[10] Ilija Trojanow, "Oscar in Afrika. Nairobi 1982" is a veiled tribute to *Die Blechtrommel*, in *Der entfesselte Globus. Reportagen* (Munich: Hanser, 2008), 18–22. Trojanow elsewhere presents Grass's failure to interact with the people of Calcutta in his account of six months that he and his wife spent there — documented in Grass's *Zunge zeigen* (Show your tongue, 1988) — as the antithesis of what he himself sets out to do: "Auf den Spuren von Günter Grass: *Zunge zeigen* in Kalkutta," in *Der Sadhu an der Teufelswand. Reportage aus einem anderen Indien* (Munich: Sierra, 2001), 152–60.

[11] Ilija Trojanow, *Gebrauchsanweisung für Indien* (Munich: Piper, 2006), 74–75.

9: Sibylle Berg, *Die Fahrt*: Literature, Germanness, and Globalization

Emily Jeremiah

THE QUESTION OF CONTEMPORARY German national identity is uniquely vexed. The legacy of National Socialism, the ongoing effects of reunification, the challenges of multiculturalism and of globalization — all of these combine to create a fascinating case study: "Germanness" is a shifting construct that is fraught with difficulties. It is a matter that has been hotly and widely debated within Germany over the past decades.[1] The discursive construction and contestation of Germanness have logically formed the subject of numerous discussions in German literary and cultural studies, which examine, among other topics, memory and history, East and West Germanness, Turkish-German culture, Jewish identities, and gender and nation.[2] This chapter aims to contribute to such investigations through a reading of Sibylle Berg's 2007 novel *Die Fahrt* (The journey), in particular by building on work concerning globalization and Germanness.[3]

Debates about national identity have complex histories and contexts, nowhere more so than in the Berlin Republic. Because of the especial difficulty of the German case, and the self-reflexivity manifested in the numerous political and popular discussions of German national identity in recent decades, Germany has been described by Stephen Brockmann as "postnational," that is, as a nation in which the very concept of nation is open to question.[4] Owing to its horrific history, Brockmann argues, Germany is well positioned to attempt the creation of an unconventional national identity, one that involves as much self-questioning as it does self-affirmation.[5] Berg's questing, questioning novel is German in Brockmann's postnational sense. At the same time, however, Brockmann's deployment of the term "Germany" must be carefully scrutinized, for it performs a homogenizing gesture. Which Germany is in fact well positioned to be questioning and creative? Arguably, it is only a small minority of Germans that is so positioned and/or minded. A quizzical stance is perhaps the preserve of a privileged few. And fantasies of fixity and security undeniably persist in the German context, with *Heimat* in particular serving a consolatory function.

Heimat — "home(land)" or "home region" — is a floating signifier in German culture that connotes "shelteredness and harmony."[6] It is an intrinsically conservative construct involving idealized notions of family and nature, in which these are strongly marked with conventional assumptions about gender.[7] It is an idea of continuing relevance in the Berlin Republic, as Peter Blickle asserts and as Berg's novel critically implies. For Blickle, *Heimat* remains a formative and all-pervasive element of German culture, constituting a crucial aspect of German self-perceptions.[8] *Heimat* has a complex relationship with German nationality, however. While it has historically been used to yoke together a "nation of provincials," as Celia Applegate has demonstrated,[9] it is also an antinational construct — albeit one that paradoxically has served to support a broad and not clearly defined nationalism.[10]

A renewed attachment to this trope or dream is in evidence. In postunification East Germany especially, provincialism and consciousness of *Heimat* have been reasserting themselves steadily.[11] The East German turn to *Heimat* can be linked to the questions of *Ostalgie* — a nostalgically indulgent view of the GDR past — and of an Eastern *Trotzidentität*: a defiant assertion of a specifically East German identity in opposition to hegemonic West German values and assumptions.[12] Discourses surrounding "home" and "belonging" are thus continually reworked to fit shifting contexts and agendas. In the Berlin Republic as a whole, the reliance on *Heimat* can be viewed as key to the German reaction to "the shock of globalization"[13] — Berg's novel both acknowledges this shock and undermines attempts to lessen it through *Heimat* fantasies. The predilection for such fantasies can itself be seen as an interesting example of glocalization, involving as it does a local or national response to global forces.[14] But one cannot simply read *Heimat* as standing for the national, as opposed to the global; *Heimat* connotes regionalism as much as, or indeed more than, it does nation.[15]

Heimat thus demonstrates the difficulty of disentangling the many factors involved in the construction of (German) identity — regional, national, and global. This last term is crucial for a reading of Berg's novel, which constitutes a response to and a comment on a globalized world, one characterized by the erosion of national borders, ever-more-sophisticated communication technologies, and increased ease of travel.[16] In this context, the nation — a relatively recent construct — is arguably less salient than before. But as Craig Calhoun argues, the nation still holds significance, with nationalism remaining a powerful force.[17] Pitting the global against the national is in any case not a helpful move, since both are at work in the construction of the postmodern (German) subject, along with regional identity, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age: a list that inevitably concludes with "an embarrassed etc."[18]

Die Fahrt engages with the issues of nation and/or postnation in instructive ways. It undermines globalization as an ideal, exposing its discontents.[19] But it does not flee from the world at large to take refuge in idealizations of Germanness or *Heimat*. Instead, it offers a complex vision of transnational, interconnected subjects. It puts forward and practices what might be termed a nomadic ethics — a way of conceiving ethical relationality that accounts for and indeed welcomes mobility and multiplicity — in particular by means of its form and technique. The novel shows that the global and the national are intertwined, making a renewed case for the glocal. Indeed, literature in general both demonstrates and enacts the meshing that the term "glocal" implies. Literature involves an encounter between self and other, decentering unitary models of (national) identity and promoting a vision of the subject as fluid, multiple, and relational.

Berg and Pop Literature

Sibylle Berg was born in 1962 in Weimar and now lives in Zurich. In 1984, she left the GDR for West Germany, being *freigekauft* (bought free of the regime). In 1997, she published her first novel, *Ein paar Leute suchen das Glück und lachen sich tot* (A couple of people seek happiness and laugh themselves to death). Berg is the author of six novels altogether, as well as of essays, newspaper columns, and plays. In 2008, she won the Wolfgang Koeppen Prize. The four novels that precede *Die Fahrt* present thematic concerns and formal techniques that are revisited by the later novel; they have also helped to construct Berg's persona and her status as a writer of *Pop-Literatur*.

Ein paar Leute consists of numerous short chapters narrated by or from the point of view of various characters whose lives overlap; such criss-crossing and multiplicity led one critic to comment: "Promiscuity has become form, so to speak."[20] Such "promiscuity," also found in *Die Fahrt*, implies multiplicity and interactivity; the subject is not static, but always on the move and encountering others. Moritz Baßler likens Berg's technique here to that of films such as Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train* and Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*, thus drawing attention to the text's filmic qualities: swift changes of scene and the use of montage.[21] Such cinematic techniques are reprised in *Die Fahrt*. The laconic, ironic tone and black humor of Berg's first novel are also echoed in later works. Again like *Die Fahrt*, *Ein paar Leute* features characters aimlessly on the move. Characters seek love and fulfillment but are foiled, failure and frustration are the norm, and most of the protagonists die in gruesome ways. The text also includes a number of pronouncements on the state of the world. This is a world of unreality, insubstantiality, a world of no fixed values and of mindless, rampant consumerism.[22] Berg has been described as "an expert in cynicism,"[23] and her work is in general shot through with bleakness. *Ein paar Leute* refuses easy identification; the narration here is self-reflexive, the jokey nar-

ratorial asides drawing attention to the constructedness of the literary text and creating an alienating effect. However, the briskness and humor of the novel mean that it is extremely readable,[24] like *Die Fahrt* but unlike certain of the later works.

Sex II (1998), for example, features a deracinated protagonist who wanders through a city over a period of twenty-four hours, observing, and seeming to enter the consciousness of, many of its inhabitants; her first-person narrative is interrupted by third-person passages telling of the experience of these others. The characters — if they can be termed such — are summed up brusquely at the beginning of their respective sections: for example, "Rosa, 33. Teacher, does creative writing, falls in love a lot. Unhappily. Not particularly contented, no reason to be."[25] The figures encountered are in the main failures, perverts, and depressives. The stagnant nature of the novel's plot, und the unremitting blackness of its vision, make for a forbidding read. *Amerika* (1999) is similarly deflating: the America of the title is a site of fantasies that are to remain unrealized for the novel's characters; again, disappointment and failure reign. *Die Fahrt* will explore further the disappointment inherent in dreams of escape. Like these earlier works, it, too, features numerous characters, whose very numerousness involves a challenge to ideals of uniqueness and individuality, let alone heroism. In *Die Fahrt*, however, such a challenge opens up new ways of conceiving subjectivity and ethics.

Ende gut (2004), in contrast, offers very little hope. It features a heroine who cannot be described as such unproblematically; the work itself alludes to and undermines the notion of literary heroism.[26] It is a polyphonic text, consisting of numerous disembodied pronouncements by various subjects. There is no unifying narrative voice here, and the text is disorienting, even off-putting. Voices seem simply to emerge, clashing and canceling each other out. The work thus stages postmodernist uncertainty, demonstrating the crisis of values that it explicitly thematizes. It strongly recalls the work of Elfriede Jelinek at points, with caustic observations about sex and family, and mocking citations of dominant discourses; Jelinek is, in fact, mentioned in the text (36). *Ende gut* functions, among other things, as a radical deconstruction of the novel. Within the text, other novels are mentioned dismissively; one character has been given a book by Günter Grass as a present: "Wasn't up to much," is her comment (79). Authors like Nick Hornby, John Irving, and Jonathan Franzen are name-checked, but they stand only as brands, comparable to the many other labels that are mentioned here. This is a grotesque and surrealist text, featuring apocalyptic, gory scenes. It alludes often to Islamist terrorism and millennial anxieties. It is comparable in vision to the work of Michel Houellebecq, who is mentioned here and elsewhere by Berg.[27] Like previous works, it addresses the state of the world, with characters offering such analyses as: "we are the generation that is nothing" (100). This is a world

replete with information, which has a paralyzing effect on its consumers. Bodies have become impotent in this posthuman world — human beings are insignificant. *Die Fahrt*, too, portrays human subjects as insignificant, adrift, and bewildered.

Berg's savageness is often accompanied by playfulness, evident also in her self-presentation. Berg can be seen as a sophisticated and savvy marketer of her work and her brand. She has a stylish website and is an enthusiastic tweeter on Twitter.[28] The cover of Berg's first novel features a head-and-shoulder shot of the author lying in bed, apparently naked under the sheets, holding a cigarette and looking at the camera. The author's image — youthful, sexualized — is integral to this book as product. The author is quoted on the back of the 2008 Reclam edition as claiming the book is perfect for depressive nineteen- to twenty-five-year-olds. On the one hand, Berg is here mocking discourses associated with marketing and advertising; on the other, she is assisting in the cultivation of her own brand, associating it with a saleable youthful melancholy.

A similar ambivalence is at work in the author biography in *Ende gut*, which reads: "Sibylle Berg, born not so long ago in Weimar . . . has since her debut novel been considered the 'mother' [*Übermutter*] of new German literature. She could do without that." This (self-)description positions Berg teasingly both inside and outside contemporary literature. It also alludes to the question of her age, suggesting a discomfort with generational positioning; Berg was born not long ago, but is now already an *Übermutter*. The description ends: "Sibylle Berg lives in Zurich because it's so nice there." This bland explanation serves to suggest deeper and more complex motives, raising the question of Berg's relationship to her homeland — a question pertinent to a reading of *Die Fahrt*. The issue of biography is perhaps especially salient when it comes to considering Berg's latest novel, which features a writer living in Switzerland.[29] Berg teasingly offers up self-portraits, but as is the case with the cover of *Amerika*, which features a heavily made-up, elaborately costumed Berg,[30] such images are self-consciously artificial and partial.

Berg has thus cultivated a strong but subtle and playful brand. She is associated with the label *Pop-Literatur*, being included, for example, in Baßler's book *Der deutsche Pop-Roman* (The German pop novel). *Pop-Literatur* is a term that is hard to pin down, but for Thomas Ernst, contemporary pop literature in German appears to be a reaction to a changed world, one characterized by the dissolution of national borders and by Americanization.[31] This description certainly applies to Berg's work, which can also be set convincingly alongside other German-language texts that have been labeled "pop." *Ein paar Leute* is comparable to Ingo Schulze's *Simple Storys*, whose interlocking stories owe a debt to Raymond Carver and to Robert Altman. Berg's spare prose, disaffected characters, and allusion to brands recall Christian Kracht's *Faserland*, itself influenced by the

work of Bret Easton Ellis. And Berg's citationality is reminiscent of Thomas Meinecke's *Tomboy*, for example, which alludes relentlessly to academic discourse and popular culture. Thus, Berg can plausibly be seen as a practitioner of intertextual, international pop.

Die Fahrt

Die Fahrt constitutes a return to the accessibility of Berg's first novel; both texts offer a humorous and sprightly narrative that is not entirely suffused in cynicism and gore. It is a softer work than most of its predecessors and has even been accused of being moralistic.[32] The novel has been recognized as marketable; it formed the basis of the podcast for the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair. But for all its palatable and commercial qualities, this is a probing and questioning novel.

Die Fahrt is also a dizzying work; it is multiperspectival, its third-person narration hopping in and out of different points of view, as well as multi- and transnational. The numerous characters encounter one another, clash, part, or miss each other, in locations that include Germany, Iceland, Israel, China, India, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Characters are most often on the move, in pursuit of or in flight from something that remains obscure. Globetrotter Helena exemplifies this tendency: "Helena . . . was constantly searching for something that she found more meaningful than herself."[33] We have here a shifting set of subjects characterized by restlessness and rootlessness. Characters search for meaning in the context of lives that seem arbitrary and pointless — a vision familiar from other of Berg's texts. As one character in *Die Fahrt* reflects: "Most people just kind of end up in a life" (92).

With its focus on mobility, Berg's novel can be seen as a product and an enactment of globalization, but it is skeptical regarding the benefits of unlimited movement. It wittily critiques facile discourses on globalization in which disembodied subjects roam the globe unproblematically with the aid of technology;[34] such discourses are subjected here to irony, in particular through the figure of Frank. Frank, who is approaching middle age and leads a dull and isolated life in Berlin, a city depicted as overly gentrified, soulless, and fragmented. He keeps in contact with far-flung acquaintances and friends via the Internet; his promises to go and stay with such contacts are never realized (15–16). Frank's isolation serves to expose contemporary communication technologies as inadequate substitutes for meaningful, sustained relationships. Frank has never had a *Heimat*, we are told, because "You don't find a homeland on the Internet or by means of frantic toing and froing" (17). This assertion points, again, to the isolation and rootlessness of the contemporary global subject, but it also mounts a challenge to *Heimat*, revealed here as an absent referent.

Saskia Sassen has observed that the contemporary emphasis on transnationalism and hypermobility has given rise to a widespread feeling of powerlessness among local actors, and a sense that resistance is futile.[35] Berg's Frank lacks a sense of agency, having long ago given up on the idea of changing the world, and he can thus be seen as a disempowered local actor (17); this sense of passivity and despair is familiar from other of Berg's works. Failing to find *Heimat* on the Internet, Frank opts for frantic toing and froing. Experiencing a sense of restlessness one week, he concludes that he has been struck by "Reiselust" (a desire to travel), and books a trip to Shanghai on the Internet — a decision he immediately regrets. On his way to the airport, Frank considers turning back, but chides himself that his life will otherwise be totally predictable. He then wonders what would be wrong with that. Frank boards the airplane but then flees, exhilarated (118). The ideal of joyous mobility, of liberating nomadism, is thus undermined. While habit and the everyday can be deadening, the novel points out, they also serve a useful protective function; another character, Ruth, leaves Berlin for Tel Aviv, where the absurdity of her existence becomes even more undeniable than before since it is not glossed over by the comforting if empty rituals of social life (167). Frank does eventually leave Berlin, however, to find a *Heimat* in Iceland, where he experiences a sense of peace and a loving relationship with Ruth, cut short by his death from cancer. There is no happy end here, then, but Frank at least glimpses happiness — away from Germany.

Leaving Germany is not necessarily a solution for all. Helena, who hates her life, takes refuge in ceaseless travel, and in "tantra, reiki, the works" (26, 27). She takes a consumerist, superficial view of other cultures — we are informed that she has visited nearly all the countries covered by the Lonely Planet series (27). Her ignorance means that she receives insults in a foreign tongue with uncomprehending humility: "She had smiled when the locals insulted her, and when they said you ugly piece of white sausage, she nodded . . . and thanked them humbly, using the few sentences she'd picked up beforehand from the guidebook" (27). In India, Helena exemplifies colonial attitudes common among Western visitors, who overlook the country's realities (141). Such visitors hold patronizing attitudes toward the "natives," satirized elsewhere by Peter, the proprietor of a hotel in Sri Lanka: "you sweet little natives, just you stay innocent now, or what we think of as innocent" (93). Helena's realization that Indians are people comes as a shock to her, countering as it does her habitual othering (146). Her naivety leads her into absurd and perilous situations, as when she finds herself living among Brazilian gold-diggers — who offer a fitting symbol of the largely hopeless questing of the novel's protagonists (66). Rather than finding herself through travel, Helena in fact loses part of her self, feeling that travel has transformed her into a person she does not yet know (271). Helena's journeying could be seen as

representative of Germany's search for a new "global" identity — a search that here seems futile and ridiculous.[36] Helena eventually finds a home in an alternative community in Füssen, Bavaria: a comically bathetic conclusion to her international exploits (342).

Travel, then, is often disappointing, as well as ethically dubious. Tourism is a superficial "viewing of foreign lives" (48), fueled by a desperate and misguided desire for authenticity (44). Peter is irked by what he terms the "We-want-to-live-like-the-natives-lot" (93). Mobility — more precisely, travel for the purpose of leisure — is a shameless luxury. For slum-dweller Amirita, there is "no elsewhere" (148). Amirita dreams of being an air hostess, a dream that appears cruelly impossible and that highlights the injustice of the world order (151).[37] Thus, the novel undermines illusions of unhampered mobility and escape, asserting economic and existential realities. The quotidian is inevitably demanding and draining (37). Banality is inescapable, as Frank realizes: "everywhere looked like something" (16). For most people, in any case, what is important is food, family, and TV: daily, local practices and pleasures (37). Habit might be deadening, but it is also useful in maintaining mental health. While contemporary — popular and academic — discourses might affirm mobility as a lifestyle choice, or as paradigmatic of new and radical ways of being and thinking, it is not necessarily healthy, and is in any case only open to a privileged few.

The myth of globalization as a source of wealth and freedom for all is undermined in the novel, as dreams of a better life are shown to founder. Gulzada, for example, moves to New York from Kyrgyzstan and is soon disillusioned (223). As Sassen points out, the global city does not offer a level playing field to its players: "Global cities are sites for the overvalorization of corporate capital and the further devalorization of disadvantaged economic actors."[38] New York is indeed viewed by one character in *Die Fahrt* as a lethal money-making machine (212), and the narrator refers explicitly refers to "globalization's losers" (148). Globalization results in sterile homogenization; in Vienna, Pia observes: "Mango and Zara . . . Schlecker and Nordsee . . . was there no end to it?" (224).

Heimat and/or Germanness?

Heimat has acted as a refuge from globalization in the German context — and it is a myth that is punctured here. Germany is depicted in uncomfortable terms. Returning to Germany after a long absence, Pia detects a specifically German form of "joylessness" in evidence (281).[39] The German flags she observes in Bayreuth, where the Wagner festival is being held, provoke fear in her — a detail that implies discomfort with German nationalism (282). Pia asks herself: "Just what has become of the Germans?" — a

rhetorical question that can be seen as emblematic of the quizzical Germanness that Brockmann identifies (284). Return to Germany does not bring about fulfillment and peace, as it does in the traditional *Heimat* narrative.[40] German nationalism is lampooned here. Flag-waving soccer fanaticism gives Germans a sense of being and belonging: "and everyone was finally someone, an us" (224). National identity is in fact a matter of chance, the narrator points out (229). The narrator observes of the fans: "the globalized population of the world reeled through the summer and played at nationalism" (224), thereby undermining a sense of national belonging; in fact, the population is "globalized."[41]

Germanness remains, however, as a restrictive and exclusionary construct. Ruth, a German Jew, travels from Berlin to Tel Aviv, but once she is there — no longer *anders* (other) as a Jew — she finds herself adrift. She returns to Germany, perhaps accepting her Germanness (169, 189). However, this decision is complicated when Ruth finds herself "at home and very foreign" (264), and considers alternative places to live. Numbing herself with medication, she attempts to imagine a better life for herself in Berlin. The chapter ends with an ellipsis, perhaps suggesting that a German-Jewish identity is unimaginable. Ruth leaves Germany again, to find love with the dying Frank in Iceland. Jenny, who is German-Chinese, offers another case study of alienation. While she deems herself German, she is often complimented on how good her German is or asked how things are in her country, when "her country was Germany, whether she liked it or not" (129). Jenny goes to China on a quest to understand her father and herself. Her impressions are not favorable and she wishes to go home, yearning for "democracy, civilization, all of that" (162). There is here a typically wry and nuanced treatment of nationality: Jenny might not like Germany, and other Germans may act in a way that excludes her, but it is her country and other countries might not be more to her liking.

Such a nuanced approach is also evident in the handling of the issue of multiculturalism. Fatma is the only Muslim girl in her class in a German school, "and somehow she was nothing" (292): a criticism of German intolerance and xenophobia. Yet naïve liberal discourses concerning multiculturalism are also critiqued. Pia, in Whitechapel, views her surroundings with distaste, and reflects, in light of the Muslim women around her: "bollocks to multiculturalism if it meant you'd have to put on a veil" (317).

Aesthetic, Ethics, Identity

The novel's technique shores up its message. The narrative often relies on comic exaggeration or distortion (see, for example, 38, 251). In addition, it frequently practices a deadpan citation of dominant assumptions: for

example, "Helena was a woman and equipped with faulty visual-spatial ability" (183). German notions of leisure and pleasure are wittily deconstructed when Füssen is described as being "what the average German means by a 'Nice Place'" (286). The novel is citational, then, quoting discourses to undermine them. In this way, it opposes what the narrator sees as a habitual, widespread lack of self-questioning. People are described as acting as they think adults act, and it is this failure to question that renders the world so dreary (20). Such an adoption of de rigueur attitudes is found in the mothers in a Berlin café who are "terribly environmentally aware and thick" (17). The use of "and" here, and in the description of Helena above, has a jolting effect that troubles common-sense notions of logic and causality: in the first case, by ironizing biologistic conceptions of gender, with their facile explanations of human behavior, and in the second case by hinging together usually unrelated notions (environmentalism and stupidity), and so overturning a widely held liberal view that environmental awareness is the mark of superior intelligence and of moral stature. Here, it is a sign of superficial trendiness.

The novel explicitly asks where ideas come from, concluding they come from television and one's parents and neighbors (180). Ideology is a fashionable indulgence. Peter, we learn, used to be left wing: "communism, Mao, squatting, nuclear power demos — the works" (93). It is clear to Peter now that he had just wanted to be different; in fact, his faddish adoption of causes only makes him into a stereotype. Received wisdom is bandied about and unquestioningly assumed. As one character, Pia, learns, one can question oneself, and the result can be liberating. One can avoid holidays if one does not enjoy them, or put aside books that are not to one's taste, but self-scrutiny is necessary for the establishment of one's true desires and inclinations. Thus, as Pia perceives: "The reward for the effort involved in questioning oneself is personal freedom" (181). The novel's mocking citationality upholds and heightens its critique of received wisdom.

Similarly, the critique of individualism found in the work is mirrored and strengthened by its multiperspectival form. When Helena realizes that Indians are real, the narrative point of view switches to that of Amirita, one such real Indian, who looks on Helena with scorn. This shift in perspective reflects and enacts a challenge to the colonial gaze that is elsewhere denounced (146). It also challenges the notion of the individual subject as stable and intact. One character, Brian, mounts a critique of individualism, asking when individuals first began to deem themselves such (96). Individualism involves unhealthy delusions of grandeur. According to Brian, it arises from excessive consumption of the media, therapy, and the fact that stardom now seems available to all (97). Helena, who has grown up in the context of "individualism contingent upon underpopulation," has to confront the fact in India that, were she to die, it would not signify much (143). In this way, Western individualism is contextualized and critiqued.

Brian also offers an interesting perspective on the notion of difference, a key term in critical theory of recent decades. According to Brian, uniqueness and difference are wrongly prized, and indeed illusory: "The human being is a replaceable part of a large mass" (97). Difference, then, should not be fetishized, being always relative. The novel's form — the use of *erlebte Rede* (free indirect discourse) and numerous points of view, the mobile network of characters — also suggests that individual identities are porous and overlapping, or "nomadic," in Rosi Braidotti's sense.[42] The subject is not stable or discrete, but rather shifting and relational. The novel's technique recalls Sara Ahmed's description of identity formation as taking place through encounters between subjects.[43] The text proposes and practices a relational nomadic ethics, for relationality is ultimately celebrated here. While the characters' quests for meaningful relationships are largely ridiculous and unsuccessful, the questing itself is perhaps not so derisory. In the opening chapter of the novel, the recently widowed Gunner reflects: "After all, life was only bearable with another person" (13). The novel ends with Ruth and the dying Frank entwined in bed in Gunner's house (345).

Different viewpoints do not necessarily cancel each other out, then; there is the possibility that (fleeting) mutual understanding can be achieved. The multiplicity and mobility of postmodern subjectivity does not necessarily spell the end of beneficial connections to others; rather, an ethics built on this very multiplicity and mobility can emerge. Literature is one site where this ethics can be explored and enacted. The use of photographs in *Die Fahrt* — images of landscapes are interspersed throughout — points up the acts of representing and communicating, and highlights the relationality inherent in them, and the dialogue between writer and reader(s). According to her publisher's website, Berg traveled extensively in order to research this novel;[44] the photos thus function as a reminder of the authorial presence, hinting at a Flickr-style sharing of Berg's experiences while traveling that is in keeping with her status as a tweeter. In this way, the author is alive — this contrary to Barthesian pronouncements regarding the death of the author — and implicated in her work. The author/text, author/protagonist divide can thus be seen to be challenged, and (authorial) subjectivity shown as interactive and dynamic.

Conclusion: "Glocal" Literature

Literature arises from the particular experiences of an individual writer — albeit one who is to be understood as a relational subject-in-process. It usually involves specific local or national settings and is written in a certain

language — in this case, German, which is spoken in Germany and Switzerland (enabling Berg's mobility and granting her a readership, potentially, in both countries) but is not a global language with the reach of English. Most often, literature is initially marketed and consumed in one country. In this way, it is perhaps always to some extent local.[45] But there are numerous ways in which literature can transgress national boundaries and highlight or enact hybridity: by featuring mobile characters with diverse or mixed backgrounds; by alluding to texts from other national contexts; by foregrounding or featuring multilingualism or translation; by being consumed in different settings; by being translated.[46]

In this way, literature can blur, or anyway relativize, national/regional/cultural differences and enable the realization of what Berg's Brian understands as our shifting, overlapping selves. Literature can be seen to enact glocalization, rendering global — or anyway other — experiences and ideas homey. Beth Linklater indeed argues that glocalization, originally a business term meaning "the adaptation of the global to the local in the production of a new form of hybrid," is highly appropriate as a way of thinking about literature.[47] Literature both demonstrates and encourages the relationality of subjectivity, and is thus extremely pertinent to a globalized world, in which there is a constant, dynamic tension between self and other and between familiarity and strangeness; Arjun Appadurai describes global cultural processes in terms of "the infinitely varied mutual contest of sameness and difference."[48] Berg's novel both explores and participates in this contest.

Notes

[1] As Anne Fuchs notes, "the meaning of being German remains a contested issue in contemporary German discourse." Anne Fuchs, *Phantoms of War in Contemporary German Literature, Films and Discourse: The Politics of Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

[2] See, for example, Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove, and George Grote, eds., *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006); Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005); Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007); Linda E. Feldman and Diana Orendi, eds., *Evolving Jewish Identities in German Culture: Borders and Crossings* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000); Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller, eds., *Gender and Germanness: Cultural Productions of Nation* (Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1997).

[3] See here Renate Rechtien and Karoline von Oppen, eds., *Local/Global Narratives, German Monitor* 68 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007); Stuart Taberner, ed., *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation* (Birmingham, UK: Birmingham UP, 2005).

[4] Stephen Brockmann, *Literature and German Unification* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 192. Historian Mary Fulbrook agrees that, since 1945, Germany (divided and reunified) has been almost continually preoccupied with debates about its identity and history. Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Polity, 1999), 2, 3.

[5] Stephen Brockmann, "'Normalization': Has Helmut Kohl's Vision Been Realized?" in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 17–29; here, 28.

[6] Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 17.

[7] See here Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat — A German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890–1990* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 23, 26; Blickle, *Heimat*, 71, 82, 83.

[8] Blickle, *Heimat*, 1, 4, 151.

[9] Hence the title of her book: Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1990).

[10] See here Blickle, *Heimat*, 47.

[11] This was Applegate's 1990 verdict, *A Nation of Provincials*, 246. See also Blickle, *Heimat*, 47.

[12] See here Paul Cooke, "Performing 'Ostalgie': Leander Haussmann's *Sonnenallee*," *German Life and Letters* 56 (2003): 156–67; here, 156–57; Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, 8.

[13] See here Andrew Plowman, "'Was will ich denn als Westdeutscher erzählen?': The 'Old' West and Globalisation in Recent German Prose," in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, ed. Taberner, 47–66; here, 48.

[14] Compare Stuart Taberner, "Introduction," in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, ed. Taberner, 1–24; here, 13.

[15] See here David Clarke, "Introduction: Place in Literature," in *The Politics of Place in Post-War Germany: Essays in Literary Criticism*, ed. David Clarke and Renate Rechtien (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 1–24; here, 18.

[16] Compare the following definition: "Globalization refers to the fact that more people across large distances become connected in more and different ways": Frank J. Lechner and John Boli, "General Introduction," in *The Globalization Reader*, ed. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 1–5; here, 1.

[17] Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open UP, 1997), 2.

[18] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 143.

[19] A reference to Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New York: The New Press, 1998).

[20] Moritz Baßler, *Der deutsche Pop-Roman. Die neuen Archivisten* (Munich: Beck, 2002), 80. All translations from German sources are my own.
[21] Baßler, *Der deutsche Pop-Roman*, 81.
[22] Sibylle Berg, *Ein paar Leute suchen das Glück und lachen sich tot* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997); see, for example, 46, 57, 97, 170.
[23] In a text concerning a television program featuring Berg, online at www.3sat.de/dynamic/sitegen/bin/sitegen.php?tab=2&source=/specials/98550/index.html (accessed 9 November 2009).
[24] On discussions of the "new readability" as a desirable feature of new German fiction, see Taberner, "Introduction," in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, 15.
[25] Sibylle Berg, *Sex II* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998), 78.
[26] Sibylle Berg, *Ende gut* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2005), 15.
[27] See Stephan Maus, "Madame Berserker singt den Blues. Von Anfang an gut: *Ende gut* von Sibylle Berg," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 14 February 2005, www.stephan-maus.de/serendipity/archives/36-Sibylle-Berg-Ende-gut-SZ.html (accessed 15 July 2010). See also Berg, *Ende gut*, 26. Houellebecq features in Sibylle Berg, *Das Unerfreuliche zuerst. Herrengeschichten* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001).
[28] See www.sibylleberg.ch/flash/ and https://twitter.com/SibylleBerg (accessed 9 November 2009).
[29] Sibylle Berg, *Der Mann schläft* (Zurich: Hanser, 2009). Iris Radisch speculates that the narrator has "a little bit of Sibylle Berg in her." See www.zeit.de/2009/37/L-B-Berg (accessed 15 July 2010).
[30] Sibylle Berg, *Amerika* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1999).
[31] Thomas Ernst, "German Pop Literature and Cultural Globalisation," trans. by Heather Fleming, in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, ed. Taberner, 169–88; here, 170.
[32] See Kristina Maidt-Zinke, "Mit Hass im Aug sieht man besser," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9 October 2007, www.buecher.de/shop/buecher/die-fahrt/berg-sibylle/products_products/content/prod_id/22818044/ (accessed 15 July 2010).
[33] Sibylle Berg, *Die Fahrt* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2009), 26. Subsequent page references appear in parentheses in the main body of the text.
[34] See Sara Ahmed et al., Introduction, in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. Sara Ahmed et al. (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 1–19; here, 1.
[35] Sassen, *Globalization*, xxviii.
[36] Compare Taberner, Introduction, in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, 14.
[37] See here Ahmed et al., Introduction, in *Uprootings/Regroundings*, 5.
[38] Sassen, *Globalization*, xx.
[39] Compare Berg, *Ende gut*, 39.
[40] See here Boa and Palfreyman, *Heimat*, 25–29.
[41] Compare Berg, *Ende gut*, 40.

[42] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994).
[43] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.
[44] www.kiwi-verlag.de/36-0-buch.htm?isbn=9783462039122#inhalt (accessed 15 July 2010).
[45] See Beth Linklater, "Germany as Background: Global Concerns in Recent Women's Writing in German,' in *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, ed. Taberner, 67–87; here, 73.
[46] Thus far, Berg has had a novella translated into English: *By the Way, Did I Ever Tell You* . . . (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2007). The work is illustrated by Andro Wekua and Rita Ackermann and edited by Raphael Gygax; it is not clear from the publicity material who translated it. An English-language description of *Die Fahrt* and an extract from the novel translated into English (by Franklin Boisillo Mares) are available on the Web: www.litrix.de/buecher/belletristik/jahr/2008/diefahrt/buchbesprechung/enindex.htm (accessed 15 July 2010).
[47] Beth Linklater, "Germany as Background," 73.
[48] Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *The Globalization Reader*, ed. Lechner and Boli, 95–104; here, 104.