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Central European Literary Reconceptualization of Historical Memory: The Case of Ingeborg Bachmann's Novels

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The case of Central European memory and nostalgia is a key to the understanding of spiritual and artistic life in the 20th century. Special features of Central European spiritual life and narration are the feelings of nostalgia, innumerable flashbacks in time, cosmopolitism, and strong regional identity at the same time. Central Europe is the space of distinctive and specific tolerance. The figure of Ingeborg Bachmann is symbolic since it embodies the connection between the two fundamental cultural processes of the twentieth century: philosophy and literature. The article examines Ingeborg Bachmann's literary interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and responses to this philosophical and geopolitical challenge. Borders of Habsburg Empire are symbols of cross-border identities and culture. The author offers to look at the Central European literary nostalgia as a possibility to situate Central European culture and spirituality geographically and territorially. Ingeborg Bachmann created her own borders: the linguistic border, border of gender, time, territory, and philosophical thinking.

Keywords: border, Central European narratives, language, memory, nostalgia, territoriality, Ingeborg Bachmann

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The memory about the centrality of territoriality,
border, and boundaries in theories of national
identity is more important today than ever before.

László Kürti

Diffractive readings bring inventive provocations;
they are good to think with.

Karen Barad

Introduction: Metaphorical Vision of Central Europe

Metaphorical vision is important for analysing space. A metaphor mostly does not reflect situations or events adequately but gives us something more important: it marks the similarity of different cases and gives possibility to look at this as something very close.

The term "Central Europe" is often used as a generic label covering the great diversity of historical legacies and the heterogeneous ethnic and religious composition of an area that stretches from the Baltic States to the Balkans. Its characteristics include instability, contradictions, constant sense of loss, and high level of historical memory actualization. The different names of the same Central European cities do not only carry simple translations from one language to another, but they are also marks of historic belonging to different states and results of remade borders and processes of demarcation.

The Central European borderland represents a concentration and interconnection of several ethnic, cultural, and religious borders in a rather small territory. The population of this part of Europe was characterized by the knowledge of neighbouring languages and openness to cultural diversity, the perception of otherness as the norm of everyday life, a higher level of tolerance. European literature provides more evidence of this than sociological, ethnographical, or other research. Such writers as Ingeborg Bachmann, Paul Celan, Milan Kundera, Czeslaw Miłosz, and others give answers to many questions about Central Europe in their own poetry and prose. The outline of Central European cultural centres is on its borders: Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Vilnius, Ljubljana, and Lviv. The cities entered the territory whose boundaries were irrational but more realistic and historically stipulated. They were the "boundaries of soul."

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Each important city has a similar narrative, the text of a city. This text is composed of poems and novels, essays and letters as well as paintings, engravings, photos, films, and even the lives of the people connected to the city in various ways. This text embraces everything that constitutes the aura and myth of the city and helps preserve it in the cultural memory as a specific and unique entity. Architecture, as well as the daily life delineated by it, is but the first layer alongside a multiplicity of others.

What probably marks Vilnius most strongly is the fact that the city is usually construed as an object of nostalgia. In the text of Vilnius, such emotional complexity is also present, but nostalgia here is more frequent, more deeply rooted and more multi-layered. This is probably the most important aspect that affects not only individuals but also entire ethnic and national groups.

Central European Literary Nostalgia

The feelings of nostalgia and innumerable flashbacks in time are typical for Central European literature. For Bachmann, Günter Grass, Miłosz, and Joseph Roth, nostalgia becomes a predominant aspect of the narratives. Bachmann wrote her stories based on personal and national history. For her, just as for many writers (not only Austrian but in general Central European), a widespread feeling of nostalgia and of loss are understandable. Her creations are a rare case of deep penetration in the Central European history and soul. All of the above-mentioned features of borderland are found in her stories. Her works are a literary example that should be analysed from a geographical, geopolitical, multicultural, and multilingual perspective. She examined the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy at its disintegration as a multicultural and multilingual environment. Similarly, to Miłosz who has named himself one of the last citizens of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in a spiritual sense, Bachmann was probably the last citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bachmann celebrated the multinational past as a great value. As a child, she spent many summers in Dreiländereck at the intersection of Austria, Slovenia, and Italy. The memories of those summers were among the most cherished recollections in Bachmann's life.

We could find close personal and non-personal relationships between Bachmann, Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, Miłosz, and Kundera, who continued

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the Central European cultural literary tradition. This generation was inspired by the literary tradition established by Robert Musil, Joseph Roth, Hermann Broch, and Franz Kafka. The cultural, historical, and geographic space, where their characters live, struggle, love, and die, is Central Europe. For all of them, a typical style of writing is that of fiction interlaced with philosophical digression. These writers had close spiritual and intellectual, and sometimes intimate connections. However, these connections are not only personal relations but common ideas and views about the Habsburg myth, the Austrian House, the foundation of the Central European cultural heritage, nation-state, war and violence, tolerance and prejudice.

The idea of 'kitsch' is very important for most Central European intellectuals. Usually, it is defined as a form of aesthetic manifestation expressing pretentious sentimentality that hinges on vulgarity. From an aesthetic view, it is a form of art that is considered an inferior, tasteless copy of an extant style of art or a worthless imitation of art of recognized value. For the writers mentioned, kitsch has different meanings. For Broch, it is "the evil within the value-system of art, and if true art is 'good', kitsch is 'evil'."[1] For Kundera, it is closely linked with totalitarianism and communist kitsch is based on the "categorical agreement with being." For Bachmann, kitsch has not only aesthetic or political sense, but it is also very close to interpersonal relations, to stereotypes and clichés about different aspects of life such as history, politics, culture, public and private everyday life and events.

Bachmann: Central European Archaeology of Memory

Memory that is closely integrated with place, meaning, and recollections created what some authors have termed a "sense of place." Two views on memory: cultural critics have noted the flowering of a post-modern nostalgia for an imagined simpler past; memory has been "claimed by the heretofore silenced and

[1] Hermann Broch, "Notes on the Problem of Kitsch," in: *Kitsch: An Anthology of Bad Taste*, ed. Gillo Dorfles (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 49–76; Michael Lister, "Introduction: Europeanization and Migration: challenging the values of citizenship in Europe?", *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 6 (2008): 529–530.

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oppressed as the gateway to a past that history had closed."[2] Social memory is not perceived as monolithic but as variable by gender, ethnicity, class, and religion, allowing for a multiplicity and a possible conflict of memories in any society.

Ingeborg Bachmann was a product of the historical situation of her time. Unlike many writers, she insisted on the importance of history for literary production: in a 1973 interview, she said: "History is essential for the writer. One can't write when one doesn't see the entire historical context that led to the present."[3]

Ingeborg Bachmann was born in Klagenfurt in Carinthia, one of the "crown lands" of Austria-Hungary. Her complicated history and geography (it shared borders with Italy and Slovenia) reveal themselves in Bachmann's writing. She was in the medium of a turbulent period in Austrian history that included depression, Austro-fascism, National Socialism, defeat and occupation, economic recovery, and political restoration.

For Bachmann, the house in Galicia has no street name and the location is only in the memories of Franza and Martin: "At least the Fossil had never set foot in this part of the world and could not lay claim to the signs and names by which everything here was coded [...]."[4] When Bachmann attempts to shape myth as home, she prepares a theoretical ground. Spatial proximity to the fatherland is always inseparable from the past ideology of the past. In Arturo Larcati's view, her disengagement from the concept of home is the result of the relativity of a territorially defined concept of home. Her idea of homelessness is close to an approach of literature and a poet that are permanently in transit and never arrive at their destination.[5]

In her Frankfurt Lectures on Poetics, Bachmann looked at literature as a product of its historical conditions. She adds that today probably no one believes any more that writing literature takes place outside of the historical situation. Her own writing is rooted in history primarily because of the avant-garde complexity of her texts, which made it possible to interpret her attitude toward history in

[2] Thomas W. Laqueur, "Introduction," *Representations* 2000, no. 69: 1.

[3] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Wir müssen wahre Sätze finden: Gespräche und Interviews*, ed. Christine Koschel and Inge von Weidenbaum (München, Zürich: Piper, 1983), 133.

[4] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina*, trans. Phillip Boehm (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990), 118.

[5] Arturo Larcati, *Ingeborg Bachmanns Poetik* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2006).

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various ways depending on the personal social and political positions of her literary critics. Der Spiegel called Bachmann's poetry a "stenogram of its time." Bachmann and her friend Paul Celan's poems became a turning-point for post-war German literature that touched upon such themes as loss, isolation, fear, and flight as a response to the historical situation and existentialist accounts of the condition of a man in the modern world.

For Bachmann, the post-war Austria national oblivion on the complicity in Nazism and its victimization hampered the objective assessment of the country's recent past, which was so necessary for the transfer of personal and national memory to the post-war generation. Many researches describe the arrival in Vienna of two famous poets—Bachmann and Celan—as their arrival at their final destination, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. When Paul Celan arrived in Vienna late in 1947, he had come, via Bucharest and Budapest, from Czernowitz, once an outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire where his parents were part of a German-speaking enclave. Bachmann had then been in Vienna for just over a year, studying philosophy, having come herself from the provincial town of Klagenfurt not far from the Slovenian border.

Bachmann's narrative geography is closely linked to the categories of private and public. If we start to investigate the novel Malina with respect to the categories of private and public, which roughly correspond to spheres allocated to women and men, we will find a unity of time and place in Vienna's Ungargasse. At the beginning of the novel plot, "I," the narrator, an unnamed female writer living in contemporary Vienna, is involved with two men named *Malina* and Ivan, who live nearby on Ungargasse. For her, this side street, Hungary Lane, "is the narrator's 'only country'—'which I must keep secure, which I defend, for which I tremble, for which I fight'."[6]

Bachmann: The Troubles of Being a Woman

Bachmann's attitude to the "historical context that inevitably leads to the present" was linked to her perception of feminism. Such feminists understand

[6] John Taylor, *Into the Heart of European Poetry* (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 217.

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literary and other texts—produced and read by those discursively constructed subjects—as interventions into meaning-making practices that can variously support or unsettle prevailing social arrangements. In addition, its reading strategy takes the form of ideology critique, probing texts to discover how they work to support, document, and/or challenge the existing social order. Bachmann was writing for and contributing to the further elaboration of the methodology of materialist feminism. In a 1969 interview, Bachmann underlined that the massive writing project *Ways of Death* would focus upon contemporary history:

> To me it's not a novel, it's a single long book. There will be several volumes, first two that will probably appear at the same time. It's called "Ways of Death" and for me it's a single large study of all the possible ways of death, a compendium, a "manual," as one would say here (in Italy), and at the same time I imagine that it could provide an illustration of the last twenty years, always with Vienna and Austria as the setting.[7]

The Austrian post-war atmosphere created Bachmann's fear that desexualization might threaten the woman who has engaged in the rationalized and impersonal activities of modern production and life so alien to her nature, transforming her into the "replica of a man" or a woman that looks as manifesting a dangerous hyper-sexualization. The female characters play a dominant part in Ingeborg Bachmann's prose writings. For every one of them, one of the most important questions is—what it means to be a person and how to save and develop a unique personality of one's own. Bachmann's females show so many "traditional" marks of behaviour and mentality that the question of a conventional sex-specific image arises with the attendant question as to its purpose. An analysis of these characteristics reveals that the Bachmannian woman's image deserves the appellation "sex-specific" but that these "traditional" characteristics are infused with new values: the values of individualism, of a specifically female identity, and of a new and particularly intense personal freedom. Thus, emotionalism, irrationality, and vanity are components of a new form of personal development and expression that is less restricting and more self-oriented than the "traditional" image that many critics have assumed they represent.

[7] Bachmann, *Wir müssen wahre Sätze finden*, 66.

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A second crucial and critical problem in Bachmann's fiction is the female–male antithesis: violent dimensions between the "sick male" and the "victimized" female. Bachmann depicts "female" characteristics in marked contrast to those of men and lends them moral significance in an antithetical world of male versus female; thereby, the woman and her values are assigned a morally higher position. As we have mentioned, the emotionalism, irrationality, and non-utilitarian thinking of women stand in contrast and are deemed superior to the calculated behaviour, rational thought, and efficiency of men. The image of the man represents the brutality of technological, rational, and inhumane sides of modern society. At times, Bachmann's image transcends the male–female issues and points to problems of a universal nature. For her, it is the personal reaction against increasing strictures laid down by economic, social, and bureaucratic sense and structures of modern industrialized societies. The subject of the personal freedom of Bachmann's heroes is more important for every character. She underlines that all personal conflicts, motivations, and aspirations are closely related to Bachmann's heroes. It finds expression in the most extreme form of longing for a state of being entirely lacking in any form of limitation and border.

Feminist scholars have argued that it is more productive to read the *Ways of Death* as an exploration of the damage done to female subjectivity in a society founded on the principles of male dominance and female subordination. Despite the contemporary setting of *Ways of Death*, Bachmann's avant-garde techniques sometimes made it difficult even for feminists to recognize that her novels addressed the social construction of femininity of a particular era. The first of Bachmann's *Ways of Death* remained a fragment, and her editors named it the *Franza case (The book of Franza)*.

In *Ways of Death*, she rejects from the tradition that focuses on the examination of the situation of individuals within society, which is carried out only via a grand narrative about what is happening in the outside world. Bachmann deconstructed this tradition and put the woman, her psyche and story in the centre of novels. She preferred that every drama of suffering and passion should be portrayed as intrapsychic, as a "history/story within the I/psyche" but not in the society as a whole.

Bachmann did not feel herself, like the female figures in her narratives, as merely a victim of social obstacles. In 1972, she replied to an interviewer that she was a person "who never resigned herself, never ever resigned herself, who can't

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even conceive of that."[8] At the same time, in her depiction of male characters, we can feel a strong influence of the Frankfurt School with its dominance of authoritarian personality displaying specific traits such as: compliance with conventional values, non-critical thinking, and an absence of introspectiveness.

Ingeborg Bachmann's personality, her personal life is an example of new post-war thinking, feeling of an independent, cosmopolitan style of life. At the same time, the victimization and feeling of dependence from partners accompanies her, and she shows this in her novels. Her destructive love affairs with men have all ended badly, and she concludes that it would be best if men and women kept their distance and had nothing to do with each other until both have found their way out of the tangle and confusion, the discrepancy inherent in all relationships. In the *Malina* dialogue, she develops this idea in an unexpected way and underlines that in the world of *Ways of Death* there is no peace at all: "It's always war. Here there is always violence. Here there is always struggle. It is the eternal war."[9]

Sara Lennox, analysing connections and relations between the feminist movement, theory, and Bachmann, found some changes at the end of the 20th century. In her view, it is, first, necessary to underline the strong feminist enthusiasm for Bachmann derived from the cultural climate out of which West German feminism has emerged and produced readings that corresponded the movement's theoretical assumptions. Second, in the mid-eighties, a feminist approach to Bachmann, indebted to radical feminism and poststructuralism, gained dominance over Bachmann's studies. Third, a later stage is connected with some feminists' doubts about how to read Bachmann: some retained a poststructuralist method, others ignored gender and moved beyond the limitations of the eighties' feminism. "We attempt to return Bachmann to history and history to Bachmann."[10] The way I see it, Bachmann does not mention the idea of superiority in female–male relations: they are simply different worlds with their own priorities, values, and concepts of life. She was far from the idea of radical feminism.

[8] Ibidem, 118.

[9] Ingeborg Bachmann, *The Book of Franza & Requiem for Fanny Goldmann*, trans. Peter Filkins (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 155.

[10] Sara Lennox, *Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters: Feminism, History, and Ingeborg Bachmann* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 81.

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Foucault's conception about power as "a general system of domination exerted by one group over another [...] whose effects pervade the general social body"[11] had particular saliency in the 1950s, the period from which *The Good God of Manhattan* derives. In her prose, Ingeborg Bachmann "took up the Frankfurt School's cultural criticism and extended it by adding the dimension of gender. Violence and oppression are thus shown to be structural moments of the public and the private spheres."[12] Bachmann, following Marcuse, moves to a discourse of repressive hypothesis. She understood power and sexuality as binary opposites: power is the form of domination and monolithic system of social control, sexuality, and femininity which creates in a realm outside of domination.

The God from *The Good God of Manhattan* declares that he has committed violence against love to preserve social order: "I did it so there would be peace and security, and so you could sit here quietly and observe your fingertips. So, the way of all things remains the way we like it."[13] Love, sexuality, and eroticism are the source of chaos, destroying order and social stability. The last sentence of *Malina*, "It was murder," was for many feminist scholars to be simply understood as: men kill women. Taking seriously Bachmann's own argument that both Malina and Ivan are doubles of her own I. It is important to emphasize that all these images constitute the radically divided "I" of the intellectual woman.

Karen Achberger concluded that "the great irony of Bachmann's life" was public recognition of her as a great writer during her lifetime, rather than her critique of post-war society in which her political orientation remained largely unrecognized until her death in 1973."[14] Achberger contends that beneath these themes lay Bachmann's tireless search for a new language and her utopian belief in writing on the brink of destruction.

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[11] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 92.

[12] Helgard Mahrdt, Jeanette Clausen, " 'Society Is the Biggest Murder Scene of All': On the Private and Public Spheres in Ingeborg Bachmann's Prose," *Women in German Yearbook Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 12, no. 1: 167.

[13] Ingeborg Bachmann, "The Good God of Manhattan," in: Ingeborg Bachmann and Christa Wolf, *Selected Prose and Drama*, ed. Patricia A. Herminghouse, trans. Valerie Tekavec (New York: Continuum, 1998), 90–91.

[14] Karen Achberger, *Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995).

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Bachmann: Troubles with Language

For Bachmann, the problem of language was concentrated around certain dimensions: the philosophical sense of language, the language functions as punishment, and after the Second World War the legacy of the Austrian National Socialist as a problem of the "corruption of German language by Nazism."[15] The period following the Second World War in Austria represents a unique historical situation: strongly conservative and restorative trends in politics and a radically new avant-garde movement emerged.

It was during the immediate post-war years, the years of the Allied occupation of Austria (1945–1955) that Ingeborg Bachmann wrote a dissertation at the University of Vienna under the direction of philosopher Victor Kraft. Bachmann's thesis, which was accepted in January 1950, was entitled *The Critical Reception of the Existential Philosophy of Martin Heidegger*. This "critical reception" was a critique in which she tried to discredit Heidegger. Bachmann took Heidegger's early support for the Nazis seriously and was prepared to connect his political opinions to his philosophy. Bachmann explained her relation to Heidegger by words from Wittgenstein: "Of that which one cannot speak, one must remain silent."[16] Her attention was concentrated around Ludwig Wittgenstein and his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), which was most important to Bachmann, a proposition that acquired a new tension in the years after World War II, as the need to speak about the past became pressing. For her, Wittgenstein is the mentor of a commandment to silence.

However, Bachmann's attitude toward the word as such had been changing both because she more deeply understood Wittgenstein's philosophy and also because she strived to sense her literary tasks in the philosophical and linguistic comprehension framework. In the first of her essays on Wittgenstein, published in July 1953, Bachmann writes:

> Not the clarifying, negative propositions which restrict philosophy to a logical analysis of scientific language, and leave the investigation of reality to the special fields of natural science, but his desperate attempt to get at the unspeakable, which

[15] Taylor, *Into the Heart of European Poetry*.

[16] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Die kritische Aufnahme der Existentialphilosophie Martin Heideggers* (München, Zürich: Piper Verlag, 1985), 115.

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> charges the *Tractatus* with a tension in which he himself is sublated—therefore his failure to attain a positive regulation of philosophy, which in the other Neopositivists becomes a frightful ignorance—this is worth a renewed, ever renewing, attention to his thought.[17]

For her, of more interest in the *Tractatus* is the relationship between philosophy, thinking, and especially language. In the broadcast *Sayable and Unsayable—Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophy* (1954), she adds the ideas that are of great importance to her: "A whole cloud of philosophy can be condensed to a drop of grammar!" and "Language itself is the vehicle for thinking."[18]

Bachmann's novels are very close to the Wittgenstein metaphor about language "as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses."[19] Her style of narrative story includes "straight regular streets," "uniform houses" (postmodern), "little streets" (the mystical and antique style of *The Mysteries of the Princess of Kagran*).

In her view, philosophical difficulties residing in language are in reality substitutes of collective social and psychological difficulties, specifically those difficulties that are the legacy of the Austrian National Socialist past after the Second World War.

Bachmann follows Wittgenstein's understanding of this definition. He underlines that:

> Are using the word 'to know' as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?), then other people very often know when I am in pain. Other people cannot be said

[17] Ingeborg Bachmann, „Ludwig Wittgenstein—Zu einem Kapitel der jüngsten Philosophiegeschichte [Ludwig Wittgenstein—On a Chapter in the Recent History of Philosophy]", in: Ingeborg Bachmann *Werke,* Bd. 4, *Essays, Reden, Vermischte Schriften*, ed. Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, and Clemens Münster (München, Zürich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1978), 12–23.

[18] http://shirtysleeves.blogspot.com/2019/03/the-sayable-and-unsayablethe-philosophy.html (accessed: 20.08.2022).

[19] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. Gertrude E. M. Anscombe and Rush Rhees, trans. Gertrude E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), sec.18.

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> to learn of my sensations only from my behaviour—for I cannot be said to learn of them. I have them. The truth is: it makes sense to say about other people that they doubt whether I am in pain; but not to say it about myself.[20]

In Bachmann's novel *Malina*, we feel that pain over a collective past is anything but 'private'. Her pain appears not only because she carries 'an unavoidable dark history' within her but also because as a writer she bears the burden of working it through in language.

> One must suffer away the things other people have no time for in their countries, in which they are busy and plan and act, they sit in their countries, truly anachronistic because they are without language, it is the people who are without language who rule for all time. I will give away a terrible secret: language is punishment. All things must enter into language and must be worn away in language according to their guilt and the degree of their guilt.[21]

In the works of seminal post-Holocaust German and Austrian authors and filmmakers, such as Ingeborg Bachmann, Elfriede Jelinek, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Michael Haneke, the Central European map of nostalgia was created. By focusing on nostalgia of this German-language culture, we found that the nostalgia of former Nazi countries encounters a taboo since the fascist past must never be idealized. In the essay entitled *Biographical Matters*, Ingeborg Bachmann describes the crossing of the border from one culture into another. She looks at her native space through the language and culture, rather than in terms of nationhood. Strange-sounding words of other languages were part of her childhood experience. Often, throughout her stories, we are reminded of the bilingual space of the Gail Valley near the border with Slovenia.

She wrote: "At home we always said that once it's over we'll go back to Lipica, we have to visit our aunt in Brünn, what could have possibly become of our relatives in Czernowitz, the air in Friuli is better than here, when you grow up you have to go to Vienna and Prague."[22] This wonderful world of childhood memories was destroyed by the outbreak of the Second World War.

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[20] Ibidem, 246.

[21] Bachmann, *Malina*, 98.

[22] Ibidem, 62.

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Bachmann struggled not only with the Austrian collaborationist, anti-Semitic past but also and especially with the corruption of the German language by Nazism: spatially, temporally, and linguistically. In her poetry, she reminds the reader that it is no longer possible to remember German lyrical heritage without remembering the crimes committed by this country.

For her, "language is used not only to tell a story; the language used is that story." Her novels *Malina*, *The Thirtieth Year, and Three Paths to the Lake* illustrate Bachmann's concept of a "utopia of language." The idea of "utopia of language" is repeated many times by Bachmann and mostly in the lectures at the University of Frankfurt in 1959/60. Even though the failure to achieve this ideal language and literature should "be praised for its desperate march toward this Language" which offers humanity a reason to hope. Bachmann underlined many times that there existed "one more border" in her life—a border between three languages: German, Slovenian, and Italian. Her feelings mirror the idea that was expressed by Wittgenstein: "The boundaries of my language mean the boundaries of my world."[23]

Bachmann: The Troubles of Being a Writer

What does it mean to be writer? In her speech for the Anton Wildgans Prize, Bachmann commented: I exist only when I am writing. I am nothing when I am not writing. I am fully a stranger to myself, when I am not writing. Yet when I am writing, you cannot see me. No one can see me. You can watch a director directing, a singer singing, an actor acting, but no one can see what writing is. In this sense, the narrator is "nothing," "no one" in the novel.

Alan Pauls in the essay *Less Than Zero* notes that Walser, as well as the other "disobedient" to literary dogmas, always created something, preferably anonymous, non-understandable, and obscure, which would require only one thing from the writer: "come to naught."

In her doctoral dissertation on Heidegger's existential philosophy, Bachmann was also fully cognizant of his idea of a genuine writer or poet getting "on

[23] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. David Pears and Brian McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), §5.6–5.621.

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the way to language" (*unterwegs zur Sprache*). In fact, she followed Heidegger's relation to language beyond its metaphysical parameters only to be able to describe the singular and non-repeatable "event" of being through its essential singularity and non-repeatability.

Bachmann's narratives leave us with a feeling that more important events and characters can be intuited yet not named. For example, the symbolic triad of characters "I–Malina–Ivan" do not tell us about the real status and factual relations between these personages but intuitively we read and understand all nuances of these kinds of relations. In the Todesarten-Projekt, she explains it as follows: "Sometimes it takes a coincidence, sometimes intuition, to recognize the true stories that are happening behind the playacting."[24] For Bachmann, novels are typically the presence of disguised allusion to another own literary work: the intertextuality of her literary creations can be found in works such as *Malina*, *Requiem for Fanny Goldmann*, *The Barking*, and others.

The difficulty of being a writer is closely linked to her philosophical activity, which additionally required not only a literary but also a philosophical rethinking of every narrative sentence that she wrote. For her, philosophy is mostly philosophy of language. Bachmann's papers as well as Bachmann's published essays on Wittgenstein show that many of the concerns that inform Bachmann's late fiction were present in her work from the beginning. Bachmann's own philosophical position at the time of her dissertation corresponded to that of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Following Wittgenstein, she concluded that one could not speak meaningfully about language at all. In her view, finally, all philosophical questions have led back to this analysis and philosophical problems thus revealed themselves as pseudo-problems. As Bachmann perceives, the move beyond the *Tractatus* in the *Philosophical Investigations* is to show that "the problems of philosophy are problems of language, that so to speak the mis-firings of language create philosophical problems."[25]

[24] Cf. Lennox, *Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters: Feminism, History, and Ingeborg Bachmann*, 223.

[25] Bachmann, *Werke*, Bd. 4, 123.

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Bachmann: Troubles with Time

For Bachmann, the problem of "today" is a paralyzing doubt on the nature of time in general. The long and difficult thinking about *time* leads Bachmann to the conclusion that the concept of "today" is neither a part of her life nor her literary lexicon.

> This today sends me flying into an anxious haste, so that I can only write about it, or at best report whatever's going on. Actually, anything written about Today should be destroyed immediately, just like all real letters are crumpled up or torn up, unfinished and unmailed, all because they were written, but cannot arrive. Whoever has composed an intensely fervent letter only to tear it to shreds and throw it away knows exactly what it meant by "today."[26]

In John Taylor's view, "in contrast to the timeless 'today' in the second part of Malina, time no longer exists for the narrator at all. Bachmann shows the idea of timelessness on Malina by the different remarks: it could have been yesterday, it could have been long ago, it could be again, it could continually be, some things will have never been."[27]

In the view of new-materialistic theory (Donna Haraway), the "past" which is open to changes and the possibility to "repair" the "now" (today) situation exists. There is no inherently determinate relationship between past, present, and future. The Central European history suggests that it is the territory where a possibility to "repair" the "now" (today) situation exists. Such "diffraction patterns" are not just reflections, they produce changes in the public consciousness. For her, diffraction can be a metaphor for another type of critical consciousness. Karen Barad describes a diffractive methodology as "a method of diffractively reading insights through one another, building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details, together with the recognition that there intrinsic to this analysis is an ethics that is not predicated

[26] Ingeborg Bachmann, *Malina*, trans. Philip Boehm (New York: New Directions Publishing, 2019), The Cast, https://books.google.pl/books?id=pCNvDwAAQBAJ&pg (accessed: 29.12.2022).

[27] Taylor, *Into the Heart of European Poetry*, 219.

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on externality but rather entanglement."[28] This type of diffractive methodology is very close to Bachmann's narrative that is an amalgam of art, literature, and philosophy. Ingeborg Bachmann's world is a territory where "past" and "future" are permanently clashed. The "past" was never simply there to begin with, and the "future" is not what will unfold, but "past" and "future" are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through the world's ongoing intra-activity.

As Sarah Lenox underlines: "Bachmann displays the scars left on them by the inability to remember, as well as the wounds still inflicted today by men and women who bear those scars, i. e. who are not yet healed because they have still not adequately "come to terms with the past."[29] Bachmann's understanding of the definition of time helps us better comprehend and subsequently contend against destructive circumstances which are responsible for producing disastrous social events. She was the untypical product of a turbulent period in the Austrian history that included depression, Austro-fascism, defeat and occupation, economic recovery, and political restoration. She hated and condemned not only this political course, the contemporary meaning of femininity, but as a member of a generation before the emergence of the student movement and the second wave of feminism she felt powerless to influence the direction of political events.

Conclusions

Ingeborg Bachmann created her own nostalgia: it is important to distinguish between imperial and multinational in Bachmann's work. Bachmann celebrated the multinational past as a fertile ground for unequalled cultural production and ethnic interaction, but she never lost sight of the past as a power. A multinational empire like Austria-Hungary represented the confluence of several nations that together created rich cultural interfaces, but Habsburg Austria had been for centuries among the great powers of Europe, and the collapse of the imperial state brought about a loss of that sense of power for many Austrians. Bachmann recognized in fascist Austria the desire to return to the greatness of the imperial

[28] Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies* (Michigan: An imprint of Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2012), 50.

[29] Lennox, *Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters: Feminism, History, and Ingeborg Bachmann* , 19.

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past. She looks at her own space of life through language and philosophy, history and time, memory and nostalgia, and gender relations. And all these meanings and relations are a source for Bachmann of endless troubles causing painful doubts.

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Streszczenie

Środkowoeuropejska literacka rekonceptualizacja pamięci historycznej: przypadek powieści Ingeborg Bachmann

Przypadek środkowoeuropejskiej tolerancji to klucz do zrozumienia życia duchowego i artystycznego w XX wieku. Szczególnymi cechami środkowoeuropejskiego życia duchowego i narracji są uczucia nostalgii, rozliczne retrospekcje w czasie, kosmopolityzm i jednocześnie silna tożsamość regionalna. Europa Środkowa jest przestrzenią odmiennego i szczególnego rodzaju tolerancji. Artykuł analizuje konstruowane przez Ingeborg Bachmann literackie interpretacje filozofii języka Wittgensteina oraz odpowiedzi na to filozoficzne i geopolityczne wyzwanie. Granice Cesarstwa Habsburgów to symbol transgranicznych tożsamości i transgranicznej kultury. Autorka proponuje, by na środkowoeuropejską literacką nostalgię spojrzeć jak

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na możliwość geograficznego i terytorialnego usytuowania środkowoeuropejskiej kultury i duchowości. Ingeborg Bachmann wykreowała własne granice: granicę językową, granicę płci, czasu, terytorium i myślenia filozoficznego.

Słowa kluczowe: granica, narracje środkowoeuropejskie, pamięć, nostalgia, terytorialność, Ingeborg Bachmann

Zusammenfassung

Die mitteleuropäische literarische Neukonzeption des historischen Gedächtnisses: Der Fall des Romans von Ingeborg Bachmann

Der Fall der mitteleuropäischen Toleranz ist der Schlüssel zum Verständnis des geistigen und künstlerischen Lebens im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert. Die Besonderheiten des mitteleuropäischen spirituellen Lebens und Erzählens sind Gefühle der Nostalgie, zahlreiche Rückblenden in die Vergangenheit, Kosmopolitismus und zugleich eine starke regionale Identität. Mitteleuropa ist ein Gebiet einer anderen und besonderen Toleranz. Der Beitrag analysiert Ingeborg Bachmanns literarische Interpretationen von Wittgensteins Sprachphilosophie und Antworten auf diese philosophische und geopolitische Herausforderung. Die Grenzen des Habsburgerreiches sind ein Symbol für grenzüberschreitende Identitäten und grenzüberschreitende Kultur. Die Autorin schlägt vor, die mitteleuropäische literarische Nostalgie als eine Möglichkeit der geographischen und territorialen Verortung der mitteleuropäischen Kultur und Spiritualität zu betrachten. Ingeborg Bachmann schuf ihre eigenen Grenzen: die Grenze der Sprache, die Grenze von Geschlecht, Zeit, Territorium und philosophischem Denken.

Schlüsselwörter: Grenze, mitteleuropäische Narrative, Gedächtnis, Nostalgie, Territorialität, Ingeborg Bachmann

Ins Deutsche übersetzt von Anna Pastuszka

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