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## Introduction

Resulting from the “Spatial Turn” in cultural and social studies as an international phenomenon,<sup>1</sup> space and related terms like place and mobility, have become important analytical categories and objects of analysis in German-language literature and other media in the last decades.<sup>2</sup> Somewhat more recently, space as an analytical concept has also visibly begun to inform theoretical approaches to linguistics and language learning.

Although there is an abundance of – partially contradictory – definitions of space and place, one of the most important remains, in accordance with Walter Benjamin’s *Passagen-Werk*, Michel de Certeau’s understanding of space as a dynamic, practiced place. The latter informs the concept of *transit space* that thematically links the articles in this special issue of *Germanistik in Ireland*. For de Certeau a space is the action of using a place, movement within a place, such as walking and other forms of travelling, and the elapsing of time.<sup>3</sup> The subject thus plays an active part in the

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<sup>1</sup> Configurations of space have already been of interest to cultural and literary scholars at an earlier stage. When thinking of the twentieth century, Ernst Cassirer or Walter Benjamin spring to mind. However, the recent spatial turn across a number of disciplines has been sparked by Michel Foucault’s work and Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, both of which are central to Edward W. Soja’s *Thirdspace*. While Soja is generally attributed with having declared the “spatial turn”, the term was coined by Doris Bachmann-Medick. (Henri Lefebvre: *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991; Edward W. Soja: *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996; Doris Bachmann-Medick: *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2006.) For an overview of the phenomenon in different disciplines see Jörg Döring, Tristan Thielmann (eds): *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008; Barney Wharf (ed.): *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London/New York: Routledge, 2008, as well as Jörg Dünne and Stephan Günzel’s collection of important theoretical texts *Raumtheorie. Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2006. For a discussion of space and movement in literary texts, see Wolfgang Hallet, Birgit Neumann (eds): *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jaimey Fisher and Barbara Mennel: Introduction. In: Fisher and Mennel (eds): *Spatial Turns. Space, Place and Mobility in German Literary and Visual Culture*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2010, p. 9-23, here p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> For de Certeau “a space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements.” (Michel de Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984, p. 117).

creation of space by means of his/her movement. This includes, according to de Certeau, an active engagement during a transit(ional) situation, i.e. the act of producing, consuming and using locations.<sup>4</sup> Such locations may be modes of transport like the tram or the train, associated localities such as train stations or parking lots and liminal places such as city squares or passageways. These are reminiscent of Marc Augé's "non-places" as a phenomenon of super-modernity and globalization.<sup>5</sup> The latter include airports, as well as train stations, motels, highways or shopping malls. Their status is one "of 'in-between', where nothing is fixed and stable and where time and place are fluid and hybrid and seem to follow their own rules".<sup>6</sup> However, unlike the transit space based on de Certeau's understanding of space, a non-place "cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity".<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to Augé, Ana Luz in her 2006 paper on urban architecture argues, drawing on de Certeau and Foucault, that mobility and the mobile act of transition between places might not create a non-place, but rather an 'other' place, which is neither the departure nor the arrival point, but is related to both.<sup>8</sup> The 'transit' between creates another reality, literally a short-lived transit(ional) place. Taking into account the role of the subject in this process, it might, however, be more logical to call them spaces, rather than places as Luz does. These mobile places are in essence spaces in which several incongruous sites and moments in time are juxtaposed, co-existent and layered together. In this regard they resemble Michel Foucault's spatial zone of "heterotopia".<sup>9</sup> Hence, a place of transition in a literal sense is an experiential zone that is made up of interlocking and exchange, which is normally erased after the time of happening.<sup>10</sup>

*Transit* tends to be associated with the idea of border crossing, thus including a further spatial dimension. This draws our attention to the conceptualization of

<sup>4</sup> de Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> Marc Augé: *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London/New York: Verso, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Augé: *Non-Places*, p. 83.

<sup>7</sup> Augé: *Non-Places*, p. 77. De Certeau, on the other hand, follows Walter Benjamin or Siegfried Kracauer in "effectively 'spatialising' time" (Derek Gregory: *Geographical Imagination*. New York: Blackwell, 1993, p. 234).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ana Luz: *Places In-Between: The Transit(ional) Locations of Nomadic Narratives*. In: KOHT ja PAIK/PLACE and LOCATION. *Studies in Environmental Aesthetics and Semiotics V* (2006), p. 143-65.

<sup>9</sup> Foucault gave permission for the publication of his paper 'Des Espaces Autres' (1976) in English in 1984: <http://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.html> (accessed 15 November 2013). The above reading is based on Michel Foucault: *Of other spaces: Utopias and heterotopia*. In: Neil Leach (ed.): *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*. London /New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 350-56.

<sup>10</sup> For an in-depth discussion of this concept of transit space and its application to literary texts see Sabine Egger: "The East" as a Transit Space in the New Europe? *Transnational Train Journeys in Prose Poems by Kurt Drawert, Lutz Seiler and Ilma Rakusa*. In: *German Life and Letters* 68 /2 (2015), p. 245-87.

borders separating supposedly distinguishable cultural spaces. The concept of the border is of crucial importance for the project of interculturality, which, according to Heimböckel and Weinberg, as a liminal phenomenon relies on the transgression of borders as well as on the reflection and suspending of presupposed borderlines.<sup>11</sup> *Transit* or *transitional* actually foregrounds the dynamics potentially inherent in borderland spaces. Whether one understands borders as concrete objects or, like Michel Foucault or Stuart Hall, as something constructed by a culture or society to exclude what it perceives as its Other, the creation of transit spaces may either work along such borders, move, transgress or subvert them. Transit spaces can become hybrid or *third spaces* as described by Homi K. Bhabha, as well as liminal spaces in-between childhood and adulthood,<sup>12</sup> different languages and their cultural contexts, and physical places, including earth and sky.

Thinking in terms of transit spaces stresses the transitory or temporary nature of processes taking place in such transit spaces, which allows for the displacement of individual or collective perceptions of Self and Other, the known and unknown, past and present, and of what is regarded as important or marginal in spaces of everyday life. Transit spaces therefore permit encounters which are unlikely to happen and are not experienced in this manner outside of transit spaces. At the same time, this experience – which is often a concrete or physical one – might lead to a change in perspectives in the longer term, even to the transformation of the subject and of places affected by the transit process.<sup>13</sup>

Space, mobility and borders have taken on a central role in contemporary texts, which have been described as “Literaturen ohne festen Wohnsitz”.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the focus on transit spaces and transitory encounters in older texts not only offers a view of literary traditions from an intercultural or gender studies perspective, but also provides surprising insights into the physical experience of transit spaces by eighteenth century balloonists and the impact of this experience on the literature of the time.

Both transit spaces and transitory encounters were explored from various angles at the international conference of the *Gesellschaft für interkulturelle Germanistik* (GiG) “Begegnungen in Transiträumen / Transitorische Begegnungen”, which took place from 29 May to 1 June 2014 at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, hosted by the *Irish Centre for Transnational Studies* and the Department of German Studies,

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Dieter Heimböckel and Manfred Weinberg: Interkulturalität als Projekt. In: ZiG. Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Germanistik, 5/2 (2014), p. 119-44.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Victor Turner: *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Verena Dohrn and Gertrud Pickhan (eds): *Transit und Transformation: Osteuropäisch-jüdische Migranten in Berlin 1918-1939*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010; Ulrike Zitzlsperger: *Topografien des Transits. Die Fiktionalisierung von Bahnhöfen, Hotels und Cafés im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*. Oxford et al: Peter Lang, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Ottmar Ette: *ZwischenWeltenSchreiben. Literaturen ohne festen Wohnsitz*. Berlin: Kadmos, 2005.

MIC, with the support of the *Centre for Irish-German Studies*, University of Limerick.<sup>15</sup> The articles included in the thematic section of this issue are based on selected papers from this conference, with a specific focus on the configuration of transit spaces as well as the dynamics of transit processes as a form of cultural border crossing in language learning and in literary and non-literary texts from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. These include borders between languages, ethnic and social groups, generations, gender roles or different means of transportation.

In his contribution Arnd WITTE examines the fundamental dependence of constructs of the self on the patterns and norms of one's first cultural space, which is increasingly loosened and changed by the process of learning a foreign language in its cultural context. It is argued that the intensive encounter with other cultural patterns has the power to contribute to restructuring the self by developing increasingly intercultural subjective places, which serve as the basis of genuinely new cognition, emotion and behaviour. The minute mechanisms of this subjective development are explained by blended space theory, which is extended here to include intercultural instances of blending. The blending of spaces across cultures facilitates the unfolding of the intercultural self beyond the constraints of the first cultural space, so that it contributes to a new self-awareness and identity, which is essentially facilitated by the highly subjective intercultural space.

Gerald BÄR re-examines the universal dream of human flight and its realization in the eighteenth century against the background of its impact on science, literature and other printed media. As recent studies emphasize,<sup>16</sup> ballooning was a result of scientific thinking during the European Enlightenment and a massive cultural phenomenon, reaching even the United States. Professional aeronauts, such as Jean-Pierre Blanchard, became public figures of international standing. New sensory, scientific and poetic perspectives were gained and popularized worldwide through articles in newspapers and magazines, prints and engravings, but also in literary texts. The transitory experience of moving up and looking down, as well as of brief encounters in the narrow basket attached to the balloon between members of different social classes and genders, found its reflection in shared images. The dichotomy of transitory unboundedness and gravity created a space where such

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<sup>15</sup> The conference was organised by Sabine Egger (Limerick), Withold Bonner (Tampere) and Ernest Hess-Lüttich (Berne/Stellenbosch). In addition to this *Jahrbuch*, there will be two further publications arising from the conference, each with a different thematic focus: articles in a themed edition of the *Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Germanistik* highlight paradigmatic examples of transit spaces (trains, boats, photography, digital spaces) in literary and non-literary texts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and show how these constitute a complex aesthetics from the point of view of different theoretical approaches. The conference volume, to be published by Peter Lang, looks at transit spaces and transitory encounters in different contemporary literary and film genres, tracing emerging spatial and intermedial trends.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Michael R. Lynn: *The Sublime Invention: Ballooning in Europe, 1783–1820*. London/New York: Routledge, 2010.

experiences and encounters became possible. When comparing literary texts by Adolph Freiherr Knigge, Jean Paul, Karoline von Günderode and the impressions of the aeronaut Wilhelmine Reichard, the importance of such transitory experiences and encounters becomes clear, particularly with regard to the role of women in aeronautics and to that of the literary texts inspired by these events. Entering unregulated space allowed fleeting glimpses of the sublime and of universal freedom, as well as triggering fantasies and fears, not only of high altitudes, but also arising from the confrontation of traditional gender roles with women's participation in the technological avant-garde.

Michael EWERT takes as a starting point for his contribution the renowned Chamisso Prize, which, for over 30 years has sent far-reaching literary and socio-political signals. Not only has it created links between Adalbert von Chamisso and the prize winners with regard to their language and ideas of cultural exchange. It has also highlighted aesthetic tendencies which mark a movement towards a transnational literature. Ewert traces themes of travel and movement from Adalbert von Chamisso's fairy tale, *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Reise*, to contemporary intercultural German literature. Authors such as Rafik Schami, Ilija Trojanow, Yadé Kara, José F.A. Oliver and Feridun Zaimoglu come to mind who have each in their own right cultivated a mobile sense of spatial consciousness. While the texts for discussion differ significantly on a number of levels, the contribution highlights structural similarities which articulate themselves in the creation of spatial configurations, transit spaces and dynamic border-crossings.

Yvonne DUDZIK looks at transit spaces as a central characteristic of the prose work of Yoko Tawada: Her protagonists often travel from one place to another and through different languages in the process. Two of her prose texts, the novel *Schwager in Bordeaux* (2008) and the shorter narrative *Fersenlos* (1994) start with the arrival of the narrators at a train station in a foreign country. This paper analyses the distinctiveness of the train station as a specific transit place in these texts, focusing on the perception of the train station through the eyes and ears of the narrators in both texts, while taking into account relevant notions of language and identity from Tawada's collections of essays *Sprachpolizei und Spielpolyglotte* (2007), *Überseetzungen* (2002) und *Talisman* (1996).

Elin NESJE VESTLI's article is a comparative analysis of two novels, *Apostoloff* (2009) by Sibylle Lewitscharoff and *Tauben fliegen auf* (2010) by Melinda Nadj Abonji, focusing on the role of the car. In these texts, which both display elements of the road novel, the car is not only a means of transport, but also constitutes a transitory space. Lewitscharoff has her first-person narrator travel to Bulgaria, the country from which both her own father and the narrator's father once emigrated. Nadj Abonji writes about the migration of the Kocsis family from Yugoslavia to Switzerland, based on her own childhood. Having spent a lot of time in the back seats of cars, both female first-person narrators reflect upon their many childhood trips to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia respectively, upon their transitory family histories, conflicting identities and their different ways of dealing with losses.

In her contribution Silke PASEWALCK discusses the underground as a transit space in Volker Ludwig's rock musical *Linie 1* (1986) within the framework of Marc Augé's essays of 1988 and 2008 on the Parisian Métro, and compares *Linie 1* to Günter Kunert's short story *Fahrt mit der S-Bahn*. The rock musical's action is located in the Line 1, which both mirrors modern society in its anonymity and segregation and provides the place where a social utopia emerges. The underground in the musical thus functions as a transit space which cannot be reduced to a mere non-place (in Augé's terminology). How this is realised aesthetically becomes apparent in the comparison between Ludwig's *Linie 1* and Kunert's *Fahrt mit der S-Bahn*.

In her article Cornelia ZIERAU analyses Wolfgang Herrndorf's adolescent novel *Tschick* with regard to adolescence as a transitional space in the context of current research on adolescence novels, intercultural literary studies, and, in particular, postcolonial studies. It will be shown that aspects of identity and representation of the two main characters open not only a transitional but a *third space* (Bhabha) of border-crossings and personal development. The text therefore crosses the boundaries of the postmodern adolescence novel towards postcolonial writing.

Anna STIEPEL's contribution looks at the process of adolescent individuation in Joseph Zoderer's *Das Glück beim Händewaschen* (1976). The Catholic boarding school described in the novel is a crisis heterotopia as well as a transitory space, where the male protagonist is on his way from heteronomy to autonomy. Crucial steps of his process of individuation are marked by train and bicycle journeys through Austria, Switzerland and South Tyrol.

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