lay beneath. (415)

Just as she came along to switch on the colors for herself, the ice revealed itself *under her* gaze. It shows her the layers under what reveals itself under closer attention, but also that it is possible to move through a complex, shifting world of meanings. The ice-skating rink enclosure implies an element of inclusion and exclusion as well. Ali, it seems, wants to leave the reader with the impression that contact with Chanu, Mrs. Islam, and Rupban—who talked over or through her—left Nazneen with scars, but left a concept her herself, her wholeness, untouched. This reflects the tendency of people in diaspora, who see themselves as "long-distance nationalists" (Anderson qt. in Brubaker 2), to continue to retain ties to home and consider themselves citizens of a different place than the one where they are geo-politically located. In retaining their emotional and social ties with the homeland and preserving their distinctive identity vis-à-vis the English, the Bangladeshis in London retain the "homeland orientation" that Rogers Brubaker determines as one of the criteria of the label diaspora, and this kind of transnational orientation (6).

As Brubaker points out, boundaries can be maintained "by deliberate resistance to assimilation" (6). If one can hold onto values or habits that align one with the other members of the group, but not necessarily with those outside the group, that can still give people a sense of cultural identity and community, which is not easy to compromise. However, no one says Nazneen must assimilate, and she has already been compromising. She is the shifting ice, reminding that identity is always changing, and one can claim she has success in cultural negotiation and integration. While it is worth looking at the way Ali "oversimplifies the cultural concerns of minorities and immigrants by reducing a collective enterprise to an

individual one (Rezaei), one must also acknowledge how the use of televisual references to 9/11 and other instances of cultural interaction balance, and inform, the more individual concerns expressed in the ice-skating references. These references to televised terrorism or ethnic tensions reveal the collective enterprise of creating and interpreting semiotic systems, in which people define themselves and others against each other. Ali challenges the self-understood hegemonic conception of global knowledge and experience and allows for the ambiguity of the work of television for integration, assimilation, and integration.

Through these references, it becomes clear that by coming to London and through her exposure to new semiotic systems, Nazneen also learns how to engage with one system in its comparison to others. At the end of the novel, Nazneen negotiates her way of being with the action of "ice-skating" and the reader can see that Nazneen does not give up her experiences in Bangladesh, nor has she stopped wearing a sari or lost all the aspects of her discourse that she learns from her mother.[97] In fact, the reader sees Nazneen preserve a sort of hybrid identity that does not deny the "unchanged nature" of the ice rink, nor her ability to enunciate a subjective self. Nazneen's final statement "But you can't skate in a sari" (415), prompting Razia's answer and the book's final line, comes from her two worlds finally becoming one. Lining up the semiotics of the televised ice-skating with the physical activity bring a paradigm shift that places her firmly in England.

[97] This could be considered a hybrid experience. Bhabha, whose theories inform the current definition of the term in contemporary postcolonial theory, said that hybridity "is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of dominations through disavowal" (*Location*112). That is, while we talk of hybridity as a fusion of two or more things, the concept of two "originals," and in turn "binaries," must be eradicated through the concept of hybridity. Tensions are kept sharp, but power relations are transformed when our attentions are drawn to the ways in which dominated figures interfere with power processes.

CHAPTER THREE: "CAUGHT BY MOVING FILM": BELONGING WITH TELEVISION IN ZADIE SMITH'S *THE AUTOGRAPH MAN*

Introduction: Navigating Twenty-first Century Identities

Although Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is considered the first novel to feature the female Bangladeshi perspective in British literature, she is not the first author to feature South Asian perspectives, and definitely not the first author to narrate what Peter Boxall refers to as "hyphenated identities."[98] One can list several works appearing in the 1980s and 1990s that are described in this way, most famously, perhaps, Hanif Kureishi's *Buddha of Suburbia* (1990). However, it was Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) that made reading about multicultural spaces and hyphenated identities popular, and opened up the book market to literature that engaged with the postcolonial effects of polycultural Britain, setting the tone for the next decades. Arguably, there would be no *Brick Lane* without *White Teeth.*

Given the enormous success of *White Teeth* and Smith's subsequent fixture as a darling of the literary landscape of the twenty-first century,[99] her second novel, *The Autograph Man,* received a surprisingly low amount of attention. Published in 2002 to mixed reception, its awards were limited to the Jewish Quarterly-Wingate Literary Prize. [100]

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[98] According to Boxall, hyphenated identities are "subject positions which emerge from the failure of distinction between separate nation states" (Boxall 168), which defers identity to questions of nationality. More commonly, hyphenated identities describe a dual identity in which a person oscillates between the two cultural identities on either side of the hyphen, sometimes feeling more like one or another.

[99] Smith's fame following the book deal she secured with a few pages of what would be *White Teeth* was unprecedented and, perhaps, overwhelming. She was praised by recognized authors such as Salman Rushdie and Martin Amis. Her earnings enabled her to move out of her mother's apartment into her own, and her name brought invitations and business-class trips around Europe and the US, something she touches on in *The Autograph Man*. She was "the voice of generation" (Brenner).

[100] This comment about awards stands in comparison to the reception of her other works. *White Teeth* was awarded several and Smith's other books have been long and short-listed for the (Man) Booker Prize. Expectations aside, reviewers were mixed on the more spartan writing in *The Autograph Man*. It was either a relieved of the baggage in *White Teeth*, or "sparser" and too "eccentric" (O'Hagan). One critic, James Wood, was especially harsh in his review for the *London Review of Books* and his opinions about inauthenticity, vacancy, and boringness are shared by many of *The Autograph Man*'s readers. However, the challenge for authentic experience in today's world is precisely that which Smith means to describe.

However, it continued the work of *White Teeth* in challenging the pervasive model of multiculturalism before 2000, one which John McLeod describes where "so-called white Londoners are represented as the 'native' community" ("Writing" 246). Instead, as McLeod notes, Smith's multiculturalism consists of a polycultural society where interactions between people of different cultural identities are much more frequent, natural, and emphasize the commonalities between people rather than differences. Superficial markers of acceptance, such as those in *Brick Lane* of being able to wear a sari on an ice-skating rink in England, are replaced by more direct interactions with people of different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, and more subtle signs of integration via language and points of view.

Thus, while *Brick Lane* is still very much a 1980s British novel, addressing how migrants are assimilated into a postcolonial society that is still adjusting to decolonization and changing immigration laws, Smith's novels are placed more firmly in the new millennium where she complicates older notions of diasporic identity and people who continue to orient themselves to the country that was left behind. Specifically, Smith pushes past the idea of national boundedness requiring assimilation or integration. Instead, she seems more interested in the challenges of multiple belongings for the second and subsequent generations who have a diasporic heritage, but not the same feeling of loss. For these generations, as for Nazneen's daughter Shahana in *Brick Lane,* there is instead a sense of unease, since they are made to feel as though they must choose between two or more (cultural) heritages and communities. Often, members of the second or third generation will identify with the same cultural identity label of their peers, yet they can do nothing to prevent

the peers from often seeing them as "other."[101] This "othering" is often perpetuated by the media, which rely on tropes and stereotypes in their storytelling.[102]

Smith's character creations in *The Autograph Man* and their conception of identity are more complicated than they were in *White Teeth*, as indicated by their double hyphens. Instead of Jamaican-British or Bangladeshi-British, characters are an African-American Harlem-Jewish family moving to London, or the British-Chinese-Jewish main character Alex-Li Tandem (whose name retains one of those hyphens). However, while these cultural heritages could make for rich personal identities and multiple possibilities for belonging, they are mostly just bothersome for Alex and his friends. Being excited about identity was left in the "exclusive province of childhood: a time when genetic/cultural inheritance feels like this weird but cool thing you just got landed with, like an extra shoe" (*AM* 27). Cultural and biogenetic heritage are less a source for self-discovery, but rather a burden only redeemed when it could possibly get one a girlfriend.[103] By her own admission, Smith deals with multiculturalism as a "descriptive fact" rather than a "as a kind of ideological principle" (Fallon). It does not automatically determine how someone will act or feel.

Alex Clark points out in one of the first reviews to *The Autograph Man* that

> [i]f Smith was keen to shed the tag of grand chronicler of multiculturalism, it was perhaps unwise to give her protagonist such an unusual pedigree, but Tandem, whose most noticeable affinity to his Chinese half is his neurotic loyalty to a herbal doctor in Soho, and whose lack of observance is the despair of his friends Mark Rubinfine and

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[101] This understanding corresponds to Amin Maalouf's conception of heritage, which operates at the vertical and horizontal influences, with horizontal coming from one's contemporaries and the age one lives in (86). This is also reflected in Toni Morrison's lament in her most recent essay collection, *The Source of Self-Regard* (2019), that we are now more interested in classifications of foreigners than definitions of citizenship (19). We focus too much on the differences and not on the things that bring us together.

[102] This stands in contrast to what Lynn Spigel points out, that "it was the particular aim of the mass media—especially television—to level class and ethnic differences in order to produce a homogenous public for national advertising" ("Installing" 6).

[103] Alex is not keen on taking on these labels, except when they may help him get a girlfriend, like his neighbor who ends up being uninterested in "shared race, or coincidence, or shared racial coincidence" like both being Year of the Dog (Smith, *AM* 23).

> Adam Jacobs, is a character made deliberately ill at ease with his background and his surroundings, and who spends much of the novel trying to free himself from their claims upon him. (Clark)

Although Clark describes Alex as "trying to free himself" from the claims of his background, the reader is given the impression as though these things do not matter or are easy to cast off. Smith introduces Alex's and the other's mixed heritage rather flippantly. Even his name with the suffix of the second most popular Chinese surname, Li, quickly gets shortened to just "Alex." His characterization threatens to perpetuate a superficial Chineseness, relying on a vague understanding of a country which Allen Chun calls the "persistent imagination of an unbroken historical continuity despite repeated barbarian invasions, the rise and fall of dynasties, and the absorption of alien regions" (113). Despite giving her character a Chinese name and Chinese father, as well as a few (albeit stereotypical) traits of someone with Chinese heritage, Smith ignores looking more closely at how "Chineseness" encompass a myriad of languages, ethnicities and socio-economic realities, with an extensive Chinese diasporic community including in north London.

Furthermore, Alex's Jewish identity seems to distract from an already complicated label, though this heritage is treated only slightly less superficially. Although he, his mother,[104] and his inner circle of friends are all Jewish, the status of Alex's Jewishness gets put in the same position of being a lapsed catholic who only halfheartedly subscribes to the faith.[105] As a result, identity in the novel often seems best explained by Paula Mora's concept in "Who We Are and From Where We Speak" as "the nonessential and evolving product that

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[104] Per Orthodox Jewish law, Jewish lineage is passed down through the maternal line, which points toward possible interpretation about the mother-son, father-son relationships through cultural influence. This also places an emphasis on biogenetic heritage—something Smith remains ambivalent about in the text: is authentic ethnic identity necessary for Smith or not? It would seem not, but in this instance that stance seems insecure.

[105] It does seem that Alex performs a lot of the rites unconsciously, for example the blu-tacking of his father's signed pound note above the door in the tradition of the mezuzah. He often adapts the traditions for his own purposes.

emerges from the dialectic between how a subject of consciousness identifies herself and how others identify her" (80). It is, in a way, a dialectic between ascription and description, and Alex has more problems with the claims of other's assumptions about him than his own relationship to this background.

So, one is encouraged to look at what Chun calls "the boundedness of identity" when "the notion of multiple identities" serve to "decenter the authority of cultural hegemony" (136). Individuals uphold identity markers even as they resist hegemonial powers, and as a result, in the daily act of confronting "difference," it is difficult not to off-set one notion of identity against another. Smith seemingly acknowledges this in the construction of her novel, naming Book One a *Kabbalah* and setting it in the fictional Mountjoy suburb of London, England, while Book Two is called a *Zen* and set in Rolling Heights, NY, United States. The construction implies transcultural and transnational moves, but does not encourage mixing. Still, there is no such thing as cultural purity and Smith takes readers to the endpoint of transnationalism, the concept of the global citizen, and the deemphasis on origins. Immigrant and minority populations are a meeting of multiple simultaneous histories, which take into account decolonial scholar Maria Lugones' living in "overlapping worlds of sense" (Moya 87), which in turn draws on Edward Said's notion of "overlapping territories" and "intertwined histories" in modern communities (qt. in Moore-Gilbert 107).

The limits of media are perhaps just as diffuse. These overlapping worlds of sense are complicated by the influence of mass media and new technologies on the ontological sense of being in western societies, which is something, I argue, that Smith is especially interested in showing in her works. Television in particular already played a significant role in Smith's *White Teeth,* where television news are a plot device to show what characters were doing in the broader community and to show how media could inform the individual heteroglossia of

characters and their utterances—similarly to *Brick Lane.*[106] However, while one can imagine *White Teeth* without television, it is indispensable to *The Autograph Man,* and not just because it is constantly mentioned (fifty times either as "television" or "TV") and present in important passages (112, 304, 340). The intermedial references to television are used as a strategy for explaining various characters' relationships to society: watching others to belong and watching oneself to determine that belongingness.

In particular, Smith presents these experiences as universal, parallel to the general sense of navigating erratic, hyper-medial realities of the twenty-first century, and she interrogates the necessarily individual experience of using media to escape the things that are too difficult, *too real*, to face, such as pain, loss and death. These realities exist on top of the individual understanding the role they fill in communities. In the bildungsroman tradition, Smith has her picaresque, that is to say roguish, but still likable, protagonist come to terms with his father's death by confronting identification beyond objectification. Getting to know his lifelong idol off the screen rearranges Alex's conception of subjective positioning within contemporary transnational and multicultural societies. Specifically, the intermedial references in the novel open up the space for reflecting on communication and community building.

Understanding the novel as a commentary on both media and transnationalism goes against what most critics say, who decide that Smith focuses on one or the other. For example, in her response to *The Autograph Man,* Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga makes the point that

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[106] Zadie Smith introduces a perspective of the relationship between people and media in *White Teeth* with a few specific instances: photos of two characters, Millat and Magid juxtaposed to the television, turned-on, below it; Alsana and Samad discussing the Britishness just before seeing their son, Millat, who himself emulates US crime bosses he sees in films, partaking in the *Satanic Verses* book burning on television (*White Teeth* 194-5), and Irie quoting *Newsweek* to talk about the fall of the Berlin Wall that the families are watching on television (196-9). Of the Millat sequence, Philip Tew writes that these moments allow one to, for example, contemplate the illusory dynamism of contemporary media in comparison to a static past, which can simultaneously be seen as the object of cultural longing ("Celebrity" 65).

> [i]f *The Autograph Man* offers a vision of reality in which place is not a clear support of identity, it is not because of migration and displacement but because of a problematic sense of "the Real." The "philosophy" behind Smith's second novel seems less inspired by postcolonial critics and more by such theoreticians as Jean Baudrillard and Walter Benjamin. (59)

While the novel is indeed indebted to Baudrillard and Benjamin, the latter of whom is directly referred to in the novel as "the popular wise guy" (*AM* 37), it is not fair to say that the postmodern theorists replace the philosophy of postcolonial critics. Rather, the novel emphasizes the postmodern aspects of postcolonialism—its pluralism and deference to a diversity of experience in determining meaning—and reminds the reader that to have a history of migration and/or displacement does not preclude one from the general "problematic sense of 'the Real.'" If anything, Alex and his friends are fated to be challenged by both, which reflects Philip Tew's conclusion about the novel that "Smith seeks to position all of her characters in the wider complexities and variations of being that affect all social selves and our ontological understandings of them" ("Celebrity" 56). Still, media seems to play an overwhelming role in these complexities.

One of *The Autograph Man's* most outspoken critics, James Wood, refers negatively to the general ubiquity of media in the novel: "By now we get the idea that we are poor sops in the society of spectacle, and that everyone under fifty speaks in consumer clichés and TV tags." Wood wants to "retire this little observation." However, why deny the fact that, as Guy Debord claimed, social relations are mediated by and through images? This "little observation" describes a reality that continues to affect how people interact with one another, and it carries important implications for what Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright call the "multiplicity of gazes and looks that mediate power between viewers and objects of the gaze" (135). It is a multiplicity that becomes even further complicated by the pluralism of contexts

of the viewer. Furthermore, it is precisely this "little observation" that Alex rejects. By the end of the novel, when Alex finally carries out the Kaddish for his father who dies in the prologue, the clichés and taglines have been exchanged for the formal lines of a religious ritual, but these are interrupted by the individual gestures of the attendants, which Alex has learned to read as the human element in the spectacles of life. In turn, *The Autograph Man* is redeemed in its unique ability to encourage the reader to look closer at the "range and horror of the human form" that television "does not show you" (88).

By acknowledging an enduring role of the media references, I align myself with Tracey Parker's conclusion that

> [w]hile the ending [of the novel] in part seems to suggest that gestures, and therefore mediated reality, take precedence over real life experience, […] gestures, images, and popular culture referents are the tools by which the contemporary individual expresses emotion and identity, and they do not necessarily preclude the ability to connect with others. (81)

The gestures in the end signal a realization that mediated reality *cannot* take precedence over real life experience, but they can help bridge gaps in connection. While Parker's conclusion rests on the Baudrillardian consideration of the "Real" and human interaction, I think these considerations can also be explained vis-à-vis the patterns of objectification and typing that are simultaneously built-up and broken down by media such as television.

To explain Smith's thematization of stereotyping and objectification, I begin this chapter by explaining the means by which "otherness" is created and mediated in television, as explained by Alex's moments of watching himself and others. I continue with Smith's characterization of Kitty Alexander, a fictional famous 1950s movie star, and I explain her role in the novel before discussing how Alex watches her on television. In looking at how Alex's relationship to Kitty compares to his relationship with his girlfriend, Esther, one can

see the importance of gestures for narrating belonging and begin to understand the function of rituals. This leads into a final point about how the simulacrum of television can highlight the ritual's potential in balancing the notion of identity as the relationship of ascription, the discursive description of others, and one's own subject position. Altogether, I believe that Smith uses television and celebrity to explore the themes of representation, stereotyping, and belonging. By looking at the television references in the novel, one is forced to contend with the challenges and possible solutions of navigating a hyper-mediated world, especially as a multi-ethnic and/or transnational person.

1 Mediating Othering

1.1 Television as escape

The Autograph Man begins with a literal act of self-othering, where the protagonist turns himself into a television character that he can watch. On the first page, the reader is told that Alex- Li is "one of this generation who watch themselves" (3). In the subsequent description of how Alex sees himself, it quickly becomes clear that this kind of individual is both so self-absorbed that he is unable to see anything outside of the frame of which he is a part, but also so aware of social ascription that he cannot think about himself without thinking about how others see him. "[I]f he imagines himself swimming in the sea, well, while most children will think immediately of the cinematic shark below them, Alex-Li Tandem is with the lifeguard," "a bronzed and languid American," more interested in the girls on the beach than life-rescuing (3). That the lifeguard is automatically recognizable as a character from the popular US TV series *Baywatch* speaks to the accessibility of the references Smith uses. The justification the novel provides for Alex's self-othering is that it allows him to deal "in the shorthand of experience. The TV version" (3). This method of rapidly going through life by means of symbols (specifically audio-visual ones) and avoiding the more difficult, long-hand

aspects of experience is key to understanding Alex's characterization, especially as the novel continues.

When Alex grows up, he becomes an Autograph Man, which by his own admission is a "little like being a Munchkin, or a Good Witch, or a Flying Monkey, or a rabbi. Not much, without your belief" (51). Comparing the profession to three characters from *The Wizard of Oz* and one actual profession, a rabbi, fits into Smith's style of comic realism in a metafictional novel that is just as escapist as the character it features, though admittedly the inclusion of the rabbi in this context is meant to introduce Alex's lack of faith. To be an Autograph Man, Alex notes, is an escapist profession, just like he escapes other difficult situations: his affair, his girlfriend's potentially deadly heart condition, his relationship with his mother, and, key to the novel, his father's death of a brain tumor, which the reader is introduced to in the prologue. Alex's drug and alcohol habits and his obsession with the Hollywood actress Kitty Alexander are other means of escaping from this early trauma. Even through the end of the novel, he resists dealing in the long-hand of experience.

As an Autograph Man, Alex has a set of personal skills that allow him to be successful at what he does. While one would think he is immune to the fetish of the autograph, which is both the relic of a famous person, extending the aura of their celebrity, and a commodity subject to market values and the supply and demand of the people, Alex is interested in the autograph of one person in particular, the Russo-Italian actress Kitty Alexander. The novel is constructed around the acquisition of this autograph (she has mailed it to Alex after thirteen years of letters from him), trying to find out if it is authentic, visiting Kitty in New York, getting her to come back to London with him, and convincing her to let him sell a variety of letters and autographs for her. The obsession seems to end when he finally agrees to participate in the Jewish public mourning ritual, the Kaddish, for his father. The novel's construction suggests that getting the signature precipitated everything that

followed, which made it possible for Alex to resolve his mourning. The resolution comments on the role a mediated figure like a celebrity may have in leading to identification and belonging. For one, celebrity may be responsible for releasing collective effervescence, which as per Emile Durkheim reaffirms the bonds of collective life (Rojek, *Celebrity* 57). For another, as the novel shows, the material products of celebrities can serve as intermediaries between real and imaginary spaces.

In most of his actions with Kitty, Alex is shown as participating in the collective practice of celebrity adoration. Through the seventeenth century, celebrities were those accorded fame and public attention most usually for being a public leader or someone who contributed to culture and science.[107] However, with the advent of the mass media, fame could be accorded to more people, and so media figures, including movie actors, music stars, and talk show hosts, increasingly replaced older notions of idolization, ending the era of glorifying the leaders of government, which seems appropriate given the end of empires, criticism of the nation-state, and the complication of the idea of national heroes.[108]

While no longer just political or social leaders, celebrities still function in social-groupings by serving as symbols or markers for social meanings, as Daniel Boorstin puts it. They are "vehicles for the creation of social meanings" (Evans 2). In particular, as cultural studies theorist Chris Rojek explains, celebrities "replaced the monarchy as the new symbols of recognition and belonging" and "elevated the public sphere as the arena *par excellence"* providing an "important integrating function in secular society" (*Celebrity* 14). This integrating function of an individual celebrity may not be as strong as the aggregate consideration of celebrity commodification, but Smith challenges the way this individual identification may work. Before I discuss the role of the autograph and its significance for

[107] Autograph collection also became fashionable in the seventeenth century.
[108] Many political leaders or representatives continue to be celebrities, such as Asian and European royalty, Ruth Bader Ginsburg or Barack Obama, and celebrities have also become political leaders (Grace Kelly, Ronald Reagan, Donald Trump)

providing identification beyond objectification, it is necessary to first describe this objectification.

1.2 The allure of celebrity

While many critics have commented on the themes of fame and celebrity in *The Autograph Man,* very few of them have looked at how these topics are actually constructed. Through the theme of celebrity and its various representations, including through television references, the novel gives the opportunity to see the ontological and psychological status of a social subject who has been made into an "object" (Cheng 14) in ways that are potentially not as damaging as via race. That is to say, personhood constructed via socially determined processes can happen in various ways. As Anne Anlin Cheng explains in *The Melancholy of Race*, racialized people often have "objecthood thrust upon them, which to a great extent constitutes how they negotiate sociality and nationality" (20). On a social level, the same thing can happen to celebrities, whose veridical self (the *I)* and self as seen by other (the *Me)* often become conflated and affect how they navigate social encounters.[109] However, Smith challenges the distinction between people who have committed to entering the public sphere through their stardom, albeit not always wanting it, to people who are subject to the same public scrutiny, but did, nor can do, nothing for or about it.

As Smith shows, the challenges of belonging for celebrities are common knowledge. One of Rubinfine's rabbi friends chastises Alex for being an Autograph Man, saying "[p]eople deserve privacy. Just because people are on television, this doesn't mean they don't have feelings" (64). In the next sentence, this same person questions Alex for being Jewish

[109] The social psychologist George Herbert Mead argued that the split between the *I* (the 'veridical' self) and the *Me* (the self as seen by other) is the human condition, at least since the ancient times, in Western society. However, for the celebrity, the split is disturbed "[s]o much so, that celebrities often complain of identity confusion and colonization of the veridical self by the public self" (Rojek, *Celebrity* 11). Because of their treatment, celebrities often feel that others forget this split, and that they are separate from the character they play, but the celebrity themselves may forget this split, and move through life as the "*Me,*" constantly being watched by others.

while also having Chinese heritage and having a non-Jewish name (65). Smith sets up a situation in which someone recognizes that celebrities do not deserve to be treated like objects' or 'other,' but they have no problem in doing this via ethnicity in another case. This is, however, not much unlike what Alex does with Kitty. The references of him watching her become metaphors for othering.

One learns that Alex's interest in Kitty is not just for her beauty or the elusive autograph, which is stated to have "held an almost mystical fascination" in a premature obituary (328), but in a particular character she plays in *The Girl from Peking,* where she plays a Chinese woman who comes to New York and finds success on Broadway and later in Hollywood. Having the video of *The Girl from Peking* on seeming permanent loan from his friend Adam's video shop enables Alex to watch Kitty repeatedly.[110]

> In the film, Kitty's eyes are taped down as ever, and she is lost in New York, again, a Peking girl with no friends. […] Lonely. Alex's heart cleaves to her as he watches her slender form slipping into cinemas, sitting in the dark. (135-6)

The third-person, focalized, omniscient narrator says it is loneliness that makes Alex's heart "cleav[e] to her" (136), while the reader can see it is also desire, though not in the erotic sense. The scenes are narrated from the future, since Alex has seen this movie many times and knows what is going to happen in the limited space of this film. He is watching not to find out what happens, to but to watch her while it happens. Smith creates the scene of interest for Alex as one which focusses on the transition from obscurity to fame, and a single scene that emphasizes loneliness to create the moment of identification in the text.

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[110] Video rental stores are another liminal marker of the novel, since today even DVD rental stores have mostly gone out of business, replaced by streaming-on-demand services. This obsessive rewatching of movies on television is also something Smith thematizes in her latest novel *Swing Time* (2016). Deferring to television as a medium in the 1950s has a lot to do with the broadcast of quality content such as films that would not be accessible in the archives or select cinemas otherwise.

1.3 Gaze of the other(s)

Significantly, loneliness cannot be depicted, since it occurs as the result of the absence of something. It is a moment created by a series of shots that becomes remediated and affixed with a descriptor in the literary text. The description brings Alex into the dark cinemas with Kitty. The ambiguous modifier "lonely" leaves open as to whether the word describes Kitty, Alex, or both, and this mental pause points towards what Alex is really interested in, which is to watch Kitty in her loneliness and feel something himself. This is, after all, one of the primary reasons people engage in para-social interaction (Horton and Wohl 215). The verb "cleaves," which is actually a violent division or cut, is used to describe the painfulness of the feelings Alex has at this moment. It heightens the need he has for Kitty, even though she is only a figure on the television screen, and the reader is presented with a projection of his loneliness onto her—which, again, is what othering is.

Furthermore, in watching her "slender form," and watching "Joey watching Kitty watching the huge flickering faces of people she presumes to be gods" (136), the moment becomes a mise-en-abîme of the reader watching Alex watch a film on television in which Joey is watching Kitty watch people on a cinema screen. In the plot actions are repeated just as systems are remediated, and television here is seen as having gone so far as to swallow film whole (Thompson).[111] Yet, as Raymond Williams points out, the similarities between film and television are only superficial and much is lost in the transmission to the small screen. On top of this, video technology interrupts the flow and content of television "point[ing] to video as a means of transcending boundaries" (Casey et al. 294). In the literary text, this leads to the reader asking what kinds of boundaries exist between Alex and Kitty, and which ones Alex sets up around himself.

[111] See Raymond Williams' *Television* (1990), section "Mixed and New Forms" in the "Forms of Television chapter: "It is clear that television has depended heavily on existing forms, and that its major innovation has been their extension, which can be qualitative as well as quantitative" (70). For another influential perspective of remediation, see Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's *Remediation* (1999).

The reader is involved here, too, since they are watching Alex watching Joey. This is important because it means that the reader is implicated in the act of watching, which adds a layer of objectification to the figure of Kitty. It also adds to a sense of belongingness to this group; and Kitty, whom they all rally around, is their star. Alex becomes "caught up in dynamics of desire through trajectories of looking and being looked at among objects and other people," which Sturken and Cartwright explain is key to the gaze (442), and so one can say that Smith recreates a cinematic experience in the living room. This is possible, because as Sturken and Cartwright explain via Jean-Louis Baudry,

> part of the fascination with cinema […] is that the darkened theater and the conditions of watching a mirror-like screen invite the viewer to regress to a childlike state. The viewer undergoes a temporary loss of ego as he or she identifies with the powerful position of apprehending bodies on the screen. (121)

The viewer becomes absorbed into the screen. The text makes this possible for the purposes of Alex's characterization, even if, as Williams originally said, the size difference between film screen and television can "radically alter the effect of an image" (*Television* 59). However, in watching while smoking marijuana, Alex's perspective allows him to expand the screen beyond its normal size, making the frame of the television disappear, and he experiences the same "temporary loss of ego" and becomes absorbed into the images on the screen in a similar way.

One could argue that Alex also experiences the same erotic desire that one feels in the movie theater, even if the usual experience of watching a film on television has "no fascination; here darkness is erased, anonymity repressed; space is familiar, articulated […], tamed: […] the eroticization of the place is foreclosed" (Barthes, "Leaving" 347). According to Roland Barthes, the experience of erotic desire felt in a movie theater is unique, hypnotized by the lights ahead in a surrounding darkness. However, the erotic gaze was not

restricted to the cinema in *Brick Lane* either. There, the dynamics of erotic desire and cultural codes of decency were successfully juxtaposed to codes of performance and agency. In *The Autograph Man,* Alex catches Kitty in the traditional 1970s film theory in which the "gaze of the spectator on the image was an implicitly male one that objectified women on screen" (Sturken and Cartwright 442). Thus, one could say Smith plays with the idea of Alex as the stereotypical male bearer of the look of Laura Mulvey proportions, participating in Hollywood's satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure (Mulvey 361). However, again the writing challenges this simpler understanding.

1.4 Racialization

To some extent, this pleasure in looking comes from Kitty's slender form. At the same time, the reader is given to understand it also comes from, assuredly, Kitty's costume and taped down eyes (54), made to look Chinese even if she is, in fact, "a Russian-Italian child of Capri" (228). In this film, she is the "fantastic construction of a woman of color," unattainable like Eve in *Time Magazine*'s 1993 project "The New Face of America," a digital creation of computer graphics that were coded to mix visual markers of ethnicities and genes. Mulvey explains in her 1975 manifesto "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Media" that the "determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly" (364). While the racial imaginary of Hollywood's Orientalism is confirmed in the actress's becoming an eroticized and exoticized object of male desire, Kitty does not necessarily embody the "white distrust of the inassimilable Oriental other," which Sally Wen Mao says happened to the first Chinese-American star in Hollywood in 1931, Anna May Wong, which may be due to the fact that it is Alex watching and Kitty's own mixed heritage.[112] If it were anyone else watching, it would be a vaguely exoticized European

[112] Perhaps it is also a response to how certain works offer "resistance to the white heteropatriarchal gaze" and they "transform the gaze and turn it back to ourselves, an inward empathic look at the self" (Xie).

woman performing. To Alex she is something else. To some extent, Kitty performs the idea that marginalized identities are interchangeable,[113] but at the same time, Smith uses Kitty to complicate systems of visualization. If Kitty is not Asian, then hers can be neither an avowal or disavowal of racialized bodies, even if her face is racialized in order to represent the racialized body.

Smith could expand on this, but she refuses to use moments like Alex watching *The Girl from Peking* to discuss the racialized and feminine body on screen beyond mentioning her taped-down eyes. Instead, it becomes communicated through the description of the remediated character. This relative scarcity of commentary fits into Smith's tendency to focus on other things than talk about race and ethnicity.[114] However, this is not to say that it is not an important theme for her book. As a biracial woman of color who grew up in the aftermath of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, movements uniquely tied to the proliferation of television,[115] Smith has written in other instances about the relationship between representation and the media and the power of seeing oneself on screen. Arguably, her refusal to give the reader something about this character's visibility responds to what Toni Morrison calls the "real excitement." "Sometimes what is already there is simply not enough; other times it is indistinct, incomplete, even in error or buried. Sometimes, of course, there is nothing. And for a novelist that is the real excitement. Not what there is, but what

[113] Since the late eighteenth century, the figure of "the Jew" has been a trope in the discussion of colonial subjects, with Salman Rushdie, Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire theorizing migration or colonial racism by analogy with Jewish diaspora and European anti-Semitism (Moore-Gilbert 106-7). However, as the postcolonial scholar Bart Moore-Gilbert explains, "at times, the positions of Blacks and Jews are not just equivalent but interchangeable in Smith's work" (109). While it seems dangerous to claim that the two groups are equivalent and interchangeable, thus relativizing their unique histories of persecution and suffering, the point remains that the characters in *The Autograph Man* resist ascription and thus being discussed in terms of cultural identity
[114] One instance in which this become evident is in the discussion between Zadie Smith and Édouard Louis in their discussion for *Celine* 12 April 2018; www.documentjournal.com/2018/04/novelistsedouard-louis-and-zadie-smith-on-writing-in-a-distracting-political-present/
[115] A good starting point to explore this significant phenomenon is the *Civil Rights Digital Library,* www.museum.tv/archives/etv/C/htmlC/civilrights/civilrights.htm. Furthermore, Ann duCille's book *Technicolored: Reflections on Race in the Time of TV* makes the link between the contemporary civil rights movement under the rallying cry "Black Lives Matter" and the function of television.

there is not" ("I'm Writing"). The gap of the text is paralleled by the gaps left in cultural or intellectual history. Therefore, it makes sense to consider what it in the gaps about race that Smith may be commenting on with small moments like taped-down eyes.

Smith seemingly skips over the problematic of Kitty's raced representation while Alex watches her, but she inserts this criticism later into Honey Richardson,[116] another autograph collector who points out to Alex all the ways in which Hollywood (fails to) represent(s) people of color. Either the actor is not even a person of color and just made to look like one (e.g., Kitty Alexander, but also the real-life Theda Bara), or they are actors made to fit into the stereotypes the producers thought the audience wanted to see (e.g., Louise Beavers). Honey also provides metacommentary for Kitty, and although both she and Kitty are fictional, the historical figure Theda Bara provides a key to Kitty's role in the novel.

Honey refers to the actress as having played objectified exotic characters and challenges the validity of these descriptions: "she was born in the shadow of the Sphinx, weaned on serpent's blood. According to the publicity. She was supposed to be sex on legs. Hard to believe" (203). By highlighting the exaggeration of Bara's sexual appeal to the audiences, which was a part of her star power, Honey evokes the factual foil to Kitty and makes clear that the pleasure Alex experiences in watching her goes beyond the sensual or the celebrated. For Alex, it is about knowing Kitty, and it is because he wants to be known. He saw in her eyes "an approximation of his own epicanthic fold" (Smith 54), and this observation ties in more clearly to the subtle commentary on description that happens earlier in the novel, retaining the televisual "naturalness" of stereotypes (Dyer, "Stereotyping" 357); it has to do with the way audio-visual media rely on physical markers of race and

[116] Honey is arguably the most interesting character in the novel, because while she is introduced as what Tracey L. Walters calls a stereotypical jezebel figure (Walters 134), Smith manages to undermine this predictable character type through a depiction of personal desires, loyalty, intelligence and vulnerability (135). Thus, she provides more nuances to what is found in television, where one is most likely to find these stereotypical figures (duCille 3).

stereotypical actions. Alex finds self-recognition in Kitty, which according to film scholar Richard Dyer is also necessary for the pleasure of viewing.

1.5 Racist media

Despite noticing a similarity in Kitty's and Alex's eyes, the text suggests that Alex's Asian heritage is just as constructed. Alex's identity becomes constantly overdetermined from without, even while the reader is given usually given the impression that Alex is not ethnically "othered," especially in Mountjoy, because there is a "considerable Jewish presence" (9). Although Li-Jin does not recognize his son's Asian features, and perhaps even participates in the "unseen racialization" of the Asian immigrant (David Palumbo-Liu qtd. in Cheng 13), other people in the novel wonder about Alex's name (*AM* 65), make off-hand comments about his eyes (Rubinfine calls them Accidental, "halfway between Oriental and Occidental") (40), or they call him Chinese.

Smith's depictions of Alex and his father, as well as Kitty, comment on the inherent racialization of audio-visual media, completed differently across different media. Film scholar Jonathan Beller even goes so far as to claim that cinema as a technology is inherently racist, because it historically allowed for race classification based on circulated photos of lynching and other hate crimes, and it is organized to "profitably portray white narratives as universal narratives in a society profoundly structured by racial inequality" (139). In television, the effect of profiting off so-called universal narratives may be even worse because of television's relationship to factuality in programs like reality shows, documentaries, and the news, which frames what is seen as being less constructed than it is. This kind of programming, combined with the individual choices of those holding the remote, provides a limited perspective of the available narratives and therefore may cause more damage in the way people respond to or understand the things that happen off-screen.

Beller's argument suggests that photography and other systems of visualization may also be inherently racist in a racist society, but the medium has been used before as an anti-racist tool. Frederick Douglass, known as the most photographed US American of the nineteenth century, believed that a photo was a representation without an intervening (racist) eye or hand, and therefore gave the sitter agency in ways that they could not have in painting. Douglass "did not have the same faith in the objectivity of an engraver (or painter) as he did of a camera" (Stauffer et al xiv). Part of his understanding comes from the belief, as the philosopher C.S. Pierce also saw it, that the photo is not really a representation; it is "automatically produced, it involves no action of human thought" (Brunet 301). Today, is it understood that even the automatic shutter of a camera is being controlled by someone, and the print can be produced in many different ways. Especially in the digital age, photography is not automatically accepted as objective seeing.

Still, one must acknowledge the positive effects when many of the processes can be undertaken by the sitter themselves. Based on an understanding of framing, textures, backgrounds, and setting, Douglass was able to demonstrate techniques of how he could "control meaning" (Guterl), since the only thing automatic in the making of a photograph is what happens after the trigger is tapped and before the editing. As Matthew Pratt Guterl explains, it "made it possible for the subject of the photograph to determine, to some extent, how people read and understood an image." For Douglass, photographic portraits could "[bear] witness to African Americans' essential humanity, while also countering the racist caricatures that proliferated throughout the North" (Stauffer et al xi). Thus, while Barthes saw the photo as killing the subjective self (*Camera* 14-15), Douglass used it as a way of preserving one's own view of the self.

As one knows, at the latest since Stuart Hall, stereotypes are ways of organizing information about people. Hall famously asserted in "The Spectacle of the 'Other'" that

people who are in minorities are frequently interpreted in a binary form of representation, with polar oppositions, which is both a product of the principles of difference (as per Saussure) and the practice of "othering" in their various manifestations. In this case, Hall refers not to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept, wherein one needs the other for generating meaning, but Edward Said, who describes the "battery of desires, regressions, investments, and projections" to which people who are "othered" are subjected (Said 16). In television, this often manifests itself in the utilization of stereotypes which reduces the world to "them" and "us," insiders and outsiders.

On the other hand, in his 1985 essay "Stereotyping," Dyer calls stereotypes "enshrined" hegemonic definitions" (357), "characteristically fixed" and "clear cut" (355). A few years later in *The Matter of Images* (1993), he points out the dangers of thinking rigidly in terms of stereotypes when dealing with representation. "A stereotype can be complex, varied, intense & contradictory, an image of otherness in which it is still possible to find oneself" (3). Stereotypes persist, perhaps because they are allowed to remain complex and because it is not completely alien. This becomes apparent in the literary text.

I argue that Smith uses the references to Alex watching Kitty on television to narrate objectification and turning people into symbols, and in this way, she addresses the objectification of people of color in the media. All it takes is small details of a different race or ethnicity metonymized to the whole person, and this is most quickly done with the camera shot, both moving and not. In *The Autograph Man*, this is done through the focalized narration of a single character, Li-Jin, and in a pithy set of a few personal and physical characteristics that are affixed to the character and give the first-impression of a well-rounded character. Mark Rubinfine is described as "tall and cunning, with a beauty spot on his cheek and that permanent look about him that suggests it would take more than a man excreting gold to impress him" (5). Adam is "definitely a nice boy, with a bit of a weight problem

which may or may not be the root cause of his niceness" (6). However, while Rubinfine's skin color is not mentioned and Alex's paleness is mentioned immediately (4), Adam is "black as peat, with curled hair tight on his scalp, and eyes so dark the pupil and iris have merged" (6). It is merely a physical description, albeit with the use of a simile and perhaps some hyperbole,[117] yet it stands in contrast to the way Li-Jin describes Joseph Klein a few pages later.

Li-Jin observes that Joseph "has delicate, pinched features. A boy like that should be blond by rights, but Joseph is a swarthy little thing, his hair black like an Indian's, his big eyes darker than that" (23). It is unclear why Joseph should be blond by rights, and Smith provokes the reader into making assumptions about the relationship between physical and personal characteristics, as well as whether a young man with a Jewish sounding name should be blond. In Joseph, like in the others, there is a more overt personality judgment in the physical characteristics that is not usually found in audio-visual media. In this way, Smith comments both on the act of typing and on the choices authors make in providing character descriptions.

1.6 Representation and watching selves

People need the feeling of being visible to others. When they consider themselves a part of a group, they want to be acknowledged and have their belongingness affirmed. As Smith shows, there is something pleasing in it as the camera sweeps over the crowd at the wrestling match in the prologue, and people are able to see themselves in the TV monitors hung around the hall. They "point and whoop and watch with delight as their pointing and whooping is sent back to them instantaneously, like light bouncing off a mirror" (29). On top of being a description of the unsteadying pleasure when discovering oneself amongst live

[117] Further consideration of Adam, who represents an intercultural and transnational member of the black Atlantic diaspora, could be done with the work of Paul Gilroy, especially *The Black Atlantic*.

television coverage, which can also be found in the CCTV screen at the front of any store, the alliteration and repetition of the words "point" and "whoop" create a kind of verbal bouncing back. Even the word "light" bounces back from "delight." It invites the reader to reconsider Jacques Lacan's mirror phase in the new technological age. Smith conjures one of the key steps to people entering the symbolic and becoming social beings: when they learn to recognize the other and begin to exist in cooperation with them, and at the same time, learn to reconcile their imaginary self with their perceived real self (Fiske 60). To see oneself in this medial frame and on this social plane can affirm a sense of being present and part of the group.

This is also why it is so important for people of color in majority white spaces and other marginalized people to have representation in the media, since as Rob Waters notes in his essay on Black Power and television, already in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain, "[v]isibility—being noticed—was inextricably tied up with seeing oneself on television" (955). Not being represented or having screen time is directly related to the feeling of invisibility. Concurrently, a common issue in the representation of minorities in the media is whether they uphold unbalanced power dynamics. Despite having a presence, the effect in the past has often been just to claim diversity. [118] However, the actor often is asked to embody a character that serves to perpetuate certain stereotypes, or their cultural association may be used to extrapolate to anyone else who may look like them, ignoring the diversity of experiences. This is to say that physical representation of a minority person does not automatically grant "good" visibility of marginalized people or minorities, as also argued in Nikesh Shukla's *The Good Immigrant*. In the 2016 edited collection of personal essays,

[118] This kind of "quota" filling is thematized in Honey's criticism. However, see *Reading Television* to read how John Fiske and John Hartley looked at specific examples of shifting away from these stereotypical roles, enough for them to make the argument that race representation on television in the 1970s was improving, especially in regards to the quality of roles played by people of color. To which extent this satisfies an idea of "positive" representation is also questioned by L.S. Kim in their *SAGE* reference article.

nearly every contributor has something to say about racial representation on television and how this informs what actor Riz Ahmed calls the experience of being "signifier before you are a person" (163). It constricts the possibilities and expectations for anyone else deemed part of that group. Smith plays with this understanding with Adam's small line "I die halfway through" (45) aware of the tendency in the representation of Black people in horror movies whose characters are often one of the first to die.

1.7 Double-Consciousness

Smith compares the way Alex watches himself to the way he watches Kitty to help depict the objectification or loss of individuality or subjectivity. Looking televisually at himself the way Alex does in the beginning of the novel describes the challenge of looking at oneself through the eyes of another, and this is uncannily similar to the way W. E. B. Du Bois describes the double-consciousness in his 1903 publication *The Souls of Black Folk*:

> the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, —a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, –an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (35)

Du Bois refers to the experience of being a Black man in the US at the turn of the twentieth century and being the subject of the gaze of the white American who may look at one's darker skin with "amused contempt and pity." When constantly faced with this, Du Bois describes, one learns to see oneself this way as well. James Baldwin describes this experience similarly, in that Black people are "taught to really despise themselves from the moment their

eyes open on the world" (*Fire* 25). By gazing and being the subject of that gaze, one becomes the subject of one's own gaze. This double-consciousness creates a constant struggle within oneself, only held at bay by an unusually profound self-consciousness that ironically is not recognized by the racist society.

From the opening page to *The Autograph Man,* where he sees "himself as that smudge on the horizon" (3) the reader is given the impression that Alex experiences this same kind of instability of being the subject of his own gaze. However, for Du Bois the source of this consciousness comes from being a member of a persecuted minority within a larger majority. Alex is not persecuted, but he still experiences micro-aggressions challenging his right to exist as he is based on how he looks, including the aforementioned incidence with the rabbi friend.[119] There are other instances as well, such as when a fellow Autograph Man keeps calling Alex Japanese (91). Even Kitty Alexander, his idol no less, asks him "where he is from, what he is, exactly" and when he tells her she says, "well I must say, you *look* Jewish" (*AM* 255, Smith's emphasis). One could wonder if this experience of being subjected to the objectivizing gaze is as common to those "of this generation" as the feeling of hybridity in the postmodern condition, as suggested by Bhabha. At the same time, it seems that some people more than others are exposed to the threat of being "fixed by others in a way that is overdetermined from without" (Chow 2), and Smith plays with the objectifying gaze with her television references.

After all, it is not just television that Smith has brought to life, momentarily personified by the persona of the wrestler Big Daddy to "pull itself from its socket and request that Adam and Rubinfine and Alex follow it now, NOW YOU LITTLE UGGING

[119] Alex's experience is described as less painful than Adam's, whose experience as a Black Jewish person in Mountjoy becomes thematized (9). This experience is addressed again later, with a reference to Sammy Davis Jr. (114). I recommend James Baldwin's interview with David Estes "I never intended to be an essayist" for considerations about the relationship between Black people and Jewish people in Harlem, New York City since the early twentieth century.

FREAKS" (7) to get Alex to go to the match. The novel does not break into magical realism here, but rather Smith personifies the television to gain a physical and verbal agency that bullies Alex and his friends. Television's power of persuasion becomes evident here, with a humorous note of suspension of disbelief. However, it also represents the oppressive perspective of others who provide commentary and judgement on how one looks and the choices one makes.

The real motivation for Alex to go to the match is the opinions of the people in his father's doctor's practice who start talking about Alex in the epilogue.

> He is just a boy, watching. It is like a TV show. Except in the past year he has become conspicuous. He has grown and filled; he's now soft-bellied, woman-hipped and sallow. His new glasses magnify the crescents of his eyes—does he look more Chinese? His boyhood is falling away. […] If you are twelve, suddenly everyone has an opinion about you. (*AM* 4).

Alex's puberty marks the transition from being in a safe space to observe and describe to being observed and described. Alex's parents have an opinion about Alex too, though Li-Jin's motivation for preventing Alex from "standing out from the crowd" (7) is not to prevent challenges based on the fact that he is Chinese-Jewish in a primarily white and Christian or Atheist society, but rather that he is the son of a father who has died too young of a brain tumor (7). The patients at Li-Jin's practice, however, though perhaps just equally concerned about Alex getting fresh air and exercise, make comments about his boyhood and Chineseness that are the encroachments of two social constructions onto Alex, who until he was a teenager, ready to "enter society," was not exposed to these demands. Society left him alone. Now, Alex is the one being observed, in effect turned into an object, subjected to people's opinions, and Smith describes both the experience of watching himself and being watched to make a comment on the experience of being 'othered' in the media.

This also happened in *Brick Lane,* where the protagonist lives the sheltered life of a female Bangladeshi migrant, bound by certain codes of moral behavior. When Nazneen describes how "she was conscious of being watched" while out one time with her husband, she really also means that this physical experience of being watched by a female photographer in the street matches Nazneen's sense of having "everything she did, everything she had done since the day of her birth, […] recorded" (Ali 208). In Ali's novel, the parallel of being watched feels like a kind of panopticon, Michel Foucault's concept of subjectivation by the state, but in *The Autograph Man,* watching and being watched becomes bound by patterns of 'understanding' strangers, which often happens by relying on what Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka calls "joint cumulative assumptions" (15). Smith takes this general feeling of being watched in a society that looks to see how one conforms to a set of norms and expectations to a new level.

Thus, these moments of Alex watching himself could be more than what Philip Tew suggests, which is that they are indicative of image replacing material reality, "image over substance" (*Zadie Smith* 72). This can and should be complicated in the case of people of color, for whom image often replaces reality to the disadvantage of the person of color, both "limited and limiting" as cultural studies theorist Ann duCille describes (4), though the image replacing reality is not so much the problem as the problematic experiences found in reality as a result of it (5). Since the images compete with the messiness of the things they are meant to represent, there is a constant negotiation of reconciling the image with the person. Calling this subjective agency, the process is a "convoluted, ongoing, and generative, and at times self-contradicting negotiation with pain," as Cheng states (15). Success in mastering this meaning becomes important for understanding the emotions involved in the psychical dynamics of social relations: "affirmation and rejection, projection and identification" (Cheng 15).

1.8 Intermedial situatedness

Riz Ahmed may have recognized that he is a signifier before he is a person, but this does not mean he accepted it. To do so would require buying into the idea that the world is a simulacrum anyway, and that personhood cannot properly exist. However, Smith challenges this, and in one of the most metafictional passages in the novel, the relationship between medium and mediated throws into relief, perhaps, some useful borders between the two.

The passage begins with Alex still struggling to see the purpose of performing the Kaddish and lamenting his own tendency to turn everything into symbol, a habit best evidenced by his mental binarization of all aspect of life as Jewish or Goyish in his book of Jewishness and Goyishness. "Feeling glum and muddled, Alex begins walking at a clip, wishing he could get over himself, get out of himself, out of this skin, just for a *minute"* (*AM* 151). But he realizes that "[l]ife is not just a symbol"; "There are no shortcuts. You're always *there.*" Smith creates a sense of desperation here, that one cannot get away from the physical being of a person. However, then she suggests several alternatives: suicide, which would "tak[e] some serious balls" (151), taking drugs, which often seems to have the opposite of its intended effect, and hiding in the mediality of things, in represented reality, but even this cannot get one out of oneself.

Alex's walk through the streets at this point is narrated twice, once presented in the first person as a speech bubble as if it were a defense made in a court as "if his life were on trial" (151), and once in the third person, with a short interlude to second-person, placing the reader in Alex's position, before continuing with the story. With this kind of double-narration, Smith recreates the polyphonic text of the television in which multiple voices compete for primacy of what is happening. In using a polysemic collage of voices in varying textual styles as well—the text on one page becomes inscribed in a speech bubble, where the

speaker repeats both to himself (Alex) and to the reader that "YOU ARE NOT WATCHING TV]."

> Things cannot in reality fit together the way the evidence does when I write it down—please remember this, please. The lunch wasn't just so, so neat; I didn't walk down a street to divert you; the scenes didn't follow one to the other, flawless and meaningful—please remember this is my life. [YOU ARE NOT WATCHING TV]. (152)

By using apophasis, Smith points the reader towards studying the medial conditions of the text. The statement is true, since the reader is reading a text, not watching TV. However, when one considers that the literary technique replicates television's textual contradictions and instability, it is uncertain whether the reader is *not* not watching TV. The text, after all, states that "this is my life," but it is also only a text, a fiction, and so this statement cannot be true either; or, both are equally valid. The whole sequence destabilizes any meaning in Alex's epiphany, and it is a pithy reminder that life does not work like the writing of a novel, a play, or a movie.

In defending his life, which is set up as a sister text to an obituary, Alex defends the lack of his life being like a television show. He reminds the reader that he, like the reader, will walk, "just like you walk." One could say that this passage is an acknowledgement of the way that in popular imagination, television is neat, where broadcasts fit into their scheduled programming, and individual scenes follow one another, "flawless and meaningful" (152), like the continuity Williams observed in *Television* (86-94). In speaking to the reader, Smith suggests that life cannot be narrated so neatly, especially now. There are gaps. Life is filled with many surplus stimuli that cannot be captured by our senses or noticed by our brain, or interactions will be full of miscommunications and mistakes. Thus, no medium is superior in representing these experiences, and, in fact, they may even need to be used together.

Returning to the content, which at this point should be recognized as aligned with the novel's form, Alex's ruminations grapple with what Martin Jay calls "situatedness." Because there is a "surplus beyond who we are, a surplus that allows us to create dialogue, translation, to be cosmopolitan, to be diasporic, to be in the world of global exchange," surplus may be that "which allows us to transcend the […] situatedness that seems to constrain us" (Jay qt. in Moya 82). Trying to fit identity into neat categories is like trying to arrange things "just so,…," but as the contemporary theories of identity postulate, this is impossible. At the same time, as Hall has pointed out, media have created a site for the creation of difference that is less ambivalent than before the level of representation. On the one hand, media allow for more possible interpretations; on the other hand, they allow for less ambiguity. Although Alex has choices in how he acts with others and how he conducts himself, he cannot be ambiguous; he must still either be wholly alive, or "opt for forever" and die.

In summary of the various moments of Alex watching himself and Kitty, one could say that Smith uses the intermedial moments to take the reader through the experience of being othered. James Wood criticizes Smith's novel for its postmodern approach with its emphasis of imaged over the 'real,' which "extends characters out into generality, away from individuation," and I argue that this is precisely Smith's intention and what she wants to criticize. This is often what happens to minorities in their representation, she shows. They become "types," stereotypes, maybe, that are created by the hegemonic group defining the minority group for themselves. This is reflected in the uncomfortable experiences Alex has of watching himself, where he is either submitting to a shark attack or crawling out of his skin.

2 Belonging With

However, the novel reveals some other possibilities for visibility, and thus acceptance and recognition. While the first part of the novel sets up the ways in which celebrity and minority construction can be quite similar, and the disconcerting ways that the experience can

be combined, the second part of the novel complicates the role of celebrity and popular culture in building contemporary communities. I begin by explaining the significance of the letters Alex writes Kitty, their in-person interactions, the role of the autograph, and finally the impetus to participate in the mourning ceremony for his father. I argue that together these passages uphold the conclusion that Smith interrogates means of navigating transnational and multicultural spaces through mixed-media strategies that continue with audio-visual text-based configurations.

2.1 Letters

When Alex first writes Kitty, it is a typical fan letter. Initially, he merely expresses, like all fans, his admiration and tells Kitty a little about himself to "*show that he is more than just a fan [...] a unique individual!*" (127, Smith's emphasis). "I am your biggest fan. If there is a more beautiful vision than you as you appeared in the movie *The Girl from Peking,* then I have yet to see it! As an avid Autograph Man, who is himself half-Chinese and interested in the cinema […]" (127). The letter begins with his statement of identification and Alex has no problem here asserting his Chinese heritage, in the same way he asserts it when he thinks he may start a relationship with his new Asian-English neighbor. However, this assertion, the plot constructs, does nothing to inspire a reply from Kitty, and so Alex changes his tactic.

Instead of naming superficial marks of identification, Alex intends to provide a more nuanced connection to Kitty by telling her "about [her]self" (127). These letters become more than the common fan pursuit of activities that facilitate taking part in the "streams-of-identity thought that imaginatively project […] them in to the experience of the celebrity" (Rojek *Celebrity* 51).[120] In Alex's case, the letters are literally projecting thoughts onto Kitty. These letters are all similar. The first example given to the reader:

[120] Alex's fandom works differently than contemporary fandom, though his is a precursor to contemporary fandom where fans have access to celebrities via Instagram or Facebook/Myspace and therefore have a feeling of an "intimate, day-to-day connection." However, before these kinds of platforms were available, the fans had

Dear Kitty,

She walks into the store and winces at the age of the boy serving her. Even his knuckles have no lines. He should be in school, she thinks.

Love,

Alex-Li Tandem (128)

In starting his letters addressing Kitty, Alex talks directly to her, yet then by referring to her in the third person, he seemingly describes someone who is not the addressee of the letter, making her an object, and not even a direct one. Here the voice is also divided again, once towards Kitty and the once towards a world in general, suggesting that even here Alex knows he is being watched. He focusses on a gesture, in this case "winces," and provides an accompanying thought, in this case implying compassion. In the signature, Alex creates intimacy with "Love" and then immediately distances, or brings it back to the formal, with his full name. The total effect of such a letter is both touching, since so much care is put into the empathetic, humane detail of the person, but also disturbing in its assumed accuracy and intimacy. The speaker suggests to know what Kitty does, thinks, and feels in hypothetical situations.

Overall, however, Alex seems more successful in reaching Kitty through this letter than any other means because of its connection to identity. The letters stand in opposition to the descriptions of the characters at the beginning of the novel, and they participate in the text differently than the television references did, since here the gestures draw the character without an impression of factual representation standing in the way. Since identity is also constructed and made up of symbols, the gestures relate to those symbols and communicate motives, desires, etc. that are part of identity. With the letter, Smith opens the possibility of

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to create their own stories. Now, celebrities become "the social construct invented by cultural intermediaries" (Rojek *PI* 70).

comparing writing to television, since it seems Alex, in "capturing" Kitty's gestures in writing, gets closer to her "true" self than any other representation has. This may have to do with the fact that he uses textual means of encoding (in the letters) rather than a visual one, or Smith is pointing the reader to the off-screen directions given to actors seen on screen.

Another difference has to do with time. The marker of television is (usually) instantaneous broadcasting. Smith provides an equivalent writing example when Alex and his girlfriend, Esther, use an instant messenger (171-3). However, letters are defined by a more evenly proportional distance to time ratio, with the time needed for the letter to arrive determined by the distance needed to be covered. Its paper material aspect means that it can also physically be misplaced, or waylaid, such as Alex's letters to Kitty are. In fact, in the novel, it takes thirteen years for Alex's first letter to arrive, since they had bee intercepted. Because they still have their intended effect and retain their intended meaning even when removed from the context in which they were written, these letters seem timeless.

A similar halting of time occurs in *Brick Lane,* which also features a series of letters; the seventh chapter consists solely of the letters to Nazneen from her sister, Hasina. In *Brick Lane,* the letters mark a transition between Nazneen's life before and after the death of her first-born, and through Hasina's responses to Nazneen, one learns of the major events in Nazneen's life: the birth of two daughters, changes in her husband's position, etc. Thus, the letters create a relief image of Nazneen's life in an approximation of Hasina's shaky Bengali, juxtaposing the challenges of a women in precarious situations in Bangladesh to a woman living in a patriarchal household in London. Some critics have accused Ali for verbal appropriation, challenging the representation of an uneducated woman's writing. However, the letters, like in *The Autograph Man* seem to be used in media interaction, pointing towards limits of distinguishing fact from fiction in multiple kinds of representation.

Alex may be successful in identifying Kitty in his letters, because they focus on specific, supposedly candid events and particular characteristics found in the unique individual behind the character on the screen. When Alex meets Kitty, he reveals the extent to which he has collected specific images of her in his mind over the years. “You are a library of me” says Kitty (257*)*, in response to Alex’s obsessive memorization of all her gestures. These are the “single moments in the films, the gestures” (256) that are the embodied images, the signs by which to interpret a character. They become the medium for memories of Kitty, which Alex preserves in writing.

2.2 Repetition

These same gestures create the basis of the letters Alex has written to Kitty since his seventeenth birthday, which represent a level of identification that extends unnervingly beyond the ways in which fans usually engage with their celebrities, such as through wardrobe and vocabulary. Para-social interaction (PSI) is a term coined by Donald Horton and Richard Wohl to refer to the often one-sided, nondialectical interaction between a performer in the mass media and their audience in a mediated encounter. The theory accounts for the way that the performer will adjust their performance to the supposed response, and the way that the audience will respond to this response as though it was anticipated (215), leading both parties to participate more and more in the same performance.

The para-social relation between Kitty and Alex is made possible by television and VCR in a way that it is not possible in the cinema, since, as Smith shows, the repeated watching of the gestures is what allows Alex to create a “collaborative expectancy” of her behavior on the screen (Horton and Wohl 220). The use of the VCR in itself is significant, because it ironically needs a television screen for playing the film, but the machine disorders what is television: the routinized live-transmission of broadcast. Viewers could control themselves what, how fast or slow, and for how long they watched material, and they could

choose to repeat it as well. In the US context especially, which is what frames Smith's novel, where television was in competition with Hollywood, theorists like Paul Attallah have even called the VCR "Hollywood's revenge on television" (80).

Alex's understanding of Kitty is unique precisely because he watched the video on television, and is able to rewind and rewatch her, taking spectatorship beyond the conception of the single gaze described earlier to active agency in her performance. The close-ups or immersion into the film give him more insight into her character than a one-time viewing would have. The process indicates a chance for her to state that he "understands [her]" (236). However, to the reader, common sense would dictate that Alex only understands what Kitty and the film directors and others involved in the editing would want Alex to see, and yet Kitty affirms Alex's understanding.

For some, Alex's recognition of Kitty may feel inauthentic. No one can possibly know what it is like to be Kitty based on a few movies they have seen. Anything Alex could see in Kitty would be a projection of himself. However, to have Kitty later affirm his understanding of her, "how could you *know* a thing like this!" (*AM* 232) is to suggest that in defining her—which is defining himself against her–he has been able to identify her. These letters assume a reality about Kitty based on observations Alex has only made of her in film, yet when she confirms that these descriptions accurately describe her, it become a moment of successful encoding and decoding. Alex's articulation is proven equal to the intended meaning. This exchange implies that Alex successfully read the signs Kitty put out about herself and was able to communicate these back to her, through the letters, in a way that she was able to understand as signs about herself. The use of multiple media in this exchange suggests that the possibility for understanding could only occur through semiotic translation. The exchange also reaffirms Kitty's celebrity nature, since she has incorporated Alex's projections.

After Alex recognizes Kitty and she confirms his recognition, Kitty provides Alex with a sense of being affirmed in his ability to decode her. The exchange indicates a possibility for belonging, which situates someone in a social structure through connection, attachment and identification. Although framed somewhat implausibly in the novel, Smith retains the possibility that recognition, and in turn finding a kind of belonging with the other, can exist. Furthermore, one's own role in the process makes it a "belonging with" as opposed to a "belonging to." Pfaff-Czarnecka makes this distinction in her discussion of multiple belonging, that "'belonging to' is experienced individually while affected by collective constellations. 'Belonging together' draws upon and results in both intersubjectivity in the sense of a person's feeling /enacting/experimenting the sense of common belonging as well as in collective practices and collective representation" (14).

2.3 Fluidity: Meeting

When Kitty finally responds to his years of letters with an autograph, Alex decides to visit her in New York. One could think he is looking for the human connection, perhaps because as Chris Rojek contends (59), the personal association to the celebrity, such as a personal message or actually meeting the person, will make his "relic," his autograph from her, more valuable. However, in terms of celebrity obsession, Alex's is different than most. He does not need to visit New York to prove her existence, but he thinks it is a genuine opportunity to meet and in part to confirm his impression of her. To an extent, this is similar to Phillip Tew's assertion that Alex visits to satisfy a desire of realness and to come into contact with the "original ontological presence or source of all of the various copies of her that he had viewed in her film over the years" ("Celebrity" 63).

When he stands in front of her house and rings the bell, before he sees her in person, Alex sees in his mind's eye his favorite shot. It is not a famous one, but the "beginning of her" where she "had recently lost her real name, Katya Allesandro." She lost her name, but

not her accent, which is arguably more important since it is connected to her voice and embodied presence, and she "remains a Russian-Italian child of Capri" (228).

> Her forehead melts into her nose like buttermilk down a ladle, as it did on Garbo [...]. That face can and will play everything from disenfranchised Russian princesses to flighty Parisian ballerina to Chinese immigrant. Maybe it is precisely the fluidity of her face that stops her from being a star of the first order. It is a face that will do whatever you ask of it, so full of gesture and movement that the critics will offer the futile, consolatory comment that the silents died too early. (228)

The passage literally rewrites Barthes' *Mythologies*, providing a different version of stardom. For Barthes, Greta Garbo represented an ideal made possible in cinema, "when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy, when one literally lost oneself in a human image as one would in a philtre" (56). Garbo's face was a mask made-up of all the ideals of beauty. It is what made her an icon, but not a subject with agency; "it has nothing of the essence left in it" (57). Barthes' reverence of Garbo's face, calling it divine or godly, removes it from ordinary contemplation.

However, Smith specifically replaces what would be Kitty's celebrity marker of singularity with fluidity. Her face becomes accessible and, while not a star of the first order, one whose face was just as beautiful, and whose gesture and movement could mesmerize Alex. She thus promises a "real existence outside the film" that can "guarantee" "the uniqueness of the characters they play" (Dyer, "Stereotyping" 361). Furthermore, as Alex realizes shortly after this moment, Kitty's face has changed with age. Time has also made her face more fluid, "folded over many times" (229).[121] Because of this, Smith's celebrity figure goes beyond the issues Walter Benjamin found in the "cult of the movie star" who

[121] Her appearance is a reminder of the root of the word celebrity, which is *celere* and means "swift," and this is related to the idea that fame and physical beauty are both fleeting.

participated in “artificial build-up,” and “preserves not the unique aura of the person but the “spell of the personality,” and “the phony spell of a commodity” (Benjamin 11-2). Alex’s letters and this moment poke beneath this “spell of personality.”

2.4 Belonging

When Alex finally meets Kitty and gets over the familiar initial surprise that she is not quite who he imagined her to be, he realizes that the “viewing was not one-way. She could see him too” (229). Not only that, but “her face suggested she understood him all the way through, to the marrow, as we all want to be understood” (232). The reversal of the two positions, and Alex’s gaze returned, upends the distinction between celebrity and fan; however, this too is only Alex’s projection. She does not turn him into celebrity in the same way, though he feels celebrated when she praises him for the letters. At the same time, he cannot stop recalling filmic images in her physical actions before him, and Smith interweaves these flashbacks to Alex’s memories of her films within Kitty’s continual speaking about her life.

> Here the moment was very familiar to Alex. It was from the dressing room scene […] quick forward thrust of her head, chin up […]. Alex knew the next line (*I’m sorry, I just can’t do it, honey”*) and thought for a moment he might say it. (233)

Alex remembers the gestures, the scenes, and the lines amidst the space of the vividly described apartment, Kitty’s chatter, and he even gives the line and that directly addresses Honey, who is also in the room.

Their interaction is used to create the understanding that people can find belonging around celebrities, and through them, but not with them. They exist in a liminal space between promoting belonging while being excluded from that belonging. Rojek writes that “celebrities are significant nodal points of articulation between the social and the personal” (*Celebrity* 16). Nevertheless, if celebrities “simultaneously embody social types and provide

role models" (16), then they oscillate between being and not being a member of the group. Fame simultaneously recognizes one as being the best in a group and perpetuates their standard as the best. However, once one is marked, one can no longer belong to that group. Alex even experiences this himself when he becomes famous for a day after a lucrative auction sale with Kitty's help (298-299).

The intermedial narration of Alex's meeting with Kitty becomes a metaphor for the paradox of identity as per critic P.A. Sell, who notes how Smith "drives a wedge between the knowable and definitory representations others make of an individual's identity, based on a culturally determined set of elements, and the unknowable and undefinable reality of that identity itself" ("Chance" 36). Alex has a chance to get to know Kitty, but he cannot get beyond the "culturally or historically determined self" (36).

According to Sell, identity is a

> paradoxical state of affairs, whereby an entity is a member of a given set and also stands outside that set, with the result that the entity's true identity is cast into doubt while the possibility of defining identity is ruled out altogether. (36)

However, perhaps the point is to prove that the representation of the culturally and historically determined self does not need to be logically compatible with the undefinable self. The concepts used to describe identity are, after all, "constantly crossed and recrossed by the categories of [race,] class, gender, and ethnicity" (Hall, *Representation* 201). They are not stable, and as Sell describes, they are something other people do to a subject, not an inherent part of the subject. This maintains that there is something about human identity that exists beyond the discursive constructions used in attempting to describe it. Furthermore, according to Hall, the subject is also the creator of the discursive process of defining oneself in and against social forces (Hall "Introduction" 7). Because of this, it seems mediated people may be used as a part of these discursive practices as well, and something to define oneself

against. Television mediations seems especially conducive for this, since not only is the viewer's gaze more active, but the television program is more open.

3 Death and Impermanence

On top of providing new ways for thinking about marginalized identities and belonging, Smith utilizes intermedial strategies for the discussion of one further theme: death. Other than pointing to death as the ultimate objectification, it is also the ultimate connection. Even the wrestlers in the epilogue know that *"death comes to all!"* (*AM* 31). This is true of Kitty as well, who is aware of it, even if Alex seems unable to see it. Kitty later explains "'You know why I like them?' She said wistfully. 'Your letters? They are nothing of movies. Nothing about that. They are just a woman, walking the world. This is beautiful'" (*AM* 236). Kitty finds them so wonderful, because the letters are evidence that she is still living, and that her "life has moved on" (*AM* 233). It also means that it will end one day. Ironically, precisely this aspect about her that Alex was able to observe is the one that he struggles with. "He keeps seeing her young face. Maybe he is here to see her young face for her" (256). A part of him wants her to remain permanent, unchanging and spared from death.

Alex struggles with this plural vision of Kitty during the entirety of their time together: his memories of the movies, her physical presence, and her appearance when watches the movies again. The remediation provides new perspectives of her significance in his life. For example, after meeting Kitty, Alex notices a new gesture in *The Girl from Peking* as he focusses on the "tiny pulse in this wrist that [Joey, another character] grabs. It speaks a Bible" (256). A single physical gesture can communicate a few hundred pages worth, and this time the pulse signifies blood pumping through the body, the life force. In recognizing this aspect about Kitty, Alex notes her embodied mortality. Although this seems difficult to reconcile with the fact that she is a celebrity, the reference suggests there is a relationship between the moment of "otherness" as celebrity and the concept of death.

In his foreword to a collection of essays by Toni Morrison, Ta-Nehisi Coates writes about the developments that have occurred in the US since Morrison gave her series of Harvard Lectures about "the literature of belonging" in 2016. In 2016, just as in 2020, much of the US's discourse on racial politics had to do with the killing of Black adults and youths like Michael Brown. Coates asserts that "death is but the superlative example of what it means to live as an 'Other,' to exist beyond the border of a great 'belonging'" (xv). To be "Other" is to be excluded from that which is considered universally human, which in this case is to be alive.

However, at the same time death is "a space beyond the human and yet inextricably underl[ying] the experience of subjectivity and the relationship to representation" (Lea, "Anxieties" 467). We are no longer human when we die, because a large part of what makes us human *is* this inevitable death, yet its inevitable arrival is something that every person has in common, and it underlies a collective awareness, unifying people, but also affecting each person individually, who comes to terms with it in a different way. It remains abstract until the end, even while one can observe its approach in bodily changes and one suffer from the emotional pain of seeing others die. It remains understood only in terms of representation. With *The Autograph Man,* it seems that Smith suggests there is a hierarchy to this representation, and film and television are not at the top.

3.1 Empty media

Death is rarely purposefully shown on television, though deaths can occur on-screen, as is the case when someone unexpectedly dies on live-television.[122] History books are filled with media events that went wrong, such as the Challenger Shuttle crash in 1986.[123] Also, as I explored in regards to *Brick Lane*'s depiction of the September 11th terrorist attacks, part of

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[122] In his 2010 book, *Zadie Smith,* Philip Tew explains how Smith was watching as the comedian Tommy Cooper collapsed and died on live-television (30). She was nine and watching with her father, and it is sure to have affected her.

[123] See Stephan Weichert for his relevant discussion of crises as media events.

the trauma of those broadcasts were seeing death happen on a mass scale and being unable to do anything about it. Despite not being staged, the attacks were arguably instigated to be covered by the media, and then the narrativization took over, grouping the occurrences together and situating them within a social and political context.[124] It is worth also asking how moments such as the narration of deaths on television will be reflected in the future, where digital platforms and hand-held cameras connected to the internet allow for immediate spread of disturbing instances of murder. However, most of the time, the death on television is staged; it is not a factual death, but one acted.

Within this sequence, television news obituaries occupy an interesting role. They do not show a person as deceased, but a narrative is constructed around a factual death. In *The Autograph Man,* Smith plays with the representation of a morning news program announcing Kitty as having died.[125] Amidst other events,

> the television, well aware of the median age of its viewers, spent barely a minute of this new death, the 152,460th of the day. Here is a picture of the actress when young:
>
> Here is one of the men she loved (he is broken now, and on wheels):
>
> Here is the most famous moment of her most famous film . (293-4)

In this banal impression of reporting, the reader is given the impression that the broadcasters have taken images from their "morgue" and presented them with a little context, but very little storytelling.[126] Unlike the gestures that Alex has collected of Kitty and contained parts

[124] After this narrativization happens, it can, as Elihu Katz and Daniel Dayan explain, allow us to act "in concert with anonymous and like-minded persons in the political process" (124).
[125] The novel loses a touch of realism when the reader is asked to suspend their disbelief about the news not having fact-checked Kitty's death.
[126] Every news network has news clips saved in their "morgue," an archive specifically for collecting news on famous persons, so that when the person has died, they can report on it right away with a summary of that person's biography. One major distinction between television and journalistic texts is the limited amount of information that can be given (*The News Manual Online,* Ch. 51), but also emphasizes the way television can

of her essence, the news journalists selected a few moments from Kitty's timeline and relied on the images the public is bound to have known, to which, on the other hand, the reader has no access; at least they could read Alex's letters. Instead, the reader is given a drawing of a television with an empty screen, as though inviting the reader to draw Kitty there.

The drawing of the television is a unique intermedial reference amidst the others in this book, because it is the only visual representation within the four novels I discussed, and one of the few references to the physical manifestation of the television, not just its content. In fact, these televisions have no content; at least, their screens represent no explicit content. Although the book is filled with visuals: doodles, the Hebrew alphabet, the *sefirot,* speech bubbles, and joke boxes, this is the only one to be used in place of text.

From an intermedia theoretical standpoint, the reader has to acknowledge that the drawing is a remediation of the blank television screen. Rather than refer to it with words, Smith refers to it by another visual medium that seems even less successful in replicating the simultaneity of the audio and visual signs than words may have been, which could have at least represented the accompanying commentary. Now, one gets an empty screen with barely any accompaniment of what one is supposed to imagine on the screen. On the other hand, while the textual reference would have succeeded in the "as if" characteristic from the verbal standpoint (Rajewsky, "Intermediality" 51), the image satisfies the visual aspect. The reader really is faced with a television, even if only a two-dimensional sketch of one with the bare amount of detail. The detail is enough to mark it as a television: the screen, a squiggle representing the television's manufacturer, the "on" button and a few smaller buttons for channel and volume control. The lack of detail plays with the notoriously low-definitely of

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also involve interviews and other audio-visual material in an effective way, bringing the deceased person back to life.

television, as opposed to cinema screens (one of the reasons that McLuhan distinguishes it as a "cold" medium).

The box and these buttons would be difficult for anyone born after 2002 to identify, since most televisions are now high-definition, but in the novel the blank screen serves as a metaphor for the way the reader will create images with their imagination. Smith calls upon the reader's tendency to imagine something based on the terse captions, even if they are neither a transcript from what one would imagine to go along with a television clip, nor an ekphrasis, clearly telling the reader what to imagine. With these doodles, the power of the image, and therefore the story, is granted almost exclusively to the audience, in this case the reader. Hence the television does not perform its escapist function here.

Looking more closely at why the screens are empty, one can wonder if it comes from an inability to represent what is being shown, life after death. Because Kitty's life is created in this text, the text goes to one symbolic mode further with the doodles to show how the representation of death happens as one mode further. If addressing it in life, then one would shift it to the symbolic. Since Kitty is already in the symbolic in the text, one now needs the doodles. Or, after Alex has met the real Kitty, there is nothing left for him to project into the imagined space of the screen. The screens are empty, because Alex does not fill them.

Acknowledging Smith's interest in the relationship between the image and the text, the context indicates that the empty television sets perform the same function as the empty set earlier in the novel, when the narrator asks the reader "if you have a better phrase than *like thundering elephants* insert it here [   ]" (*AM* 32). The doodles are the visual equivalent of the clichés, which play a critical role in the novel. One gets the impression that Alex relies on them for many of his interactions. When he approaches Kitty, he realizes that "[a]ll the opening lines he can think of call for a younger woman in the role" (253), and so he does not say anything. He also has a hard time offering more than "perfunctory TV consolations"

when he learns of the deaths of Kitty's parents (261). This reflects his inevitable verbal socialization by television, which Li-Jin comments on early (15), and which comes as result of the way television "popularises slang, neologisms and ethnic epithets, creates catchwords and buzz-words, and introduces new words and provides reference points for simile and metaphor in everyday language" (Gillespi 58).

Much can be accomplished with such language in storytelling, however ultimately, they are superficial and restricted to a common understanding. At some point, there is just something they cannot express. The reader sees this in Smith's description of the fundamental clichés, but ultimately, death is one of those things that cannot be satisfyingly grasped. Instead, the reader is given a series of short sentences, like the series of images sent across the screen meant to give an idea of the basic biography: "Reclusive, in recent years. She was a talent. Joy to so many. Private funeral. Sorely missed. And now for the weather" (294). These platitudes and the speed in which the reporter goes through them, plus the callous transition to the weather, confirms the lack of sentiment that already began with the news:

> In the middle of the East a man had boarded a bus with a bomb pressed to his naval. In Parliament a man accused another man of deceit. A child was missing. Her parents rocked and gulped and couldn't finish their sentences. (*AM* 291)

"Middle of the East" clearly evades mentioning the term "Middle East" that has occupied media and politics since the 1960s, and rather than mention names, general nouns are used to describe actors in Parliament. The media response to a kidnapping and the description of the way the parents are depicted offers no sympathy. Pierre Bourdieu describes such a disturbing tableau of events as a "vision" that is

> at once dehistoricized and dehistoricizing, fragmented and fragmenting. […] Stripped of any political necessity, this string of events can at best arouse a vague humanitarian interest. Coming one after the other and outside any historical perspective, these

unconnected tragedies seem to differ little from natural disasters […] that also occupy the news. (Bourdieu 7-8)

In other words, television can distance one from the human reality of the events. Smith sets up this interpretation early in the novel when she has Alex evoke the classic binary of television as entertainer and as informer (Silverstone 19). "Forgive the twin lies of entertainment and enlightenment" Alex tells himself during the speech bubble alleyway interlude (*AM* 152). The most significant thing about the news is that it is perhaps as far removed from reality as any fiction, and therefore just as much a lie. But it is a lie that we forgive. Perhaps, because as Alex says "TV does not show you […] the potential range and horror of the human form" for which it is "rightly celebrated" (88). In this obituary sequence, the television literally shows no form. As it becomes clear throughout the novel, the television cannot show the full range of the human form, because "[l]ife is not just a symbol […] Life is more than just a Chinese puzzle" (151). The news medium saves one from the trauma these events inflict on others, and it manages this precisely because it deals in symbols.

Either way, the plot moves along even when the medium is empty, and the screens are used to show how mass media may create a presence (through a circularity of pretending to make present) through an actually empty aura. Jargon, according to Theodor Adorno similarly presents a gesture of autonomy without content[127] (Schroyer xiv), and if one extends this notion of the gesture to *The Autograph Man,* one can wonder, as Alex does, why a gesture is so important. He claims "it's a gesture […] nothing more," even as Adam asks "What's more important than a gesture?" (*AM* 340). One can see gesture as abstract and

[127] "The symbolism of the jargon does not represent actual social relations but rather symbolize only relations between abstract concepts" (Adorno xiv).

already manifest at the level of representation. Thus, the question remains "what is more important than a gesture *to which we can have access*?"

3.2 Mediating the dead

Smith makes a point of showing how Kitty's popularity has died out but for the interest in her signature and a regular appreciation of her beauty (69, 297, 238),[128] perhaps indicating a side-effect of living in pluralistic society: people do not all perceive things in the same way. Alex is one of the few people who have retained an interest in Kitty, and his attachment ultimately goes back to his interest in autographs, which originates from the day his father died. Alex started collecting autographs at the wrestling match on their last outing together, but the first signature of his collection is that from his father. The signed Li-Jin Tandem pound note became a material shibboleth for Alex and his friends. It stood as a symbol for the friendship between Alex, Adam, Rubinfine, and Joseph, who had each received one, and it became a means of distinguishing the in-group.[129] Adam has Alex swear on it (53) and Alex Blu-Tacked it above his door and touches it before leaving like a mezuzah.

As the novel continues, it becomes clear that Kitty's autograph serves as a stand-in for this autograph, an elusive, mystical item that Alex seeks because he thinks it will replace what is missing in his life since his father died. Because of his experiences, autographs are heightened in their significance for Alex, and they mean more than the price one can get for them based on the laws of the market or its common role as a relic. He does not need the autograph to replace the divine, immortal figure of the celebrity (Payne 4). The materiality of the autograph becomes immaterial to Alex, who refuses to sell it later for his own profit.

[128] When Kitty reads her obituary in the paper the next day, "*Her chief interest in cinematic history was for collectors, for whom her autograph held an almost mystical satisfaction.* […] That is my whole life, apparently, in a sentence" (328).

[129] Note, Philip Tew comments on shibboleths— "Smith attempts to undermine quite subtly certain shibboleths of contemporary intellectual culture" ("Celebrity" 56)—but he does not mention the pound note.

When Alex receives the signature from Kitty after years of unanswered letters, it represents to him the affirmation of his attentions as well as a direct connection to her, causing an emotional, subjective reaction and exhibiting an emotional value that extends beyond social construction. The autograph becomes something like Barthes' punctum, the personally piercing detail in a photo that strikes the viewer's (mind-) eye, and it becomes the lasting impression of the photo. It establishes a direct connection between the subject of the photo and the viewer that often extends beyond the mortality of the sitter. Often, this *punctum* is related to the mortality of the sitter who may have died and is still seen in the photo, and the recognition that "*[t]his will be* and *this has been"* (*Lucida* 96) connects the autograph to Alex's father even more.

Alex notes how "[a] man could own these photographs and partake (in however minor a way) of the famousness of these people and their remarkable ability to cheat Death of its satisfaction: obscurity" (153). However, this fear of obscurity marks Alex later as well. "As if the world could be saved this way! As if impermanence were not the golden rule! And can I get Death's autograph, too? Have you got a plastic sheath for that, Mr. Autograph Man?" (207). Collecting autographs is meant to alleviate this fear of death.

After Alex moves beyond the autograph to seeking out the autographer, he ultimately realizes that the source of his interest in an autograph from Kitty Alexander was really his father. The last letter Alex writes to thank Kitty for the autograph she finally sends him make this clear, since he describes her relationship with her father to her, while projecting his own desire for this relationship with his father. Alex suggests things he wishes someone would say to him, such as that he crosses his legs as his father did, or they remind him of things such as "playing horse-and-rider on [his] father's lap" (129). Thus, while Alex is literally running away from the death of his father at the beginning of the novel for the autograph of the

wrestler Big Daddy,[130] and while Alex subconsciously continues to flee this memory with the collection of more autographs, including the most elusive one of Kitty, he returns to the memory of his father and the way he used to sign at the end, signifying that he is no longer running away.[131] This understanding is made explicit when near the end of the novel, Adam, who intends to give Alex a spot in his Kabbalah for Kitty, ends up letting him place the signature of Li-Jin Tandem there instead (341-2).

Smith frames the novel with Adam's Kabbalah, which is called the Kabbalah of Alex-Li Tandem, by placing it at the beginning of the book. Its purpose does not become clear until the story continues; it uses popular culture icons to symbolize the different aspects of the existence and the human psyche (107). His diagram, Tracey Parker writes, is an "act of articulation [that] transforms popular cultural referents into meaningful signifiers and is an example of an individual bringing together ideological elements to create new meaning" (77). By placing Li-Jin at the head, which represents both crown, nothingness (*Ayin*), and will, Alex acknowledges his father's role in his life and affirms the link between a loved one from his past and a motivation for living towards the future.

With the autographs, Smith highlights the disconnects between the medial result and that which was meant to be mediated. Although Alex spends the novel distinguishing himself from his father, keeping him a figure in the past, by the end he realizes that the source of the signature was within him all along. They share the same signature. Smith refuses to give the reader these moments of identification until the end, teasing with illegible signatures even though he wrote it "perfe—" (65), using the wrong alphabet: "not even English. Is that Chinese, man?" (175), or, once when he is high, it is "a shaky table, a catcher's mitt, the

[130] It is worth noting the irony of the name and the replacing function Big Daddy has as a father in this instance.
[131] Note, while I came to this conclusion using a different constellation of characters and memories, my claim here is similar to that of Peter Childs who states about Kitty Alexander that she represents "[t]he symbolic fleeing the real for the artificial characterizes Alec's life until he returns to the memory of his father at the narrative's close" (Childs 203).

bottom half of a chair" (159). At the end, the reader is told that Alex's signature is just like his father's: "they're *similar,* aren't they?' said Adam earnestly. 'I mean, you really write alike'" (340). It is only after confronting this realization that he had been emulating his father in these mediated constructions all along that Alex manages to participate in the Kaddish for his father.

The fact that Alex demonstrates the similarity of the signatures on the back of a TV schedule (340) is both ironic, because of Li-Jin's untimely death, but also a fitting tribute, because Li-Jin had decided television was the closest thing he would get to the "permanence" of "moving film" (29). It underscores the inherent mediality of all these actions and the connections between them.

3.3 Mediating the living

Smith juxtaposes Alex's watching Kitty to his relationship with Esther, his girlfriend, to emphasize the role Kitty plays in his life: she is the "fantasy [person]" by whom he feels "soothed" (135). Esther recognizes that Alex's interest lies in Kitty as a symbol, not an actual person, but she feels threatened by Kitty anyway, mildly reinforcing the idea that Kitty is the "other woman" in Alex's life, which reflects what Lynn Spigel explains already began in post-War US, where television created female competition for male attention (*Make* 119-21).

With his reflex to watch *The Girl in Peking* instead of talk to his upset girlfriend, Alex substantiates the idea of media like movies and television serving as means for escapism and avoidance. The novel provides several examples in which television is sought out as a source of distraction or escape,[132] and with this, Smith's character upholds Baudrillard's 1986 claim "that we live in an era of hyperreality" (Rojek, *Presumed* 79) and that "media representations

[132] Examples: when Li-Jin cannot sleep, because he is thinking about his impending death (29); when Adam tentatively asks Alex about performing the Kaddish for his father this year (112); when Alex flies to New York ("All Alex is required to do for the next six and a half hours is eat and watch television and fall asleep for a while") (184); when Alex is alone in the hotel room, in New York, thinking about what to do next now that he has found Kitty and Honey has implicitly rejected him (252).

of reality and illusion have become so entangled that social consciousness flees from respecting anything real or lasting" (79). Smith describes Alex as a character that took thoughts of death "cinematically, or televisually, if he took it at all" (*AM* 324).

Turning on the television in the midst of a potentially relationship ending fight with Alex, Esther emphasizes her non-television aspect. Standing "in front of the screen," with her "fierce bulges that were thigh muscles" (291) emphasizes Esther's opacity and physical presence in comparison to Kitty's fantasy aspect. Of course, Alex has gotten to know Kitty in the meantime, and see aspects of her physical presence, but the reader is to understand that these impressions do not stay with Alex because of the overwhelming mental record of her virtual gestures. This is not to say that Esther is not also mediated. In fact, most of the conversations the two have are over the phone or on an internet chat board, but the comparison between Esther and the screen is different than when Alex sees Kitty walk by. In this moment, Alex "seizes a scene. Kitty in a two-piece, drying her hair. She stops. Stands above it, looking down at the image from an oblique angle, scorning it almost" (257). She does not block the screen, like Esther does; she compares herself to it, and the description is chopped into shots, just as Alex's memory of Kitty is.

3.4 Rituals: Kaddish and wrestling

Smith distinguishes between the affective responses of individuals and the general situation of a group, as well as the phenomenological experiences of existence in comparison to representation. When Alex complains to Adam about the Kaddish— "I thought you said all this was going to make me *feel* better. I don't feel better" (341)—Adam answers "I said it was going to *be* better, not feel better" (341). The novel actually ends with this meeting with Adam, who helps Alex understand that it is not so important how he feels about doing the Kaddish, but the fact that he decided to do it. If it seems strange that people seek their emotional soothing in larger groups, one need only look back again at how the novel started:

in the wrestling hall. People have always relied, to some extent, on external stimuli like storytelling, fiction, and ritualized spaces to realign themselves with their feelings and with community.[133]

Alex's friends help, direct, and encourage him to perform the Kaddish, the Jewish mourning ritual, for his father on his 15th death day.[134] It takes Alex until the end of the novel to finally perform this ritual, even if performance is a loose term here, since the ceremonial, rabbi-officiated one is done half-heartedly and the more affectively true one is done between being sick in a closet, "some spot where he could not be heard, hot and dry and full of towels" (325). His sick literally becomes the difficult he has coming to terms with death expelling from his body. Although Alex resists organizing the Kaddish for his father, he is able to say it in the penultimate chapter "without gesture or formality" (325). The tension in the affective truth of the non-formal performance derives from the normally understood aspect of gestures that work as verbal symbols to be understood in a group, and the way gestures become necessary to participating in the group.

The Kaddish as a ritual reflects many religious rituals, Jewish or otherwise, that serve to evoke catharsis in the same way as a Greek tragedy. James Baldwin and others have made the relationship between theater and the pulpit (*Fire* 37), where the actors seeking a relief from "Blindness, Loneliness, and Terror" put on a performance that is "at once so pagan and so desperate" (31). Smith extends this performance to the wrestling ring, where the wrestlers act out the ancient drama of *Good and Evil*.[135] *The Autograph Man* opens with the wrestling

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[133] The claim seems bit banal despite continuing to be a theoretical concern for literary scholars. A recent example by Albrecht Koschorke in 2012: *Wahrheit und Erfindung. Grundzüge einer allgemeinen Erzähltheorie*.
[134] The way Smith has Alex perform the Kaddish was informed by Leon Wieseltier's book *Kaddish* (1999), which is cited in the front matter of the novel. *Kaddish* is the result of the journal Wieseltier kept while informing himself about the practice of the Kaddish, and his account highlights how he performed the Kaddish three times a day, every day, in the year of his mourning.
[135] In thinking about the theatricality of television and wrestling, it is useful to point out Volker Roloff's talk about the theatrical effects of television, its interaction with the audience, and the effects of flow in television versus its lack in theater (though the willing suspension of disbelief could be considered a type of flow) (Roloff "Theatralität" 17-18).

and closes with the Kaddish because both are rituals, and the events sandwich the rest of the novel as a part of Alex's journey in mourning his father's death. Their roles as ceremonies, *merely* gestures (though exaggerated ones in the case of wrestling), are created to affirm a sense of justice on the one hand (33), and on the other a sense of hope on the other.

Wrestling has a reputation in academic scholarship, covered by Barthes in *Mythologies* (15-25), Hall, who extends on Barthes in *Representation* (36-7), and not least Fiske in *Reading Television* (245-251), where he pays special attention to televised wrestling in his analysis of television, connecting it to Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque. For Fiske, wrestling exists "on the borderline of art and not-art (or life)" (Fiske 245). It is "the parody of sport" and "all [including the spectators] participate spectacularly in this inverted, parodic world" (248). Admittedly, Smith's creation of the wrestling match seems indebted to both this notion of the carnivalesque as well as Barthes' idea of the myth-making function of wrestling. Smith also has Good triumph over Evil by the end of the fight; it is "inevitable", the audience only had to wait for a "sufficient time" to "elapse" (*AM* 33). She emphasizes the predictability and the neatly ordered arrangement of events. However, this lack of ambiguity is a fantasy that even Alex recognizes as an unhelpful approach to life.

Notably, Smith specifically frames the wrestling as occurring in a public space as opposed to television; it is decidedly *not* on television, even if "in the age of electronic reproduction, culture is able to come to us via the screen, video, radio, etc. We are no longer required to explore it in the context of ritualized spaces" (Barker 352). Instead, it is in the Royal Albert Hall, which places an emphasis on the wrestling as a public ritual as opposed to a televised carnivalesque (though those elements do remain), and it suggests that these ritualized spaces are still vital.

To a point, one can consider the return to the live-wrestling event and the Kaddish as a turn away from television again as the contemporary religion. Television had, as George

Gerber explains, replaced the church in its symbiotic nexus with the state (176), since it provides

> perhaps for the first time since preindustrial religion, a daily ritual of highly compelling and informative content that forms a strong cultural link between elites and other publics. The heart of the analogy of television and religion, and the similarity of their social functions, lie in the continual repetition of patterns (myths, ideologies, "facts," relationships, and so on) which serve to define the world and legitimize the social order. (Gerbner, et al. 3)

In reading Smith's pro- and epilogues, one can see the repetition of patterns, and upholding of pre-determined relationships, even if Smith's narrating style casts a challenge to the ability of the content to compel. In framing the novel with two decidedly not-televised events, Smith asks the reader to look at what happens to the event when stripped of TV, recognize the inherent mediality that remains, and fully consider the construction of ritualized spaces and their conduciveness for belonging.

In the novel, Li-Jin, Alex and his friends attend the match set in the context of the Hall as the site of Queen Victoria's "Excessive Grief Syndrome (EGF)" (17), the name and ethos-granting acronym one of Smith's many ironic historical commentaries. The Hall, named after Queen Victoria's late husband, is a part of her "trac[ing] his death and her mourning around the country" (17).

> She mourns in public, Victoria, and everyone mourns with her. That's another reason they call it the good old days. Back then, people felt things in unison, like the sudden chorus that leaps from a country church when the choir starts to sing. (17)

With another implicit link to the Greek epic, the narrator makes fun of the impression of homogeneity in nineteenth-century England. In effect, Smith pushes the reader to try and understand what changed over the course of the twentieth century so that mourning is no

longer possible the way it was "back then." By euphemizing the state-regulated public mourning during Victorian England, Smith plays with the suggestion that people were unified then in a way they are not at the end of the twentieth century.

Of course, the introduction of mass electronic media has contributed to some dissolution of this impression of unity, especially as the diversity of the population has become more represented. The Royal Albert Hall stands for Queen Victoria and British imperialism, an era threatened with obsoletion by television and globalism instigated by multiple factors. After creating the Hall as a space for remembering the dead ("There are many ways to remember the dead" (Smith *AM* 19)), setting Li-Jin's death there suggests both an affirmation of the Hall's intended purpose and a connection to national belonging, while at the same time encouraging a break from this kind of thinking. After all, Li-Jin dies a solitary death in this Hall. His last thoughts, the reader is told, is how there is "no one familiar or friendly. No one to help. No one he knows" (35). Despite being surrounded by people, Li-Jin is still alone. This is contrasted to the Kaddish ceremony, where there are two people "unknown to him," but the rest were Alex's friends, several rabbis, and his mother (345). Because of this, the reverse medialization of the match suggests that maybe a more positive belonging would have been possible with television. At least it would have given him the illusion of an ending.

Human belonging has been perpetually defined by its need to tell stories, which Smith attaches to Alex as well: "The great tragedy of his heart was that is always needed to be told a story" (Smith, *AM* 85), likely because stories, especially on television and Hollywood film, tend to have an ending: "The Miracle of cinema is how rarely the convention of the happy ending is ever broken. The bigger miracle is that the convention of the ending is never broken at all" (136). Yet this is something that Alex was denied with his father.

His death remains “unended,” “unreal”; Alex does not even notice it as he goes to hunt down a signature. If realism in media is defined by the audience’s expectations being met, then the wrestling is absolutely realistic. However, Li-Jin’s death is not; it does not meet the expectations of the participants, which would have been that Alex gets his signature, and they go home. Alex never had closure. Perhaps for this reason he is so attached to Hollywood movies which pride themselves on “the happy ending” (136). He relates it to “closure,” but this is not the ending the reader gets at the close of the novel.

The epigraph is dissatisfying. One has the impression that Alex just goes through the motions and is distracted. This may be fine, at least according to Wieseltier, who sees "‘Closure’ [as] an ideal of forgetfulness. It is a denial of finality, insofar as finality is never final. Nothing happens once and for all. It all visits, it all returns. But ‘closure’ says: once and for all” (Wieseltier 576). The Kaddish does not seek closure; it is a “denial of finality” and its circular feeling reminds one that finality is never final. In denying this closure to Alex, even at the end of the novel, Smith forces the reader to look more closely at the purpose of the ceremony itself.

When Alex expresses his doubts about performing the ceremony, Adam berates him.

> “Look,” said Adam suddenly, swiveling round with renewed rigor, “you the son, are the atonement for where he rests. Don’t you get that? *Thus a child does acquit the parent.*[136] You bring him peace. You honor him. And all you have to do is go to shul and say Kaddish with ten friends around you. That’s all it takes. Every year I do it, and every year I realize the *value* of—.” (112)

To use the word “value” in this case smacks of commodification, which links to Rubinfine’s metaphor of death later as the gift from God, which quickly devolves into a joke about

[136] “Bera mezakeh aba” The son acquits the father. Or, the son vindicated the father. Or, the son vouches for the father. Or, the son shows merit in the father. This is the principle on which the mourner’s kaddish is founded” (Wieseltier 170).

exchanging it at the store (339). It is also similar to Kitty's suggestion that buying all her father's belonging lost in the Russian civil war is something she owes him (112). However, one cannot owe the dead anything. As Rubinfine says, exchanges with God are not like gifts one can bring back to a store. It is not a debt you can pay and write off. Nothing material would count, and the temptation to interpret it this way should be pushed back. There is something deeply humane about this moment, and Adam is trying to push Alex to see that it is worthwhile. The act he is to perform is not empty, even if relying on immaterial gestures.

3.5 Gestures

Recalling Smith's empty TV screens, one can remember that the gesture is only a symbol, maybe even a cliché, and it is useful for belonging. Gesture scholar Adam Kendon describes gesture as a "form of social utterance […] a type of extra-verbal communication designed to convey intelligible cognitive intentions" (Rojek, *Presumed* 137). This would usually imply some kind of "genuine emotional identification" (138). However, it can also just be used to "garner acceptance and approval in the social networks" of which one is a member (138). This means that gestures can carry a large amount of cultural capital, even if it seems an inferior form of communication.

Furthermore, the formulaic nature of the words in a mourning ritual relieves one of the effort needed to find a way to convey genuine pain or avoid banality in communication. The Kaddish is a kind of cultural discourse that includes not only symbols of national identity, icons of patriotic fervor and other things; more importantly, it involves the authority of statements about "shared values embodied in language, ethnicity, and custom, as well as shared myths encoded as genres of knowledge, such as history, ideology and belief" (Chun 115). Performing the Kaddish reinserts Alex into a more stable sense of belonging.

The ritualistic practices may not feel authentic, in that they are something one does regularly or even knows how to do, yet they are often what people reach towards when

someone dies, just like the perfunctory TV expressions (*AM* 261), seem to become important again when someone dies, because they help engage in social behavior when one does not have previous experience in the situation. They are something to fall back on and continue navigating the togetherness, and they demonstrate an attachment to the group and affirm the identification with that group. When mourning, people rely again on rites and customs that give them something to hold onto, which often looks like returning to the habits and customs of predecessor and that often relies on cultural attitudes. However, as Smith shows, the individual still inserts themselves into these lines, appropriating them for themselves in a way that is beyond reproach.

3.6 Voice

Alex's closing lines stand in contrast to his practicing the lines in the park in New York. There, while the words are correct, they are not spoken in Alex's voice. "The last came out in the voice of the popular actor James Earl Jones, a rich basso that often appeared in his throat when he attempted religion" (262). At this point in the novel, Alex is not ready to use his own voice for these utterances, perhaps because he has not mastered the gestures in the words yet. However, by the end, while his oral expressions are left unknown—he says things, "though not in those words" (345)), his voice is his own.

Thus, the end brings to conclusion the claim that representation is expressed through culturally conditioned and temporally limited articulations, as Tracey Parker also claims (81). Each articulation could be considered an iteration, or reproduction,[137] of the postmodern subject. However, in today's globalized societies, existence is marked by plurality, because in order to be, one must be with, and there are plural possibilities for being with others—that is, belonging—today. Therefore, rather than privilege the unique, the hybrid positioning

[137] This could somehow be connected to what Walter Benjamin writes in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction": "By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence" (Benjamin 4). This concept of plurality can be both positive and negative.

encourages a privileging of the plural. This includes the finding of voice. The reader sees at the end of the novel when Alex inserts his individually persuasive discourse into the Kaddish with his description of the various gestures made by those in attendance (*AM* 346). Previous to this, the reader was given the impression that articulations in the novel are dominated by television discourse.

Of course, the idea that it is impossible to articulate anything new is invariably Bakhtinian, as explained in relation to *Brick Lane*. It has to do with the fact that the "word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic intention" (*Discourse* 293). The active adaptation that the speaker must do must be motivated by some desire to express something internally persuasive, and this is what allows them to "begin to liberate themselves from the authority of another's discourse" (348). Thus, one really should not "retire" the observation that everyone speaks in clichés, as Wood writes, since it is something that one must continue to engage with in order to "take the word and make it one's own" (Bakhtin 293). *The Autograph Man* takes the concept of voice a step further beyond *Brick Lane,* and recognizes that this is a world filled with clichés, but it is also possible to make creative links beyond that. These possible links are necessary when previously used means of belonging are challenged.

4 Conclusion

In the end, Smith's use of television references provides new means of understanding identity, belonging, and the construction of "otherness." They highlight the mediated and unmediated circumstances of being and belonging in a pluralistic society. The Kaddish is set up in opposition to the Albert Hall as a place to suggest full participation, but television is what pushes the protagonist there. Alex's previous experiences with being "othered" and then facing the previously "othered" Kitty helps him welcome social spaces that allow for

conscious self-fashioning and experimentation, as Pfaff-Czarnecka say are needed for multiple belonging (12).

In the discussion of the television references and celebrity, one can see that the questions about labels and language of race or gender, while at the height of their significance in socio-cultural conversation, are not the only questions for a person today. People continue to face challenges of belonging, especially as alienation through media and the disconnect between virtual and physical relationships continue. Smith winds a story around television and its mediated representations as a part of a story that complicates and humanizes an impression of straightforward transnationalism, as though to say that just because we have arrived at a point in history where heterogenous identities can coexist and usually integrate, people continue to struggle with the same challenges of belonging. Smith's novel takes as its starting point that the world is polycultural, and borders do not really matter. However, belonging remains important, and through the concepts of television and celebrity, she explores enduring means of belonging.

If Smith is to be understood as an author concerned with the way people navigate the contemporary hypermediated landscapes and globalized worlds, then one must consider her response to include a redress that makes television part of the solution, and not the source of the problem. Her writing provides other perspectives of television and reality hitherto ignored by most critics, and she inserts the subject back into the objectified presences with which we contend. With her focus on television, Smith also situates Alex's anxiety within the anxiety that comes in the face of digital reproducibility. Writing at the cusp of a contemporary literary engagement with the internet, she is able to see what sets the television apart from other media, such as its audio-visual mediation of bodies and gestures. For her, the threat to the authenticity of the self lies not in the machine, as it does in Stephen Hall's *The Raw Shark Tales,* but rather in the image and reception by others.

Reasonably, Smith may be arguing for more visibility and more authentic representation of marginalized people, since people are bound to identify with these representations. At the same time, Smith points out the individual creativity of a person to find a role model in anyone. Her concern for the relationship between media representation and identity returns in her subsequent novels (*On Beauty, NW, Swing Time*), and the clues found in interpreting the television references in *The Autograph Man* provide an important background for understanding these novels. Television's role as escape, remediator, and distraction from death may also provide important means for considering other post-2000 fiction writers who seek to write new constructions of identity within changing societies using and relying on new forms of media.

CHAPTER FOUR: “GREGORS ANDERES BLAU”: TELEVISION, MEMORY, AND SILENCE IN OLGA MARTYNOVA'S *SOGAR PAPAGEIEN ÜBERLEBEN UNS*

Introduction

As Zadie Smith’s novel shows, transnational identity for second- or third-generation migrants is more nuanced than for people who have crossed borders themselves and continue to orient themselves towards the places they left. Also, although Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* was clearly bicultural and depicted transnational processes like memory and diaspora, *The Autograph Man* squirms under this label. In fact, the derivative cross-cultural experiences of Alex and his friends may not even be worth mentioning as a result of migration, and the only direct crossing of border is from one Anglophone former super-power to another. However, what Smith emphasizes is the current situation in the UK where identities are always constructed, as per Stuart Hall, “through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (“Diaspora” 226). In Germany, it is not so different.

With her 2010 novel *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* [*Even Parrots Outlive Us*] (hereafter *Papageien*), Olga Martynova asks what it means to be a cross-cultural, transnational observer within changed public spaces. Her depiction of the individual, subjective response to various forms of mediated culture creates a warrant for suggesting that cultural contact may rely on one collective memory constellation accommodating the other, and that groups build upon connections to facilitate integration. Marina, Martynova’s traveling protagonist in *Papageien*, shares the depicted relationship between subjective viewing and memory with Nazneen in *Brick Lane.* However, Marina’s gaze is smoother than the tensions found in Nazneen’s, which may be the effect of *Papageien* foregrounding a

different cultural interaction with different histories, and perhaps Marina enters a less crowded discursive space.

When Martynova published her debut novel in 2010, she was entering a German literary scene that was just beginning to realize its multicultural potential. Her collection of awards and grants, where she went from winning a Chamisso Förderpreis in 2011 to winning the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize in 2012 and the Berlin Literature Prize in 2015, reflects changes in Germany's literary market. Incited by a reassessment of German history in the wake of reunification, as well as an emergence of multicultural authors and new perspectives towards globalism, the German literary market opened up to authors who address cross-cultural and transcultural experience.

Germany accepted its heterogeneity later than England, which had seen its social constellations change drastically as a result of new migration laws after the colonies gained their independence. However, Germany was similarly affected by mass migration and geopolitical redistributions of power since World War II.[138] These circumstances continue to include: providing refuge for ethnic Germans and Jewish people from Eastern Europe; bilateral recruitment agreements with Italy, Greece, and Turkey to balance the lack of human resources and unemployment; German reunification; and asylum provisions for people from war-torn countries in the Middle East and Africa. Significantly, Germany became home to millions[139] of Russian emigres in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its resulting economic, social, and cultural instability.[140]

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[138] Not to forget, Germany was a colonizing power, which has become more part of the public knowledge over the past decade. This becomes more relevant in discussing *Gehen, ging, gegangen*.

[139] One can separate these into three groups: ethnic Russians, Jewish Russians, and Russians descended from German migrants to the east (known as *Aussiedler, Spätaussiedler* and *Russlanddeutsche*). In her dissertation about Russian representation in the media, *Russkij Berlin: Migranten und Medien in Berlin und London* (2002), Tsyplyma Darieva points out the way that migrants and refugees from the former Soviet states are often grouped into (werden wahrgenommen) as one homogenous mass labeled "Russians," even though this group is quite heterogenous.

[140] This is not to say that Russian to Germany migration was a new development of the 90s. In the 20th century, there have been at least three distinct waves of Russian migration to Germany (Isterheld 23), beginning during the 1920s with pro-imperial Tsar supporters, intellectuals and artists seeking refuge in Berlin, of whom Vladimir

Still, while the other three authors discussed in *Literarily TV* write from a position of critical awareness of migration, Martynova is the only one whose migration reflects in her language use; she is the only exophonic writer, and her identity became hyphenated later at age twenty-nine with her permanent move to Frankfurt and[141]—more importantly—with her first German publication.[142] Now her work, like herself, can be considered a German-Russian hybrid[143] that is concerned with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the speed at which things changed in Russia over the latter half of the twentieth century.[144] At the same time, while Martynova writes prose in German and presents most of her work in German venues, she breathes new life in the words of Russian poets and writers who suffered persecution under the Soviet State, creating an intricate web of intertextual references to both German and Russian writers in her literary works.[145] Her translingual dialogues with various authors are most often the focus of the research around her work.[146] Few novels so adeptly intertwine the mental landscapes of a post-reunified Germany, post-Soviet Russia, and their shared World War II trauma as *Sogar Papageien überleben uns.*[147]

Nabokov is perhaps the most famous and to whom Martynova refers, for example, on page 17. See Isterheld pp. 23-47 for a thorough discussion of the various waves and references to resources for further reading.

[141] Monica Ali came to England as a baby, Jenny Erpenbeck's country changed around her when she was twenty-two, and Zadie Smith was born and raised in England.

[142] One of the favorite quoted facts about Martynova is the strict separation of the language of her oeuvre: poetry in Russian and prose in German, which she claimed most recently again in an interview for *Die Welt* (Heidemann).

[143] Note also Brigitte Schultze's distinction between "given" and "chosen" hybridity in her article on Martynova and Jaroslav Rudiš for the *Rocznik Komaratyczny – Comparative Yearbook* in 2015. Because Martynova migrated voluntarily and chose to write exophonically (in a language that is not her mother tongue), she belongs to the latter group according to Schultze.

[144] Of this Martynova writes: "In Russland ist so viel in so kurzer Zeit geschehen, dass hier mindestens drei Jahrzehnte gleichzeitig existierten: die spätsowjetischen 80er Jahre, die 90er Jahre des Umbruchs und die heutigen 2000er Jahre" (*Dummheit* 29).

[145] See Isterheld, footnote 1077, for a list of intertextual references, not just restricted to German and Russian authors but also to Russian and French authors and Greek myths (325)
(Isterheld 325)

[146] See Karina Deifel, who labels Martynova's work as a transcultural translation project (24). See also Nora Isterheld for a list of books and articles that discuss the current state of research in regards to Martynova, pp. 52-54.

[147] I write this with the full awareness that a long list of contemporary Russian (or Russian heritage) writers in German exists who equally address German-Russian history and intercultural exchange. Again, please see Nora Isterheld for a comprehensive list of authors who make up this identifiable group (15). As far as it being defined, note the introduction to *Handbuch des Russischen in Deutschland* (Witzlack-Makarevich and Wulff).

In a way, Martynova's novel attempted the same thing for German literature that Smith and Ali did for English literature: expand the boundaries of who is included within a "national philology." It does this, like *The Autograph Man,* in a style that is more experimental than realistic. However, unlike *Brick Lane* and *The Autograph Man, Papageien* does not have a wealth of television references; there are only a handful. The first reference is indirect, to a television guide (16), and there are only two other references to television directly and two to "Bildschirme," or screens. Still, the design of the novel itself could also be considered televisual: episodic, polysemic, and relying on a combination of images and sounds. This, on top of the actual references used, indicates the productive potential inherent in the text for analyzing from an intermedial standpoint. The televisual structure helps center these television references that otherwise seem easily overlooked, and it points to the connection between television and the primary themes of the novel: subjectivity and memory. This aligns with what Nora Isterheld also calls the text's function as a medium of transcultural memory.[148]

In *Papageien,* the reader is exposed to a television that has developed over the 1990s and first decade of the twenty-first century beyond the public broadcasting and cable options discussed in *Brick Lane* and *The Autography Man*. It survived the predictions that it would be replaced by social media and online viewing, and it adjusted to competing means of informing and entertaining with the internet. In the middle of these developments, television also moved from its position in nearly every household, a position in which had become quite comfortable, to the streets.

For fifty years, television was considered a medium of the home, implicating the gender and power relations of that space—as seen in *Brick Lane*—and dominating the

[148] In her dissertation Isterheld claims that all the German-Russians texts she discusses "als Medien transkultureller Erinnerungsarbeit zu verstehen sind" (398).

routines of everyday private life. Its position in the living room, kitchen, or bedroom changed everything from social habits to the construction of houses (Spigel, *Make* 67), adding to the argument that television can change culture over time.[149] By the turn of the twenty-first century, television had a place in most homes, even reaching, as one sees in *Papageien*, the nomadic yurts of Kyrgyzstan. However, as broadcasting laws changed to accommodate shifts in technology and consumer demands, television began to play a larger role in public spaces as well. The spectacles and public rituals depicted in comparison to television in Smith's *The Autograph Man,* for example, could appear on television screens in the streets and stadiums themselves. This makes for a more multifaceted approach the discussion of the relationship between media and society.

In *Papageien,* Martynova uses television references as a device for evoking community and memory; their function of perpetuating cultural codes and hegemonic structures supports their facilitating role in the processes of cultural memory. These references highlight various types and reasons for keeping silent (s*chweigen*) across historical and contexts in Germany and Russia. Martynova's text becomes a platform for the discussion, and perhaps implicit criticism, for the German and Russian moves towards normalization in their social practices and politics. In particular, references to televised soccer matches provide an efficient means of addressing continuing anxieties about nationalism and xenophobia. Although Martynova clearly establishes successful intertextual dialogue and the role that media can play in understanding these dialogues, her text reminds the reader that there are many factors in intercultural exchange to consider when claiming that television broadcasts can bring in an extra layer of unheard voices. Looking at these medial references

[149] Lynn Spigel's *Make Room for TV* provides more evidence for the technologically determinist conclusion that television has changed ways of living.

and the way they foreground subjective experiences also encourages one to look at the relationships between individuals and groups in transnational spaces.

To make my proposed arguments, I explain the text's audio-visual style and episodic nature before discussing Martynova's thematic focus on subjective memory, which becomes important to the interpretation of two references to the 2006 FIFA World Cup. These television references draw upon the association made throughout the novel between windows and mirrors, which have been previously ignored in responses to the novel's representations of memory and time. In looking more closely at these renderings of the subjectivity of experience, it becomes apparent how individual memory works in relation to collective memory. The themes of *Schweigen* and trauma in particular show how interlinked memory and television can be to national community and intercultural dialogue.

1 Sounds and Sights

Previous considerations of *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* have fixated on the novel's imagery and Martynova's use of metaphors and other rhetorical devices that add to the novel's *Bildlichkeit,* or representativeness. Part of this *Bildlichkeit* stems from her creative background in poetry, which results, on top of strong images, in an alliteration that lays an emphasis on sounds. The first example happens almost immediately with a bag that begins to vibrate due to an accidentally switched-on electric toothbrush: "Die Tasche brummt, bebt und bibbert, scheint einen Bienenkorb zu verbergen" (9). The alliteration of the "b" sound brings the bag to life in its vibration, along with the personified toothbrush that welcomes the reader into the temporal setting. It hums "*Willkommen im einundzwanzigsten Jahrhundert*" (9), but in its sounds and the image it brings to mind, reflected in the eyes of both people present,[150] the toothbrush also reminds the reader what it means to be in the twenty-first century. It is a time when any suspicious bag at an airport raises immediate alarm.

[150] "die Frage in den Augen der Beamtin spiegelt sich in meinen Augen" (Martynova 9).

The allusion taps into a store of memories, personal and collective, of the lines at airport security checks since 2001, the airport bombings in 2016 in Brussels, and an extended connection to the 9/11 attacks themselves. Martynova's subtle reference marks the latent disease of trauma that pervades literature post-9/11 (Estévez-Saá and Pereira-Ares), even in Germany. With this, time already becomes an important motif, and Martynova's work with metaphors and imagery is one of her most conspicuous talents, often, as Julia Schöll describes, winning "the upper hand over the plot" (546).[151] Martynova literarily involves sounds as well as images to create a possibly televisual text that relies on both aural and visual signs to be understood. This making-televisual of the text becomes emphasized by conspicuous book-media devices, which include the banners at the top of each sub-chapter and consistent bolding and italicizing throughout the text.[152]

1.1 The time-banner

Told from Marina's first-person perspective, the plot moves back and forth between the events of the conference and the narration of Marina's memories, specifically her memories of Andreas, her former lover. Arguably, the nonlinear trajectory of these memories tells the story of Marina's relationship with Andreas more aptly than the linear, individual telling would have done. Containing the same dates in each banner, the reader knows which dates are being referred to by the bolded text. The first banner in the novel looks like this:

> 5th Cen. B.C • 1453 • 1529 • 1714 • 1717 • 1787 • 1871 • 1917-1933-1934-1937-1941-1942-1943-1944-1945 • 1955 • 1973 • 1976 • 1982 • 1986 • 1987 • 1988 • 1989 • 1990 • 1991 • 1992 • 1995 • 2001 • 2002 • 2005 • 2006 (*Papageien* 7)

In this case, the events described in the first chapter—Marina's first conscious recognition of time, and her later arrival in Germany for a literary conference—are separated

[151] "[A]n vielen Stellen gewinnt die sprachliche Form die Überhand über den *plot*."
[152] Here I reference the bolded text that marks the difference to the text that is not bolded and makes known to which year is being referred. Her use of italics delimit intertextual references.

by thirty-three years between 1973 and 2006. These memories span more than thirty years, but half of the banner consists of dates before Marina's personal history. As one can see, the years take up physical space on the page, regularly spaced even if not listed in regular increments, and they are separated by dots. The impression is a series; it is not a continuous flow of time as how the river of time is imagined in these opening pages, but rather a series of points in time, linearly arrayed and unconnected.

The array reflects the effect of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the obfuscation of time as a linear concept over the twentieth century. For literature in general, this meant that writers often preferred shorter narrative forms in order to provide "the quick, sometimes even lightning-fast, reaction to the shocking events that punctuated the twentieth century" (Lipovetsky and Brougher 22). Martynova's episodes reflect this too, and notably, Daniil Kharms, who provides the novel's main intertext, wrote manuscripts that also consisted of "constellations of fragments" (Kakovjevic 6). With Kharms, whom Martynova metafictionally analyzes through Marina's academic work,[153] Martynova emphasizes some parallels to the Soviet avant-garde, such as Kharms' fluid conception of genres and what Michail Yampolsky describes as "visual as much as literary" writing (Jakovljevic 26). This, in conjunction with Kharms' conception of event as emerging from language, "but not linguistic itself," corresponds to Martynova's focus on images, visual arts, and objects.[154] Yet unlike Kharms, whose works exhibit a "skeletal terseness" (*Incidences* 12) and an impression of undermining themselves, struggling with senses and the ability to communicate with language (9), Martynova's works are rich with description.

[153] Martynova refers to Daniil Kharms and the OBERIU avant-garde literary group, who responded to the political persecution and difficulty with producing their art in the late 1920s under Stalin by using "Unsinn als Erkentnissmittel" (*Papageien* 53). Kharms became known for publicity antics and seemingly non-sensical statements like "art is a cupboard" (*Incidences* 3).
[154] Martynova also refers to time via hieroglyphs (140), which is worth further consideration in light of Kharms' theory about hieroglyphs. See Jakovljevic for more on Kharms' "practice of fashioning broad poetic symbols" (76).

Furthermore, Martynova's fragments have a discernible flow, and she uses the banner device to retain some sense of control over the conception of memory. Although the dates are separate entities set off by dots, the "Aneinanderreihung von Momentaufnahmen" (Schöll 545) become a part of the episodic nature of the sections. Just as semiotic meaning in moving visual media is created by the sequence of shots (Lotman), so too are the episodes in *Papageien*. If one takes Julia Schöll's metaphor of a "series of snapshots" one step further, the images become frames of still pictures that are presented so quickly that the image appears to be moving, which contributes to what I call the televisual effect in Martynova's text.

1.2 Mediated metaphors: Blog versus television

If one were to take the analysis of the banner one step further still, one could compare it to a blog sidebar or footer. Critics often evoke the web log as an intermedial reference when commenting on *Papageien,*[155] and it is a fair interpretation. The banner at the top of the chapters looks like one of the elements of a blog, hyperlinked dates that allow one to click on a given month or year and see all entries from that month or year. It creates the impression of time-spaces that one can move between.[156] The writing is also episodic and fragmented, giving the impression of sporadic blog entries. However, this visual recreation is not replicated to the point of digital accuracy as the text remains static, bound by the literal binding of the pages of the book not manipulatable or collatable in the same way as files online. Skimming through the pages and settling on a given year does not thereafter arrange all the following pages to also be episodes from that year. This relative rigidness and lack of interactivity in the story indicates a metatextual awareness of the text's material manifestation as well as pointing to the potential of new, digital media. At the same time, it resists that

[155] See, for example, Julia Schöll pp. 544

[156] I return to this later in the chapter when I discuss Martynova's use of the letter/email

newer medium and falls into the same skepticism as the protagonist's wariness of cell phones, emails, and the bright, loud screens in public spaces. The invention of the blog is commented on in the novel (105), but even these references focus on the relationship to the screen, "elektrische Leere der Bildschirme" (121).

The lack of chronology and the third-person narration style make these episodes less suitable for a blog than one would think, because although a blog is a digital medium, it still relies on much of the elements of the written word. According to John Fiske these are "consistency, narrative development from cause to effect, universality and abstraction, clarity and a single tone of voice" (15). Bakhtin would disagree with the single-tone descriptor, since he identifies the novel as a polyphonic genre, but the specific imagery of *Papageien*'s "Momentaufnahmen" undermines the fact that it *is* a novel. Furthermore, the sequences are inconsistent, like "[e]ine Wirrnis, verhedderter Bandsalat aus einer Videokassette" (106). The reference comments on the ordered logic of a video-cassette, itself disrupting the logic of television broadcasts—as described in Smith's *The Autograph Man*—and the impossible narrative produced by the tangled tape. Such a mess is physically impossible to watch, just like the future for which it stands as a metaphor in the novel. The resistance to linearity perhaps represents the chronical of the collapse of the Soviet Union (Deifel 140).[157]

As also discussed in relation to *The Autograph Man,* video is often considered a postmodern phenomenon that has "significantly altered the time/space characteristics of television" (Casey et al 294). The initial reference in *Papageien* to a television guide indicates an awareness of the control over broadcasters' schedules, but its aged appearance "mit seinem sovjetisch-gelblichen Papier [with its Soviet-yellowish paper]" suggests this is an obsolete model of time organization (Martynova 16). Video-cassette recorders (VCRs)

[157] Deifel argues one should see the novel as „eine von der Subjektivität der Erinnerung verzerrte Chronik des Zusammenbruchs der Sowjetunion, die sich einer linearen Zeitdeutung entzieht … [a chronicle of the collapse of the Soviet Union distorted by the subjectivity of memory, which eludes a linear interpretation of time]" (140).

mean that audiences no longer relied on the time programs were broadcast watch something independently of the schedule. At the same time, on the production side, video technology that developed in the 1960s also made it possible for artists to leave the studio, enter the community, and to ‘document’ people’s lives. The freedom to film uncast and unscripted material lead to the “distinctive social/documentary strand” in television and film production, and it also made it possible to construct non-narrative pieces (Casey, et al. 293). Yet, these images are often organized in a highly constructed way, giving only the illusion of a linear story-line and flow.

2 Metonymies of Mirrors and Windows

Martynova plays with these mediated constructions as a part of her depiction of memory. The novel begins with Marina describing her recollection of being carried across the river at the beginning of the novel, and this memory is encapsuled like in a photo. While Marina can see her mother “in diesem Bild am Rande meines Blickfeldes” (7), her mother cannot tell Marina whether her memory is real or imagined. The river of time suggests flow, but the depiction links individual experience as difficult to verify, which is something that appears in much post-WWII literature, including Jenny Erpenbeck’s *Gehen, ging, gegangen.* This trend of unreliable memory continues and helps introduce the significance of television-like objects, such as mirrors, for the narrative.

As discussed in the introduction and in reference to *Brick Lane,* the television as a window on the world is by now a clichéd metaphor. It refers to the layers of understanding that television programs can give access to a sense of the real, even while, as Fiske has pointed out, this is only a “socially convincing sense of the real” (21). Fiske refers to the “transparency fallacy,” which theorists call the mistaken idea that one can look at a television screen like through a window and see the outside world, to counteract it with the point that the window television provides has been designed to present a certain version of the real. In

the case of Beigbeder's *Window on the World* in particular, and 9/11 literature in general, it is important to note that the realism of the images presented in the novels work as a second layer to that of the televisions, which was ultimately constructed.

In his review of postmodern English fiction, Andrzej Gasiorek claims that the twentieth century has been saturated with so many second-order images by television and other communications systems, that the "distinction between appearances and reality ceased to have meaning" (206), and yet literature continues to challenge this idea. Evi Zemanek and Susanne Krones, like many twenty-first century media scholars, identify a return to the idea of mimesis in literature after shaking off postmodern poetics, albeit with changes to the nineteenth century model (13). Martynova complicates this understanding with her protagonist's musings.

> Ich habe auch andere Erinnerungen, die meine Eltern nicht bestätigen: Ich falle von der Schaukel; ein Auto vom Roten Kreuz bringt mich ins Krankenhaus. (…) Meine Eltern hätten ein solches Ereignis unmöglich vergessen können. Und doch habe ich eine Narbe am Ohr […] was mich jedes Mal wundert, wenn ich […] einen schnellen Blick in den Spiegel werfe. (*Papageien* 7)

The motifs brought up in the novel's first paragraph set the tone for the rest of the novel: memory, and more specifically subjective memory, needs mediation; but this mediation does not make it any more reliable. The scar's significance is called into question by the lack of a consistent memory within even this small a group. At the same time, although Marina is the only one who remembers the story and sees the scar, she also needs an external source, the mirror, to prove to herself both that this mark on her body—and the memory associated with it—exist. The proof relies on a supposed objective reflection in a mirror. However, the mirror as an object serves as a reminder that its reflection depends on who is looking at it, and from which angle they are looking.

The mirror is described a few pages later as a stately piece of glass "hugged" by mahogany wood and showing Marina the dark pink worm on her ear lobe.[158] It is one of the "*Dinge von früher*," a thing of the past that survived the political and economic instability of twentieth-century Russia.[159] In mentioning it thrice, Marina draws attention to the mirror's framing function, presenting this memory as another still-image in Marina's memory. These photo moments compose the process of self-identity construction as described by Aleida Assmann in her synthetization of the ideas of John Locke and W.L. Randall:

> [o]ur memories are indispensable because they are the stuff out of which individual experiences, personal relations, the sense of responsibility, and the image of our own identity are made. To be sure, it is always only a small part of our memory that is consciously processed and emplotted in a 'story' that we construct as a backbone to our identity. (3)

If our identity consists of a selection of memories, saved over time and plotted together in a way that makes sense to us, so too does *Papageien* work like a selection of memories from across Marina's individual memory, which have been plotted in the story of her identity as a part of her memory of people before her time, ancestors, or unknowns living during the Soviet Union, the siege of Leningrad, or even during the fifth century B.C. Thus, Martynova solidifies the relationship between individual memory and mediated still-images. However, in looking at collective or cultural memory, Martynova uses moving images.

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[158] „Und dieser Spiegel im Mahagonirahmen" (14).

[159] "in den 20ern nichts beschlagnahmt, in den 30ern nicht gegen faule, süßgewordene Kartoffeln getauscht, in den 40ern nicht in den niedergebombten Häusern abgebrannt oder geschmolzen, in den 50ern nicht verkauft und in den 60ern nicht auf der Welle der »Wissenschaftlich-Technischen-Revolution« weggeworfen worden waren" (13). See Lauren Cohen-Pfister's chapter in *German Literature in a New Century,* "An Aesthetics of Memory for Third-Generation Germans" (pp. 119-134) for more on the way that one reconstructs the past based on the tangible objects left behind.

2.1 Frames

Frames reappear in the first significant television reference to the live-broadcast soccer match of the 2006 FIFA World Cup in the streets of the town where the conference is being held.

> Die Fußballweltmeisterschaft machte es sogar in diesem entlegenen Ort bequem: die deutschen Farben überall und die dreifache, um nicht zu sagen *dreifaltige* Höflichkeit aller, die meinen Akzent hörten. Bildschirme über den Stühlen und Tischen des Straßencafés: Fenster in das Grün der Felder und das Bunt der Tribünen, surrende und sirrende Fenster, die dann und wann fröhlich oder enttäuscht aufschrien. (*Papageien* 88)

Martynova highlights the effect of the multiple screens in the public space of street cafés, and their juxtaposition to the green fields and animated, colorful masses of people.[160] The television screens are directly compared to windows,[161] and while the historic conception of television as a window on the world also appeared in *Brick Lane,* in *Papageien* it becomes important to note the way televisions and windows work via a frame. From the shot framed by the parameters of the camera, to the box framing the screen of the television, to the potential bias in which a supposed reality is reflected, these frames create epistemological edges that, as Judith Butler explains in *Frames of War* (2009) "not only organize visual experience but also generate specific ontologies of the subject" (3).

The usual limits imposed by the frame on a window become irrelevant here, because the images blend into their physical surroundings. Usually, a television has very clear frames,

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[160] Martynova stated in an interview that she cannot shake off the idea that "[i]n der Demokratie entsteht der Eindruck, vom Fußball bis zur Mode wäre alles wichtiger als die Kunst." „Natürlich würde ich mir wünschen, dass etwa der Bachmannpreis in allen Straßencafés in Fernsehen liefe wie eine Fußballmeisterschaft. Aber wenn jetzt vielleicht viele Menschen auf die Literatur verzichten, dann sicher nicht für immer. […] (Heidemann).

[161] Consider the window of the S-Bahn through which Marina sees a hallway in St. Petersburg in her memory (15), the window in the door in the liminal midnight story time (28), various descriptions of sitting at windows (74, 79), and others (129, 161)

physically separating the mediated images from the surroundings, but through the textual flattening of the medial difference between two-dimensional broadcast and three-dimensional space, the screens above the tables lose their frames. Only a spatial frame, limited by the direct and peripheral vision of the eyes, remains. The framing disappears, and therefore the figures on the screen become unbound, with the fans transforming into the window itself. This turns people into a formless mass, objects even, which challenges Lotman's notion that the "central place in the world of cinematic 'words' is occupied by images of man" (qt. in Berger 85), since man has been diffused here. At the same time, it removes the emphasis from the individual and places it on the group.

The narration also effectively removes the distance between the viewer and the people shown on the screens and brings them into the streets with Marina and her fellow conference attendees. These televisions in the street, while mediated, fill a space that spectators often feel at a soccer match. The philosopher Simon Critchley declares that what Hans- Georg Gadamer calls 'an absolute distance' "absolves the spectator of direct participation in the play" (Critchley 76). If the spectator is not even in the stadium, but rather far away, so that their cheers cannot even be heard by the players on the field, they are at even more of an 'absolute distance.' Although televised sport (and radio before that) long divided fan attention between the stadium, home, or local bar/restaurant, the new spaces of public viewing that opened during the 2006 World Cup in Germany provided new ways of seeing that reduce that distance.[162] Just as the television drew people away from cinema and into their living rooms, later into the kitchen and individual bedrooms, public viewing encouraged new *Sehkulturen,* bringing people away from individualization back to watching together in large groups.

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[162] This idea stems off from the notion of *Sehkulturen,* which comes from German intercultural studies discourse and implies a different theory of seeing and looking based on a different cultural background. For example, in Hans Belting's discussion of Arabian and European perspectives of images during the 15th and 16th centuries, he makes a distinction between an emphasis on the process of seeing in Arabian theory and the gaze of the subject in western theory (Belting 103). However, I use the parallel term seeing culture here to describe the different processes of seeing determined by the space in which one is.

Except this time, rather than sit together in dark boxes facing one screen, public viewing moved the screens into public spaces, open to the elements, free of charge for the viewers, and without the same expectations of preserving the viewing experience of the person sitting or standing next to one.

At the same time, the differences between the spectator experience in a stand and the public viewing of a soccer match arguably take away from the experience of live-spectatorship of a sporting event. It is the camera that choses the focus, not the viewer, and there are differences in acoustics, half-time features, and the circular stadium swivel versus the linear street view. This is not to say that public viewing, for many, is necessarily preferable to watching a game on one's own. Soccer communities form through the feeling of being part of a group that has the same interests and participates in the same activity. According to Critchley, "it is the sharing of moments that allows for the possibility of togetherness amongst fans and binds them into a collective community, a deeply felt form of association" (138). These moments can be found in collectively seeing the same shot on goal or the same foul, but also participating in the same chant or performing the wave together.

Martynova's emphasis on the crowds in the stands and not the players on the green field reiterate a focus on community in soccer spectatorship. This community feeling, or cohesion, is more important than the actual outcome of the game, especially since, as various scholars have pointed out, the game is a ritual produced over and over again. It is, as Critchley puts it, "repetition without origin" (55), which aligns the sport with Jean Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum, in which each game is a copy that has no origin or whose origins have been lost. In this vein, the fans both watch and become part of a spectacle, which Martynova also depicted.

2.2 Flags

Guy Debord states, "[t]he spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (10).[163] The windows on the stands that Marina sees are the mediation of the coming together of people from various backgrounds to watch the game, and either cry out together in happiness or disappointment. In fact, one could call this unisonality an "echoed physical realization of [an] imagined community" (Anderson 145).[164] Thus, it is clear why Martynova's windowed-fans are brought into the same space as flags to directly link soccer fandom and patriotism. The feeling of cohesion is often magnified while watching international sports tournaments through televised broadcasts (Holtz-Bacha 6), because of a potential feeling of double belonging—to the team and to the nation the team represents.

However, Martynova does not show cohesion. Coming together in the streets promises feelings of togetherness, which the decorations are also meant to augment and the politeness is meant to encourage. However, in the text, one sees objects—chairs, tables, screens—and only a few people, and this becomes more obvious because of the screens. The ones who are present are fellow conference attendees, complaining about literary prizes and Russian TV reports. They have no interest in the game. Marina primarily notes the national colors and the hospitality, and implies that this togetherness suggested by the screens is only a virtual reality, an illusion. This illusion casts the patriotism into doubt, which is a feeling only enhanced by the ironic depiction of the black, red, and gold cookie called an

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[163] "[Goldblatt] references situationist theory and post-Marxist analysis, Guy Debord and Walter Benjamin as a twin strike force, to substantiate his persuasive belief that pretty much all of the hopes and inequalities and fears of contemporary society are played out in the spectacle of 11 v 11" (T.Adams). In his book *The Age of Football,* Goldblatt compares soccer at various points to a gladiator spectacle in ancient Rome or theater performances of Greek tragedies that ended in catharsis for the audiences.

[164] Relevant to the context but not picked up by Martynova explicitly, is the tradition of the national anthem played for each participating team and their supporters. Benedict Anderson discusses the significance of the national anthem in his section "Patriotism and Racism" in *Imagined Communities.* While he does not recognize the soccer match as an event at which the anthem is sung, he does pick up the significance of its simultaneity: we may not be aware that others are singing the song precisely when and as we are, but we are connected by this "imagined sound" (145).

"American" in German. Such displays of banal nationalism are common in the US,[165] but the summer of 2006 became famous for the way that Germans, for the first time in over fifty years, felt as though they could fly their flags without shame. Previously, one could wear a black-red-gold sling bag, like the one Marina's aunt had made for her, anywhere but Germany (99).[166]

Although Germany is a recognized nation-state with autonomy and it has garnered respect for its foreign and domestic policies, it officially avoids overt demonstrations of patriotism since WWII because of its continual singularity in regards to its past. Unlike many other nations whose national identities function by means of celebrating "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" (Renan qtd. in Brockmann 25), Germany's crimes during WWII overshadow the rest of its history, and they cannot be considered within a rich legacy; to build a positive national identity based the loss of lives is impossible. According to former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, patriotism could be acceptable if it was "in reference to democratic achievements and to a distinctly 'post-Cold War' Western rhetoric of tolerance and attention to human rights" (Taberner 11). However, this too could be criticized for trying to find a rationale for a perhaps unnecessary "need for an emotional attachment to the nation" (11). As a result, Germany's national identity continues to remain unconventional.

Before the Berlin Wall fell, Germany had a decade of moves towards normalization under Helmut Kohl that was continued by Schröder.[167] Normalization,[168] or the shift from

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[165] See Michael Billig's 1995 *Banal Nationalism,* "Chapter 5: Flagging the Homeland Daily" (pp. 93-127) for a discussion of the use of flags in everyday contexts like sporting events. Note also that Goldblatt calls it civic nationalism and cultural cosmopolitanism.

[166] Part of the social acceptance of flag waving led to a commercialization of the national symbol as well. However, Marina's bag was the unconscious result of putting the three colors of the German flag together in that order.

[167] Martynova arrived in Germany at a time when, under Chancellor Helmut Kohl, social harmony was prioritized over reform (Taberner and Cooke 4), even when reform was especially necessary in the wake of the changes made to the economic landscape of Germany after reunification.

[168] Normalization has been used in various contexts in regards to German political situations. Some examples: start of the Euro crisis where Germany "starts to act as a 'normal' country, self-interested and nationally-

conceiving of Germany as a nation with a singular past to a one that claims a more conventional national identity, stemmed from Kohl's belief that the 1968ers "had weakened and even destroyed the basis for common values and a shared sense of belonging" (Taberner and Cooke 4). This was a "dangerous state of affairs" as "this was a society that was growing ever more complex, diverse, and fragmented" (4). The solution, Kohl believed, was normalization and that "we simply don't stick out" in the international community (qtd. in Brockmann 17).[169] These policies through 1998 built the basis of a society more comfortable with its national identity by 2006. [170] However, as Stephen Brockmann points out, this can go two ways.

Two possible outcomes for Germany building a national identity with and/or despite its history can be done by erasing or relativizing the Nazi crimes "in order to construct a conventional national identity," or by trying "to create a non-conventional identity that is based on remembrance, not on forgetting" (Brockmann 25-6). Of these two possibilities, it seems more positive to create a culture of remembrance rather than relativization or erasure, since although the former is more painful by reiterating the pain of the victims and guilt of the perpetrators in subsequent generations, it keeps the historical truth alive and does not try to hide it or create a false sense of identity, which the latter possibility does.[171] However, in

minded, no longer guardians of European progress" (Griffith-David, 10 August 2011), or the people's attitudes about Germany's identity as a nation of migration and this identity becoming more normal (Duncan Cooper, 2012). Please see Stuart Taberner's and Paul Cooke's edited *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: beyond Normalization* (2006) for more specific answers about normalization in Germany in regards to the Holocaust.

[169] From a famous 1990 *New York Times* interview with Helmut Kohl by Serge Schlemann

[170] Recall that this is the same period of anti-immigration I mentioned in footnote 3 of this chapter. Schröder's idea of conceptual patriotism was "in reference to democratic achievements and to a distinctly 'post-Cold War' Western rhetoric of tolerance and attention to human rights" (Taberner 11).

[171] On this note, it is not surprising that Schröder's government appropriated the term from the mouths of right-wing thinkers and politicians, in particular from "the so-called New Right intellectuals who had been so vocal at the beginning of the 1990s" (Taberner 6). Conventionalism was once regarded as "synonymous with historical revisionism, and the desire to play down the centrality of the Nazi past in order to mitigate German guilt and instill national pride" (6). This position allowed for more freedom of movement on the international and local stage, arguably allowing for parties like the alt-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to steadily gain in power. In her article "To Remember or to Forget: Which Way Out of a Shared History of Violence" (65), Aleida Assmann explains how remembering is also important for the postwar generations, since it helped them to break "the pact of silence."

the context of the soccer matches, it seems that Germany tries to relativize, because the success of the 2006 World Cup relied, perhaps, on playing down the centrality of the Nazi past and having a sense of national pride.

Even if one would say that national pride was not necessary for hosting guests from around the world, it would admittedly have been strange to not decorate public German spaces with the German flag when so many people were decorating themselves with other flags in displays of banal nationalism. This reasoning is conflated with the hospitality of those who serve Marina, who comments on "die deutschen Farben überall und die dreifache, um nicht zu sagen *dreifaltige* Höflichkeit aller, die meinen Akzent hörten" (Martynova 88). The three colors of the German flag are compared to the tripled nature of the German politeness directed at Marina, because she is deemed a foreigner due to her accent. However, Marina checks herself, changing the term "dreifache" to "dreifaltige," not only linking the behavior to the fabric, and thus the symbolism of the flag, but also evoking the concept of the trinity and its use in various situations of church and state.[172] These uses range from the three-estate system through early modern Europe to the separation of powers of the modern state. As one could also see in Smith's *The Autograph Man,* it is also normal to think of a "new symbiotic relationship of state and television" (Gerbner 176).

While those who decorated the streets, cafés and restaurants would not necessarily think about this connection to the flag, Martynova uses it as a floating signifier with multiple meanings applied to it.[173] The flag can represent pride in a team, patriotism, belonging, or an inherently exclusionary and/or xenophobic nationalism. The public were, of course, invested in being inclusionary rather than exclusionary. The "Sommermärchen" was actively promoted by the media to contrast the somber German impression captured once by Heinrich

[172] The trinity evokes the often-religious overtones ascribed to soccer and its ritual function as well, as discussed by Critchley.
[173] One example from East Germans who criticized the Federal Republic of Germany gave other possibilities for the flag's color symbolism "Tod. Blut. Geld," which is ironic, since the GDR flag had the same colors

Heine's *Wintermärchen*, and to push against a negative image of Germany defined by its role in WWII and orchestration of the Holocaust.[174] Studies, such as that by sport-sociologist Sven Ismer in 2016, have shown that this idea was largely promoted by the news with its overly positive commentary about the flag waving and face painting, and the feeling of togetherness was enforced by the creation of shared televisual space in the form of live broadcasts for fan festivals and public viewing. The support of having the games played in the streets, so to speak, was a part of the national government's goal of living up to the motto "die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden" (M. Müller).

At the same time, in the novel, the three-fold politeness aimed towards Marina automatically sets her off as not part of the group who sports the flag. Her treatment also becomes curious in the possibility that the new German flags merely hide old values. Martynova ironically writes "die Welt hat ihre alten Farben abgelegt und sich mit neuen geschmückt" (101); the flag may be new, but the group sporting it may be the same group that sixty years prior had refused that politeness, or any humanity, to the Jewish people who were suddenly deemed foreign to the country.[175] 2006 was still early in the possibility for sports broadcasts to be shown in semi-public venues like cafés and restaurants, and it also turned the Strasse des 17. Juni, etc. into mass spectator opportunities, opening the feeling of live-spectatorship to people outside of the stadium. However, Marina and the other characters

[174] This kind of indirect propaganda paralleled the 1936 Olympics in more ways than one. Both served as indicators of the socio-political conditions of Germany at their point of time. Both demonstrated national pride and political power. Both featured a change in the broadcast technologies and sharing of sport events. In fact, 1936 was the first live sports broadcast to viewing rooms throughout Berlin, and cemented the relationship of sports to television that changed the nature of sports. Then, in 1948, the Olympic Games in London "cemented television ass the ultimate immersive experience of the age." See "The Televisual Legacy of the Austerity Olympics" by James Wilson on the *Museum of Science and Media* blog (10 October 2019) for more on this. .

[175] One further interpretation, surprisingly related but not strictly relevant, given the original German, is that the three-fold evokes the word implication, whose folded-into-ness is mirrored by the word *verwickelung* (Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject* (2019)). Consider also what Michael Billig says about the ironic difference between flags and citizens: "The Second World War had not been prompted by the German government's mistreatment of its own citizens: no foreign government had committed its soldiery to rescue German Jewry. But once the German government started making national flags, rather than individual citizens, disappear, then war became inevitable" (Billig 3).

do not participate in this; they resist the illusionary depiction of mediated togetherness because their associations are different.

3 The Subjectivity of Perception

Colors serve as a key reference for the novel's argument about the differences between sense and perception (*Empfindung* and *Wahrnehmung*), which points towards the subjective nature of how people respond to televisual media while at the same time acknowledging a socially, and in turn culturally, constructed perception. Recognizing how some people interpret certain signs is one way of discussing intercultural interaction. At the same time, these senses are connected to memory.

3.1 Color and emotion

Papageien contains many ruminations on the individuality of sense perception, which seems fitting in a novel where the protagonist is so inwardly-focused. However, in her return to the World Cup reference in "Wie es uns auch an Schatten erinnert," Martynova emphasizes the community aspect of certain sensory stimuli, and these reveal points of contact between people in intercultural dialogue. As Marina walks to dinner with some other conference attendees, she glimpses televised moments from a round-of-16 game between Switzerland and the Ukraine on 26 June 2006.[176] The section's title, given to three other sub-chapters in the novel,[177] is a direct quote from J. W.v. Goethe's *Zur Farbenlehre,* or *Theory*

[176] This conclusion comes from looking at the matches played during the 2006 World Cup by countries who have a yellow/blue flag (Ukraine, Sweden) and countries whose flag has a white cross on a red background (Switzerland). The only game that comes into question is this one, assuming Martynova refers to an actual match. If she does, this would be significant as far as representation goes, since one can find images of the event in the extra-diegetical world. It reiterates the "live" aspect of this kind of broadcasting, because one is exposed to an event removed in space and/or time that affected and continues to affect the physical world.

[177] Title of the sub-chapters starting on pages 93, 105, 111 and part of the title of the sub-chapters starting on pages 175 and 177. The first two sub-chapters address Marina's consideration of Gregor's color theory, indirectly relating such ideas to the creation of the internet, and the third use is the one I discuss at length here. The two other references, which include the other quote by Goethe "Blaues Glas zeigt die Gegenstände im traurigem Licht," refer to the description of the little window of a pregnancy test and the way that it will turn blue if pregnant. These references also address the affectual experience of looking at color. An interesting note about these passages is the way that future precedes the past. The second sub-chapter is a flashback introduced by the first, thus perhaps another example of intermedial reference.

of Colors: “Aphorismus 782: Das Blaue gibt uns ein Gefühl von Kälte, sowie es uns auch an Schatten erinnert” (Goethe 280). According to Goethe, color exists from an interaction of light and shadow,[178] but this has been rejected by physicists who understand it to be the processes of wavelengths and behavior of particles.

On the other hand, Goethe’s theories about the subjective nature of perceiving color and their psychological effects have proven to be an important part of color theory. Martynova paraphrases these theories between the two World Cup references in the voice of Marina’s artist friend, Gregor. The painting Gregor calls “WIE ES UNS AN SCHATTEN ERINNERT” is a framed piece of unpainted wax-paper (94). It could be seen as not being able to express something, but it is also a commentary on the viewer, who only believes in the existence of that which they can see. “[U]ns Menschen gibt es vielleicht, ohne dass uns jemand wahrnimmt, auch nicht“ (94). Unlike the Bishop of Berkeley maxim “esse est percipi,” the thinking being is also brought into question if they are seen. This is something found in *Gehen, ging, gegangen* as well, where a large part of the initiating action consists of the main character realizing something existed that he had not seen. Martynova’s concern, however, is less on the present and more on the past.

> Mond, Laternen und Schaufenster werden in ihrer Beleuchtungsarbeit von den Bildschirmen unterstützt, die vor und in allen Kneipen blinken: Mal ist eine rote Wange mit weißem Kreuz zu sehen, mal eine blau-gelbe Nase (ich denke dabei an Gregors anderes Blau, aber auch daran, dass die wenigen Juden, die den Zweiten Weltkrieg in der Ukraine überlebten, jedesmal [sic] zusammenzucken müssen, wenn sie diese Farbkombination sehen, wen interessiert das schon? Gelb sei das Korn, blau sei der Himmel, Korn & Himmel bewegen sich plötzlich wie durch

[178] “Die wahrgenommene Welt ist also nichts anderes als eine Summe metaphorisierten Wahrnehmungen” According to Goethe, color arises from the dynamic interplay of darkness and light. Also, the shadows of some objects will include some of the complementary color of that object. For example, the shadow of an orange will appear to have some blue in it.

eine Bö: “Tor!!!”), mal ein Schiedsrichter, pfeifend, pausbäckig, wie der Wind in einem barocken Bild; die übrigen Geräusche sind vom gleichmäßigen Getöse des Fußballuniversums verhüllt, deshalb raschelt das Laub – das noch dunkler und tiefer ist als der dunkle und tiefe Himmel über ihm –heute lautlos, und unwahrnehmbar zirpen die Zikaden in ihm. (111)

The windows this time are more literal than metonymic, placed next to the television screens or the sheet of glass through which the television projects its light from within a bar. The green fields from the last reference, which recalled pastoral fields of eighteenth-century paintings, connect neatly to the description of the referee with his baroquely inflated cheeks.[179] However, this reference to painting, a silent, still medium, is contrasted to the blinking lights—which implies an assault on the senses—and the sounds that are absorbed into the steady buzz of the soccer universe, shouting over the private reflection on German and Ukrainian history.

3.2 Subjective significance

Gregor states a few pages earlier, “niemand kann behaupten, dass die Farben so sind, wie man sie sieht. Niemand kann beweisen, dass diese Farbe [and here he refers to a yellowish painting] nicht das wirkliche Blau ist” (94). The painting he refers to is called “ICH GEHE IN EIN ANDERES BLAU” (90), which is what Marina thinks of when she sees the blue of the Ukrainian flag colors. The same thing happens with this reference. The reader cannot certify whether Marina sees a soccer match or a blur of colors from a trauma that happened sixty-five years before. In fact, through the narration, the only way one knows that

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[179] The Baroque was a period of “major and traumatic crisis” and is generally viewed in similarity to postmodernity as marking a fin-de-siècle, at least according to Bryan Turner in “Periodization and Politics in the Postmodern.” Thus, the baroque referee creates an interesting kinship to the theme of fin-de-siècle in the novel as marked by both Joseph Roth’s (source of the novels’ namesake) considerations of the end of the Hapsburg Empire, the reunification of Germany, and the end of the Soviet Union. Stephan Braese comments that Roth’s characters are distinguished by the way they can become case studies in which processes of time, becoming, and passing become visible (Deifel 150).

a soccer match is being referenced is through the use of the words “Tor,” “Schiedsrichter” and “Fußballuniversum.” Although Marina seems disinterested in soccer, she does recognize the person with the whistle, and likely also sees the goal that is being called and reacted to here. She can recognize the codes and what they are meant to communicate. However, to her the broadcast has a polysemic characteristic.

In text-based media, the author determines what is being signified with the signifiers they use, while the signified retains an ambiguity based on individual associations. Martynova writes about the fans, thus the reader thinks foremost of the personally imagined group of people that they ascribe to that word. The mental images these words bring to mind, much like Gregor’s theory about colors, are subjective. However, the images Martynova refers to are less ambiguous, until they are remediated into text. She evokes a factually broadcast image that, to a point, loses its factuality in its replication on the page. Furthermore, its unambiguous nature is debatable anyway, based on the preselection of those images Martynova chose to narrate by the people involved in getting the match to the screen. Several choices were involved, including the placement of the cameras, the angles they shot from, and which camera would broadcast at which moment. One could say that the audio-visual narration accommodates for more variation in perspective, despite the source of the narration being more precise.

Once again, Martynova focusses the reader’s mental gaze on the fans and not the players: “Mal ist eine rote Wange mit weißem Kreuz zu sehen, mal eine blau-gelbe Nase” (111). This night, the soccer universe consists of fans of the Swiss and Ukrainian soccer teams who brought with them the customary fandom usually associated with club soccer, extended here once again to displays of banal nationalism. They are wearing the team colors, which in this case are the national colors, in their scarves, hats, jerseys, or on their faces. The face markings are a bodily extension of the paraphernalia in front of private homes or in

public spaces like restaurants. However, unlike the markings in public spaces, these marking on the body are mobile and they can move into welcome or unwelcome spaces without creating those spaces. The symbols can cause one to stick out from other people uninterested in the game or help identify fans to one another and make them feel part of a group. Uncomfortably, it is also reminiscent of the yellow stars Jewish people were expected to wear in Germany and Nazi occupied territories, reminding the reader that sticking out can also be dangerous.

3.3 Community

Both soccer broadcasts stand in stark contrast to the television Marina and her friends come across in Kyrgyz while traveling through the Soviet Union.[180]

> In der Jurte stand ein großer Fernseher, weiß Gott weshalb. Sie haben das Gerät wahrscheinlich unterwegs gekauft und mitgeschleppt, an den Winter gedacht, wenn sie nach Hause kommen würden von diesen stromlosen Weiden – zu ihrer Winterhütte, wo vielleicht ein Kerosingenerator steht… Warum dann bereits ausgepackt, der Fernseher? Als Schmuck und aus Vorfreude vielleicht… (Martynova 72)

Here, the narrator and reader are exposed to something possibly new to them, both in the nomadic lifestyles of the Kyrgyz people and their existence in a highly stylized natural world, as well as in the appearance of a television in this otherwise technologically modest space. Both the reader and Marina wonder at the point of the television in this space, and try to come up with reasons for having it. "For decoration and anticipation, perhaps?" But the text does not answer what they could be anticipating, other than a way to get through the long winter evenings where the only other light sources are generated by gas.

[180] The noun "Fernseher," or television (note that while television in English can be used as both a noun and an adjective (or compound noun), German forms can include the adjectival prefix Fernseh-) only appears twice in the novel pp 72 and pp 158.

The anticipation may be in advance of a satisfied desire for entertainment and information that the television would provide, also connecting them to the world beyond the mountains that surround them. The television's promise of more knowledge about the unknown world beyond their mountains, shrouded in physical and metaphorical brown fog, becomes aligned with electronically produced light. Although the television remains off, its presence already provides a service in the physical way it takes up space. It can carry meaning, since the television has already begun to provide the centralizing force and community building that watching television as a group creates.[181] The yurt television thus reaffirms the medial focus Martynova sets up with the World Cup broadcasts.

With this, one cannot ignore television's affinity with Benedict Anderson's conception of the "imagined community" on which the nation is based. As explained in the introduction, this becomes emphasized with televised sports. Soccer teams can provide a sense of unity, even with the most diverse of players. In contrast to the other two sports addressed thus far in *Literarily TV*, ice skating and wrestling, soccer clubs bring a certain amount of community cohesion in that the fame of the team in the local community extends beyond fans of the sport itself.[182] Clubs globally provide critical revenue for local economies and are indispensable to regional identities.[183] National sports teams, where players represent the nation and eligibility is based on rules of citizenship that often rely on ethnic heritage,[184]

[181] One can also consider it a commentary on the assumptions about different cultural groups and the physical presence certain technological devices can command regardless of the services they provide, such as discussed on the next page (74). In the case of Andreas' German coffee machine, a friend comments on the way he would not own such a machine, since his Jewish grandparents would be reminded of the trauma they experienced at the hands of the German Nazis, and that they would go out of their way to avoid these reminders. That the machine is innocent of such socio-political connotations, merely serving coffee, is made irrelevant by the emotional response that could be caused by the physical machine itself. The same thing is true of the television. See also McQuail's 2005 text on cultural artefacts and domestic technologies. The content being mediated by technology will be bound by the technical constraints, thus implying a kind of superiority in the hierarchy of control over meaning, however the material of the technology may also have meaning in itself.
[182] There are some exceptions to this rule in the US or India, where American football and cricket may replace soccer's role as community cohesive. However, the point remains that a local sports team plays this role.
[183] One indicator of this may be how one can live in Munich, for example, and know that the local club is Bayern-München without ever having watched a game, just as one can live in South Florida, hate US football with a passion, and still know that the local team is the Miami Dolphins.
[184] Note again that German laws of citizenship are based on jus sanguinis versus jus soli.

can extend these relations on a broader scale, while at the same time implicitly asking questions about who can belong to the nation. The winning German national team, affectively so charged as to be recognized the world over as “Die Mannschaft” has, for the past 30 years, increasingly featured players whose ethnic background was in whole or partly non-German.[185] For some nations, such as Iraq, diverse teams featuring players of Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish origin offer a “genuine and precious moment of national unity” (Goldblatt 91).[186] The teammates certainly feel unity, and the fans may do so as well. The question is what happens once the team loses or once the tournament is over.

In the second reference, Martynova points out once again how this idea of national unity may be an illusion. She reiterates Goethe’s claim that blue can be reminiscent of the possible shadows inherent in its color in her commentary on how the colors of a flag can remind the viewer of the shadows inherent in its history. The images on the screen first call up the personal association Marina has with the color bleu nattier, which the reader is previously told[187] is the color of the painting of a friend, Gregor, that bears the title. The direct association Marina makes is to the possible trauma evoked by the colors in Jewish survivors in the Ukraine after WWII, “[die] zusammenzucken müssen, wenn sie diese

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[185] In 2006 it was four (Miroslav Klose, Lukas Podolski, David Odonkor, Gerald Asamoah), up from two players in 2002 and none in 1998; in 2010 it was eleven players, and in 2014 the winning team had seven players. Jacco van Sterkenberg dedicates an article to migration, race, ethnicity and sport media. Among other things, he mentions Paul Gilroy who, in his foreword to the 2013 *‘Race,’ sport and British society,* discusses how “football fans’ patriotic support for the national English soccer team incorporates ideas about an English nation characterized by (White) racial purity and homogeneity” (Sterkenberg 390). The integration of non-wholly ethnic Germans came into question based on who sang the national anthem in 2010. For a quick look at this, see “For German Soccer, a Lyric Debate: Players' Silence During Pregame Anthem Sparks Controversy; a History of Patriotic Ambivalence” by Vanessa Fuhrmans and Laura Stevens for *The Wall Street Journal*, 3 June 2010.

[186] At the same time, nationalists everywhere question the loyalties of multi-ethnic national people. Bicultural players will seem to be seen as integrated into the German national team without issue—until the team loses. As one saw in 2018, Mesut Özil, previously a celebrated Turkish-German player and role-model was suddenly given the blame for the German team’s falling out of the World Cup round-of-sixteen matches (for the first time in history) after displaying a compromising closeness to Turkey’s controversial leader Erdogan.

[187] The title of one of Gregor’s paintings, “Blaues Glas zeigt die Gegenstände im traurigen Licht” is the one that has the color what Marina calls bleu nattier. Also note that the color blue nattier is named after the Dutch painter Jean-Marc Nattier, who had been called to Russia by Peter the Great, but refused his patronage and died penniless in Paris. Thus, the color also represents another intertwining of Russian and European history (Deifel 147).

Farbkombination sehen" (111). Ukraine's history of anti-Semitism and pogroms, reflected in many eastern European countries through the twentieth century, included the Babi Yar Massacre in 1941. The country continues to avoid addressing the collaboration of west Ukrainian nationalists with the Nazis during the war. What starts as a look at changing images on a television screen turns into an association with a painting of a friend, which turns into a reflection of a trauma that challenges the nationalistic symbols that have become so celebrated in a present state,[188] and then turns into a recognition that things have changed.

4 *Erinnerungsdiskurs*

The memory to which Marina's associations lead her seems incongruous to the patriotic setting and light-hearted socio-political climate: "Wen interessiert das schon?" (111). However, the reference points towards Marina's memory recall and the codes she used to store the knowledge of the persecution of Jewish people in the Ukraine. This effect is in part a result of the polysemy of images broadcast during a televised soccer match, but also an indication of pushing against the closed model of the "Sommermärchen," which was medially created to celebrate a possibility for positive nationalism. In light of Michel Foucault's claim that the past may only be accessible in mediated form, and that "we cannot even know the reality of the past as we have access only to representations, purporting to map the real" (Richter 1326), one must ask which structures influence Marina to construct the memory in this way.

Of all the matches, Martynova choses to refer to a match between Switzerland, a neutral zone during WWII, and the Ukraine, which while a member of the Soviet Union at the time, had various independent nationalist organizations face accusation with other Eastern

[188] Arguably, some of Martynova's unease comes from the fact that there was an active Soviet oppression of fan-articles and any kind of visual communal/community symbols. „Es gab eine Unterdrückung sichtbarer Gemeinschaftssymbole. […] Fan-Utensilien waren nun „westlich" konnotiert und im Stadion nicht mehr zugelassen. Eine Konstante, die während des gesamten Kalten Krieges galt und die nationalen Gegensätze zwischen den Fans innerhalb des Vielvölkerreiches überbrückte, war die Unterstützung sowjetischer Klubs und der Nationalmannschaft, wenn diese auf ausländische Gegner trafen" (Wiederkehr 158).

European countries of carrying out mass murders of Jewish people in conspiracy with the German National Socialists from 1941 to 1945. Although the reference to the blue and yellow flag seems anachronistic, it is possible to believe that those who were persecuting Jewish Ukrainians were members of Ukrainian Nationalist paramilitary and partisan groups.[189] Notably, Jewish people in the former Soviet Union continued to face persecution after World War II, something Sasha Maria Salzmann's novel *Ausser Sich* depicts most recently.

4.1 Memory and dialogue

The mediated images that Martynova describes are located in the natural world of Marina's physical sensation—the other lights, the sounds of the leaves and the cicadas in the sky. Arguably, the natural sources of light and sound are juxtaposed to the television screens, which reflects a parallel between the distinction Assmann makes between individual/social memory and political/cultural memory. Individual and social memory, she explains, are embodied, while political memory and cultural memory are mediated (6). The latter are founded in "the more durable carriers of external symbols and material representations" (6). In social interaction, individuals share experiences that they perceive and remember within their own life span, but while these memories inform ideologies, these and collective identities must be actively formed from the "top-down" (6). Thus, "social groups do not 'have' a memory, they create one with the aid of memorial signs such as symbols, texts, images, rites, ceremonies, places and monuments (6). According to Assmann's definition, international sports events are a clear occasion for collective cohesion, while the flag is not, perhaps because it is subject to change.

[189] These were groups without loyalty to the Soviet Union and who had an incentive to cooperate with the Nazis, since the Nazis would maybe help set up an independent Ukrainian state after the War. It is not clear if Martynova is also referring to the pogroms carried out during the short control of power before WWII by the West Ukrainian People's Republic, which declared its independence from the Republic of Russia in 1917 and took on what is now known as Ukraine's national flag.

At the same time, Martynova presents the generational gap in memories as well. Marina's students have their own individual memories and do not know how to respond to the stories of their parents and grandparents; they do not know "wessen Grossvater war Opfer, wessen Henker und wessen beides" (101). Some of their parents or grandparents may have suffered under Stalin's Red Terror, some may have been a part of that regime, or participated in the persecution of dissident, Jewish, or LGBTQ+ people. Some may have been sent to fight and die in World War II; some may have survived the war and been part of the liberating forces in concentration camp, and/or participated in the occupation of eastern Germany that later became the German Democratic Republic, but they also may have perpetrated sexual assault or murder. The globalization of the Red Terror, Holocaust memory, and dozens of other genocides in the second-half of the twentieth century

> have had a significant impact on the way in which the most "German" of themes - the Nazi past - is now presented in public discourse. [...] Participation in worldwide debates on the prevalence and causes of genocide, the motives of perpetrators, and the universality of suffering has made it possible for German writers to approach the German past in a less blinkered fashion. (Taberner 21).

These writers include Martynova, who seems to suggest that the shared memories may also unify.

The extent to which this unification is possible depends on the position of the participants. In thinking about the transnationality of Marina and how she moves in German spaces, one must ask how other migrants continue to be viewed in Germany, especially after the Holocaust. For example, how would Nazneen, the Bangladeshi-Brit in *Brick Lane*, have found the connection to Germany or the Soviet Union? Leslie A. Adelson uses the term "touching tales" to refer to the "'competing narratives' of twentieth-century Germany history" following reunification (93), and the way that the Turks, Germans, and Jewish

people feature in literature after the fall of the Wall. Although Annette Seidel-Arpaci criticizes this perspective of the third participant of the "dialogue" allegedly taking place between Germans and Jewish people (Adelson 95) as mainstream and over-general in its classifications (for example, it excludes the consideration of Jewish-Germans), one should acknowledge the "presumed detachedness of migrants from the history of Nazi Germany" (Seidel-Arpaci 105). Martynova's transcultural dialogue functions precisely because the people involved share memories.

In a way, Marina identifies with the Jewish people of that time through the images she sees. She imagines their physical reaction, even though the images do not cause that same reaction in her. It reflects the way that one can bear witness to events through mediated forms of representation, as Barbie Zelizer explains (52). Despite Marina's exposure to Holocaust testimony most likely having been to the black and white photos, she responded to blue, which is what most first-hand witnesses would have seen as well.[190] Her association may not be based on an individual memory of seeing people flinch at the blue-yellow combination, rather on the collective memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

4.2 Holocaust memory in the USSR

Martynova came from Russia at a time when its own relationship to the Holocaust was just being examined. The official narrative of the war, where over twenty-five million USSR citizens died, emphasizes the killing of Soviet citizens, and Nazi hate was broadened to all humans, as evidenced by the term человеконанавистническиы (*chelovekonanavistnicheskiy*)[191]—a term that means "human hatred" and replaced the

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[190] If the thought had been presented as a memory, one could say Marina has memory by adoption. Witness by adoption according to Geoffrey Hartmann, is similar to rememory, which comes from Toni Morrison and refers to the physical and emotional memories experienced by biological descendants of slaves, except that it does not necessitate the biological connection.

[191] Note also a *Moscow Times* article from 2017 by Eva Hartog and Matthew Kupfer, who address the possible public phenomenon of forgetting the Holocaust in Russia. "Russia Tries to Remember the Holocaust." *The Moscow Times*, 27 Jan. 2017, www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/01/27/russia-tries-to-remember-the-holocaust-a56959.

Holocaust in several contexts in Russian (Penn 1). However, the collapse of the totalitarian state and subsequent opening of archives meant that Russians could organize institutions such as the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Center in 1992,[192] and the Temple of Memory erected in 1998. Ukrainian official commemoration did not happen until as late as 2020. The late admission after others have long been doing it, and many of the survivors are no longer alive to see it recognized, adds to the understanding that the history of the people's collaboration with the Nazis could be considered a suppressed history.

Marina's perspective of these matches in Germany simultaneously represents a European collective memory post WWII about the Holocaust, and a smaller collective memory of Jewish Eastern Europeans. Martynova thematicizes the in-between position of Jewish intellectuals and artists in the Soviet Union, who had their work suppressed and faced an increasing anti-Semitic tone and behavior in the country.[193] With these intimate observations, Martynova notes the difference in perspective of Jewish Germans and Jewish Russians, which was based on their position in regards to WWII. „Im Gegensatz zu den einheimischen Juden der Nachkriegszeit, den ‚Displaced Persons' und Holocaust-Überlebenden, die durch den Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland vertreten werden, betrachteten die russisch-jüdischen Einwanderer Deutschland nicht als ‚Land der Täter', sondern der Besiegten, das zudem über ein gutes Sozialsystem verfügte" (Isterheld 27).[194] Jewish Russians had a different relationship to Germany, which one can also read about in Wladimir Kaminer's famous works. Martynova writes against this common understanding with the recognition that there were distinct crimes against Jewish people perpetrated by both sides, and not just the Germans towards everyone not German.

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[192] A similar process occurred in the GDR when its state collapsed.
[193] This complicates the notion that, unlike the previous waves, the fourth wave was not motivated in the same way by religious or political persecution as stated by Eva Hausbacher in *Poetik der Migration* 30.
[194] Isterheld's footnote 60 (27) refers to Lena Gorelik's research in this regard as well

Marina's reaction to the owner of the residence where the literary festival is taking place and his mentioning of the former Jewish owners, presenting himself as a fine connoisseur of Jewish customs because he knows about the Sukkot, the Festival of Tabernacles (57),[195] displays just as much concern. Martynova's parallelism and a kind of *tu quoque* gesture (Brockmann 26) to the German National Socialist behavior implies a kind of relativism that would render Germany's history less singular and more normal in comparison to the members of the Soviet Union. In remarking on anti-Semitism in the Ukraine, Martynova reminds the reader of the anti-Semitism of the Germans and this allows her to continue to express her unease at manifestations of German national pride found on the occasion of the World Cup.

As Bill Niven has pointed out, citizens from other countries besides Germany or those in Eastern Europe may have a history in the persecution or deaths of Jewish members of their population, or other ethnic minorities in their countries. This can speak for a kind of globalization of the Holocaust memory. However, Arpaci-Seidel argues, it remains impossible for common remembrance culture to form between the descendants of the perpetrators and the descendants of the victims. The media around the 2006 World Cup attempted to make the matches a public spectacle that could create a "new start" for forming a common remembrance culture. At the same time, however, this is eerily similar to the ways in which totalitarian dictatorships, including the Nazis, used media to build conceptions of unified community, and this is a heritage the media suppresses while relying on it.

4.3 Ein Sommermärchen

Simona Mitroiu describes how "official symbols and emblems have very little capacity for promoting cultural cohesion" (Mitroiu 884); people must rely on other things

[195] In the chapter „Laubhüttenfest": "Man sieht den Häusern das Schicksal ihrer früheren Bewohner nicht an" (57).

than the flag for finding a stable ground for a collective European identity. Thus, in contrast to what Walter Benjamin points out in his seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), modern means of mass communication, such as television, do not place excessive demands on the individual senses, erasing reference points for a collective memory (477), but rather they become the reference points for this collective memory.

Those who lived during the summer of 2006 in Germany share the experiences, memories and stories of the time, but primarily as informed by the positive media reports and things like Sönke Wortmann's *Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen.* Although the documentary presented Germany's team and the success of the nation's hosting the World Cup as a new start, its hopeful optimism about Germany identity and European integration could not escape the past. Even its name ironically mirrored the Heinrich Heine poem and carries within it the shadow of the complicated European political history that led to Heine's exile from Germany in the nineteenth century, and made him wary to express his love for the nation that, in 1844 was still only an idea. *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* may have been more melancholic and uncertain, but one could argue that it at least represented Germany more critically than the documentary film, which premiered on Germany Unity Day 2006, October 3. The symbolic date reveals the film's attempt to connect to the cultural and historical significance of German reunification. The film itself was also widely seen, supporting the idea that it played an important role in collective memory.

However, Martynova reminds the reader that tensions can exist within this collective narrative. One of the dangers of looking too euphorically at 2006 Sommermärchen is that it is easy to forget the continuing difficulties Germany has with racism and xenophobia.[196] While

[196] Even within the documentary *Sommermärchen* itself, mistakes of 'othering' occur where camera time is given to the Black German Gerald Asamoah even though the other Black German on the team, David Odonkor is the one who scored (38:05) and who is being narrated in that moment. At least they, like all the other players, were given general camera time even when the voice-over is not about them specifically.

the crowds in the stands may be unified in one colorful mass[197] and one collection of sounds, the public spaces continue to hold a potential for racism. A sighting of anti-Turkish graffiti, "Kanaken, Koffer packen!" (50), and a discussion about the ambiguous anti-racism of coming to the aid of ethnic minorities (173-174),[198] help show that while what is on screen continues to follow the mold, given the history of the medium that works to create black and white representations of situations and promote unified presentations of groups of people,[199] situations and groups continue to be individualized, fragmented ones. In a way, this reflects the challenge, in general, to Germany becoming more inclusive. Expanding definitions of belonging, be it from a stadium, to anyone who watches the game, to a nation with open borders, can mean a wider group, which often implies less cohesion.

On the other hand, Marina's latent anxiety seems more about forgetting the culture of remembrance than about a rising nationalism. She worries "Wen interessiert das schon?" (111). The images and sounds of the soccer jubilation hide everything else, including the „übrigen Geräusche. […] deshalb raschelt das Laub – das noch dunkler und tiefer ist als der dunkle und tiefer Himmel über ihm – heute lautlos" (111). When they enter a quiet and screen-free courtyard in the next passage, the silence in contrast to the television screens becomes a reference to other kinds of silence in the face of, perhaps, oppressive cultural codes. In this case, it is the open meaning system of the televised soccer game that allows for both the game and Marina's moment of remembrance.

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[197] Martynova describes it as colorful. Realistically, the viewership in the stadium will be overwhelmingly white. While the ethnic demographics are more split among private viewers, it is still a higher number of males than females, and more urban than rural viewership. However, idealistically one can see it as a "melting pot" (Goldblatt)

[198] A second example features several young Germans at a train station showing solidarity with a young black man surrounded by three white men, until they realize he is a ticket dodger. He is a Schwarzfahrer, implicitly drawing to mind the 1994 Pepe Danquart short film of the same name that won the Academy Award that year Marina and one of her poet friends, Fyodor, wonder if it is was less racist to assume the man was being surrounded because of his skin color or to come to his defense (173-174).

[199] See more on the representation of diversity on the screen in Hall's "The Spectacle of the 'Other'

5 Trauma

Martynova's quiet screens become the backdrop to another important theme in *Papageien*: trauma. The "Bildschirme" were silent, perhaps because they had been replaced by the conversation at the dinner. There, it becomes clear that some things are too difficult to express, though people must continue to try to share these impressions with others as a part of building communities, especially as those communities become transcultural.[200] Karina Deifel notes that "[d]ie an der Bevölkerung durch Soldaten verübten Verbrechen und Gräueltaten beider politischer Regime bestimmten die negative Wahrnehmung des jeweils anderen nach 1945 und überschatten den Kulturkontakt" (134). In recounting how the parents of Marina and Andreas respond to their union, Martynova highlights the cultural tensions that come from past and current political situations. Marina's parents respond in and with shock, and she naively asks herself if this was because Andreas is from the FRG, which is part of the "west" and therefore the enemy of the Soviet Union; Andreas' father, on the other hand, who fought at Leningrad[201] says he approves of it "obwohl niemand um seine Erlaubnis gebeten hatte" (Martynova 27).

While Germans typically refer to the capitulation of the Sixth Army under General Paulus at Stalingrad in 1943 as one of their greatest traumas, in Soviet collective memory, this was the Siege of Leningrad. Martynova turns this history of winners and losers around with the German veteran's response to Andreas' announcement that he was going to Leningrad for his Russian studies: first *schweigen*, for a whole week, then approval "er billige es." "*Geh, aber hol mir meinen Arm zurück* - das sagte er natürlich nicht*"* (Martynova 27).

[200] As Nora Isterheld points out, the images of Germany and Russia staged in Martynova's novel, as well as the related national historical narratives, have already been analyzed more closely from an intercultural perspective. See: Aurenche-Beau: *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* d'Olga Martynova" (2012) and Svetlana Geiges: *Deutschland und Russland in Olga Martynovas* „Sogar Papageien überleben uns" (2015). (footnote 1069, p. 322),

[201] A change of names accompanied the change in colors here; this is now St. Petersburg

Although the siege was a German victory during World War II, one German lost his arm, and many lost their lives.

As seen in *Brick Lane,* authors often use the individual fates of a single character to represent the fates of many, and to create links to a communal trauma. The distinction between psychological trauma and cultural trauma was originally conceptualized by sociologist Kai Erikson, who explained that individual trauma is a "*blow* to the psyche" that "*breaks* through one's defenses" (Erikson in Alexander 4), while collective trauma is a "*blow* to the basic tissues of social life that *damages* the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (Erikson qt. in Alexander 4, his emphasis). In *Brick Lane,* the personal trauma of seeing her dead mother became enveloped by the traumatic image of the falling man, which represented a much less articulatable trauma. A similar thing happens *Papageien.*

5.1 Apophasis

The narrator's "natürlich nicht" about Andreas' father's answer highlights the complicated, controversial nature of German victimhood after a war that Nazi Germany started and after the genocide it perpetrated. It is there, but one could not talk about it. In the text, Andreas' verbalization becomes a talking about it, and therefore this apophasis is less silent than another medium would have been, such as television. Television cannot show something that is not shown; by virtue of its sounds and images, the only way to show *schweigen* is to not show or sound something. However, in not being shown or sounded, its not being shown or sounded cannot be depicted. Writing, on the other hand, retains the paradox of the visible and sayable that is shown in its invisibility and muteness.

Apophasis as a literary device has a rich history. The opening passages of Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" or "The Nose" come to mind, where the narrator reveals information about characters and situations while at the same time claiming not to reveal any of it.

Gogol's texts are perhaps the well-known examples in Russian literature, but the general use of apophasis to foreground absence within a text seems to emphasize one of literature's significant traits: the inherent ability to create something out of nothing. However, while Gogol uses apophasis as a device for, as Brigit McCone puts it, "the generation of interpretative suspense" used to disrupt the reader's interpretative frame (117), Martynova primarily uses apophasis to foreground the cultural norms of what can or cannot be said in the Soviet Union or Germany, and thus she creates a transnational dialogue on the basis of the ineffable. While the apophasis in "The Overcoat" "highlights the incompetence of its omniscient narrator, which undermines the reader's faith in the intentionality of his prose" (McCone 119), the narrator of *Papageien* emphasizes the competence of the transnational narrator, able to navigate multiple contexts of the taboo.

Martynova turns the silencing around in the novel as well, describing the German trauma and negating the supposed silencing of the Soviet trauma in this case. It appears in the conversation Marina has with a German author at the literary festival who says "'Hierzulande weiss niemand Bescheid über diese Belagerung. In Russland auch nicht, weil es in Russland verboten war, darüber zu sprechen.'" 'Nein;' sagte ich, 'das stimmt nicht.' (126). This author does not believe Marina, because he trusts what he read in the paper more. However, Marina's individual memory is filled with the experiences she had engaging with her grandparents' trauma.

5.2 Voicing multiple narratives

At the same time, German suffering started being openly discussed in German politics, and then literature, in the 1990s. Some theorists consider Kohl's, and later Schröder's, push for normalization as a cause of this while others, such as Niven locate this in the globalization of memory, which perhaps not coincidentally coincides with an increase in media productions that focus on such events as the Dresden firebombing by the Allies in

1945.[202] The circulation of the images preserves some topics for discussion as being valid while other topics become lost from lack of focus.

Although television was still in its development during the war, film and photography were heavily utilized. Photography as a tool for propaganda and reporting was especially controversial, and Joseph Goebbels even forbade the publication of photographs of dead German civilians, as Christoph Weber points out (11). However, both film and photography were used for television documentaries later. These documentaries are notable, because they attempt to build narratives out of heavily emotionally-weighted material and follow a rhetoric of realism. Though it would be obtuse to compare these to the *Sommermärchen* documentary, media producers in both times contributed to a building of collective memory and a resistance to forgetting. However, the conversation about how to appropriately represent or even memorialize Allied bombing victims continues (Weber 25).

Martynova seems to support the creation of spaces where the multiple stories can be heard and given their moment of attention; this is why the television screens and natural sounds are phrased side-by-side. In another conversation at the conference between Marina and a German poet, characterized a jackdaw,[203] Marina fights to be heard over the poet's dominant voicings.

> Die Dohle schaut mich plötzlich an mit ihren beiden auf einmal hart und hell gewordenen Augen. "Eine schreckliche Sprache!" sagt sie. […] aber wie Paul Celan es sagte, die Sprache meiner Mutter ist die Sprache der Mörder meiner Mutter, es solle jeder normale Russe die Sprache hassen, die so viel Leid gebracht hat, auch ihrer Mutter hätten Russen viel Unrecht getan. (Martynova 113)

[202] See Niven pp. 230 for a short list

[203] *Dohle* is just one more ornithological literary reference in the novel. There are parrots, jackdaws, and sparrows, perhaps also an indirect reference to Franz Kafka, whose last name comes from Kavka, the Czech word for jackdaw.

Marina knows the irony of the poet's statement, for she knows the original quote about language was actually about the German language. The literal and figurative silencing of the Russian language suppresses Marina's ability to reply, and the moment draws up several parallels to the way the soccer-universe noises dominated Marina's external and internal world. In the case of the screens, the reader knows Marina's association is incongruous, and it would be amiss to say the current world-cup atmosphere should go silent at the memory of a trauma that is ongoing. On the other hand, the disturbing way the screens overwhelm everything else indicates that nothing else could be heard, even if it needed to be. However, unlike the poet's diatribe, the screens do not actively overwhelm their surroundings. They could be simply shut off.

The poet implicitly says "schweig," which prompts a challenge about who has a right to voice what pain to whom. What is appropriate? The reader is faced with a dilemma, since they cannot say that the German poet has no right to lament the assault upon her mother,[204] who experienced "viel Unrecht," at the hands of the Soviet soldiers. At the same time, she seems to ignore Marina's reality, just as Marina casts the poet's into dark. Marina ambiguously describes the woman's complaint as "fantasy": "*Was sie braucht, ist nur Energie für ihre Fantasien"* (113), and yet it is true that an estimated 1.5 million women were sexually assaulted by Soviet soldiers and affiliates when they advanced into German territory at the end of World War II (Niven 230).

This theme of suffering at the hands of the Soviets was "more or less taboo" until recently, according to Niven (230), and the German poet's voicing of this suffering is an important voice, given space in Martynova's narrative. But it is *interlaced* by the voices of

[204] Note the role that W. G. Sebald's concept for secondhand memory plays, where people can experience trauma from memories shared with them by other people, and assimilate these memories as their own. The poet did not experience the trauma herself, but it has been passed on to her from her mother. An interesting, related note is the potential mediality of secondhand memory. According to the writer and scholar Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Literature and film, too, are a form of secondhand memory, lending us knowledge of a place or time that we haven't experienced directly" (French).

Jewish Soviets, Jewish Germans, and Russians. The statements by the two speakers are literally interwoven on the page. The interruptions may reflect the incomplete narrative since, as has been often repeated, traumata are things that happened for which one has no narrative. Arguably, the poet's strong silencing voice is the result of her trauma as well, which makes it difficult to have ambiguity and difference. In this way, it becomes more like the closed system of a documentary, which limits its available frames for interpretation in its attempt to control fact.

Still, one cannot deny that the poet's memory is actually second-hand memory, a phenomenon famously thematized by W. G. Sebald. In works interested in highlighting the question of literary versus documentary modes of representing history (Linkis 6), Sebald describes how people can experience trauma from memories shared with them by other people, and assimilate these memories as their own. The poet did not experience the trauma herself, but it has been passed on to her from her mother through narrative. Second-hand memory is usually mediated, and according to the writer and scholar Viet Thanh Nguyen, "[l]iterature and film […] are a form of secondhand memory, lending us knowledge of a place or time that we haven't experienced directly" (Nguyen).

Martynova plays with this understanding and provides one further clue for understanding the various layered voices and media. Accompanying the television references is the sub-chapter, "Die Wahrheit flaniert mit, aber schweigend," which picks up the televisual reality of what it means to have multiple "truths" for one situation, and again Martynova presents this medially. Using an intertextual allusion to a different kind of conversation between Kharms and his poet friends from OBERIU, Martynova emphasizes the different ways of seeing using a discussion of photography versus writing. A photograph can be taken from different angles, with different lighting, but the objects remain the same (supposedly). Writing completely transforms a situation, and nothing remains the same. The

ping-pong nature of the poet's dialogue reflects the way that truth can get shuttled back and forth; it reminds one that there are always multiple truths about a situation, and Marina's confrontation with the poet can show how both have a truth that is equally valid. The irony of the comparison is that these poets had less freedom to speak than the one with whom Marina talks. In a way, the USSR's collapse is what allows for both speakers to have their say,[205] since before that, it was common practice to avoid speaking, so that one did not say the wrong thing.

6 *Schweigen*

Blue is a significant color for Martynova, and she arguably takes this color symbolism from Goethe who determined that this color "macht für das Auge eine sonderbare und fast unaussprechliche Wirkung" (280). The effect of the color goes to the limits of what can be expressed. Goethe continues that there is "etwas Widersprechendes von Reiz und Ruhe im Anblick" (280). It is a paradox paralleled by various other kinds of simultaneities in the novel: victim/perpetrator, victor/loser, and others.

The indescribable, unsayable is often attributed to trauma. Speaking of trauma is treated as taboo in many situations, not just because the source of the trauma and the repetition of that trauma in remembering it are too much to bear or cannot be expressed, but also because the group around the person or people experiencing that trauma learn not to speak of the trauma in order to avoid provoking a painful memory. The concept is integral to Martynova's novel. Significantly, as I have shown, she utilizes the German word *Schweigen*, which elegantly describes a restrained silence, either by force or will. The verb *schweigen* can be translated as "to be quiet" or "to be silent" or "to say nothing"; however, all of these translations uphold the absence of something to say or inability to say it—*Sprachlosigkeit*,

[205] The increased sensitivity to genocide would make the Russians aware of their own victimhood under Stalin, for example. The crimes Stalin perpetrated against citizens of the USSR are also sometimes referred to as genocide. The Ukrainian famine explicitly makes the reference in the name Holodomor (Niven 235).

whereas *schweigen* implies an act of suppression of that which needs to be said, but cannot—or will—not for various reasons. Before the archives were opened in the Soviet Union and the GDR, people were merely silent about topics deemed threatening to the state. They virtually did not exist. With the opening however, a failure to speak it or discuss it could be considered *schweigen*. On top of this, some things can no longer be said, because the context in which they make sense is missing. Martynova evokes this sense of lost place with her memories of St. Petersburg, which actually occured in Leningrad and therefore in „einem nicht mehr existierenden Staat, in einer so nicht mehr existierenden Stadt […]" (74).

Martynova creates parallels to various types of *schweigen* on the narrative level, with her own lack of communication, which will be the focus of the last part of this chapter, as well as at the metaphorical level with the narration of the television broadcasts, as I have shown. Her position as a migrant both legitimatizes an impartial perspective of the situation in Germany, while at the same time excluding her. On top of this, she comes with her own perspectives of the Holocaust and issues of state control and discrimination in the Soviet Union. This includes the persecution of the Lamas[206] as well as corruption and the Ukrainian Nationalists participation in pogroms against Jewish people.

6.1 Censorship

Above all, Martynova is able to criticize the censorship that happens when dissenting perspectives or events are not open for public debate or discussion. She addresses this with her references to Kharms and the OBERIU as well as on the state level with the broadcast of *Swan Lake* to cover up the 1991 August Putsch.

> Als wir zurück in der Stadt waren, wartete Maschas Mutter mit der Kunde auf uns, dass das Fernsehen Tschaikowskys Ballett "Schwanensee" übertrage, was in unserem

[206] "einerseits wurde […] [der] Atheismus ein bisschen [lockerer]. Andererseits wusste das kollektive Gedächtnis noch von vielen in den 1930ern zerstörten Dazans und verhafteten und in den Lager gesteckten Lamas" (Martynova 155).

> Land immer (seit Erfindung des Fernsehers) bedeutete, dass etwas Ernstes passiert und *die da* nicht wissen, was sie dem Volk sagen sollen. (158)

Marina intermedially evokes a Soviet Union censorship technique for broadcasting *Swan Lake* when something controversial and/or a political transition is happening for which the cover-up narrative is still missing. In this case, the ballet is actually planned for that evening as per the TV guide, but as Katya's mother points out, even if this were the case, it still would not be shown in all the channels. "Katjas Mutter lächelte triumphierend und hatte recht: es war der Beginn des Putsches, der 19.08.1991" (158). Here reference is being made to the 1991 Soviet coup d'état attempt, also known as the August Coup. Although Mikhail Gorbachev was able to resume power at the end of two days, the temporary success of the coup is what lead to the further destabilization of the USSR and perhaps its eventual collapse.

According to the narrator, whenever "they," *die da* did not know what to report to the people, *Swan Lake* would be broadcast (158). "Die da" are usually the news broadcasters, however, as the text shows, in this case it is both the state and the news broadcasters. The tasks of categorizing and containing news items belonged to the state, which was not interested in as informative as television. When the news item was something that they could not manage, it did not exist. To broadcast the ballet was a "a stalling tactic" meant to block access to the news entirely while the Soviet leadership settled on a succession plan. The same had happened following the deaths of Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, and Leonid Brezhnev. It had not been shown since Perestroika began under Gorbachev, so the citizens knew something was happening when for days the only thing broadcast was a continuous loop of the ballet.

By emphasizing "since the invention of the television," the narrator points out that the state existed before television, and yet the state has become so thoroughly integrated into its development as a broadcast medium as to be used as a tool by the state in times of crisis.

These actions of the broadcasters during the Soviet Union were only possible because all five of the channels were controlled by the state through the Central Television of the USSR. Thus, one can compare this to a media event before on-demand streaming was possible. Martynova uses the *Swan Lake* broadcast as an example of state propaganda, however she makes clear that the Soviet Union was not the only state to do this. Earlier she provides the example of a *CNN* broadcast.

> Auch gestern, als ich in meinem Hotelzimmer CNN schaute, staunte ich über die Sendung *space race* (das Weltraumrennen mit den Russen): Ein fröhlicher Sprecher erzählte vom *genius of Kennedy,* der im Flug zum Mond *a rallying point for the nation* erkannte, und das *a fantastic way of demonstrating to the world the value of American life* war. Dieselben Worte, derselbe Stil wie bei uns damals, und das aber im Jahr 2006. (69)

It becomes clear that Marina has a different experience in her international hotel room than Alex-Li Tandem does in *The Autograph Man.* It is not uncommon for a television to appear in a novel that features a character who travels, but they are not used the same in every text. Both characters hate hotel breakfasts, but while television is just another means of escapism for Alex, for Marina the television provides a surprising contradiction to the way she previously understood the world. It provides another chance to see the "us" versus "them" reporting of news television that happened after 9/11, though, once again the "alten Farben [sind] abgelegt." This time it is the Soviet Union versus the US, though she had always heard the Soviet side. The same style, and even the same words, surprise her. The nostalgic look into the space race acknowledges a shift in the twenty-first century from a bipolar world system into a multipolar one.

One could see the *Swan Lake* broadcast as a distortion of factual current events, similar to other references in the novel to tricks of colors and images, such as the mirage (65), the

charades (78), originals and copies (161-163), or even identifying the sources of shadows (199).[207] The television news reporting of the space race, on the other hand, is the use of one and the same words, despite different languages, so that one cannot speak of originals or copies, or an illusion and a physical. The observations indicate that both versions are equally valid, though problematic in their ideological framing.

As explained earlier, one most commonly thinks of windows as something to look through, windows can also, with tricks of the light, reflect as well. This means that any window can become a mirror, and vice versa. Thus, the television not only takes one metaphorically from an interior into an exterior, or even public space, but it also reflects the spaces in question. This understanding is old, and yet Martynova is one of the few authors to refer to the mirroring metaphor. On the other hand, as Fiske explains, while one has the impression that television can serve as a window onto the world, or reflect the world back to the viewer, both these metaphors ignore the role of representation and the processes that construct, distort, present one view of the world. Sometimes, when it fails to reflect the space accurately, as when the Soviet broadcasters transmit *Swan Lake* instead of the news of the day, then the mirror and the window have failed to perform their function. Thus, *schweigen* in the media can be noticed when one considers all the things the media *do not* report.

6.2 E-mail

Such state censorship throws into starker contrast the personal choice not to talk. One of the main causes of *Schweigen* in the novel is Marina's lost and potentially found love for Andreas. It starts with the e-mail she received before coming to Germany and which she

[207] Martynova references shadows several times throughout the novel and seems to want to do something different with the conception each time. At the end, Fyodor comments in conversation with Marina on the mountains and the way they have turned into see-through shadows "diese zu durchsichtigen Schatten gewordenen Berge, die Schattenschichten sind von verschiedener Dichte […] egal was ich mit diesem Schattenspiel mache […] das wird eine Schöpfung zweiten Grades sein" (199) And so the mountains become another instance of originals versus copies.

thinks about at various points throughout the novel.[208] Unlike the sports broadcasts, which represent a correspondence between time and real-time, the e-mail, due to its relationship to the letter, represents a more convoluted relationship. The relationship between the letter and time is even more intricate in *Papageien* than it was in *Brick Lane* or *The Autograph Man,* perhaps also because it was sent as an email. In the other two novels, the letters are used to represent the passing of a long period of time, and they are the physical embodiment of the way the letter must cross space to arrive at its destination, and the passing of time before Nazneen recovers from her son's death, or Alex finally meeting his idol, Kitty. In both instances, the letters cross wide expanses of land: from Bangladesh to London and London to New York. They also guide the plot in a way that returns the sequence of events back to the same space-time, which creates a "räumliche Konkretisierung und Manifestation im Chronotopos Gestalt" (Bakhtin cited in Deifel 146).

In *Papageien,* the email is sent and arrives almost instantaneously, but the choice not to answer it, and instead print it out and carry it through her travels indicates a reversal of previously understood "progress" in media. Martynova asks the reader to take a step back and consider the way the narrative functions. Isterheld describes it like this:

> In dem narrative und reale Welt im Austausch miteinander stehen: Wenn die dargestellte und die darstellende Welt auch niemals miteinander verschmelzen können und wenn die prinzipielle Grenze zwischen ihnen auch niemals aufgehoben werden kann, so sind doch beide unlöslich miteinander verbunden und stehen in ständiger Wechselwirkung. (403)

The letter poses a paradoxical confirmation and interruption of the interplay. While, as we have seen, the television in the text becomes polyphonic and is polysemic, Marina's

[208] The email in question is excerpted on page 98 and written in an informal style, without proper punctuation, syntax, or orthography, but very сказ (skaz) -like.

urge to keep the email monoglossic, or removed from its dialogic function, demarcates a separation between personal and public space. Both become necessary to the understanding of how Marina moves in these spaces.

While thinking about it, Marina holds onto the email and refuses to reply, because as long as she does not reply, the letter is hers (72, 76): "Nein: Solange seine E-Mail unbeantwortet blieb, war sie mein Eigentum" (76). The reader knows that Marina has printed out the emails, so they are a material belonging to her. However, the concept of an email as *Eigentum*, as I show in discussing Jenny Erpenbeck's *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* proposes once again that there is a difference between physical medium of the letter and the digital medium of the email. Even if the digital processes are just as reliant on physical materials as paper and pen—perhaps even more so, the email gives the impression that it is an ethereal thing that cannot be "owned" by a person. Its restrictive use for sole proprietors distinguishes it from the communal medium that is television. It remains one's own as long as it is a one-sided letter, without correspondence. Once replied to, it becomes a dialogue. Or rather, once responded to, all the possible responses no longer exist; then there is only the one response to this letter. As long as it remained unanswered, anything was possible, thus one could see this as another example of polysemy.

7 Conclusion

As the novel starts with a potential reference to 9/11, it implicitly asks how the way people watch mass events on television has changed since then. It also provides a means of using literature to explore the various layers of these events. Many noted after 9/11 that "such a historic event was bound to find itself addressed in fiction written after that event" (Bentley, et al. 7), joining the ranks of other fictionalized key social and political events such as the end of World War II, the discovery and extent of the Nazi Holocaust, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. It seems impossible to grasp the full political, social, or emotional extent of the

impact of these events. However, literary narrative tries to do this. It can address individual aspects of such an incidence, even as it remains difficult to understand the implication of each piece of information about the events and everyone who was involved, and the extent to which they are contributed over time.

Having the media already fictionalize 9/11 made it, perhaps, possible for the literary responses to even seem appropriate, since anything else would have been "barbaric," just as Theodor Adorno claimed about writing poetry after Auschwitz in 1951, encouraging a "dignified silence" as "the only proper response" to such loss of life (Versluys 67). However, because the fictionalization had already happened, the authors could respond with what Kristiaan Versluys calls healing: "[t]he liveliness of language itself, the force of articulation" (67). Novelists could, therefore, "arrogate to themselves a certain power of explanation, comprising not systematic knowledge, but a kind of affective and empathetic understanding" (Versluys 66).

Media play a large role in remembering historic events, in part due to their unique characteristics as fluid, mobile, and unbound (Seidler 1). This aligns it with community in the twenty-first century, which is also fluid, mobile, and unbound. Being written after 9/11, *Papageien* could emphasize the way media can share memories both "with particular communities, thus constituting and reinforcing group identities, 9/11 showed how transcultural, transnational, and even global circulations of memory worked within the globalized media world" (Seidler vii-viii). The collective memory had expanded transnationally.

Through her television references, Martynova indirectly asks whether the Holocaust guilt is a part of German identity. Can one have German identity without being one of the perpetrators? What does it mean to be a migrant to Germany explicitly excluded by its

"remembrance culture"?[209] Annette Seidel-Arpaci, looks critically at the *Erinnerungsarbeit* that the Germans do, since "even now German is reluctant to take full responsibility for all Nazi crimes" (Arpaci 116). "Remembrance of the Holocaust and of National Socialism as a whole is turned into a form of *German* memory work that asserts a monopoly on narration and access to remembrance culture" (116). Thus, there is an exclusionary aspect to it for migrants to Germany, but precisely this exclusion can be worked against, as can be seen in literature. Evoking televised products of cultural memory can "play an important part in the construction of notions of the past that become hegemonic within a society, such as the idea of a 'normal' German history," as contemporary German literature scholar Kathrin Schödel points out (195), but it can "also be used to reflect on, destabilize, and subvert the fixed and one-sided narrative of the past that often dominate public memory." This happens both with the subverting of the "Sommermärchen" images at the same time as presenting one's own perspective of the matter.

Through the inter- and metatextual chains of associations, which can be found between seemingly disparate times, the assumed defunctness of the gaze becomes reaffirmed both through process of perception and the electronic technologies themselves. All understandings of the texts presented thus far in *Literarily TV* rely on codes of shared rules to which members of a culture implicitly or explicitly consent. Martynova highlights the audio-visual systems and the ways that meaning is organized in the media texts, such as the World Cup or the *Swan Lake* broadcast, but one can see how they differ in that which is said or not said. As these two examples show us, it is not so interesting how the codes have changed (or

[209] Martynova repeats this claim to German identity and guilt two years later in her collection of essays *Über die Dummheit der Stunde:* "Ich kann hier nicht leben und sagen, die Vergangenheit dieses Landes gehe mich nichts an" (10). Martynova's ethical code does not permit her to live in a country and not think about the past of this country, of course also since that past affects the present. However, it seems that simply expressing a feeling of shame of being German (or Russian) is equivalent to running away from that shame, "dem Versuch gleichkommen, sich vor der Verantwortung zu drücken und auf bequeme Weise ein unlösbares Problem zu lösen" (10).

have not), but rather how the codes have changed with their contexts. Thus, it becomes a question of codes and continuities.

Papageien cannot be understood within one national tradition. At first glance, Martynova's work is so full of textual references to German literature that it seems to idolize, encourage, uphold institutions rather destabilize it. However, through the intercultural references, and the intermedial references, she undeniably also challenges the idea of a national philology or a German *Leitkultur* that can be understood with the national label. The television images described in the text are not described by a monocultural, uni-national viewer. Furthermore, despite the criticism and counter-criticism of nationalist tendencies, Martynova does build a coherent "wir" in her passages; it is a mixed group that includes both German and Russian perspectives, but that is precisely why her novel is often cited as a literary example of interculturality in Germany. The point is, rather than focus on collective identities of Germans and Russians, Martynova builds a new set of interconnected references and memories that join the two groups together.

Looking more closely at these medial references invites one to look at the balance between individuals and groups in transnational spaces. The novel is undeniably about subjective experiences, but it can show us the way in which these experiences are mediated through events larger than ourselves. The public viewing in public spaces shifted previous conceptions of television, putting an end-date on the so-called "golden age of television" perhaps at 2006. Such a claim cannot be made without a glace towards an even more drastic change in television that came with the hand-held screen.

CHAPTER FIVE: “GAB ES EINEN FERNSEHER?”: REFRAMING WITH/OUT TELEVISION IN JENNY ERPENBECK’S *GEHEN, GING, GEGANGEN*

Introduction

If *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* is about mediating memory across borders, Jenny Erpenbeck’s third novel, *Gehen, ging, gegangen* is about mediating testimony from within. Martynova’s reference to the Shoah highlights a common topic in German literature since WWII, but over the past twenty years, German authors like Martynova and Erpenbeck have approached more global, or at least glocal, themes that have shifted this focus (Linklater 84). When comparing Erpenbeck and Martynova, one can argue that their backgrounds lead them to be different from other thinkers in the early twenty-first century who consider globalization to be a negative universalizing force “fraught with anxieties” and “scarred by deep divisions’” (Giddens qtd. in Linklater 71). Whereas Beth Linklater uses this understanding to say that German literature in the current age of globalization features a “preoccupation with […] this sense of powerlessness and of alienation, and with the individual, rather than a wider focus on Germany or even a German past” (71), Martynova and Erpenbeck remind readers that it is important to look back at this past. For Erpenbeck, part of this may come from her position as a citizen of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR).

The turn of the century marked a return to an engagement with the past, but with different vantage points, and, in the words of Dirk Göttsche, a “new understanding of cultural hybridization” and “a globalising world of continuing power imbalances” (Göttsche 55). Due to renewed engagement with its history of colonialism in light of its a preoccupation with the Shoah and a more recent coming to terms with State Security spying apparatuses in the GDR,

transcultural looks at Germany frequently share a tendency to thematize analepsis. Contemporary German literature has recurrent themes of difficulty speaking and remembering. They are works that attempt to reveal what has been forgotten, or censored, from history. Erpenbeck's novel prompts its readers to re-engage with the past, but not without acknowledging what may still be unseen.

It should feel like coming full-circle to consider Erpenbeck's *Gehen, ging, gegangen* last in this discussion of television, transnationality, and identity. *Literarily TV* opens with a discussion of *Brick Lane's* response to a major media event, September 11th, and it closes with a look at the Refugee Crisis of 2015. The Crisis,[210] which resulted from the European Union's failure to agree on a joint response to an increase in humanitarian migration to Europe as a result of the Syrian Civil War, [211] was the most significant event in German and European media after the 2008 financial crisis and before the 2020 COVID-19 coverage. Although the migrant characters in Erpenbeck's book came several years before 2015, the Crisis frames critics' responses to the novel. Just as Monica Ali captured a sentiment of England and literature after 9/11, *Gehen, ging, gegangen* presents a Germany that is coming

[210] I use the expression "Refugee Crisis of 2015" to make clear the period of intense migration to which I am referring. However, I agree with many who would call this a "so-called crisis" and I, too, look critically at this period as less a migration crisis and more a humanitarian test. The arrival of the migrants was not itself a crisis; rather, the crisis can be seen in Germany's, Austria's, and other countries' failure to handle the situation in a way that ensured cooperation and dignity for all involved. Seibel calls the summer of 2015, during which refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq crossed European borders, and where several EU nations, notably Germany, temporarily stopped the upholding of the Dublin II law, the Summer of Migration under Chancellor Angela Merkel's initiative. It is important to note, however, that the novel takes place before this Crisis and is based on refugees who came to Germany between 2012 and 2014 and did not benefit from Angela Merkel's "open border" policy, which relieved asylum seekers from the previous laws requiring people to file for asylum in the first "safe" country in the EU they entered. Instead, the men of *Gehen, ging, gegangen* are notable for not being allowed to file for asylum in Germany due to the Dublin II Agreement.

[211] According to the International Organization for Migrants (IOM), humanitarian migrants are persons in need of protection, including but not limited to refugees, persons with urgent protection needs, migrants in vulnerable situations, extended family members, or persons in need of medical assistance and care (IOM, *Glossary* 96). I use migrants and refugees throughout this chapter to refer to the asylum-seeking men of the novel and acknowledge both their history of movement and reasons for leaving their homes.

to terms with its immigration as much as the history of emigration and violence that underlies the country's present stability.[212]

Gehen, ging, gegangen explicitly describes effects of German colonialism in Berlin as well as regions in northern and central Africa, and it seeks to revise the traditional perspective of several northern African cultures by the Global North, including detailed descriptions of people's backgrounds in narratological shifts that "resist" the stereotypes, inaccuracies, and generalizations circulated in various western texts and settings, including the media. Thus, the novel could be considered postcolonial, as well as transnational literature.[213] The text centers on the interaction between fictionalized refugees and the fictional, white, male, primary focalized narrator, Richard, a retired Classics professor. While the novel is a bildungsroman of Richard's development, the main focus rests on the refugees: Rashid,[214] Rufu, Osarobo, Karon, Awad, and others. It considers the paths that took them to Germany as well as the lives they left behind in body, if not in mind. In her depiction, Erpenbeck resists the flattening of these stories into a homogenous group; she emphasizes the cultural, religious, and socio-economic differences between the men. Not only do the novel's characters cross national borders, resulting in a text built upon overlapping experiences of being "here" and "there," but the borders have shifted around the characters as well, tangling the webs of connections that have fundamentally changed several conceptions of national identity.

Furthermore, *Gehen, ging, gegangen* distinguishes clearly between migration as a *conditio humana* and contemporary migration as an act of displacement perpetuated by the

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[212] Viet Thanh Nguyen's book *The Refugees* cautions me to think about *Gehen, ging, gegangen* in terms of "histor[ies] that produces refugees" (Nguyen).

[213] This reflects current developments in theorizing German literature. Britta Schelling and others have identified many works of German Post-War and contemporary literature that are postcolonial, even if the authors are not (i.e., Uwe Timm's *Morenga*), and *Gehen, ging, gegangen* has been referred to as refugee literature and, by extension, postcolonial literature (Corina Stan). See also Claire Gallien, who theorizes refugee literature in relation to postcolonial literature.

[214] Here and for the rest of this book, I use the transcriptions of the names used in the English Susan Bernofsky translation.

violence of the nation-state and those who "other" those whom they believe not to belong to those nation-states. This marks a difference to the previous novels that I discuss in *Literarily TV*. *Brick Lane* and *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* present aspects of both kinds of migration, but they lean more towards finding a resolution for tensions caused in reaction to the migrants in European communities. *The Autograph Man* and *Gehen, ging, gegangen*, however, are unafraid of allowing ambiguity to persist in the effects of colonialism and the displacement that can happen because of colonial relations.[215] Thinking about Germany's history of colonialism can become the link *Papageien* was maybe seeking for the way people with different backgrounds can engage with one another, since the Holocaust was not the only crime Germans committed. It allows for an opening of a dialogue that is often overwhelmed (and perhaps closed) through the history of the Holocaust.

Learning and knowing are regularly thematized in *Gehen, ging, gegangen*, which is often brought up by critics,[216] especially in relation to the novel's didactic style. In her article about the ambivalent potential of this didacticism, Sophie Salvo discusses such "scenes of learning" as the abandoned school, the German lesson in the make-shift classroom, the literary texts to which Richard refers, and the times in which Richard walks and drives through the city (Salvo 348, 357). However, Salvo ignores the television as a specific space or source of learning, and I argue that it is one of the most significant sources in the novel. It

[215] It is worth noting that both Zadie Smith and Jenny Erpenbeck made the choice to write about a male protagonist, which puts a barrier between the reader identifying with the author and signifies the extent to which the reader may be meant to identify with the character. In thinking about this question, it is also worth noting that all the refugees Richard interviews are men, either because these are the only ones Richard, as a male, would be allowed to contact, or because, as has been noted by Stephen Trines, the dangers of the passage to Europe would make men more likely to travel than women, which is part of what Trines calls "asylum Darwinism."

[216] See Sophie Salvo, who also cites Brangwen Stone, Monika Shafi, and Christiane Steckenbiller, Stefan Hermes, and Hanna Lühmann in this context (Salvo 346). In her article, Salvo ultimately describes the novel's work as didactic literature as a "performative contradiction" (361), and so it is a useful read for thinking about the "efficacy" of the novel.

not only informs Richard,[217] but it also often instigates further learning and even literally reflects this learning at one point.[218]

Ultimately, I see *Gehen, ging, gegangen* as performing a similar work to that of *The Autograph Man* and *Brick Lane,* which actively use television references as a catalyst for the characters to engage with the conditions of their belonging. In this chapter of *Literarily TV*, I will discuss the way Erpenbeck situates television in the passages where Richard learns of and about the refugees, researches about their circumstance, or has conversations with them. These passages contribute to the novel's work of educating its audience (assuming it needs to be educated)[219] by presenting an alternative to what many still consider a homogenous German identity.

Gehen, ging, gegangen works on two levels: first, by mimetically representing the gaze of the outsider when they finally look into the world of the migrant and how they can see the reality of the migrant's position in Germany, and, second, by communicating the stories of the migrants' lives in their countries of origin, the story of the journeys they took to get to Germany, and their experiences in Germany. While it has become customary since 2015 to think critically about televisual representations of migrants, when Erpenbeck published her novel, engagement with the migrants via mainstream media seemed to happen primarily

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[217] As Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright point out in their *Practices of Looking,* learning is approached differently and understood differently based on the medium involved (Sturken and Cartwright 231). A lot of the news in the novel is relayed via media that is read (Erpenbeck 33, 148), heard (269) or seen (62) across newspaper, the internet, radio, cell phones, and television, [217] and each of these media require a different set of skills for being understood.

[218] „Während Richard am Schreibtisch sitzt und liest, und sein Spiegelbild auf der schwarzen Fensterscheibe nur seinem grauen Haarschopf zeigt, versteht er noch etwas anderes" (Erpenbeck 86). I discuss this further later.

[219] *Gehen, ging, gegangen* is automatically committed in the sense of *engagement* as per Sartre and the Frankfurt School. One cannot separate the novel from the political discourse on which it comments. Note that Sophie Salvo contends that "'committed literature' constructs a fundamentally different kind of reader than does Erpenbeck's text," one where the reader is encouraged to imitate, not reflect (Salvo 348).

through an "othering" framework.[220] Richard's narration expands this framework, as the reader learns to see things differently through his development.

To show this, I discuss the first time Richard notices the refugees, which is on television. I do this to demonstrate that his ability to see is framed by television news and his own subjectivity. Once the migrants have become visible to Richard, it becomes important to also consider *how* he sees them, which, I will show, is often still affected by his personal framework as well as the stereotypical representation of refugees. Erpenbeck uses Richard's interaction with various men to confront Richard's framework, but, ultimately the novel shows broadcast television's limits as it continues to rely on national and other unhelpful frameworks. This is when it starts to become clear that in the representation of refugees, sound may be more important than image, which becomes evident in looking more closely at the individual stories of the migrants; they teach Richard to listen and, most importantly, act. By the end, Erpenbeck's use of television references actively opens up the "frames" in seeing and listening to refugees.

1 Frames

Erpenbeck's novel engages with the question of the representation of refugees. This is the case even while it may seem problematic that a "novel of the hour" about the refugee crisis was written by a non-refugee, not even a migrant,[221] and centers on a similar character. It is possible that starting with Richard threatens to perform the same kind of injustice of marginalizing the significance of an essentialized group, as the novel itself is sometimes accused of doing.[222] However, within the novel Erpenbeck encourages the turn away from

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[220] For more on this see Sai Felicia Krishna-Hensel's *Migrants, Refugees and the Media* (2018), Rainer Geissler and Horst Pöttker's edited *Media – Migration – Integration* (2009), and Terrence Wright's article "Moving Images: the media representation of refugees (2002),

[221] At least not strictly speaking. Erpenbeck includes a note by Richard on the sudden change of nation experienced by GDR citizens: "1990 war er plötzlich, von einem Tag auf den andern, Bürger eines anderen Landes gewesen, nur der Blick aus dem Fenster war noch derselbe" (103). The nations changed, but no one moved.

[222] On the other hand, as Stephanie Bremerich explains, Richard is only relatable to a select few readers, so it is still a question of whether Germans have the word, here. But the point is still that it is a German. Abbas Khider

media, including literature, towards other kinds of engagement for responding to the needs of humanitarian migrants.[223] Furthermore, despite its faults, *Gehen, ging, gegangen* was one of the first German novels to feature refugees in the twenty-first century,[224] and since its author cannot claim to speak for the refugees, and does not try to, I focus on how Erpenbeck uses Richard's interactions with the refugees to give the reader access to the stories of these men who, for a time, were hidden from view.[225] The novel's simple, fairly reserved narration foregrounds their stories as *their* stories, and Erpenbeck undermines the dominance of Richard's perspective in various ways.

1.1 Richard's characterization

A newly retired widower, Richard is an archetype for an ignorant German with no previous interaction with contemporary precarious migrants,[226] though he and his family were humanitarian migrants themselves after World War II.[227] Richard also experienced the cultural tensions (after the initial period of excitement) between former east and west Germany after the Berlin Wall fell, and so he is less ignorant about changing nations than some people. Richard's growing interest in the refugees and their individual personal histories causes him to educate himself, and the reader with him, on the humanity behind

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indirectly criticizes this when he explains to journalists that he wrote *Ohrfeige* so that the refugee voice would be heard. Of his novel, Julia Janke writes „er ist auch deshalb ein besonderer Roman, weil in ihm die Deutschen gar nicht zu Wort kommen, sondern ausdrücklich die Klappe halten sollen."

[223] Sophie Salvo also describes Richard's turn to political awareness as "staged as a turn away from literature" (347).

[224] Among others, most notably featuring refugees and asylum politics that came before Erpenbeck: Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Schutzbefohlenen* (2013) and Herta Müller's *Mein Vaterland war ein Apfelkern* (2014).

[225] It must be noted that this novel is based on Erpenbeck's own experiences interviewing and helping the refugees who demonstrated at Oranienplatz between 2012 and 2014. The "OPlatz" movement was a pro-immigrant protest movement interested in improving policies for the admission of migrants and refugees into Germany, including laws about how and which the EU Member States are responsible for the examination of applications and loosening of the *Residenzpflicht.*

[226] Migrants in precarious positions as a result of unreviewed or unaccepted asylum applications or not meeting migration policy rules.

[227] The terms "refugee" and migrant" are often distinguished from one another in a subjective and partially legal hierarchy when determining which kind of migrant is more justified in seeking residence in Germany. Arguably the difference between *immigrant* and *refugee* has to do with the amount of agency the person had in leaving. Refugees are often more welcomed than economic migrants, even if the drivers of migration are complex and often overlap (IOM *Glossary*, 96). While the act of applying a label is problematic in itself, it is an important aspect of applying the law. As stated, in the case of the migrants in *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* the term "humanitarian migrant" seems most appropriate.

refugee fates as well as the circumstances that caused them to emigrate and the political and bureaucratic circumstances that greeted them upon arrival in Germany. In his willingness to learn and help, critics have called Richard the embodiment of *Willkommenskultur*.[228]

1.1.1 Eigentlich

A large part of Richard's character can be summarized by Erpenbeck's use of the word "eigentlich." Appearing sixty-three times in the novel, always when the omniscient narrator's focalization is on Richard, "eigentlich" or its English equivalent "actually" is a filler word. It does not really change the meaning of the sentence except to make a statement of affirmation in a moment of ambiguity, such as when Richard admits that he is "actually" not religious and that this modification in his self-representation of not being religious is in itself already a compromise (127). The "actually" leaves something tentatively mutable because it is not a definitive "no."

One of the more prominent examples of the usage occurs during a conversation Richard has with one of the migrants, Awad, who says (in English), "I don't know where my mind is." Richard then thinks "[w]as für eine schöne, nur leider unübersetzbare Wendung […] Ich bin mit meinem Gedanken woanders? Ich weiß nicht, wo mein Geist ist? Meine Seele? Oder einfach: Das bin eigentlich gar nicht ich?" (82). In this instance, Erpenbeck explicitly makes the connection between *eigentlich* and being. If one lost one's mind, one cannot be who one "actually" is, in this "eigentlicher" form.

Eigentlich has as its root *eigen,* which operates at three levels: it can mean individual or sole; it can mean own when paired with a possessive pronoun, and it can mean unique, strange, or non-reproducible. These three meanings each also appear in Richard's characterization and view of himself. He is the epitome of the classically enlightened

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[228] For many, this *welcome culture* stands for the idea that integration, whether social or labor market-related, is not only a task for migrants but also a task for society as a whole. For example, Sophie Salvo, who says that it is Richard's "interactive approach to the 'refugee crisis' that distinguishes [him] from his apathetic friends and neighbors" (345).

individual, learned and instructed in inquiry and interested in furthering knowledge. This makes him one of a trinity of identities according to Stuart Hall. In his seminal article "The Question of Cultural Identity," Hall categorized identity into three possibilities: the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the postmodern subject (275). The postmodern self is most known today as having a fragmented identity, decentered and capable of contradictory identities. This self is described in contrast to the Enlightenment subject who is conceived as a "fully centered and unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action" (275). This depiction of humanism must be challenged in light of the history of colonialism. In this case, knowing is tempered by ignorance, and Richard is still a flawed character. [229]

The way Richard refers to quotes and can cite across a spread of old and new texts is unique to those in his profession.[230] Yet he also recognizes his solitude in this, and the description early in the novel of his life's work, packed into boxes, as his *Privateigentum* evokes a sort of protectiveness against the grabbing hands of society. It is an inaccessibility as well as a slight sadness of not being communal and not sharing, which I suggested for Marina's email in *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* as well. "Auch das, was man Bildung nennt, alles was er weiß und gelernt hat, ist von nun an nur noch sein Privateigentum" (Erpenbeck 15). It becomes *eigentlich*, but like the word in a sentence, it carries no real meaning except to the speaker or owner.

Theodor Adorno's theory of "Eigentlichkeit" in *The Jargon of Authenticity* makes the connection to authenticity and subjectivity, noting the threat to being *eigen* in an age where everything exists as a copy. In response to the "concern for the growth of false consciousness

[229] It becomes clear that while Richard is educated, he is also biased. In his ignorance, he makes comments such as "Die Lehrerin ist, ganz anders als er es sich vorgestellt hat, eine junge Frau aus Äthiopien, die, warum auch immer, exzellent Deutsch spricht" (92).
[230] This uniqueness is reflected by the fact that Thomas, for whom this is not his life's work, is the only one of Richard's friends who knows these texts by heart (181).

generated by the ‘culture industry’ and the increased integration, yet atomization of persons” (Schroyer ix), Adorno explains the dialectical medialization of subject and object and suggest that the “in-it-selfness” of subjectivity is not enough to describe subjectivity (xii). Subjectivity extends beyond the *eigen*.[231] Richard must learn to branch out beyond his own self-interested position to connect with others, even if it seems a possible risk to his view of the world, and his very subjectivity, to do so. Arguably, this may be what is necessary in order for people to expand their horizons and engage with people who they have grouped into an “other” or who may be invisible to them.

Thinking about “eigentlich” can be neatly connected to considerations of Richard’s whiteness, which has to do with certain assumptions: whiteness, as Eske Wollrad puts it, socializes a person in a racist society to think that they have the prerogative to “unter anderem, ganz selbstverständlich den Status als einmaliges und unverwechselbares Subjekt zu beanspruchen. Das Konzept des Subjekts als ein vernunftbegabtes und autonom urteils- und handlungsfähiges Individuum geht zurück auf die Aufklärung, die das ‚Subjekt‘ als Weiß und männlich entwarf” (Wollrad 150). “Einmalig” and “unverwechselbar” pick up two characteristics of “eigen,” and, as Wollrad also critically says, being white and male often comes with the socially imbued privilege of marginalizing those who are not these things (150). The ones who are different become a separate group, the “other,” who are distinct from being *eigen*, even if only by construction.

1.1.2 Routines

However, Erpenbeck gives the impression that Richard’s character may be more positive than the emphasis on individualism and privilege suggest. His fastidious and well-meaning, but perhaps misinformed, attention aligns with his interest in orderliness and

[231] This is related to Sven Seibel’s claim that a text that demonstrates the true subjectivity of refugees will go beyond the experiences of individual people (Seibel 66).

routines, which opens the novel where the newly retired classics professor must organize his days anew now that he no longer works. The reader learns that Richard's days have always been arranged per certain routines, and that these extended into his relationships.[232] Richard's wife, Christel, may have also subscribed to these routines, because of, as Johanna Vollmeyer suggests (189), their shared WWII trauma from when they were young children.

Extrapolating this individual coping mechanism to a national habit, one can posit that what Dagmar Barnouv calls "rituals of collective, public remembrance" (168),[233] which occur in Germany since WWII, are routines that have their roots in the same kinds of practices that help individuals avoid the unexpected and the painful. Even further, one should consider this reliance on routines as juxtaposed to the precarity of the refugees' position; it is a point that becomes even more salient when one considers that the foundation of precarity is violence (Baker 511). Richard's "secure, routine-filled home," which could serve as a metaphor for the state, is "possible only via maintaining a state of contingency and determinacy for the group of outsiders it sent to control" (514-5). In a similar way, at the national level, the "routines" of taxes, pensions, insurance, and job security are granted by the territorial bounds upheld by the contemporary nation-state. It is this contingency that is used to exclude the "outsiders."

Ironically, it is Richard's routine of watching television in the evenings that brings the "outsiders" into his reality. *Gehen, ging, gegangen* notably still depicts television as a source for what Jinna Tay and Graeme Turner term "solid normativity" (233), especially utilizing the evening news as a marker of routine. This may have to do with the fact that news

[232] In fact, it may be one of the reasons a girlfriend broke up with him, since she believed that she and Richard only stayed together out of a sense of routine. "Im Grunde aber, wenn auch unausgesprochen, hatte seine Geliebte ihm die Frage danach gestellt, was von ihrer Beziehung übrig blieb oder überhaupt da war, wenn die Rituale, an denen er sie festmachen wollte, außer Kraft gesetzt waren" (147).
[233] "The resulting conflicts between private and public memory made it difficult to remember spontaneously, though over a period of more than five decades Germans have been abundantly reminded of their responsibility for the atrocities and unfailingly pious in their rituals of collective, public remembrance" (Barnouv 168).

programs in public broadcast in Germany are broadcast at a dependable time every day (for example on ARD, one of two main public stations, every weekday evening at 8 p.m.), provide normative information for the national population,[234] and rely on customs like the same opening sound and closing greeting. For Richard, it also continues to be the main source of news despite the rise of cellphones and tablets, and it is incorporated into the domestic space of his kitchen.[235] Richard's television has migrated from its corner of the living room to the kitchen to replace the radio in the kitchen, demonstrating as though one (usually the homemaker) is simultaneously cooking and watching television.

1.2 "Wir werden sichtbar"

After a busy day of tasks and during a routinized supper, Richard turns on the TV.

> [I]n der Abendschau bringen sie Nachrichten aus Stadt und Region: ein Überfall auf eine Bank, der Streik der Flughafenbelegschaft, das Benzin wird wieder teurer, auf dem Alexanderplatz haben sich zehn Männer versammelt, Flüchtlinge offensichtlich, und sind in einen Hungerstreik getreten, einer der Hungerstreikenden ist zusammengebrochen und wurde ins Krankenhaus gebracht. Auf dem Alexanderplatz? Man sieht, wie ein Mann auf einer Liege in einen Krankenwagen geschoben wird. Dort, wo Richard heute gewesen ist? Eine junge Journalistin spricht in ein Mikrofon, im Hintergrund hocken und liegen ein paar Gestalten, man sieht einen Campingtisch mit einem Pappschild: *We become visible.* In grüner, kleinerer Schrift darunter: *Wir werden sichtbar.* Warum hat er die Demonstration nicht gesehen? Das erste Brot hatte er mit Schnittkäse belegt, nun kommt das zweite, mit Schinken. Manchmal schon hat er sich dafür geschämt, dass er Abendbrot

[234] Fiske also calls television a normative medium (219). See Frederike Wolf's text for more on Germany's national broadcast services, ARD and ZDF, and the role they play in German television. It is also worth considering her research on television's role as a mechanism for social integration in both Germany and the UK.
[235] Richard's habit of watching TV like this may be marked by his age, which falls in the "over-50" demographic that Graeme Turner identifies as the dominant remaining broadcasting audience. According to Turner and other media scholars, the next generation of viewers are "the primary consumers of alternatives such as online video – [and] may never acquire the habit [of watching broadcast television]" (Turner 55). See Lynn Spigel for more on the functionalism of the division between house work and leisure activity (*Make* 91).

isst, während er auf dem Bildschirm totgeschossene Menschen sieht, Leichen von Erdbebenopfern, Flugabstürzen, [...]. Er schämt sich auch heute, und isst trotzdem weiter, wie sonst auch. (Erpenbeck 27)

Just like in *The Autograph Man,* the news exposes the reader to a "string of events [that] can at best arouse a vague humanitarian interest" (Bourdieu 7). The news events are arranged and succinctly relayed with little transition between then, while the image of the journalist in front of the scene highlights its "live" aspect, but also embodies a layer of interpretation for the viewer. In this way, it is not much different than the newscaster announcing Kitty's death in *The Autograph Man.* However, in that novel, the stress is on the television as the active agent: "the television, well aware […]" (293). This makes it more similar to the English translation of the *Gegen, ging,* gegangen, where Susan Bernofsky also focusses on the device doing the showing and ignores the sender or receiver. Bernofsky determines the camera as a part of the framing, translating the German original to "the camera shows" (Bernofsky), while Erpenbeck's writing hides the camera: "Man sieht [one sees]."

In general, as this comparison shows, the television has a more active role in English, indicating, perhaps, a semantic preference in English for the media and not the people using them. Again, in the English translation, the "TV screen display[s] the bodies felled by gunfire […]" (Bernofsky), while in German it is Richard who "auf dem Bildschirm totgeschossene Menschen sieht" (Erpenbeck 27). Active agents are controlling what Richard sees, and his perception is limited by this, but in the novel, Erpenbeck does not let go of Richard's subjectivity; his perspective is the guiding instance.

The narrative juxtaposes Richard's presence at the demonstration at Alexanderplatz that he did not notice with its mediated representation on the television; this one he does notice. In this bit of situational irony, the protesters are shown with a sign that says "Wir werden

sichtbar," but they were not visible to Richard when he walked by; it is on television where they truly become visible to him.[236]

1.3 Doubting image

The television's location in the kitchen demonstrates a savviness in television consumption that does not match the viewing behaviors of Richard's generation, necessarily, who may not have found it appropriate to watch television while eating.[237] Yet, placing the television in the kitchen enables the situation where the character can eat while figures on the screen are starving. The reader's response to this may be repulsion, but it produces an intercultural space where Richard's own experiences as a humanitarian migrant become relevant. He reflects on his shame at eating while seeing the dead bodies, but he also suggests that he is able to continue eating because he has an excuse to not experience that sense of guilt due to his personal background. The narrator comments that "als Kind hat er gelernt, was Not ist. Aber deswegen muss er nicht, nur weil ein Verzweifelter heutzutage einen Hungerstreik macht, gleichfalls verhungern. Sagt er sich" (Erpenbeck 27). Despite his self-reassurance, Richard cannot escape the feeling of guilt. His conscience prods him doubly here, not only because he is eating almost in spite of the men's message, exhibiting apathy, but also because he had not seen them. The images, as Michael Ignatief would say, has to do with television role in promoting the "internationalisation of conscience" (qt. in Wright 54). As Terrence Wright explains, Ignatief "proposes that images cannot assert, they can only instantiate something if the viewer is already predisposed in the form of a moral obligation—this obligation has Christian roots" (Wright 54). Thus, Richard's recognition comes from the

[236] One possible interpretation for this that I will not pursue here is that the television provides the distance Richard needs, and often otherwise has, as an academic, to see the refugees for the first time. In a further conceptualizing of this idea, one may consider Hans Blumenberg's *Shipwreck with Spectators*, where Blumenberg describes the increased ability to theorize something when it is distant.

[237] The shame he feels in watching while eating ("Manchmal schon hat er sich dafür geschämt) could be an affect derived from the ethical consideration of pursuing bodily pleasures while seeing others suffer, but at the same time, it could come from the guilt of eating while watching television.

medium and also perhaps from his Protestant heritage.[238] He was already morally inclined to notice them.

Richard's shame prompts a segue into the vital parallels between him and the migrants: both have experienced displacement and both have experienced danger during that displacement. Richard and his family fled Silesia when he was still a young boy, and Richard was handed over the heads of jostling people to his mother in the train after he almost gets lost (Erpenbeck 25-6). He remembers his mother's telling of that memory as his own memory: "[d]iese Geschichte war ihm von seiner Mutter so oft erzählt worden, dass er die beinahe für seine eigene Erinnerung hielt" (Erpenbeck 26). In contrast to Marina's memory in *Sogar Papageien überleben uns,* it is Richard's mother who remembers, not Richard. Marina doubts her memory because her family does not share the memory. Richard doubts his because it is not even his. In Richard's case, the transmission of memory from his mother to him is reminiscent of Marianne Hirsch's term 'post-memory,' which involves descriptions of second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences, and "approximates memory in its affective force" (109).[239] As also seen in *Papageien,* Viet Thanh Nguyen calls this secondhand memory, referring to W.G. Sebald's concept of having knowledge of a place or time not experienced directly.

Richard's post-memory is a mediated memory, not sensory, and it is a reconstruction of inherited memory through narrative, making its trace through a televisual reference more significant. The barriers between mediated and sensory experience are further broken down by the question Richards asks:

> Hatte er so eine Gestalt, die auf einer Liege abtransportiert wird, nicht schon in unzähligen Nachrichtensendungen über die verschiedensten Teile der Welt anlässlich der

[238] "[B]is ins Alter hinein ist er damit befasst, das protestantische Erbe deiner Mutter abzuschütteln, den Grundzustand der Reue" (27).

[239] See Brangwen Stone's article for more on the nature of post-memory in *Gehen, ging, gegangen.*

> verschiedensten Katastrophen gesehen? Warum war es überhaupt von Bedeutung, ob diese Bilder, die in Zehntelsekunden vorüberhuschten, wirklich Ort und Zeit mit dem Schrecken, der die Nachricht hervorgebracht hat, teilten? Konnte ein Bild ein Beweis sein? Und sollte es das? Welche Erzählung lag den beliebigen Bildern heutzutage zugrunde? (29)

Coming from the future in which images can be doctored while in transmission, the objective, "truth"-telling aspect of a photograph or live television broadcast is no longer someone one can take for granted. In asking these questions, Richard also leads the reader to ask what kind of visibility the television confers on the people. [240] When watching the report, the focus alternates between the report and Richard's thought processes as a result of the visual impulses. Why did Richard not see them? Also, in asking if this was taking place where Richard had been earlier that day, it is implied that he thinks maybe he should have seen himself there as well. Richard challenges the authenticity of the report. In fact, it almost seems that he needs to see himself to confirm that this event really took place while he was there.

One could say it comes from an insecurity in the authenticity of media productions. News broadcasting organizations have libraries of such footage, often called "stock shots," that can be inserted into a report at will. In a way, it does not matter if the chosen images came from specific event being depicted or discussed. In the novel, the images work in classic television narrative function via metonymy, as John Fiske would say (293). The man

[240] Ethical dimensions of showing and seeing: Note the possible unlikelihood of Richard seeing these images due to public broadcasting ethical codes, which encourage a restraint of showing dead bodies or violent images in the news (usually involving pixilation). It is a bit odd in this reference that Richard mentions seeing bodies from earthquakes and plane crashes. It is worth checking this rule more carefully as well as asking what Erpenbeck's intention is in her portrayal of the media. Does she provide an accurate representation or one informed by stereotypes about the media? This experience is even more complicated in the digital age, where such images can be distributed much more quickly and with less (immediate) censorship.

on the stretcher need not be from Alexanderplatz, specifically, because the metaphorical nature of the image of a person in distress relays that what is happening at Alexanderplatz.

Richard's doubt about what he sees on the television is echoed by the ambiguous truthfulness of the story itself. Did the man end up on the stretcher because he had collapsed, or did he collapse because that was the necessary development of the story? Erpenbeck's layering of the two instances confuses even further the relationship between the fiction of the text and facts of the O-Platz protests.

The doubt of the veracity of an image because of the interchangeable nature of images as copies of something else reminds Richard of the maps he finds in *Summa*, medieval reference works where the maps look identical, though they are not. In the case of the television, the images are repurposed images, and so become truly interchangeable. Salvo explains that "all things are interchangeable because they are symbols of the same abstract truths" (Salvo 353). However, the tropes common in accounts of refugees and their journeys to Europe ignores the specificity of individual migrants.

1.4 Migrant framing

With her television references, Erpenbeck provides a "behind-the-scenes" to a common phenomenon in television news: framing. As it was posited in the 1990s and early twenty-first century by media and international affairs scholars, including Robert Entman, television involves specific mechanisms in the news that can provide interpretations of reality, promote specific definitions, and shape public attitudes of, for example, the perception of refugees. Entman states that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient" (qt. in Monahan 21). Frames are visual and verbal communication devices used to ascribe meanings to actions, events, and issues. They help audiences to more easily make sense of new meaning based on assumptions of what can be "readily assimilated into existing structures of meaning" (Monahan 20), and are what one can

call the choices journalists and reporters make among style, tone, and the information presented.

Joachim Trebbe and Philomen Schoenhagen point out that negative framing is one of the three most common deficits in the representation of migrants (413),[241] and Willem Joris and his colleagues documented that the majority of frames used in news reporting about refugees are negative. At the same time, they identified frames that "presented the situation as mostly beneficial and focused on the value to society, problems of integration and the refugee policies of Western societies" (8). These frames implicitly point out the weaknesses of society and call for members to do better in integrating newcomers, as opposed to presenting refugees as a social ill.

"Rahmen" and "Grenzen" return at various points throughout the novel (130, 299), reminding the reader of Richard's reliance on them as protection against an uncertain, uncomfortable world that spills over the borders of what he can understand. A walk around a lake becomes a metaphor for the way multiple stories, experiences, and realities can be contained into a neatly understood pathway. Richards muses, "[v]ielleicht hält so ein kreisrunder Spaziergang irgend etwas zusammen" (Erpenbeck 202), including the unsolved mystery of the appearance of a man drowned the past summer. Richard imagines this walk as creating a cohesion for the disparate individuals who live and walk around the lake, including the refugees who accompany him in his thoughts.

The man in the lake in particular links to the infamous images of the Mediterranean crossing. The drowned man repeats as a motif, a shadow figure who reminds Richard of the callousness of people and the unexpected effects of the death of someone whom one does not know (12).[242] The man comes to stand for every single refugee who died in the sea on their

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[241] The other two are "underrepresentation or marginalization" and "[e]thnic groups are divided into categories of good (useful) and bad (not useful) foreigners" (413).
[242] "Zwei Ruderboote seien in der Nähe gewesen, aber keiner von den Insassen habe geglaubt, dass da gerade ein Unglück geschieht" (Erpenbeck 12).

passage to Europe, and he is the nameless and silent inhibitor of Richard and his neighbors who are subconsciously aware of the dead man's presence in a way that prevents them from leading their normal lives of going swimming in the lake in the summer. Many of the refugees Richard befriends experienced first-hand the drowning of people with whom they were traveling, and this also becomes important for Richard's interactions.

Critical refugee and communications scholars resist these stereotypical refugee images in media, but it is worth noting how Erpenbeck plays with these images, which continue to have "authority over the imagination" (Moeller qtd. in Wright, "Moving" 55).[243] The man's fate via drowning becomes associated with the more common visual frames of migration in the twenty-first century, which have shifted from reusing images from Christian iconography[244] to repeated examples of the more dramatic instances of migration over the Mediterranean. Televisual images such as a boat filled to capacity unsteadily floating on choppy waters, with a rescue ship bobbing alongside, have become easily recognizable "cultural icons," as refugee and media studies scholar Terrence Wright calls them ("Moving" 59).

The Mediterranean crisis was (and continues to be) a crisis that may not have been considered as such without the media, and it is "notable not only for the large numbers involved, but also for its visibility, unfolding as it did within sight of major Western news outlets" (IOM, *Report* 293). Refugees and precarious migrants have always had a degree of visibility, Wright points out, but the power of the visual image and the increased speed and accessibility of media technology have also made these images more apparent (Ponzanesi

[243] For a general discussion of tropes of refugee narratives, see Corina Stan's article "A life without a shoreline: Tropes of refugee literature in Jenny Erpenbeck's *Go, Went, Gone.*" Therein she describes the tropes of walls, borders, papers, and water and the ways in which they become "mediations on habits of thought built into our understanding of language, on the precariousness of foundational narratives, and on what ultimately constitutes human life" (Stan 795).
[244] Terrence Wright makes the point that much of the contemporary visuality of refugees has its origins in Christian iconography such as "The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden" to Mary and Joseph's "Flight into Egypt" (Wright, "Moving" 57).

548). At the same time, one must ask who controls this visibility and with what intentions, or why apathy or distorted perception continues to render migrants invisible. Brigitta Kuster notes that the "Visualisierrungstechniken an der Grenze funktionieren nicht bloß als polizeiliche Kontroll-und Regulationsinstanzen eines vorgängigen sozialen Körpers der Migration, sondern sie spielen eine entscheidende Rolle dabei, "Migration" als Attraktion von Andersheit zu verorten" (Kuster, "Grenze" 187). The visualization works by making the migrant "other." Similarly, the man in the lake is marked by "otherness," while at the same time working as an indicator of otherness. Only strangers who do not know about the drowning still bathe in the lake (Erpenbeck 11).

As I have already suggested, Richard can only see what he expects to see based on his perceptive framework, which is also a strongly visual framework as introduced early in the novel when Richard notes the behavior of his colleagues. "Irgendwie schien ihm, als läge allen – auch oder vielleicht gerade denen, die ihn mochten – viel daran, ihn nun so bald wie möglich aus ihrem Gesichtskreis zu schieben" (Erpenbeck 12). "Gesichtskreis" refers invariably to the limits of one's visual perception, since it describes the extent of one's peripheral vision, and while it can be translated as "ken," which is a range of perception, understanding, or knowledge, in this context Richard understands that the discomfort he may cause has to do with literally being in someone's field of vision. Richard is aware of how others might see him and how visible he is, but his solipsism prevents him from realizing that he does the same with other people until it enters his *Gesichtskreis* by entering his routine of watching the news, and thus is framed within the medium with which he is familiar.

Richard fails to see the refugees when he walks through Alexanderplatz, and while this seems ironic, since that which is unfamiliar is usually that which sticks out, the text suggests this has to do with the epistemological question of being able to know something if it is not connected to something one already knows, or whether something unfamiliar will not

be seen until it is brought into a context familiar to the viewer. In pedagogical theories of learning, this is the understanding that learners must link new information to something that one already understands. In popular understanding, this is like the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon: after one has learned a new word or concept, one will often suddenly see it everywhere.

Richard's limited perspective could be called a frame, as Judith Butler calls it, which draws a focus around a specific topic or site, but at the same time delimits it and "actively participates in a strategy of containment, selectively producing and enforcing what it will count at reality" (*Frames* xiii). It becomes the epistemological edge demarking the specific ontology of the subject (3). However, when the migrants are framed within a medium with which Richard is familiar, the television, they are visible.

This can occur despite the flaws of that medium, such as the logic expressed by the journalist of needing something "actionable" to happen for her to report it (20). Richard sees how a journalist on the scene expresses her impatience that nothing is happening, since she has no story to report if there is no action. The way she speaks to the police officer raises the discomforting question of the authenticity of the story, where it comes from, and whether it can be manipulated to suit certain needs. "Sie verstehen, sagt die junge Frau, wenn nichts Besonderes passiert, dann kann ich keine Geschichte daraus machen (20). The police officer laughs, perhaps about the notion that the journalist actually needs the story to happen in order to report it. He responds according to the stereotype about the media that journalists only take dramatic events into account,[245] which are then edited into a story that may look different than what was experienced firsthand.

[245] Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan describe this as "journalism's penchant for sensationalism and spot news" (20).

As stated at the beginning, watching television while eating supper is presented as one of the most important routines for the purposes of informing Richard of news events in general, and of the refugees at Alexanderplatz in particular. Drawing on Yu-Fu Tuan's considerations on home, and how "routine converts place into home" (qt. in Baker 507), one can conclude that these routines, including shopping lists, function as "metonymies of linearity and limitation" (Baker 508). Gary Baker also points to Richard's routines and the way he constricts his movement in "die Welt, in der er sich auskennt" (Erpenbeck 72). However, while Richard's television watching is initially a part of his framework, these means of linearity and limitation fail. We see him look up more and more on the computer, and engage in conversations with the migrants themselves. As the novel continues, he still refers to the television news, but his framework by that point has already been disrupted, even if it continues to affect his initial engagement with the migrants.

2 Rethinking Frames

2.1 Richard's changing perspective

One sees how the television news production about the stories of the men have their own "routines," or constructions, in setting up and continuing developing stories.[246] As Fiske explains, this is a part of "news' way of making sense of the real and of controlling its potentially anarchic polysemy" (284). The television news introduced a story about these men because their presence at Alexanderplatz, hunger strike, and one of the men collapsing, disrupted a "state of equilibrium" and was thus considered news-worthy (Fiske 295). Once the narrative is created and opened an interest, the audience is willing to follow the developments from day-to-day until the anticipated resolution that the disturbance is no more, or another news item has ranked higher in importance and taken its spot. Despite the

[246] See John Fiske's summary of the way the news follows Tzvetan Todorov's account of the basic narrative structure (*Television Culture* 139-140 and 295)

journalist's "besorgter Tonfall" during the first report (Erpenbeck 28), Erpenbeck shows how for the broadcaster, the story commands little interest by the end: "Abends, in den Nachrichten aus Stadt und Region,[247] wird eine kurze Meldung gebracht: Die Hungerstreikenden Flüchtlinge vom Alexanderplatz seien heute abtransportiert worden. Der Streik sei beendet" (31). The shortness of the report obscures the difficult, in the end failed, negotiations and the conditions under which the strike was ended, since the occupiers of Oranienplatz were ordered, as a part of the terms, to clean up the place themselves.

The short report, callous in light of the negative outcome for the men, stands in contrast to the way Richard comes to understand the events later, but it is also the part of the attempt to create an objective report.[248] It mentions the facts, yet it projects more than an attempt at objectivity. Journalist Chris Gelardi claims that media often reduce the ideas of refuge and asylum to little more than a "conundrum of domestic policy," but in *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* the "strategies of containment" as Fiske calls them result in a kind of compartmentalization. Although Richard embarks on his research project after this initial report, the men leave a small impression. It is the journalist whom Richard thinks of later that evening (29).

Nevertheless, after Richard has interacted with the migrants, they appear differently to him when they are on the screen. This time, he cannot doubt their existence and thinks critically about the television medium and its work of representation.

> Später sieht Richard im Fernsehen, wie Raschid und ein paar andere, die auf diese Meldung [die Vereinbarung wurde für ungültig erklärt] hin versucht haben, im Schnee auf dem Oranienplatz demonstrativ einen Iglu zu errichten, um folgerichtig auch ihren

[247] The phrase "Nachrichten aus Stadt und Region" is repeated from before and compares to "aus der Welt," which would mean a more global than local focus, which explicitly locates the cultural placement of these events in Berlin.
[248] Fiske discusses the concept of objectivity in the television news as something that "plays an important role in the ideology of the news and the reading relation that news attempts to set up with its audiences" (290).

> Part der Vereinbarung zurückzunehmen, von der Polizei vom Platz geschafft werde. Die Gewalt, mit der dabei vorgegangen wird, hat ihre Wurzeln in der Inzucht, die die Gesetze mit ihrer Auslegung treiben, denkt Richard, im Grunde genommen nichts anderem als ein bisschen Tinte auf ein bisschen Papier. (301)

The language here disturbs the clinical, clean concepts of law that aspire to clearly separate justice from injustice. Describing the interpretation of laws as inbreeding evokes messy relationships, and Richard claims violence lies at the root of these relationships, and he sees this violence play out on the screen.

The question remains whether he sees it or the news frame it this way. Since the news can no longer operate via their metonymy for Richard, since the people and incidents no longer "stand for a more complex and fuller version of reality" (Fiske 293)—he now knows the complex version—the news cease to be able to contain the story in a satisfying way for him. The fact that Richard recognizes the men, and can name them, demonstrates the extent to which the media no longer functions as a "neutral" informative source. Rather, Richard can clearly see the injustice in the government going back on its word that the asylum seekers could stay, as well as the insensitivity of the media in how it has presented these events.

The representation of the televised moment shows how close Richard has come to these men. The double lens of the television represents the refugees, whom Richard has in the meantime met, once again at a distance from him and perhaps even as objects. However, now that Richard has met them, he is able to see how the materiality of the television news can disguise the actual violence inherent in the treatment of the refugees. Erpenbeck shows how the violence with which they are forced to leave the Oranienplatz, "vom Platz geschaff[en]," is parallel to the violence of the laws, which are materially harmless, a bit of ink on paper, but just as destructive.

2.2 Shifting associations

In her novel, Erpenbeck continuously takes advantage of the reader's inevitable relationship with the media for her depictions. Wright had noted how images of the people in precarious conditions on the sea can "automatically elicit the appropriate emotional response" ("Moving" 59), and Erpenbeck teases such an automatic response from the reader by featuring a different kind of boat and activity—a fishing boat and the gutting of fish. The television is on when Richard first enters the senior living facility that has been repurposed as an accommodation center for asylum seekers to begin his interviews.

> Auf der Liege ganz vorn, die queer vor einen Fernseher gerückt ist sitzt eine massige Gestalt, daneben drei andre. [...] Im Fernseher läuft eine Sendung über Fischfang. Man sieht Fische in Netzen, Männer in orangefarbener, wetterfester Kleidung, man sieht Boote im Sturm und viel Wasser. (Erpenbeck 60)

The moment, polysemic in its multiple meanings of face-value fishing program and the parallels to the refugees, also becomes polyphonic when one refugee's responses to Richard's questions become interspersed with selected shots from the program they are watching. Rashid does not actually answer Richard's questions; they seem directly influenced by the program they are watching. The discomforting juxtaposition of the questions, the non-congruent answers, and that which is shown on the screen is repeated several times:

> Haben Sie eine Schule besucht? Raschid kann nicht schwimmen. Er hält sich an einem Kabel fest und bleibt so über Wasser, […] Was war in Ihrer Kindheit Ihr Lieblingsversteck? Aber 550 von 800 sind ertrunken. Auf dem Fernseher sind nun viele Fische auf einem Fließband zu sehen, Frauenhände in Gummihandschuhen greifen nach ihnen und machen mit großen Messern innerhalb von Sekunden aus den Fischen Filet. Und in Hamburg haben sie sich wieder getroffen, Raschid und Zair. (Erpenbeck 62)

The passage seamlessly transitions between Richard's questions about childhood experiences, the ekphrastic description of what is showing on the screen, and Rashid's continuing narration. The television runs during the duration of their conversation, but shortly after that, it gets turned on mute. This happens to Richard's obvious relief, likely because he is aware of the overlap between Rashid's story and the fishing documentary. Erpenbeck rends the people Rashid has seen die around him as symbolically equivalent to the fish as a mass of life that has been mechanically prepared for consumption. The last line, "in Hamburg haben sie sich wieder getroffen" could refer both to the men and the fish, who may have ended up in Hamburg's famous fish market. In this first interaction with the migrants, Erpenbeck provides support for Richard's, and also likely the readers' interpretation, but she also begins to provide contradicting messages, which become evident through the perspectives of the migrants.

The situation hearkens to the oft-repeated association of the refugee with the boat that is simultaneously endangered yet threatening someone else's political order. Erpenbeck relies on the reader's recognition of this "spectacle of the border" (Mezzadro and Neilson viii),[249] caused by the Schengen Agreement, which Kuster notes changed the tropes of migration from "'Koffer', 'Fließband', 'Pkw' und 'Fernseher'" to "'Laster', 'Boote', 'Zäune', 'Mauern', 'Dunkelheit', 'Meereswogen', 'Wind'" ("Grenze" 188). While previous iconography fit the experiences of individuals in exile or individual persons or families leaving their homeland to settle into their new homes, as evidenced by the single-transport vehicle (Pkw) and the television as an integrational device, the new images refer to a mass, fixed in its depiction like a "nature mord," into what Kuster calls the "TV Migrant" (188). The fish in this instance represent the mass in a similar way.

[249] "the ritualized display of violence and expulsion that characterizes many border interventions" (viii)

Seen in a different context, however, if it were not amidst a scene of young adult men living out their "extended present,"[250] the reference could be harmless and may even remind one of the Christian metaphor of Jesus's followers. Still, the passage sustains its potential of these images being traumatic for the refugees. The images are written in a doubly contextual space of both the room with the refugees, and their memories of coming to Europe, but also the more probable benign association Richard would have had due to his personal experiences fishing—all of which takes place within the presence of German television. Yet, here too Richard makes the connection to the drowned man in the lake.

The fishing program thus becomes a text with many different meanings, none of which are fixed. This kind of multiple association happens in Martynova's novel as well, as was initiated by the Ukrainian flag colors at the televised soccer match. The ability of television as a text to layer the different associations is reminiscent of a montage, wherein one sees the example of the polysemic nature of television. Erpenbeck suggests a response (trauma) to the program and juxtaposes it to an actual response (apathetic interest) by the three men watching it, though the answers provided by Rashid suggest that trauma is still a valid interpretation, and reminds one that trauma is often invisible.

2.3 Osarobo: upsetting expectations

The fish metaphor is later reinforced when Richard meets with Osarobo, who came to German over Italy from Niger. In their interaction, Richard imagines the ghosts of these fish, which symbolically represent people who Richard says have died in order to make it possible for the migrants to keep on living: "In Zimmer 2017 warten Geister filetierter Fisch auf Futter, aber noch sind alle 800 Passagiere am Leben" (122). The comparison of the refugees to the fish is not gratuitous. Later, a German teacher points out to Richard "[s]elbst Fische in

[250] The socio-legal scholar Sarah Turnball describes the temporal experience of such individuals as consisting of a form of "stretched time," a period of waiting and uncertainty without a sense of personal agency. In his 2018 article about Terézia Mora's *Alle Tage* and *Gehen, ging, gegangen* Nicholas Courtman calls this an extended present (155), which I find a useful way of thinking about it.

einem Aquarium haben doch wenigstens ihr Hintergrundbild mit Korallen und Algen, sagt sie. Und die Menschen hier sollten es schlechter haben als so ein paar Fische?“ (132). Indirectly, the teacher says that the refugees in Berlin are treated worse than fish in a tank.

On the other hand, while the television references reinforce the idea of men as ghosts, and their self-identification with the fish, Erpenbeck interrupts this interpretation. In a later instance Osarobo says to Richard:

> Ich hatte gesehen, wie sie ertrunken sind […] Meinte er diejenigen seiner Freunde, die bei seiner eigenen Überfahrt gestorben waren, quälte ihn die Erinnerung? Nein, er hatte nur ein Fernsehbericht über ein aktuelles Schiffsunglück gesehen. Nur. Hatte Ertrinkende gesehen und in den Ertrinkenden sich selbst erkannt, seine Freunde und die, die neben ihn gesessen hatten. (207)

When Osarobo states that he had seen the people drown, Richard thinks Osarobo means the people who had travelled with him, and the reader momentarily also believes they will read more about this traumatic moment for Osarobo and perhaps react with the appropriate emotional response. However, Erpenbeck plays with these expectations of both the reader and Richard, and Osarobo’s next answer reveals that he had seen the same television report as anyone else may have seen about a capsized ship. The next sentence reverses this yet again as the reader is given a hypothetical demonstration of Osarobo’s identification with the people he saw drown on the screen. In the end, Richard’s understanding prevails, which is an effect of him being the narrator, and controlling the narrative. At the same time, these conflicting messages become one of the ways Osarobo resists Richard’s solipsism, and the frameworks he has become used to. “Richard scheitert an diesem Jungen. Aber es geht nicht darum, dass er scheitert. Es geht überhaupt nicht um ihn” (Erpenbeck 126). Osarobo challenges Richard’s “eigen” by rejecting Richard‘s expectations and forcing him to listen differently.

In another didactic passage, Erpenbeck suggests that people must be patient when interacting with humanitarian migrants. Initially, Richard is annoyed when Osarobo forgets about their arrangement that he would go to Richard's place to play piano: "[Richard] ärgert sich, aber worüber eigentlich? Dass der Afrikaner nicht so glücklich und dankbar ist, wie er es von ihm erwartet?" (145). However, the expectations Richard has are also fatherly, and in the next instance Richard displays empathy towards Osarobo by reassuring him that not knowing the way to his house is understandable, since his head is probably filled with other things (199-200).

Erpenbeck emphasizes a similar experience with another of the migrants, Karon, who also does not give the reaction Richard expected when Richard offers to pay for a plot of land for Karon's family (255). It takes Richard a moment to realize that Karon's failure to act according to his expectations is not out of ungratefulness, but because Karon's experiences are so foreign or unknown to Richard that he failed to have the correct expectations for a man in Karon's situation. Only at the moment after Karon explains that the plot of land will still need a year to give any profit does Richard realize that "Karons Sorgen ihn schon so aufgefressen haben, das er sogar davor Angst hat, zu hoffen" (255). Richard's frame had failed to accommodate for the experiences of the refugees. Thus, if the television provides the frames, then perhaps those are no longer relevant. Richard must start looking elsewhere.

Once Richard's framework is interrupted, the reader is exposed to how the men see Richard as well. When Richard talks to Awad, who suffers from PTSD, it is Awad who wonders if Richard is crazy: "der ältere Herr, der sehr höflich ist, aber vielleicht auch verrückt, schreibt alles sorgfälltig in sein Notizbuch" (Erpenbeck 165). Awad's perspective notably positions Richard as the "Besucher," the stranger to the asylum seeker accommodation center. This reverses the role that "natives" and migrants are often assigned. The Tuareg youth, whom Richard calls Apollo, is one of the few characters who recognizes

and responds to Richard's provincialism and naiveté that is often associated with being the "visitor." Also, a few rare glimpses are given of how others may see Richard, such as when he drives a few of the men home from their German lesson singing at the top of his lungs, leaving a neighboring car waiting at a stoplight in shock.[251]

Richard must confront his own perspective during his meetings with Osarobo, as well as the effects of positive media framing, since the text leaves open whether Osarobo committed a robbery in Richard's place while Richard was on a conference trip. To an extent, Osarobo's potential robbery could also be a figurative imposition on Richard's *eigentlich,* because of the way he may have imposed on his *Eigentum*. Although Osarobo invokes a humanitarian response from Richard, the text also shows how this can be a problematic frame when it is the only framework given for refugees to work within.

3 Death of Television

A closer look at the text's crime narrative, or *Krimi* reference, introduces how seeing and knowing can be accomplished when one turns one's back on television. Richard's failure to see the migrants as he crosses the square and the way in which this is foregrounded in the text is echoed later in the way Richard "watches" a televised detective drama.

> Richard nimmt sich ein Glas Whiskey und schaltet den Fernseher ein. Es gibt mehrere Talkshows, einen alten Western, Nachrichten Sendungen, einen Film, der auf einer alten Alm spielt, Tierfilme, Quizshows, Actionfilme, Science Fiction, Krimis. Er lässt den Fernseher laufen, ohne Ton, und geht zu seinem Schreibtisch hinüber. Während in seinem

[251] "An einer roten Ampel blickt Richard, der noch aus voller Kehle singt, während die Männer hinten klatschen und johlen, und sogar Rufu im Rhythmus mit dem Kopf nickt, zufällig in ein Nachbarauto hinein, darin sitzt eine junge Familie: Vater, Mutter, zwei Kinder – alle die Köpfe zu Richards Auto gedreht, stumm und fassungslos angesichts so vieler ausgelassener Mohren und eines offensichtlich verrücktgewordenen Weißen. Als er mit einem *Hüh, Schimmel!* Bei Grün wieder anfährt, hört Richard noch, wie hinter der in ihrem Staunen festgefrorenen Familie ein Hupkonzert einsetzt" (198). Note the use of the word „Mohren" may indicate the continuation of Richard's previous socializations, despite now having experience that should help him realize that the word does not work.

> Rücken eine Kriminalkommissarin an einer Kellertür rüttelt, schaut er ein paar Papiere durch, die auf seinem Schreibtisch liegen [...]. (Erpenbeck 41)

The reader is given a rundown of the gamut of shows on after 8 p.m. in Germany, and distinctively, there are no advertisements mentioned, which means that Richard is likely watching a public broadcaster with limited advertising. More importantly, Erpenbeck emphasizes the action of flipping through the channels and Richard's agency in picking from these channels to settle on one in particular; it heightens the significance of his choice. Erpenbeck features the description of a shot of a police detective in action, which means Richard has most likely settled on a *Krimi*. Surprisingly, however, rather than settle down with his whiskey to watch this, Richard lets the television run on mute and turns away from it to sit at his desk to perform his own investigation. The fact that this is a crime mystery reinforces the uncomfortable comparison of migration to criminal action, but by having Richard turn his back on it, *Gehen, ging, gegangen* proposes an alternative to this kind of narrative.

3.1 Names

Scenes described from the television are interlaced with Richard's thoughts about what he experiences the day he goes to building the protesting refugees have occupied. It provides context for Richard's reluctance to give his name at a solidarity meeting. He recognizes a difference between the discomfort of being made visible versus the discomfort of being rendered invisible.

> Noch jetzt an seinem Schreibtisch schüttelt [Richard] den Kopf darüber, während die Kriminalkommissarin in seinem Rücken mit einer Halbwüchsigen spricht, die in einer Ecke auf dem Fußboden hockt und weint. Die Namensnennung wäre, so ist es ihm vorgekommen, ein Bekenntnis gewesen, mindestens ein Bekenntnis dazu, dort anwesend zu sein. […] Er will einfach nur sehen, und beim Sehen in Ruhe gelassen werden. Er

gehört zu keiner Gruppe, sein Interesse gehört ihm ganz allein, es ist sein Privateigentum […]. (42)

Indirectly, Richard suggests that admitting his presence is admitting a crime. He acknowledges the right of the migrants also not to give their names, and yet his focus on his right to keep his name a secret stands in contrast to the way he freely gives names to the migrants. While respecting the men's *Privateigentum* on the one hand, Richard denies them this on the other.

The interactions between the detective and the youth serve as a foil for Richard. The direct conversation the detective engages in implies a certain tact and comforting role she is taking as the adolescent hides in the corner and cries. The reference to a female police detective implies a more nontraditional narrative, since she would presumably solve the case with characteristics other than the "traditionally masculine qualities such as strength, courage, violence and self-sufficiency, so that there is no need for an exploration of feelings" (Casey et al. 62).[252] Erpenbeck picks up the televisually transmitted recognizable gesture of comforting as an act of social cohesion, which allows her to emphasize Richard's almost asocial behavior. It is not that Richard has a lack of empathy, but he uses the moment of being asocial to create a space to inform himself. Richard repeats his strange claim from before about the sense of privacy that defines his individuality, which is something that the refugees are often forced to give up if they want to be visible to policymakers.

People wishing to enter a nation-state give up their right to privacy upon requesting entry or a right to stay. If they hope to ameliorate their situation as asylum seekers, they complete a process in which all the information about themselves is given to a third party to be judged. In contrast, Richard can choose to remain invisible when he goes to Oranienplatz

[252] Raphaela Tkotzyk provides a comprehensive look at the representation of contemporary gender norms in German criminal detective television in her book *Taffe Kommissarinnen und emanzipierte Kommissare?*

and only wants to observe (48). These motifs of silent observing, going unnoticed, and privileged viewing are repeated in the *Krimi* reference. Later, when Richard no longer silently observes, the reader knows it know it was his choice to do so; the refugees do not have this choice. The intermedial frame of the television show invites the reader to consider the function of state-sanctioned judgement and rule-enforcing.

Critics have often commented on the classical Greek origins of the names that Richard gives some of the men he meets, but Richard has a theory about names that becomes significant for the novel's overall theme of audibility. One can ask if Richard, providing names for the migrants until he learns them (such as the Blitzeschleuderer for Rashid and Apollo for the young Tuareg), is a similar means of taking agency away from them.[253] Naming Awad Tristan, because "es fällt [ihm] schwer, sich die fremden Namen der Afrikaner zu merken" (15), is, in a way, a similar admission to the fact that it is difficult "sich an irgendwen zu erinnern, die Haare und die Gesichter sind ja alle so schwarz" (93). Richard's admission falls into the known habit of European colonists who often gave Christian names to Africans and indigenous Americans. This also imposes a version of being onto them. The names come out of the way Richard sees them, not the way they are. Richard creates these names as mnemonic devices or *epitheton ornans* to aid his memory. With this, naming becomes another kind of framing, since it provides some control over how the person is seen.

The novel provides both sides of the argument of the significance of the names and whether giving the refugees other names takes away their agency. On the one hand, Richard asks "was schon sagt ein Name? Wer lügen will, kann immer lügen. Viel mehr muss man wissen als nur den Namen, sonst hat das alles ja gar keinen Sinn" (Erpenbeck 42). A name is just a sign; it has no substance and gives little information about the substance of a person. In

[253] Not surprisingly, texts about the epistemic violence of othering and essentializing will often involve name erasure or fixation, such as in Abbas Khider's 2016 novel *Ohrfeige,* which was also about asylum seekers in Germany.

contrast, Richard's reluctance to "out" himself at the assembly (36-39) where the refugees *do* give their names after refusing to give them to questioners at Alexanderplatz, makes clear that the context matters, and people have different spaces where they feel able to present themselves as more than a body in a room. Here, Erpenbeck resonates with Butler again, who posits the significance of our names and asks that "we think about the force and effect of those names we are called before any of us emerge into language as speaking beings, prior to any capacity for a speech act of our own" ("Rethinking" 16).[254] These names are markers of one's vulnerability before one "emerges into language," and they are a marker with which one continues to be vulnerable, and this reality is what both Richard and the men were reacting to in different contexts.

However, ultimately the men at Alexanderplatz were already vulnerable when they arrived there, as they had already been exposed to the dominant ideology that meant to impose a social identity upon them. Thus, in refusing to give their names, they simultaneously display resistance to this social order and protect themselves from further attack on their vulnerability. In bringing Richard to the assembly, Erpenbeck provides an example of how it feels to be removed from one's comfortable social order and what it means to expose oneself in something like the bureaucratic processes of identification, registration, and control.[255]

At the beginning, Richard is still trying to codify the refugees. However, by the end, he allows for a kind of decontextualized space, and he stops trying to codify them. At the same time, I believe Erpenbeck also uses the names to connect to voices of the characters. Richard recognizes that names are just signs, "Zeichen für Dinge" (43), but the way they

[254] Note that Butler asks a similar question about gender, and her work expands upon how we conceive of the body in acts of resistance as performative and relational.
[255] A similar work happens in documentaries, according to Sven Seibel (55). Sabine Peschel also describes the fictional documentary aspect of *Gehen, ging, gegangen* based on Erpenbeck's work to truthfully represent the real experiences of migrants whom she has met.

function as signs and what they represent, how they, as language, work “als Haut” is connected to stories (43).

To not name oneself is to withhold a part of oneself and keep it from scrutiny. One can recall how the men at Alexanderplatz are described as though they would die than say who they are (19). This reflects upon how saying too much may be dangerous, since that which is known is also controllable and therefore plays into the hands of the work of the immigration officers, for example.[256] The news broadcast worked without knowing their names, because, as the journalist made clear, she just needed something to happen. However, with this she broke one of the rules of journalism, which is that one needs a source for verifiable facts to print or show. This lack of names is thus a part of what led to Richard’s doubts about the veracity of the report earlier, and one can see how the men’s refusal to give the names would pose a disruption to the television’s success as news media.

If one would focus more on names, however, one may counter the more common considerations about visibility in refugee narratives, such as Sven Seibel’s “Visualisierungen […] als zu konrollierende Bewegung” (Seibel 56). Then the more important types of visibility can be encouraged as well. These would prevent one of the refugees, Rashid, having to fight against the men’s move to a remote location outside Berlin (Buckow) (101), and it explains why the protest march through central Berlin was so important (268).[257] Erpenbeck’s intermedial references to sound pose a challenge to this visuality—first, in asking why they are not more visible, and second, in protecting them from an unfriendly or judgmental gaze. Visibility continues to be a major theme of refugee literature,[258] especially related to

[256] However, I must mention a counter argument from Mary Stone Henley’s essay and theatrical experiment about naming. She suggests that naming both “isolate[s] a subject” as well as can “mask reality to the detriment of knowing” (Hanley 55). In the case of the men, the name would reveal more than it hides.
[257] Interestingly here, too, the men are visible while others, such as the police person trying to arrange the formalities of the protest are easily overlooked or heard (266)
[258] It is also the theme of migration literature, but in migration literature it becomes discussed in light of the nation’s tendency to view their success as a migrant country based on how “well-adapted” the migrants are. In

questions of subjectivity and agency; however, *Gehen, ging, gegangen* seems to argue that one must look beyond visibility for ways in which the invisible becomes visible.[259]

3.2 Tatort *and hegemonic order*

The *Krimi* becomes another thing that the reader is told about but is neither seen nor heard by the protagonist, but clarified for the reader who must recognize the intermedial reference and it meaning. Erpenbeck's descriptions emphasize the predictability of the *Krimi* genre, which has to do with the cultural status these dramas enjoy in Germany.[260] It is not without reason that the popular 2011 movie *Almanya: Willkommen in Deutschland,* which features an analysis of the integration of Turkish migrants in Germany, includes a key satirical scene in which one of the requirements of keeping a German passport is watching *Tatort* every Sunday (along with enrolling in a *Schützenvereinverein* (shooting club), eating pork twice a week, and spending every second summer in Mallorca).[261] *Tatort* is not only Germany's longest running television crime drama, it is its longest running drama. As a public television program, *Tatort* is obliged to provide an educational, social message on top of being entertaining,[262] and in its popularity and cultural status, it is also codified as particularly German. The show connects Richard to an imagined German community. Arlene Teraoka claims that the "phenomenon of the German police inspector has been the most enduring, and the largest, triumph of the German television industry" (267). Bertolt Brecht's 1967 essay "Über die Popularität des Kriminalromans," referencing genre prototypes from

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some ways, their adaptation is seen as completed once they are assimilated, and in turn, when their differences are made invisible.

[259] I take this formulation from Nanna Heidenreich, who is quoted in Seibel (56)
[260] See Klaus-Peter Walter for quantitative and qualitative support for this statement (81, 83-56), as well as the identification possibilities German *Krimis* give by foregrounding detective teams from across Germany (83).
[261] Samdereli, Yasemin, director. *Almanya - Willkommen in Deutschland*. Roxy film, 2011. Clip: dailymotion.com/video/xh3dio
[262] At least this is what they claim to uphold, for an example see ZDF's statement: zdf.de/zdfunternehmen/fragen-und-antworten-zum-zdf-zuschauerfragen-100.html. See also Frederike Wolf for her analysis of the way this responsibility extends to the public broadcaster's work of encouraging social cohesion in multicultural societies (33).

Friedrich Schiller to Gerhard Hauptmann, suggests an intimate history between German culture and detective stories, though a distinction must be made, of course, between the text-based genre and the televisual, often serial medium.

It also depicts the power of the state, suggesting another reason Richard tries to leave television behind. Notably, criminal detective stories are typically bourgeois,[263] since the genre centers on narratives that feature a disturbance of the hegemonic order followed by the restoration of that order through the story's resolution. More specifically, as Casey et al. point out in relation to what Stuart Hall called "Policing the Crisis," "the crime genre is seen as naturalizing and legitimizing repression and thereby contributing to the maintenance of a hegemonic order" (61). This legitimizes the repressive nature of police work. However, Richard has his back to the television in order to focus on researching the refugees, which indicates, perhaps, his willingness or a need to turn his back on this kind of order in order to engage with the migrants.

Teraoka identifies two traditions of detective novels in the late twentieth, early twenty-first century: the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle inspired harmonious-order-returning version with the upper-middle class, conventional background and the US American lower-middle-class, street-smart detective. The former pacifies a "deep-seated anxiety on the part of the citizens to uphold a sense of social and economic stability" (274). The detective's links to the state (even Sherlock Holmes, the private detective, was heavily linked to Scotland Yard), makes him a *Beamter,* an employee of law and order connected to the state, and thus the status quo. Economic stability in particular is won at the expense, quite literally, of the dispossessed and marginalized. Crime stories, such as those described by Teraoka, often link the "financial profit of high-level public figures" to the "life-and-death costs it entails for foreigners and

[263] On a similar note, Sophie Salvo refers to Richard as a "representative of … bourgeois culture" (349) based on his name, habits, and even his grocery list.

other dispossessed or marginalized groups" (277). The men of *Gehen, ging, gegangen* are not criminals, but they are entrenched by "criminal social and economic systems in which powerless people are caught" (277).

As Zygmunt Baumann also points out, refugees apose a threat to ideas of sovereignty, economic conditions, and citizenship (7). In bringing territorial ambiguities into relief, and thus potentially weakening them, refugees become enemies of the state, or, criminals. In his 1992 article, Hans-Jörg Albrecht explored the relationship between ethnic minorities, crime, and criminal justice. This association, which has partly to do with unverified origins, and thus possibilities for false identity, has been maintained through growing globalist procedures, indicating once again how the threatened dissolution of borders causes them to build up even more. Erpenbeck makes this fourty-year old association between migrant, refugee, and criminal explicit. Through their work of uncovering and making coherent, detectives also paradoxically reveal the "absurdity of determining true origins," as per Teraoka (278). This mode becomes obsolete as it becomes clear to the narrator that the criminalization of these men is inaccurate, and Richard challenges the concept of "Ausländerkriminalität," complicated by the fact that Osarobo *is* a potential criminal. However, even this framing allows even Osarobo to retain his ambiguity.

Crime series often depict "'good' people committed to improving society under difficult circumstances" (Casey et al. 60), which may be how Richard sees himself. Although he has not previously informed himself about these laws (his immediate association to *Dublin II* is that he went hiking in Dublin with his wife once (Erpenbeck 57)), by the end of the novel, Richard can tell by his research and his personal interactions the ways all the media fail to show, and his friends fail to see, the "corruption, ineffectiveness, and the iniquity of laws," which is also a part of the critique of crime shows (Casey et al. 60).

Richard as the detective searches for the origins of people and see who belongs and who does not. The text suggests that Richard, with his GDR past, may be able to see this more clearly than other Germans. The peripheral nature of the former East German view may serve as an apt "vantage point from which to critique the dominant social, cultural and economic paradigms" (Taberner 13). Brangwen Stone suggests something similar when she remarks that Richard may have more empathy for the refugees because he is an outsider to the culture himself.

Having grown up and spent most of his life in the GDR, Richard poses an interior challenge to Germany's idea of the nation, since he *is* German, but his perspective of the territory and the culture exist only in memory, and they must coexist with the contemporary ideas of the unified country. Coupled with his Silesian background, Richard becomes an example of why Benedict Anderson famously argued that basing nationality on an idea of common descent, territory or culture[264] can only create imagined communities. Richard's relationship to the German nation is different than a German whose parents grew up in Turkey, an aristocrat who grew up in Köln, or the refugees seeking asylum in Germany. Germany's former split continues to reveal itself in the diverse political and social responses to European events today, and in the face of migration, the infrastructure of the nation-state and the social community have ways of defining who belongs and who does not.

Thus, Alexanderplatz in *Gehen, ging, gegangen* becomes a kind of *Tatort,* where the police and officials go to solve two crimes, the first being the men not being where they are supposed to be or saying who they are, and Richard's crime of failing to see them. However, later it also becomes an interrogation room, after the suspects have been apprehended. When

[264] Note how these are similar to the distinction of national unity via ethnos, demos, and habitus as outlined by Karolin Tuncel.

Richard returns to Alexanderplatz, the narrator describes a group of men being questioned by the police and city officials:

> Wer seid ihr, werden sie von der Polizei und von Beamten des Senats, die hinzugeholt werden, gefragt. Wir sagen es nicht, sagen die Männer. Das müsst ihr aber sagen, sagen die anderen, sonst wissen wir nicht ob ihr unter das Gesetz fallt und hier bleiben und arbeiten dürft. Wir sagen nicht, wer wird sind, sagen die Männer. Würdet ihr denn, wenn ihr an unserer Stelle wärt, einen Gast aufnehmen, den ihr nicht kennt, sagen die anderen. Die Männer schweigen. Wir müssen prüfen, ob ihr wirklich in Not seid, sagen die andern. Die Männer schweigen. Vielleicht sagen die anderen, seid ihr Verbrecher, das müssen wir prüfen. Die Männer schweigen. Oder einfach Schmarotzer. Die Männer schweigen. […] Sie essen nicht, sie trinken nicht, sie sagen nicht, wer sie sind. Sie sind einfach da. (Erpenbeck 19)

Erpenbeck inserts the perspectives of people, such as member of right-wing parties like Alternative for Germany (AFD), who support stricter immigration-restriction laws, which commonly make for challenging hospitality. However, while these people are "othering" the men standing there, they are the ones who are "other," making a mirror out of usual dynamics in a place where the newcomers are usually the ones who are othered.[265] Here, the men are the known, the in-group while the police and city officials are "die anderen." The juxtaposition reminds one that one that looking involves relationships of power, and so the text seems to propose a disassociation to these dynamics. When Richard's house is robbed, Osarobo's guilt or innocence remains ambivalent. The importance of his guilt is left unclear, or irrelevant, just as the *Krimi* is made to be. The detective is no longer the source of

[265] In his famous introduction to *Orientalism* in 1978, Edward Said describes that Orientalism is, among other things, a projection of the European onto what it labels the "Orient: a world that emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a "detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, regressions, investments, and projections" (Introduction, Part II).

meaning, allowing for the previous mechanism of constructions of social order to be made irrelevant as well.

The impulse to accuse the migrants is the opposite of hospitality. The questions at *Alexanderplatz* begin with the assumption that one has to know who the people are in order to grant them welcome, which goes against the maxim of ancient codes of hospitality that require that one show kindness despite not knowing who the visitor is.[266] It also fails to uphold the idea of "die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden" which Richard notes was both the motto of the Weltfestspiele, World Festival of 1973 (Erpenbeck 273), and—as pointed out in reference to *Sogar Papageien überleben uns*—the motto of the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

Both historical instances invited visitors to feel welcome in Germany, with the implicit understanding that they would leave again, since the guests were only expected to stay for the express purpose of culture and sport. They were not invited to stay, nor did they intend to. This stands in contrast to the other "guests," *Gastarbeiter* who came to Germany when called after WWII. They provide the rejoinder to the claim that Germany "lacks a long tradition of an immigration country" (Trines), since Germany has been an immigration country since the 1960s. At the same time, it failed to prepare for the long-term residence of the workers it had recruited from Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, and the former Yugoslavia staying in Germany. The country continued calling them "guests" even after their children and families had arrived or been born in Germany.[267]

Furthermore, contrary to the customary creative power of words in literature, it is the absence of speech and words that substantiates the ontological status of these men. "Sie sind einfach da" (19). In light of the audio-visual broadcast that is neither audio, nor visual in the text, but made clearly present, Erpenbeck provides the words to frame this status and make

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[266] As noted by many critics, Erpenbeck's intertextual reference to Homer's *The Odyssey* clearly evokes the didactic lesson of providing hospitality to people without knowing their identities.
[267] Consider Meyda Yegenoglu's essay "From Guest Worker to Hybrid Immigrant: Changing Themes of German-Turkish Literature" *Migrant Cartographies* 137-149 for more on this.

their silence is meaningful. This understanding is enforced a bit later when the narrator describes how “[z]u den Männern, die lieber sterben würden als sagen, wer sie sind, haben sich Sympathisanten gestellt” (22). Bernofsky’s English translation of this passage, “these men would rather die than reveal their identity” reveals how “who they are” becomes connected with identity, which they express vis-à-vis the other. Epistemology becomes raised here in questions of knowing, which becomes related to the larger question of the representation of refugees in literature.

3.3 Afterlife for television

It remains to be said about the *Krimis* that Erpenbeck features a genre centered around death[268] in a book that seems to comment on the end of broadcast television as the primary medium, especially in transnational contexts. As mentioned before, this book still posits TV as a medium for which “solid normativity” is one of its “fundamental original attributes” (Turner and Tay 1). However, as Turner and Tay point out, “[a]s TV mutated, its solid normativity […] began to unravel” (1). Erpenbeck’s text seems to feature some of this as well. Although the novel upholds the Reithian rationales for television: to educate, inform, and entertain (Turner 60), Richard’s flipping through channels (Erpenbeck 41, 199) and then failing to be interested in watching any given show all the way through, may be a sign of fractioning tastes; he does not use a television guide, which other characters apparently do, since it is noted in the living room of Richard’s friend Detlef (118). Thus, while television is a part of Richard’s routine, he has no routine in what he watches other than the news, from what the reader can tell.

Instead, Richard moves towards the selective viewing offered by computer technology. Although Richard never apparently engages with new television fixtures, such as DVD players, TiVo, or streaming services, nor even older versions of taped and recorded

[268] Krimis most often focus on murder as the crime being investigated

television, his interactions with Osarobo involve some sort of recorded program available upon demand. Notably, the computer is never mentioned, and nothing is said about the screen or how Osarobo and Richard watch these videos. On the other hand, the television is also never described in detail, merely a form imagined based on its function.

Erpenbeck inserts Richard watching videos of pianists together with Osarobo (Erpenbeck 200).

> Eine ganze Weile sitzen der Alte und der Junge da nebeneinander am Schreibtisch und sehen und hören, wie diese drei Menschen mit schwarzen und weißen Tasten etwas erzählen, das mit der Farbe der Tasten nicht das geringste zu tun hat. (200)

Erpenbeck is blatant in her anti-racist description: the color of the keys articulates a distinction made between people. The implicit description of the two men sitting next to each other echoes the point that the story being told, and the art created here, has nothing to do with the color—be it the color of the keys or someone's skin.[269] The tension of drawing attention to their skin color while trying to make a point about skin color not being important is a subtle nod to the inherent racism in reporting done about refugees. There, the unacknowledged reality is that some people attract more attention than others in crossing borders. This can be attributed to legal causes in terms of one's country of origin, as well as ontological considerations because of the challenges that migration poses to ethnic homogeneity. Journalists will use racial stereotypes with or without ill-intent in various ways, perhaps unaware of how they "propagate[e] racist caricatures of the places from which they've fled" in order to emphasize the danger the forced migrants face in staying in their homelands (Gelardi).

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[269] Arguably the different colors here do make a difference, but similar to the color of a person's skin, the color does not determine the way the key sounds or the person behaves; it only affects how they are treated and that with which one learns to associate them. Thus, the black key will highlight a sharp or a flat while skin with varying levels of melanin will highlight a certain ancestry, but, as any musician knows, there is no difference in the importance of the black or white keys, though a more dangerous and painful hierarchy is often established between people of different skin colors.

Despite this being a small moment in the text, the context created through the other references and Richard's characterization suggests a particular value for the intermedial reference. Erpenbeck focuses on the interactions with Osarobo, Richard's excitement in sharing the music, and Osarobo's interest ("ja, gern," and "no problem" he states as he continues to watch) (200-1). They may be clips Richard saved to his computer, but they may also be on an online video aggregator such as YouTube. Either way, they are highly personal selections, "Aufnahmen […] die ihn begeistern" (201), for individualized, private consumption. Such selections are a key part of what Turner and Tay call the "new character of television" (1). It is not quite the YouTube revolution of producing one's own content, having content suggested on previous viewing patterns, and commenting on other people's self-created or distributed content, but the ability to store and watch what one wants independently of television broadcast schedules cannot be overstated. This gave freedom to when one spent one's leisure time and how one could view things (controlling the fast-forward or rewind, freezing frames, etc.). It reflects an interruption to the old, anti-democratic ways of accessing media (Turner 56).

However, the insertion of the moment between Richard and Osarobo emphasizes the sharing aspect of the activity. The remediation of musical performances, significantly lower in quality than they would have been "live," creates a parallel for the shaky connection they build. This interpretation gains weight when one considers the tickets for the Christmas Oratorio that Richard bought for himself and Osarobo. That is an experience they never get to share. It implies that the disparities between their realities are too great. Within the context of individualized audio-visual moments, the characterization of Richard's and Osarobo's relationship displays an incongruity of expectations and means of carrying out a paternalistic friendship. Sharing is made easier with newer media that Erpenbeck hints at here, and it may

even promote new forms of solidarity in public spaces, as Butler describes in “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance.”

> Media can function as a part of ‘infrastructural support’ when it facilitates modes of solidarity and establishes new spatio-temporal dimensions of the public sphere, including not only those who can appear within the visual images of the public, but those who are, through coercion, fear, or necessity, living outside the reach of the visual frame. (14)

Media can establish new spatio-temporal dimensions of the public sphere by extending the visual frame to include the marginalized.

At the same time, Erpenbeck asks the reader to reflect on spaces of representation through an extended televisual frame. People advocate for fair representation of all of the society’s members and ask that spaces be created in the center for the marginalized to speak, but once those spaces are created, one also expects them to speak, otherwise one makes up stories for them.

4 “Giving Voice”[270]

4.1 Silence

Notably, in watching the news report, Richard asks “Warum hat er die Demonstration nicht gesehen?” (Erpenbeck 27). Richard’s failure to see them, as Gary Baker points out, “provides diegetic evidence that these refugees have reason to protest their inconspicuousness” (509). However, when Richard had walked by them earlier in the text, the narrator did not ask about Richard’s seeing, but about his hearing. “Warum kann er diese Stille nicht hören?” (Erpenbeck 19). The juxtaposition of aporias challenges the reader’s understanding of Richard’s phenomenological processes. He may not be able to see what is

[270] This is in reference to Trinh Mihn-ha’s description of interviews, which in turn points to the postcolonial aim of “giving voice to the voiceless.” At the same time, it becomes clear through Mihn-ha and her expectations for giving a voice that there must be proof of how the “Other has participated in the making of his/her own image” (Minh-ha qtd. in Seibel 60), which both is and is not possible in Erpenbeck’s text.

there by overlooking or having them blocked from his view, but how can Richard hear what is not there? The stillness refers to the men's refusal to give their names or information about themselves, which as Richard notes, is how they become visible (31), and the question indicates this silence should be so conspicuous that it should be heard.

One can see this moment as undoing the binary between vulnerability and agency, which is a key feminist task according to Butler ("Rethinking" 25), but also highly relevant in any uneven inter-social power relationship. Erpenbeck points towards this interpretation with the intertextual reference to the "Cyclops" episode in *The Odyssey* where names, vulnerability, and agency also play a role. When the narrator notes how Richard hears on the news that the strike was ended, Richard's response is "Schade." "Die Idee, sichtbar zu werden, indem man öffentlich nicht sagt, wer man ist, hatte ihm gefallen" (Erpenbeck 31). Richard associates namelessness with this classical epic poem and makes clear the connection with a one-eyed monster who suddenly cannot see, but who is tricked into being unable to name the person who removed his ability to see. The monster becomes similar to the gross monstrosity of the government (or the onlooker), who poses such a threat and is made blind.

With the question "Warum kann er diese Stille nicht hören?" Erpenbeck similarly makes a link between visibility and audibility, and although the signs and the television report focus on the visibility of the men, ultimately it is important that Richard did not hear them—not that silence could be heard, but that he failed to notice this silence and what it meant. In his critique of transculturation, "Sounding Silence," John McLeod conceptualizes silence as "a non-verbal process of understanding in which that yearning to engage hospitably with others is inflected with a consciousness of the limits of one's standpoint, of the incommensurability of those who exist like us" (11). Richard's failure to hear the refugees had to do with his limited framework, but remaining conscious of this does not preclude the

attempt to try listening, which is vital to transcultural identity and interaction since it acknowledges the limits to knowing, or understanding, the "other."

In *Brick Lane,* the protagonist, Nazneen, "had learned to recognize the face of a refugee child: that traumatized stillness, the need they had to learn to play again" (Ali 394). This traumatized stillness was a theme in *Sogar Papageien überleben uns* and continues to be a theme in *Gehen, ging, gegangen.* This is perhaps clearest for Awad,[271] who is one of the few characters actually diagnosed with PTSD, which later affirms the need for the clinical help he is granted even after his asylum is denied (331). He is also one of the few who goes out of his way to talk with Richard, because he believes that in doing so will be able to help himself, "[d]enn wenn jemand irgendwo ankommen wolle dürfe er nichts verbergen" (73). He does not hide his identity like the men at Alexanderplatz. However, this openness is interrupted by Awad's going silent, and Richard's talks with Awad are characterized by silence (77, 81, 83), either because there is nothing more Awad can add, or because there is no appropriate response to that which he tells.

Awad evokes memories of Richard's own father's trauma, which reminds one of additional points of connection between the refugees and German, as well as any survivor of war. "Die Männer schweigen" repeats four times in the Alexanderplatz passage, and this *schweigen* is juxtaposed with the silence of Richard's father who served on the Eastern front during World War II and who spent two years looking for his family. "Lass mal, die Mutter, Kopfschütteln, Abwinken, lass mal den Vater in Ruhe. Der Vater einfach nur still" (26). This silence, which comes out of an inability or unwillingness to share or face what happened, affects Richard through his mature age. He is haunted by his failure to understand his father and see what he had gone through, which the reader is given to believe is perhaps one of the

[271] Richard has several interactions with Awad, and one of Erpenbeck's experiments involves the double-narration of Awad's story, once from Awad's perspective (Chapter 27), once from Richard's (Chapter 28).

reasons Richard feels compelled to talk to the men who also will not speak. In his meetings with them, he begins to realize that there are different reasons for not talking. At Alexanderplatz, it is resistance. However, in talking to Richard, it is the same helplessness that Richard's father had.

One of Erpenbeck's epigraphs for the novel reinforces this interpretation. In his 1968 reflection on the US Civil Rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said "[i]n the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." King referred to the betrayal one feels when something prejudicial happens and friends stand by and watch without saying something, or looking away. This, King points out, can be worse than anything the enemy could say or do, because it implies a complicity and a failure to intervene, or at least a failure to try and comfort afterwards, and somehow legitimizes what happened in a racist structure, or suggests that it is not important. Erpenbeck highlights the doubly important act of looking and making oneself heard. It is Richard who must not remain silent or look away. In the speech, unfortunately relevant through today, King explains the consequences of failing to hear, since "riots are the language of the unheard" (King). At the time, the violent civil rights protests of 1968, which drew attention through television news,[272] become the making-visible that asked to be heard. The television references in the text seem to highlight the continuing relevance of television for crossing limits of seeing, and then also inviting people to listen as well. Richard had failed to see them, but now that he is looking, he can hear and must continue to do so.

The reader learns what this process can look like in Richard's listening to Osarobo play the piano, but the implication is that listening is just as guided by frameworks as seeing. If it is difficult to see beyond one's frame of reference, it is perhaps even more difficult to

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[272] The 1960 Civil Rights Movement benefited from the relatively new medium, television, since people all over the US were able to see the extent of bigotry, injustice, integration and social rebellion through television news footage (Wickham 27).

listen to something unfamiliar. Richard notes how exhausting his first day is visiting with the refugees; their stories expose him to realities he did not previously know existed, and he also has no readily accessible means of categorizing their experiences, which, given Richard's character, renders his modus operandi defunct.

> Wenn eine ganze Welt, die man nicht kennt, auf einen einstürzt, wo fängt man dann an mit dem Sortieren? Er sagt, er müsse jetzt gehen, aber er komme wieder. Er habe Zeit, um alles in Ruhe zu hören. Zeit. (63)

Using the modal "must" here[273] creates a patronizing tone, as if it is the men who sought out this conversation and urgently want to talk to Richard; as if they are asking him to stay. The repetition underscores how Richard has the privilege to not listen, with the narrator going so far as to extend this privilege of not having to listen into a right granted by Dublin II (Erpenbeck 85). As this moment in the text shows, this version of listening does nothing to change the power dynamic between Richard and the men.

Furthermore, in this dynamic, people still often choose to speak rather than to listen. "Die Afrikaner müssen ihre Probleme in Afrika lösen, hat Richard in letzter Zeit häufig Leute sagen hören. Hat Leute sagen hören: Dass Deutschland überhaupt so viele Kriegsflüchtlinge aufnehme, sei sehr großzügig [...]" (Erpenbeck 252). Again, Erpenbeck's repetitive style emphasizes the way that, because of the German syntax, the verbs *speak* and *hear* are situated next to each other in the sentence. This inevitably reminds the reader of the important relationship between speaking and listening; communication requires each party to complete one of the two acts of speaking and hearing. It becomes a reminder that the speaking would not exist without the hearing. People let one know what they are thinking by saying it, but that is only meaningful if one has taken the time to listen.

[273] The verb is the present tense here, like much of the novel, and it appropriately uses the subjunctive "I" to indicate that the narrator is quoting Richard. One could argue that the preference for indirect speech over direct speech indicates the narrator distancing themselves from Richard, increasing his already substantial distance to the reader.

Historically, this relationship of speaking and listening has been vital to gaining knowledge that has not personally been experienced[274]—including crimes against humanity committed during various genocides throughout the world.[275] In listening to testimonies of violence in particular, as Sybille Krämer and Sigrid Weigel point out, listening involves being able to hear beyond the recognizable sounds to the inevitable silences in between. Underlying this constellation is the conception of language as neither a conventional sign system of arbitrary meanings nor as a means of communication (xvii). Traumatic experience therefore becomes communicated in an unmarked way. The gaps left in that which is said, or the deflections made by saying something else, highlight an intermediary space that reveals the borders of signs and communication.

Krämer and Weigel cite Walter Benjamin's language theory, with its "accentuation of the perceptive mode of language, its 'im-media-te' (un-mittel-bare) moments and the movement towards 'that which fails the word' ('auf das dem Wort versagte')" (xvii), to show how language is mediated through sounds as well as the silences in between. Something continues to fail to be mediated, and in a text that foregrounds media so strongly, it becomes important to look at how Erpenbeck works with silences.

These moments of *Unmittelbarkeit*, what Walter Benjamin points towards as the "Kern des inneren Verstummens" (Krämer and Weigel xvii), appear several times throughout the novel. It happens with Awad, Ithemba, and Rashid, but it is perhaps most conspicuous with Rufu. Initially, he is able to explain his occasional silences: sometimes he cannot answer things because "[z]uviel müsste erklärt werden. Zuviel fehlt" (Erpenbeck 195). When Rufu's communication breaks down even further following a misdiagnosis, he literally loses his

[274] See Axel Gelfert's "What is testimony?" In *A Critical Introduction to Testimony* for an introduction to the relationship between epistemology and testimony.
[275] See Sybille Krämer's and Sigrid Weigel's edited book *Testimony/Bearing Witness: Epistemology, Ethics, History and Culture* for in-depth discussions of these events and how they relate to witnessing.

voice (284). Improperly treated for a psychiatric condition after only having a toothache, Rufu is given medicine for which the first side-effect mentioned is “Störungen der Stimme” closely followed by “Probleme beim Sprechen” (286). After helping Rufu, Richard determines “[w]ie oft, zeigt sich […] dass alles davon abhängt, die richtigen Fragen zu stellen” (Erpenbeck 291). Rufu’s ability to speak was taken simply because the person examining Rufu failed to ask the right questions or listen properly to the answers.

4.2 Testimony

As the text develops, the medium of choice shifts more and more from image to sound. The ability to reach the refugees, communicate with, and understand them becomes didactically enforced by speech, which follows the trend for the specificity of testimony. In the context of refugees especially, images may be necessary for witnessing, but testimony can only be given in voice.[276] Thus, audibility becomes more important than the visibility, and listening opens up the audible space needed for giving testimony. This is something realized throughout history, but most significantly was recently thematized by the Windrush Project at the Migration Museum based in London, England, which collects and plays recordings of migrants who came to the UK during that era. The US nonprofit group “Voices of Witness” also recognizes the necessity of oral histories for testimony, with organizations around the world training volunteers to interview and record eyewitnesses to various events and histories. Withholding testimony can be a form of resistance as was seen during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which set up high profile hearings for the testimony of victims of human rights violations during Apartheid. Notably, many victims abstained from speaking and used their silence as continued resistance against an effort they

[276] See Axel Gelfert for a review of testimony in European philosophy from St. Thomas Aquinas through René Descartes and John Locke and beyond. Therein he argues that testimony is not a unitary category (34), and any attempt to “square the ‘objective’ information-bearing character of testimony with the ‘subjective role of beliefs and intentions on the part of the speaker’ will result in frustration” (35).

believed would fail to bring real reconciliation between the black and white communities in South Africa.

Still, the choice to stay silent is different than having it taken away. When Rufu loses his voice, he can no longer produce the narrative in his distinct idiom. Presented in the intermedial context of *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* the moment prompts reconsideration about representation of voice. Recalling Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners,* one of the reasons it was so revolutionary for British literature was because it represented the West Indies migrant voice via the dialect. In *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* very little "authentic" voice is represented; Erpenbeck's representation of her characters' languages and voices relies on a few insertions of English or Italian lines, and often one realizes these are filtered through the narrator, who speaks German. Overall, these create the impression of short, simple conversations in which the answer rarely goes beyond the succinct answer to the question, and where miscommunications abound, sometimes due to an imperfect command of the English or German.

This evokes a consideration of the distinction between representation and rearticulation, as Brigitta Kuster discusses in her scholarship. She reminds one that the documentational products of journalists, artists, and writers, etc. are to be understood as understandings of their own reality, but also "ihre je spezifischen Reartikulationen von 'Migration,'" which are to be understood in the context of socially constructed conceptions of the European migration regime ("Grenze" 187). The representation, which would attempt a reflection of things are they *are,* becomes interrupted by the rigid demands of an articulation meant to be understood. Kuster criticizes how these rearticulations are expressions designed to fit within the social framework and which reflect the already existing social constructions (187). It questions their authenticity.

However, as James Clifford says of discourses that stand in contrast to monophonic authority, it "recasts this authority, and in the process alters the questions we put to cultural descriptions" ("Partial" 15). While parts of Richard's framing may affect the style and the language of the text when the focalization is on Richard, which can make the text read a bit elitist, didactic, sluggish, soft, and old-fashioned,[277] in other sections Erpenbeck uses varying narrative forms, dialogues and monologues, simple, unredacted narrative voice, and free indirect discourse, presenting the other characters' voices as only partly mediated by the voice of the author.[278] This may be part of her project of addressing the challenge of what Terrence Wright describes as the lack of a "media-skilled voice" (105).

> In contrast to other minority groups, refugees (especially when on the move or recently displaced) are unable to provide a media-skilled authentic voice to put forward their case. Although refugees are 'interviewed', or invited to make statements to [the] camera, and can speak about their own personal experience in these 'vox pop' interviews, they are unable to provide a refugee voice that commands a view on the overall picture or the broader political situation. (Wright "Collateral" 105)

Walking the fine line between contextualization and overdetermination, Erpenbeck handles the histories of the refugees differently than the histories of Richard or Germany. She places these stories level with one another in the text and with different styles and stresses, and enables the integration of "vox pop" interviews.

Furthermore, the novel is told in the present tense, which reflects the more common mode of oral performance, as opposed to the simple past, which is usually used in prose fiction (Salvo 355). This is similar to what happens in the 9/11 description in *Brick Lane,*

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[277] One example of this may be the the *genitivus parcipitus* "Tasse echten Bohnenkaffees" (26). *Genitiv partitivus* attributes a totality, of which the relational word specifies a part. Referring to the coffee beans as a part of a totality gives the impression of something more than it is. In particular, the inclusion of legal bureaucracy and facts, supplementing a *Neue Sachlichkeit* style, makes the text particularly dry.

[278] As per Randell Stevenson, this means that "the character speaks through the voice of the narrator," with the voices effectively merged (Stevenson 32).

where the narration also suddenly shifts to present tense to emphasize this oral nature. Therein it becomes a bit like television itself in what Fiske and Hartley argue is its "characteristically oral rather than literate in its 'ways of seeing' reality" (127). Erpenbeck uses images to link to oral stories, and this runs parallel to Sven Seibel's emphasis on the oral documentation in visual recording in documentaries, in support of what he calls the task of "Stimme geben und Gehör verleihen" (Seibel 68).

4.3 Karon: Listening

Initially, it is television where Richard first notices the migrants. Then, for a while, he continues to mediate his experiences with them through references to Western literature.[279] However, people are more than their names symbolize or references to literature or television indicate. Thinking about the migrants in these terms results, as Seibel points out about other refugee narratives, in a failure to create audio-visual practices of representation without reproducing the problematic aspects of representation on which they intend to comment. Some refugee representations fail to represent the people even if they are visible. As Seibel explains, in some cases, even if the migrant is the one holding the camera, agency cannot be established. Voice-overs especially often continue to be done by people who are not qualified to narrate these lives (Seibel 60). If the representation is about giving a voice to the voiceless, the migrant would not only hold the camera, they would do the cutting, editing, and voiceovers as well. Hence, one must consider the voices of the refugees as much as the images.

This becomes ironic in light of the fact that Erpenbeck is the one writing through a focalization of Richard's narration. Indeed, if Erpenbeck had left the representation at those

[279] See Sophie Salvo for more on the way Richard mediates the men through literature. "Richard cannot understand the men on their own terms, but constantly interprets them, as if they were themselves works of literature" (Salvo 351). Consider also Richard's relationship to the classical texts, which while being the foundation of "Western knowledge" reminds one of the extra-national heteroglossic spaces of communication as well.

points in Richard's development (names, literary allusions), few people would likely be writing or talking about it now. Instead, the novel continues the work of showing the refugees even if they are not visible. Listening to and understanding the men on their own terms allows intervention into the "dominant production of images" that determines how refugees are received in German society (Wienan and Minnaard 22).

This becomes most evident in Karon's tale, which is one of the more experimental narrations in the novel. While it is not told from his focalization, Karon's narrative style dominates it, as well as his voice, which travels disembodied with Richard from the repurposed nursing home back to Richard's house (135). While Karon sweeps Richard's entire house, he explains all the work he had to do to get to Germany, how much bad luck he has, and how futile his work seems. This in turn makes his life seem hopeless as well. This hopelessness is captured in the cyclical nature of his difficulty in making money, which becomes represented in the way he sweeps up the stairs.[280] The repetition of the phrases "[l]änger als eine Nacht konnte ich nicht bei ihnen bleiben, dazu war ihr Zimmer zu klein" (136), or "[d]ann arbeitete ich […] Die erste Woche. Die zweite Woche. Die dritte Woche" (140), become cyclical as well, reminding of the agrarian sense of time characterized by recurrence and set in opposition to the time of the nation, as per Benedict Anderson (Fjeld 1), which parallels Karon's transnational status. Both expressions emphasize the limitations of time and space, but in their repetition expand them synchronically, contributing to Karon's extended present.

At the same time as being cyclical, Karon's story is straightforward, and depressing in this straightforwardness, since it becomes clear he has had many challenges. However, the way it is depicted becomes a challenge for the reader to engage completely with the story, as

[280] "Und jetzt beginnt der Dünne, die Treppe aufwärts zu fegen, anders, als Richard es bei seiner Mutter gesehen hat, fegt er Stufe für Stufe von unten nach oben, so dass der Staub von der nächtshöheren Stufe auf die gerade gesäuberte fällt" (144).

it keeps getting interrupted, albeit mildly, by Richard's thoughts about the way Karon moves through his house or the things Karon says. It echoes the distracted reader, more prevalent since the increase of hand-held devices connected to internet, or on the distracted audience for the same reason.

Possible interpretations for Karon's bodiless voice include that Richard had recorded him when they met. Since he can see Karon as well as hear him, it becomes a possibility that Richard video-recorded Karon, and is rewatching it when at home. This would explain why, although Richard has left Karon back at the accommodation center, the conversation does not end there. The voice, which the reader may guess is just in Richard's head, becomes solid and imposing, and Richard fails to make it go away. In fact, he accommodates it, keeping the light on and waiting for the ghost that belongs to this voice to finish sweeping the room (142), just as one waits for a video to finish before putting down the hand-held device.

At the same time, the bodiless, and thus frameless voice, combined with the repetition, works like the layering of something that is caught on camera and can be edited to appear interwoven or layered atop one another. If this were filmed, the young man would be sweeping in the repurposed senior-home narrating his story while Richard would be moving around his house with the shots spliced into one another. The text is designed to evoke a certain impression of ghostly presence and even intrusion.

To account for this frameless nature, rather than a hand-held device, the more suitable metaphor may be a hologram.[281] Karon becomes a three-dimensional projection into the space, made up of a "pattern of interference produced by a split coherent beam of" ("Hologram"); basically, it is fragmented light. To extend the metaphor, Karon becomes the image produced by Richard's interference of Karon's tale. Richard's interruptions may affect

[281] One primary drawback to this interpretation is that holograms usually do not produce sound from the same source as the image. One would need a separate device, such as a microphone. However, since the common interpretation of this scene is that Karon is a ghost, which also material-less, also would not be able to produce sounds, the interpretation may still be relevant.

what he hears when Karon talks, but Karon continues to talk undisturbed. In this way, Erpenbeck seems to provide an example of what Paul Celan attempted to demonstrate in his poems about the experiences of the displaced, and which Amy Colin calls "holograms of darkness." The name is meant to emulate the way Celan's poems resemble "strange and disturbing shapes, depth, and colors [that] often change dramatically with the spectator's angle of view" (Colin qtd. in Neufeldt 165). A similarly displaced figure, Karon signifies a new way of narrating such characters with intermedial reference.

If Erpenbeck uses the reference in a literary text that could otherwise avoid it, she is offering a critique of the limits and potential of that medium. After all, the borders are thrown up by being put into comparison. In this case, it is the ability of a text to be audio-visual (or not) in how it presents people's voices. Ultimately, a successful aesthetic configuration will, according to Seibel, present "eine Vernehmbarkeit die über [die] bloße Sichtbarkeit hinausreicht" (67). Asylum seekers in particular are made conspicuous by the media like television and enter the public sphere in their bare visibility, but they are not allowed to be particular. Arguably, their particularity, and hence a complete visibility, comes when the other members of the public sphere begin to recognize their testimony outside of these official stories.

4.4 Rashid: Telling

After it has made the refugees visible to Richard, the television's inadequacy becomes apparent throughout the novel. It is also turned off in several key moments. While there is still potential in the new forms of television for creating a broad viewing community, especially, as critics note, in live-televised events, and one can learn about certain situations and experiences through the news and television shows,[282] the television resists being critical for education about migrants or providing the kind of connections needed for social cohesion.

[282] A recent example is the Australian TV show *Stateless* (2020)

Especially for broadcasters who rely on advertising revenue, the worry that the audience will change the channel continues to homogenize content, and television's emphasis on action and quickly changing images—content designed to keep one "glued" to the screen—is not conducive for letting people express intimate details or stories with care.

Suggestively, the television remains off after Richard talks with Awad for the first time and Awad had shown him that lived stories are a "Ballast [weight]" that cannot just be cast off (86), which also implies that they can only be mediated with difficulty. "Während Richard am Schreibtisch sitzt und liest, und sein Spiegelbild auf der schwarzen Fensterscheibe nur seinem grauen Haarschopf zeigt, versteht er noch etwas anderes" (86). Evoking the television as both a window and a mirror, which has been discussed both in reference to *Brick Lane* and *Sogar Papageien überleben uns,* the television reflects Richard's ruminations on the way that the law moves from physical reality to a mediated reality: "Das Gesetz verlagert sich tatsächlich von der physischen Wirklichkeit ins Reich der Sprache" (Erpenbeck 86). This trend mirrors the reversal that Erpenbeck seems to encourage, moving back from mediated reality to a physical one wherein the lives of the people are actually anchored.

She demonstrates this in another passage with Rashid, who is also the first refugee that Richard met, and who comes to visit Richard for Christmas. His manic activity throughout the novel—which earns him the name Blitzeschleuderer from Richard—hides the deep grief he feels at the loss of both of his children in the journey from Nigeria.[283] Richard knows from their first conversation that Rashid was one of the men who came to Europe on a boat that capsized, but he does not know about the fate of Rashid's children. When Richard invites Rashid to celebrate Christmas together, Rashid tells Richard his story, which Richard

[283] Blitzeschleuderer is a reference to the Norse god Thor, though one could mistake it for a reference to the Greek god Zeus, since Zeus threw lightning bolts. This distinction is perhaps important for Rashid's characterization, since Zeus is a ruler of humans, but Thor's role is actually that of a protector.

recognizes as a valuable gift: “diese Erzählung ist so etwas wie ein Geschenk” (237), since it takes him some time to answer when Richard asks about Rashid’s children (236).

Similar to their first conversation, Rashid’s narration becomes interspersed with descriptions of activity and other dialogue as they spend the evening together. However, this time, the conversation is introduced by something more pleasant than the fishing documentary: a festive meal and a tour through Richard’s “Weihnachtsmuseum” (234). Richard

> erklärt [Rashid], was der Stern zu bedeuten hat, was ein Adventskranz ist, und entzündet zum Schluss noch die Kerzen der Pyramide, die neben dem Fernseher steht. Raschid kann offensichtlich kaum glauben, dass das Wunderding nur mit der Wärme der Kerzen in Gang gesetzt wird, er wirft einen Blick hinter den kleinen Tisch, auf dem es aufgestellt ist, hält Ausschau nach einer Steckdose, einem Kabel. (234)

Even if Rashid were Christian, he may not have known many of these classic German traditions, which include the lighting of candles in advance of Christmas, one for each of the four Sundays before the day. The reference to Richard’s house as a museum for Christmas highlights his role as a curator of German traditions, and the space, through these highly identifiable markers, becomes a cultural space. Peter Vergo declared that “museums exist to acquire, safeguard, conserve and display objects, artefacts, and works of arts of various kinds” (Vergo qt. in Lidchi 199). This affects the viewing of objects, conceptions of their value and validity, and the ways that meaning is conferred.

At the same time, Richard puts “on display” the dichotomy of “eigen” and “fremd.” If museums were believed by the end of the nineteenth century to be an “ideal vehicle for public instruction” (Lidchi 191), then Richard is studying himself while instructing Rashid. When he invites Rashid into his museum, it becomes intercultural and a moment for Rashid to engage with unfamiliar items. This is not a museum of “others,” but rather for them. It challenges the

ideas of “othering” by displaying “foreign” culture. Richard’s curation and guiding Rashid through the museum of “German culture” suggests that it is possible for a museum to display things that are not of the “other,” and to talk about them, too. One could argue that this indicates the possibility of engaging without determining, though the statement may seem overly optimistic.

According to curator and scholar Henrietta Lidchi, ethnographic museums use representational strategies for the selection and arrangement of the object that they display. Collecting and curating is not a neutral or innocent act. It is about knowing and possessing, but also sharing and exchange. Erpenbeck makes a clear distinction between how the items are stored and how they displayed, which also emphasizes the choices Richard makes. “[W]ie da im Dunkel all die seltsamen Wesen und Dinge einzig nach Maßgabe von Platzersparnis und Fragilität, ansonsten aber wahllos, miteinander einsortiert sind” (Erpenbeck 134). When Rashid tells his story, one sees how Richard’s “cartographies” of knowledge are dismantled.

Even here, frameworks play a role. Lidchi explains that the Foucauldian interpretation of exhibiting has to do with a construction of classifying objects according to “the frameworks of knowledge that allow them to be understood” (191). In Richard’s “Christmas Museum,” the pyramid is “exhibited” next to the television, as if to propose the comparison. This reinforces what Foucault also criticizes, which is the suggestion of a natural and artificial world. In this vein, the voice of the curator must be legitimated in order to preserve the idea of “authentic anthropological knowledge” displayed by the object (Lidchi 171), in this case the German culture. However, the comparison of the different objects (television and pyramid) also results in a “translation of difference” (172), since the act of interpreting recontextualizes the original object, in this case the television. Similarly, in inviting Rashid into his home, Richard encourages a recontextualization of Rashid’s story. Unlike the

previous situation where the television running a program on fisheries played while Rashid spoke, here the television is turned off.

The Christmas pyramid has its history in the Erzgebirge, where miners used their woodworking and mechanical skills to design wood after the demand for tin slowed in the early 1800s. It is considered “Volkskunst,” a product of “the people” and close to the idea of authentic German culture. It is also something that could not easily be mass produced until the 1990s, when machines could complete the technical work of making sure the center axel was perfectly balanced. Erpenbeck describes how the items Richard sets out for Christmas are a part of yearly, seasonal cycles that connect to time, and how this is the same time that “etwas mit einem Menschen [macht], weil ein Mensch keine Maschine ist, die man an und ausschalten kann” (Erpenbeck 293).

By setting the pyramid up next to the television, Erpenbeck/Richard literally sets it up for comparison. Initially, one could say that the two objects work in a similar way; the turning and shadows help create the effect of moving pictures, which relates to what Deborah Levitt calls cinema’s potential to “produce” life. Levitt interprets life in terms of Giorgio Agamben, who wrote that “everything happens as if, in our culture, life were what cannot be defined, yet precisely for this reason it much be ceaselessly articulated and divided” (Agamben qt. in Levitt 1). When Rashid finds out how the pyramid works, he delights in its turning and in looking at the figurines, but he cannot escape the need to verbalize a life, or the loss thereof.

In effect, through its three-dimensional form, the pyramid becomes the positive image to television’s negative one. If one thinks of positive as taking up space, and negative as two-dimensional and flat, the pyramid could be considered superior form of story-telling, even if the zoetrope is a *Wunderding* of its own, and able to delight audiences since the 1830s. The television, after all, needs an electric cable to work. Despite the fact that the television was

once, and still is, a *Wunderding* that brought the "'space age' modernity" into domestic spaces (Turner and Tay 1), something has taken its place—an older form even, reminding one that despite the anxiety of new technology constantly replacing the old ones, they often are only a remediations.

The medialization of storytelling in relationship to the Christmas pyramid becomes a kind of zoetrope, asking the reader to consider the engage with the success of the illusion created by the text. The constructed nature of the pyramid reveals how complex these stories are, how they can spin on their own, and how they will be disturbed rather than helped by a well-meaning gentle hand. On the other hand, the need for them to be "natural" comes from a general desire for authenticity. The fishermen return in Rashid's full telling, cuing the reader to recall the metaphor from before and reframe it.

> Alle weinten und schrien. Wir, und auch die Fischer. […] Noch heute denke ich manchmal, eins von unseren Kindern käme plötzlich zur Tür herein.
>
> Nach einer ziemlich langen Pause, in der die beiden Männer auf den schwarzen Fernseher starren, als wäre da irgendetwas zu sehen, sagt Richard […]. (240-1)

At the end of Rashid's narration, both men silently stare at the black television. Through this setup, it becomes apparent that Richard become relegated to the role of the chorus without being removed from the stage. Richard's ability to accept the gift and not try to fill the silence afterwards is perhaps one of the reasons Rashid is one of the few people for whom Richard's respect and interest are reciprocated. Though the moment could invite an almost voyeuristic insight into the pain at the losses experienced in the transit to Europe, something on which the European televisual media often focuses, the black screen implies that this is something that will not be broadcast. Richard could eat while watching the human destruction in the news, but Rashid's narrative, since he now knows him, exists beyond this possibility of story-telling. With this moment, Erpenbeck seems to suggest that there are

limits to television in respecting ethical codes of grief and the ability to show empathy that may bar it from intercultural communication, despite sometimes seeming like the perfect tool for it.

5 Conclusion

The passages involving Richard and Rashid put on display, once again, the complications of visibility. Though visibility can lead to representation, it also allows people to "be subjected to the scrutiny of power" (Lidchi 198). The same goes for being heard. Orality is not automatically authenticity. Having "voice" represented is still a representation and a result of choices made about what is seen and heard. The belief that this voice is authentic has to do with the idea of origins and the source of the statement seemingly being more direct and obvious. However, listening is still a better way to "ethically engage with media that offer seemingly exploitative or depoliticized visions of […] marginalized identities" (Lopez 108). It helps go around the questions of social order that still determine right and access to visibility. Maybe the men do not want to share certain things, as depicted at the beginning of the novel, but they still want to be heard.

Before Richard set out to meet the migrants, he had put together a list of questions designed to help him learn more about them. The questions are mundane and reveal Richard's ignorance about the situation and background of the migrants. The list even includes one question about televisions (52).[284] However, despite knowing that it is important that he asks the right questions (52), one of the key themes continued through the novel is the failure to ask the right questions (52, 291), and noting that "die richtigen Fragen sind nicht

[284] Listed as seventh out of twenty-eight: "Gab es einen Fernseher?" That some of them had televisions is affirmed in several of the men's stories, notably Awad, who finds his childhood home destroyed and the television along with it (77). This is important because it connects to the way Richard has questions based on assumptions about what is significant about life. In this case, it also points out a certain class status of at least one of the men, since the family could afford their own television. Furthermore, the television belongs to the basic layout of wherever the migrants stay (204, 332). If an argument needs to be made about how migrants' control televisual metaphors, one could at least acknowledge the possibility.

unbedingt die Fragen, die man ausspricht" (52). Those are the questions that later become important in conjunction with the men's stories and the question of testimony, but initially, they are still shaped by Richard's perspective and framing.

Erpenbeck is explicit about Richard's questions failing to really inform him because the answers lie outside his realm of experience. "Richard fragt und bekommt Antwort und weiß trotzdem nicht weiter" (69). When confronted with the existential needs of the men, Richard discovers the gap between theory and practice, and the irrelevance of Richard's intellectual education to that which the men are going through. "Richard hat Foucault gelesen und Baudrillard und auch Hegel und Nietzsche. Aber was man essen soll, wenn man kein Geld hat, um sich Essen zu kaufen, weiß er auch nicht" (81). This metacommentary on the situation of writing about refugees contributes to the continued debate around *Gehen, ging, gegangen,* about what literature can do, what it should do, and what its responsibilities are to the reader and the refugees. At stake in making a critical argument, of course, is the question of what theory can contribute when abstract theoretical concerns about being a migrant in Germany, such as refined subject positions and the formation of a hybrid identity, are second-order concerns to the priorities of finding work, a place to live, and establishing which rights one has (Weidauer qtd. in Cobbs i).

These television references throughout the novel become significant, because they show an old reliance on the medium and the potential for discovery, learning, and knowing beyond the terms of that medium. They also expand upon its story-telling and testimonial potential while acknowledging the limits to mediated conversations in comparison to in-person conversations and exchanges. Although television has the potential to take the role of *leitmedium* (Voigts 302),[285] or the integration of migrants, Erpenbeck consolidates its role in

[285] According to Eckart Voigts, interested in remediation and the polyprocesses of transmedia adaptation, television is uniquely related to the contemporary processes of national self-fashioning. "The rise of risqué, high-quality original series […] indicated that television had taken the role of leitmedium- providing seminal,

Gehen, ging, gegangen as an impetus to becoming involved with migrants, and a backdrop to those interactions, but to a large extent she resists this formative role and denies it further validity as a medium of storytelling. Its continuing reappearance in the text, despite being turned off, loops the reader into understanding the medium's continuing significance, but not in the ways it has been working up to now.

At the same time, *Gehen, ging, gegangen* more than any of the other books examined in *Literarily TV,* questions the potential of changes to news networks, technologies of sound and image, that may be able to provide more space for telling and showing migration narratives, or whether literature will continue to be a favored space. Migrants now have platforms to upload their own video clips, and represent themselves, though their freedom may be limited if they are in a precarious situation. Erpenbeck uses television references in creating spaces of knowing, agency, and a different kind of paying attention. The changing understanding of "seeing" in the novel, from Enlightenment to postmodern representation coincides with Erpenbeck's suggestion of a postcolonial context in Germany that has matured beyond an exploration of colonial heritage to a critical engagement with the cross-cultural experience that comes as a result of Germany's colonial history. Erpenbeck's considerations are different from previous considerations of the relationship between migrants and television, since these focus on the ways that migrants negotiate identity and belonging in diasporic spaces. Instead, *Gehen, ging, gegangen* works as a bridge for cross-cultural experience in situations where identity and belonging must first be made visible, before they can be negotiated. While television helps instigate this visibility, its ability to give people visibility and voice remains unclear.

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definitive narratives and myths that shape a nation's self-fashioning" (Voigts in "Literature and Television (after TV)" 312).

TELEVISION ITERATED: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Together, looking at these four novels can confirm conclusions found about other kinds of transnational intermediality, and help show several new distinct meanings for the use of television references in transnational literature, though the possibilities are by no means limited to these. The references: model new ways of seeing and, in this, provide moments of creative interference and explicating ambivalence; break open dualisms and expand on conceptualizations of identity, memory, and belonging; and renegotiate media boundaries and revise the limits of the seeable and sayable.

It would seem that television continues to be seen as a dying medium, often overlooked in academia to focus on newer media that have been developed over the past thirty years such as personal computers and mobile internet technology. However, these literary texts of the twenty-first century still draw on television, because television also continues to be relevant.[286] Any suggestions of obsolescence acknowledge the perspective of many people who no longer pay for public broadcasting or have the standard television machine in their homes. Due to personal computers and on-demand streaming media, many people think they are not using television technology, but not only is much of the technology still the same, merely modified, but the content continues to be remediated with the new technologies. Looking at television references in literature more closely provides us with the tools to look at the other media.

The results of the research and interpretations presented in this book support the understanding that television media are still heavily affected by the concept of the nation—

[286] However, not only is television still thriving- in part due to the vast amount of remediation, but it also because of the way its means of reaching mass audiences has persisted.

national interests still determine the content and distribution of this medium—and its relation to literary characters sets up an understanding of how people's identities and social behavior are affected by the medium as well as the tension that comes from having a personal background or identity not reflected in television. This gives rise to the question whether it is possible to conceive of a post-national transnationalism when many of the organizing principles continue to be conceived as bound by the nation. Some of these organizing principles extend to the communication and information networks, which continue to be guided by the rules that kept, and continue to keep the nation in order, even while transnational policies seek to sublimate national policies within a global whole. When transnational literature references television, one could think the references undermine the genre. At the same time, these media are often integrated in ways that support the themes and/or identity representations in the novel, and they often part of what makes the literature transnational. Furthermore, changes with broadband, streaming technologies, and on-demand viewing options will mean media events and other spectacles are not determined by the broadcasting stations as much as the collective choices of a fragmented audience, and these will be change as political unions, travel of people and ideas, and national myths change.

A few authors have provided a starting look: Zadie Smith with *NW* (2014),[287] Senthuran Varatharajah with *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen* (2016),[288] and Mohsin Hamid with *Exit West* (2017), among others who have incorporated social media and smart phones into their creation of characters and plots. In *Exit West,* Hamid plays with the instantaneity of hand-held devices through a 300-word long sentence that describes one of the protagonists, Nadia, who is taking advantage of some time, free wifi, and a charged phone:

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[287] Take for instance Smith's description of a mother's watching her children: "It filled her with panic and rage to see her spoilt children sat upon the floor, flicking thorough past images, moving images, of themselves, on their father's phone, an experience of self-awareness literally, unknown in the history of human existence- outside Dream and miracle- until very recently. Until just before now" (278).

[288] Varatharajah's book is written as a series of Facebook messages between two people

> [O]nce as Nadia sat on the steps of a building reading the news on her phone across the street from a detachment of troops and a tank she thought she saw online a photograph of herself sitting on the steps of a building reading the news on her phone across the street from a detachment of troops and a tank, and she was startled and wondered how this could be, […] and she thought she was losing her balance, or possibly her mind, and then she zoomed in on this image and saw that the woman in the black robe reading the news on her phone was actually not her at all. (154-5)

Hamid uses this instance of instability, replicated in an almost out-of-control sentence and steadied by the use of repetition, to describe the feeling of becoming "somewhat illusory" or having "multiple personalities" (155), which is how he also describes nations a few lines down. The effects of the instant news and the ability to zoom in and verify that this copy is not a copy, but rather an iteration, can lead to the initial conclusion that the reference in this instance, and the depicted relationship between the migrant and the medium, can say something about the affective realities of migration, which are caused both by the act of displacement and slow integration into new spaces, and by the media who report on them.

Furthermore, that a series of pixels on the screen can incite this experience of vertigo seems particularly unique to Nadia and maybe migrants like her. Unlike people who retain a sense of place in reconciling their past and present selves, migrants are always in the process of reconciling multiple dimensions. Their pasts are a part of their present, but as the narrator says, "when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind," so this present is constantly destabilized.[289] On top of this, digital connectivity gives migrants a transnational intimacy not previously possible. The social worlds in which migrants live their lives expand far beyond their physical situatedness. I predict Nadia's depicted interface anxiety, created

[289] Note that the doppelgänger in Romanticism also is usually connected to scenarios of separation, lack, and loss.

parallel to the anxiety of belonging in a globalized/transnational world, is a phenomenon that will only become more apparent in literature written today, and this will be interesting to follow, especially as parasocial relationships go beyond obsessively rewatching and twittering about movies and television becomes truly interactive à la 2019 "Bandersnatch" from the *Black Mirror Series.*[290]

Hamid's text plays with a new conception of time and the nation with new media, as well as providing a new appropriation that suggests a reconstruction of the medium's singularity in each instance. Very likely, these newer media will continue to be compared to the older ones, sometimes even seemingly replacing them, such as iMessage and WhatsApp have done with the telephone. One could ask if these new media introduce a third orality, to follow Walter Ong's declaration of the age of 'secondary orality' with the telephone, television, and so forth (Ong 133), that extend beyond literacy. After all, if the difference between the oral and literate mind lies in the way orality organizes things, and literacy changed consciousness through analytic, distanced, and abstract organizations, then computer literacy, an even more abstract form of organizing, will transform consciousness in another way.

As Marshall McLuhan would say, in the electric age, when people's central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and to incorporate the whole of mankind in us, we necessarily participate, in depth, in the consequences of our every action" (*Understanding* 4). If the printing press created individualism and nationalism in the sixteenth century (21), and the electric age brings fragmentation and imperialism, the digital age brings back community and transnationalism. Or, it oscillates, back and forth. After all, the media help create an idea of togetherness through joined viewing that makes the

[290] In "Bandersnatch," viewers make decisions for the main character, the young programmer. The writing of the non-linear script, so vital to the experience of the viewer/user, was made possible through new technologies and the adaptation of cache memory.

imagined community that we call a nation. Meant to create wholeness, it excluded people, and in trying to undo this damage, we bring the excluded back in again. However, that raises an anxiety of not belonging, and so one goes back to seeking an idea of "wholeness" and unity that excludes again.

In the meantime, human movement and society continues to change, a prediction only anticipating the effects of climate migration. For about forty-five years after the independence of India, Jamaica, and much of South East Asia and the West Indies, British literature has been influenced by writers from the former colonies who instigated and renegotiated a discourse of "outside" and "inside" with questions raised about belonging, cultural identity and social cohesion. Similar questions have been asked by German authors who grapple with the effects of reunification and migration through the twenty-first century. Now, with the second through fourth generation descendants of these migrants, as well as dramatic shifts in the concept of stranger/familiar through the internet, a new kind of interaction is apparent. It is no longer just about strangers becoming familiar, but about identifying the uncanny in that which has become familiar. It is also about thinking through the classifications of foreigners and citizenship, as Toni Morrison suggested in her last essay collection, *The Source of Self-Regard* (2019). She claimed that we are now more interested in the classifications of foreigners than the definitions of citizenship (19); however, the first thing people noticed when the international borders closed in the summer of 2020 was "who is a citizen?"

Questions about the representation of migrants: who is being shown and how? Who has power in the production of these representations and to what cultural frameworks do these representations contribute? To what extent are these representations authentic, and what is meant by authenticity? also continue to remain relevant. We also have access to a lot more stories than we did thirty years ago. As Arjun Appadurai notes, "the archive of possible lives

is now richer and more available to ordinary people than ever before" (Appadurai 560). Now, migrants and their descendants also have more control over the representations, and the frameworks have been expanded far beyond the binary paradigm of "good" and "bad" migrants, though these frameworks continue to struggle with persisting ideological structures. Literary and television studies continue to benefit from the discussion raised in media studies by foregrounding hybridity, diaspora, and cosmopolitical relations. Sandra Ponzanesi summarizes contemporary contributions to the study of migration and mobility in a digital age as work that

> takes the digital migrants as participants and activists within a broader discourse on citizenship rights, exploring the intersections between social identities such as race, class and gender, from the user's perspective as well as engaging with the role of media institutions as complicity in upholding structures of inequality and surveillance. (Ponzanesi 548)

As technology and platforms open up to more self-produced content and expanded or flipped models of distribution, media and state institutions will continue to have power. While the sharing of audio-visual content can continue to have legal and ramifications that are in constant adjustment, and which will perhaps never ensure complete visibility of people or topics, the fictional realm continues to allow for such possibilities through its hiding of fact and possibilities for disrupting hegemonic structures.

As a result, what I have shown in *Literarily TV* will continue to be relevant. These four studies are meant to guide through a gamut of uses for television in narratives of migration and transnationalism, from the nod to television as integrative force to the disruption of the "TV migrant" (Küster) and the hyper-visuality of the forced displacement of the twenty-first century. These authors take advantage of television's framing, multiplicity of meaning, relationship to factuality, and source of entertainment, information, and education

that continue to be relevant to people's lives, even if the narratives told change. The work done here was only the beginning. A multitude of novels depicting different transnational contexts have yet to be explored, and these will reveal different commentaries on the shifting meanings of national culture and community. I believe television has been used, and will continue to be used in literature to show developments in individual discourse, the processes and limits of creating an "other," the existence of gaps between discourse and media and the means to negotiate them, as well as challenge representations of reality and perspective, create new arrangements of audio-visual material to adjust the discussion of the mediation of memory, and continue to create spaces for audibility and visibility of marginalized people.

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Statement of Own Work

§ 7. Abs. 4 Promotionsordnung

Hiermit versichere ich, alle Hilfsmittel und Hilfen angegeben und die Arbeit auf dieser Grundlage selbstständig verfasst zu haben. Die Arbeit ist nicht schon einmal in einem früheren Promotionsverfahren angenommen oder abgelehnt worden.

I hereby confirm that I have indicated all resources and aids and that I have independently written the thesis on this basis. The dissertation has not been accepted or rejected in an earlier doctoral procedure.

26 November 2021