

Divided Berlin and Divided Germany in Young Adult Literature:

Crossing Borders from the East to the West and Vice Versa

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ABSTRACT

In postwar Germany, inner-German borders were much disputed. While Germans widely deplored the division of their country and capital city, strong political forces in the East and the West struggled for their spheres of influence. Hence, moving from the East to the West or from the West to the East is the subject of many narratives. Typically, a conflict arises between personal motives (to visit relatives, to live with a beloved partner) and ideological

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persuasions (the belief in socialism or liberal democracy). This article discusses six young adult novels published in East and West Germany in the period from 1958 to 2004 by focusing on economic and ideological attractions as well as the depiction of the German division as a political and social disaster.

INTRODUCTION

The main function of borders consists of control, which serves multiple purposes: borders can convey a sense of security on the one hand by enclosing a space and securing a feeling of belonging. On the other hand, borders can be used for oppression by shutting out unwanted people as well as by locking them within the border confines. The situation becomes even more complicated in times of political upheaval and change, when people are forced to leave their homelands in order to find refuge in a new country. As a result, they often have to adapt to new political, social, and cultural norms, and even learn a new language. Children and young people are just as affected as adults (Spyrou and Christou). It is no wonder, therefore, that contemporary children's and young adult literature reacts to this challenge. Numerous picturebooks, children's books, and young adult novels deal with current waves of migration, whether from Asia and Africa to Europe or from Latin America to the USA.

However, similar movements already happened in the twentieth century, particularly after the end of World War II, when millions of people were on the move in Europe. At the same time, the German map had been re-arranged: Germany was divided into four occupation zones – Berlin as the former capital was likewise divided into four sectors – and additionally forced to cede territories to Poland and the Soviet Union (Brenner). These political measures had lasting effects on the German population, even more so after the outbreak of the Cold War between the allied Western forces and the Eastern Bloc. From then on, border crossing between the Soviet zone and the three Western zones became increasingly arduous with far-reaching consequences for families, couples, children, and young people. Numerous novels and films tell stories about these catastrophes. While the majority of people in East and West Germany longed for the reunification of the divorced states, there were dissenting voices, particularly from those people who thought that the division was necessary to prevent a Third World War and represented a just, if inadequate, punishment for German collective guilt (Jähner).

Against this backdrop, this article examines six young adult novels dealing with the German division and how it interfered with the situation of young people. This topic has not yet been extensively investigated. The only exceptions are two overview articles on East German realistic children's literature, in which brief references are made to works that deal with the inner-German border (Lüdecke 157-170; Strobel 199-201). In contrast, there are several studies that examine the portrayal of frontier experiences in postwar adult literature.

For instance, Johanna Gelberg argues that the political border influenced German literature formally and aesthetically, reviving and updating narrative traditions, motifs, and genres. The result is a complex picture of a “common German-German literary space” (Gelberg 24) shaped by the border.

Our selection considers books published in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s, as well as one young adult novel that came out 15 years after the reunification of both German states in 1990. These novels reflect changing attitudes towards the division of Germany and the inner-German border, variously exploring the immediate postwar situation, the severe political changes caused by the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the cautious rapprochement of both German states in the 1980s, or the aftermath of the German division after 1990. Three novels are written by East German authors, two by West German authors, and one by an author who grew up in East Germany but published her novel in West Germany. It is not possible to link these novels exactly to periods of political developments or caesuras, although they implicitly or explicitly refer to the contemporary history they tell. As far as it makes sense, we include such facts in our analysis.

In order to show that young adult literature from both German states is a rich source for exploring “shared experience” in divided Germany (Carter et al. 3), we will first provide a short historical survey from the immediate postwar years to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Second, we will discuss different kinds of border crossings as they are represented in the young adult novels. Third, we will analyze the economic and ideological reasons connected to the transgression of borders and how they change the main protagonists’ behaviors and world views. Finally, we will demonstrate that the division of Germany is experienced as a political and social disaster by the narrators which impacts significantly on the mental and emotional development of the main characters.

FROM THE IMMEDIATE POSTWAR PERIOD TO THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

After the capitulation of the *Deutsches Reich* (German Empire) on 8 May 1945, the victorious powers divided Germany into four zones or sectors, following the Potsdam treaty of 8 August 1945. Though border crossing between the four zones was controlled, the guards did not usually impede the border traffic. Since the first postwar year led to a great famine, heightened by an extremely cold winter, the American foreign minister Herbert Marshall presented a European Recovery Program in June 1947, known as the Marshall Plan, in order to boost the European economy. However, only the West German zones profited from this program, while the Soviet zone was not included. The monetary reform in West Germany in June 1948, considered the beginning of the so-called years of economic miracle (*Wirtschaftswunder*), provoked the Soviet government which reacted with the Berlin

blockade. Consequently, the Berlin Air Bridge (*Luftbrücke*) came into effect well into the year 1949.

Although the idea of German reunification emerged in political debates and was even discussed by the victorious powers, the commencement of the constitution law in the Western zones of Germany in May 1949 led to parliamentary elections in August and the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany (henceforth FRG). Consequently, the Soviet occupation force supported the foundation of the German Democratic Republic (henceforth GDR) in the Soviet sector on 7 October 1949. Following the programmatic obligations of the official party congresses of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in 1950 and 1952, the GDR government requested the development of socialism on the basis of the Soviet model. The FRG, in contrast, was built on a Western democratic system that was additionally determined by a capitalist market economy.

The initial idea of a demilitarized Germany disintegrated in 1955 as a consequence of the Cold War. As a result, the FRG joined the NATO and the GDR joined the Warsaw Pact. In a next step, the FRG founded the Federal Armed Forces (*Bundeswehr*) in November 1955; the GDR followed suit with the foundation of the National People's Army (*Nationale Volksarmee*) in 1956. The rearmament of both German states led to stronger border controls and mutual distrust. Because more than three million people fled from East Germany to West Germany from 1949 for political and economic reasons, the Berlin Wall was erected on 13 August 1961 (Wilke). The bisection of Berlin caused a sudden halting of cross-border commuter regulations. In the ensuing weeks, the inner-German border was fortified with a so-called 'death strip', barbed wire, and watchtowers. Moreover, the border guards were ordered to shoot people who tried to cross the border illegally.

This political event also marked the end of the first period of German postwar history, leading to increasing alienation of both German states. After lengthy negotiations, West Germans were allowed to enter the GDR under certain conditions, while East Germans – with the exceptions of pensioners and elderly people – were prevented from crossing the border to West Germany. This appalling situation only changed after 28 years, when the borders were opened on 9 November 1989, partly due to the peaceful Monday demonstrations of the East German population. The fall of the Berlin Wall finally led to the reunification of both German states on 3 October 1990 (Wehler).

REFUGEE MOVEMENTS AFTER WORLD WAR II

After the end of the Second World War, millions of people were on the move. Within Europe, the typical direction of movement was from East to West. In Germany, this meant movement from the Soviet Zone to the French, English, or American Zone, from the GDR to the FRG, or from East Berlin to West Berlin. From October 1949 until June 1990, nearly four million

citizens left the GDR. Only 480,000 of them were officially allowed to leave the GDR, the rest left in an illegal way; that is, they committed republic flight (*Republikflucht*). After the school reform in the GDR in 1955, about 250,000 young adults fled to the West, which made up 43% of the total refugees (Zilch 251). Leaving the GDR illegally was associated with high risks, ranging from prison to death due to the firing order at the inner-German border. Yet, about 400,000 people also moved from the West to the East.

In this respect, Berlin had a special status. Before the erection of the Berlin Wall, many residents regularly moved between the four sectors. Very often people lived in West Berlin but were employed in East Berlin and vice versa (Roggenbusch). Young adults from East Berlin particularly enjoyed the leisure program offered in West Berlin. They were attracted by the American and West European movies in the cinemas as well as the dance and music events with rock 'n roll performances (Prommer and Räder 138-140). Since many people attempted to escape via East Berlin, there were strict controls on citizens who traveled from East German regions to East Berlin. Citizens had to apply for visas or residence permits which were only granted for urgent family matters or professional reasons.

Freedom of mobility was restricted for several reasons. There was a shortage of specialists, such as engineers, machinists, and laboratory assistants, and the Socialist Unity Party wanted to prevent the flight of these specialists into the West for economic reasons, all the more so as the state had heavily invested in the education of young people (Wolle). Politically, massive emigration was hard to explain under the assumption that socialism was superior to capitalism. In the case of cultural development, party leaders feared the impact of American popular culture on the younger generation, which was regarded as a threat to the socialist education program.

BORDER CROSSINGS IN POSTWAR GERMAN YA

The six young adult novels under investigation focus on border crossings from East Germany to West Germany or vice versa, mostly for family-related reasons. However, this direction is not one-way, as the main protagonists often return to their point of departure. A case in point is *Karlas große Reise* (*Karla's Big Journey*, 1958) by East German author Lilo Hardel. Karla lives with her mother in a little town near Berlin. Her parents are divorced and her father lives with Karla's twin brother Karl in Gelsenkirchen, a town in the Ruhr district. On her 16th birthday, her father invites her to visit him. After getting the permit to travel to West Germany via East Berlin, she goes there by train. Karla develops a good relationship with her brother and father who want to persuade her to stay with them. Karla declines and returns to East Germany because she longs for her mother and feels committed to the GDR, which enabled her to get a good education. To her surprise, she meets her brother who was involved in a fight and avoids expulsion from school by secretly escaping to East Berlin. He

stays with Karla and their mother and they finally travel to the Baltic Sea, where they meet with Karla's somewhat reluctant father.

By contrast, *Das soll der Mensch nicht scheiden* (*That Shall Men Not Put Asunder*, 1960) by West German author Herbert Plate assumes a Western perspective, as 15-year-old protagonist Detlef, a dedicated young communist and member of the Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*; henceforth FDJ), finally stays in West Germany. Detlef lives with his mother in East Berlin. She conceals a letter from her divorced husband who wants to meet his son. When Detlef finds the letter, he decides to meet his father who is living in Düsseldorf in West Germany. He manages to make his way to the reception camp in West Berlin from whence he goes by plane to Düsseldorf. His father is a liberal entrepreneur, and son and father like each other from the beginning. When Detlef returns to the GDR, his FDJ fellows condemn his behavior harshly and demand public self-criticism. Although Detlef still holds to communist ideology, he is disappointed by the situation. It turns out that the conflict between his parents was caused by a misunderstanding, and when Detlef tells his mother that his father still loves her, the mother is ready for a new start in the West.

Multiple border crossings happen in *Berliner Liebe* (*Berlin Love*, 1984) by the East German author Gisela Karau, which centers on the love affair of Lilo, an East Berlin history student, and Eckart from West Berlin, who hangs around and is involved in illegal smuggling activities. Lilo persistently tries to persuade Eckart to move to East Berlin, where he might find a suitable job. Eckart finally accepts a job as a policeman in the New West Berlin police force but is obliged to sign a document that he will no longer set foot on East Berlin soil. When Lilo finds out, the couple separates. More than six months later, the *III. Weltfestspiele der Jugend und Studenten* (World Festival of Youth and Students)¹ takes place in East Berlin. In order to demonstrate for peace and solidarity, hundreds of FDJ members come to West Berlin, where they are brutally beaten by policemen. When Eckart, who is on duty in the police force, observes the violence, he changes sides and joins Lilo in the protest.²

While these three books are situated in the 1950s, when border crossing was still possible, *Reise in den August* (*Travel into August*, 1969), by East German Brigitte Birnbaum, is about a family conflict which culminates with the erection of the Berlin Wall. When 14-year-old Bärbel learns that she has to move from a town in Saxony to a small village with her mother and stepfather, she is afraid that she will no longer have perfect training conditions as a sports swimmer. Therefore, she accepts the invitation to visit her grandparents in West Berlin. Fascinated by the colorful city life and the possibilities of consumption, she lets herself be tempted to write a letter to her mother in which she pledges to stay with her

1 This festival took place in August 1951 and lasted more than two weeks. Official announcements state that about 26,000 guests from 104 countries participated in this huge cultural and sportive event.

2 While Karau's novel has a happy ending with the final unification of the couple, most GDR books written for an adult audience, such as Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* (*The Divided Sky*, 1963), eschew such a solution by representing a final separation of the lovers (Gelberg 58).

grandparents forever. Shortly after, the Berlin Wall is erected and a legal return to East Germany seems almost impossible. In this situation, the grandparents reveal their true intentions. Since they want Bärbel to eventually take over their shop, they use all kinds of manipulative tricks to the extent of concealing letters from her mother and talking disparagingly about the GDR. With the help of a friend, Bärbel finally manages to get through an undiscovered loophole into East Berlin. She is captured by the guards but after the truth of her report has been confirmed, she is allowed to return to her parents.

Whereas Birnbaum's novel reflects that crossing the border from West to East Germany after the erection of the Berlin Wall was connected with life-threatening risks, border crossing from East Germany to West Germany after 1961 was a taboo topic in East German literature. The only exceptions were those books whose plots center on characters who recognize that they made a severe mistake when moving to the FRG and return ruefully to the GDR. The harsh consequences of illegal flight for children and young adults who were either left behind or were separated from beloved family members were only dealt with in West German young adult literature or books published after the reunification of both German states in 1990.

Treffpunkt Weltzeituhr (*Meeting Point World Time Clock*, 1984) by Isolde Heyne confronts the living conditions in East and West Germany by focusing on illegal versus legal border crossings. The author was a journalist and grew up in the GDR. During an official lecture tour in West Germany, she decided against a return to the GDR for political reasons. In her young adult novel, she strove for a balance in the representation of the living conditions in both German states. Fourteen-year-old Inka lives with her mother in the FRG. During the course of the novel, flashbacks inform readers about Inka's childhood spent in the GDR: when she was a young child, her parents attempted an illegal escape via the Czech frontier. Her father was shot dead, while her mother was sentenced to prison. Inka was sent to a children's home. The fact that her mother is still alive is kept from her. After she served her sentence, her mother was deported to the West. After many years, she succeeded to get permission for Inka to legally leave the GDR. Inka, who dreams of a career as a sports swimmer, leaves East Germany reluctantly because she is worried about the loss of her friends. The plot follows on from this concern, as Inka travels to Berlin with her class. During a day visit to East Berlin, Inka meets her former roommate and is relieved that she is holding on to their friendship, unlike other people who have broken off contact out of cowardice or for political reasons. Because of this experience, she is eventually able to ask her mother about her father and the reasons for their attempted flight.

Finally, Anne Voorhoeve's *Lilly Unter den Linden* (*Lilly Under the Linden Trees*, 2004) picks up the same subject as in the previous book, although with a different outcome. Twenty-four-year-old Lilly Engelhart tells her life story to a teammate during a summer party. Her parents met in Hungary but their relationship was hampered by the fact that her father lived in West Germany and her mother in East Germany. They could only meet once a

month in East Berlin at the famous street Under den Linden. Her father successfully organized the flight of her mother across the inner-German border. However, before their daughter Lilly was born, he had a fatal accident in the mountains. When Lilly was 13 years old, her mother died of cancer. At the funeral, Lilly meets her aunt Lena who lives in Jena in East Germany. They understand each other right away. Since Lilly has no other relatives in West Germany, she decides to move to East Germany. She legally crosses the border to East Berlin but instead of returning the same day to West Germany, she secretly takes the train to Jena. After complicated negotiations with the GDR state authorities, Lilly is finally allowed to stay with her aunt. One year later, the Berlin Wall falls but Lilly remains in Jena until she finishes school.

Although all six novels have heterodiegetic narrators, the authors use different narrative strategies, such as flashbacks, inserted letters, and splitting the narrative into two parallel storylines, to provide an insight into the main characters' feelings and thoughts. The latter strategy comes to the fore in Hardel's novel, in which the experiences of the twins are told in two parallel narrative threads, so that they mirror each other. The same applies to Karau's book, as the plot jumps back and forth between Lilo and Eckhardt after their separation, until they are reunited at the end. Flashbacks – both from the perspective of the young adult characters as well as from the point of view of their parents or other caretakers – are employed to introduce the readers to past events (during or after World War II) in order to make the characters' behaviors and mindsets more comprehensible. By the same measure, inserted letters serve to provide the prehistory of the events depicted as well as to elucidate the motivations of the characters. This is evident in Heyne's book in which Inka's mother explains the reasons for her failed escape attempt – in a letter which Inka has learnt by heart. Voorhoeve, however, resorts to another procedure by dividing the narrative into a frame story (the present action taking place at the beginning of the twenty-first century) and an interior story (the past events covering the period from the 1960s to the middle of the 1990s).³

Apart from *Berliner Liebe*, all novels deal with the topic of family splitting and reunion. This was one of the big topics in the postwar years, which caused much emotional trouble, even more so when the Berlin Wall was erected. From then on, it was yet more complicated to meet relatives from the other side of the inner-German border, let alone to reunite family members. Against this backdrop, the main protagonists can compare the living conditions in East and West by crossing the inner-German borders twice, if not more, and the six novels display different movements with respect to border crossing. While the novels by Hardel and Birnbaum focus on a double border crossing (from the East to the West and back), the books

3 In addition, it would certainly be exciting to scrutinize the connection between narrative strategies and moral considerations, a question that plays a major role in narrative ethics. For reasons of space, we cannot go into this in more detail (on narrative ethics in a Swedish young adult novel, see Meibauer and Kümmerling-Meibauer).

by Plate and Heyne represent a triple border crossing (from the East to the West, back to the East, and again to the West), and the novel by Karau excels on multiple border crossings due to the relatively open transborder flow between East and West Berlin before the erection of the Berlin Wall. Voorhoeve's book, however, exemplifies the distinction between strict closure and danger of the inner-German border while it existed, and openness and freedom after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismantling of border installations in 1989. Such narrative approaches to border movements within the plots mean that these YA novels are able to take different perspectives, thus weighing the pros and cons of living in two German states with different political and economic systems.

ECONOMIC ATTRACTIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL STANCES

To at least temporarily reunite divided families and lovers is certainly one important aspect of movements in both directions. However, the protagonists also ponder the assets and drawbacks of the Eastern and Western camps. All novels, apart from the book by Karau, admit that the FRG is wealthier. This is shown in the novels by Hardel, Plate, and Birnbaum in which the main protagonists experience a culture shock when they see the range of goods on offer in West Germany for the first time.

In *Das soll der Mensch nicht scheiden*, the main protagonist Detlef is aware of the contrast between his poor and grey hometown and the rich city of Düsseldorf. His father lives in a wealthy suburb of Düsseldorf, not far away from areas where the working class is living. He learns that not all people living in the West are rich, since there are ambitious and decent young workers on the one side, and pampered and disoriented youth on the other. Karla in *Karlas große Reise* is also deeply impressed by the modern urban life in Gelsenkirchen which appears to her as a big city. In particular, the beautifully dressed girls riding on the Lambretta scooters spring to her mind. However, she is upset when several people like her fellow travelers and her aunt Gustel condescendingly comment on the GDR's economic achievements. Since it is not allowed for citizens of the GDR to export their currency, she is suspicious of the Western offers just across the border to change currency at the rate of three Deutsche Mark (East) to one Deutsche Mark (West).

In a similar vein, Bärbel in *Reise in den August* is fascinated by urban life in West Berlin, even more so as her grandparents fulfill every wish by buying her new clothes, inviting her to the cinema, and allowing her to watch TV. However, she changes her mind when she realizes that her grandparents have sold a story to a tabloid in which it is falsely claimed that she was beaten by her stepfather and therefore never wishes to return to the GDR. The grandparents' deep debt, long concealed from her, and the resulting deterioration of living conditions lead to an effective change of Bärbel's mindset. Even Heyne's young adult novel from the mid-1980s still points to the economic restrictions that people are facing in the

GDR. With respect to young people, Heyne refers to favorite clothes (jeans) and Western pop music as highly sought products from West German relatives and friends. While the main protagonist Inka is accustomed to the shortage of certain food brands, electronic items, and other everyday objects, her classmates are surprised at the low supply of goods. The same applies to Voorhoeve's novel, where it is reported that products in high demand, such as bottled red wine, tomato ketchup, or certain books can only be sold "under the counter" or acquired through good connections to the West (Voorhoeve 202).

Karau's *Berliner Liebe* is the only novel in our corpus that circumvents the potentially superior supply situation in West Berlin by corroborating that the conditions in the East Berlin labor market are much better, to the extent of implying that young people in West Berlin earn their living through criminal activities or enter a profession based on the use of violence. Thus, Karau followed some of the more propagandistic messages spread by SED functionaries. In terms of ideological attraction, the protagonists Detlef, Karla, and Lilo are convinced FDJ members. Detlef has a strong communist identity.⁴ He dislikes Western music and rock 'n roll. Therefore, he brutally attacks other young men who are influenced by Western youth culture and listen to RIAS (*Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor*), a broadcasting station run by the Americans. However, he is reluctant to report his neighbors to a Stasi officer and is tolerant towards a classmate, who is a Jehovah's Witness. Step by step, Detlef reconsiders his attitude. When he is stigmatized as a traitor of socialism, he proudly asserts that he is a committed communist. Because his comrades do not accept his right to have a close relationship with his father, he is finally forced to leave the GDR. When teacher Krause explains that there is more freedom of speech in the West, Detlef becomes suddenly aware of the fact that the Soviets – who are only addressed as friends and allies by the GDR government – can also be called an occupying power. Detlef's decision to stay in the West is not so much motivated by a critical stance against GDR socialism but by the wish to stay with his family. It is the harsh reaction of his comrades that forces him and his mother to leave the GDR.

The story about Karla takes up elements of a typical emancipatory novel addressed to girls. Karla wants to become a doctor and it is emphasized that the GDR state will support her by paying the tuition fees and providing free board and lodging. Her mother has already managed to secure a leading position at a VEB (*Volkseigener Betrieb*; publicly owned company), although she was not allowed to study in the prewar years. The Western relatives, in contrast, stick to old-fashioned ideas about women's education. Moreover, Karla's father points out that studying medicine would be very expensive in West Germany. Thus, it seems to be implied that the GDR fares better in supporting women's careers.⁵ On another matter, Karla's father is skeptical about the economic and political development in the GDR and went

4 On the impact of socialist ideology on East German youth, see Fullbrook (40-55).

5 This has to do with the shortage of workers as well as with socialist ideals about women's emancipation (Harsch 95-110).

to West Germany in the hope of making a career. As a war returnee, he was upset about the autonomy of his wife who in turn enjoyed her new liberty caused by the needs of the postwar economy. Now he has resigned because he could not climb the career ladder and is therefore ripe for a return to the GDR. Like Plate, Hardel attempts to balance ideological attitudes of the West and East German population. A case in point is a discussion between Karla's mother and Helmut, Karla's friend, who regards the FRG citizens as capitalist enemies (as expressed by the official GDR propaganda at that time). She objects:

[...] the people in the West aren't our enemies after all! If you go to the Rhineland, then you are not with enemies, or even in a foreign country, then you are at home, in your fatherland, in your Germany. (Hardel 149, our translation)

While Karla's mother does not want to fall prey to socialist propaganda, Karla's twin brother Karl reconsiders his position when he hears how his teacher is speaking about the "suppressed brothers and sisters who are wasting away in poverty and misery" (Hardel 162; on propaganda and persuasion, see Jowett and O'Donnell). Resultantly, he begins to show solidarity not only with his sister but also with the attempt of constructing a socialist state in East Germany.

By contrast, Karau's novel is utterly propagandistic as the state authorities in West Berlin and related institutions, such as the police, are depicted as ready for violence, manipulation, and deception. This comes particularly to the fore in the final chapter, which centers on the violent confrontation of FDJ members with the West Berlin police on the occasion of the third 'World Festival of Youth and Students'. This event is historically documented. The Ruling Lord Mayor of West Berlin, Ernst Reuter, invited the guests to pay West Berlin a visit. This was not altruistic, since the allies thought that a direct comparison between the two political systems would generate a clear result. On 15 August 1951, the FDJ chief Erich Honecker sent roughly 10,000 FDJ members to West Berlin to demonstrate for peace. However, after 24 April of the same year, the FDJ was forbidden by law in West Germany because it was presumed to be an anti-constitutional organization infringing Art. 9(2) of the German constitution. As a result, the West Berlin police had brutally beaten down the FDJ demonstration with many injured people on both sides.

At the beginning of the chapter, the festival is described as an event full of joy and mutual understanding where the youth of the world is peacefully meeting, leaving the horror of war behind and engaging in mutual understanding. Against this backdrop, the West Berlin authorities suggest that freedom can be found only in West Berlin. In stark contrast to this message is the brutal suppression of the FDJ demonstration, which according to the narrator, was cold-bloodedly planned by West Berlin authorities. Consequently, the results of the demonstration are horrible:

None of those people who are marching while joyfully singing and laughing towards the sector border, may suspect that this day will be mentioned in history books; even the number of injured people who will be in hospitals in the evening: a thousand girls and boys with fractures of the skulls, kicked ribs, dislocated arms, broken legs, burnt eyes. (Karau 171, our translation)

This description suggests that some West Berlin authorities intended to provoke this conflict. By contrast, the East Berlin idea promoted by Honecker to 'surprise' the West Berlin people by marching through their territory does not matter. If not altogether an outright propaganda lie, Karau's assumption is highly biased, even if it is mainly intended to reflect Lilo's mental reasoning and Eckart's final decision to move to East Berlin. One possible motivation for this portrayal could be that Karau, who was a staunch communist, sought to justify the Wall ideologically at a time when people were increasingly skeptical about its construction.

In almost the same vein, Birnbaum's novel *Reise in den August* seeks to vindicate the erection of the Berlin Wall by pointing to the exploitation of the labor class and the stultification of the population by mass media in West Germany.⁶ The decadent and luxurious life style of the rich as well as the hypocrisy and mendacity of Bärbel's grandparents and the state authorities (school, youth welfare office) contrast with the honesty and unselfish commitment of East German people (Lüdecke 169). In addition, many persons Bärbel encounters use hate speech and propaganda to defame the GDR. A popular strategy at that time consisted of calling the new socialist state '*die Zone*' (the zone), a term applied by Bärbel's grandparents and the director of her new school to express contempt and non-recognition of the GDR as a sovereign country (Birnbaum 31, 50, 86). The only positive character Bärbel meets in West Berlin is her classmate Thomas, whose father is a devoted communist, fighting for better working conditions in the factories. However, the novel indicates that Thomas' father is met with mistrust by his superiors, since they presume that he sympathizes with the GDR and seeks to infiltrate the FRG with socialist ideas. In any event, the sojourn in West Berlin serves as an eye-opener for Bärbel who finally recognizes that her true home is in East Germany, thus uniting personal and ideological motivations.

In contrast to the aforementioned books, the novels by Heyne and Voorhoeve mostly refrain from any strict ideological stances, let alone propagandistic messages. The protagonists in Heyne's book represent different critical positions with respect to the ideological program of both German states, thus achieving a balance between positive and negative traits associated with West or East Germany. By this narrative procedure, which procures a multi-perspective view on the political and social situation in the FRG and GDR, the author opens up a range of opinions which mirror the public debates of that time and

6 Accordingly, the novels by Birnbaum and Karau follow a dogmatic attitude; (see Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 30-33).

influence Inka's mental and emotional development to the extent that she is eventually ready to come to terms with her past.

While Heyne's novel uses flashbacks and conversations with different people as a starting point for dealing with personal and political issues, Voorhoeve's *Lilly Unter den Linden* focuses on Lilly's life story, interwoven with reminiscences of her childhood and youth as well as reports on her parent's life stories. Although Lilly is confronted with critical objections against the political system of the GDR, these very positions do not keep her from her decision to move to East Germany. Quite on the contrary, her personal reasons far outweigh possible ideological concerns and political constraints – for instance, the obvious fact that she might be potentially restricted in her freedom of travel and speech. For Lilly, who has suffered from loneliness since the death of her mother, security in the family counts more than any economic or ideological constriction.

GERMAN DIVISION AS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DISASTER

Most interestingly, the authors of these six novels appear to agree that the German division is a political and social disaster. In particular, the inner-German border is the main stumbling block. From the end of the war until the construction of the Berlin Wall, there was widespread hope that Germany could be reunited. That the reunification was possible was suggested by the so-called Stalin Note (10 March 1952). However, this document was considered propagandistic in nature by the Western authorities. In fact, Stalin demanded that Germany should be neutral so that the plan to integrate Germany into a Western defense alliance would be undermined.

The book title *Das soll der Mensch nicht scheiden* refers to the Gospel of Mark 10:9: “[w]hat therefore God hath joined together, let no-one put asunder”, but also the family is something that God has joined together. It is implied that the two German states naturally belong together (although the religious underpinning of this idea is somewhat pretentious).⁷ The narrator, reflecting on the topic of flight and transgressing borders, argues that this border is unique by claiming that the division of Germany is “against nature”, thus neglecting the political reasons for this occurrence:

This new border had nothing in common with the old ones, it was against nature. Lust for power, anxiety, political scheming, cold business calculations created it. It was as if

7 The disastrous situation caused by the inner-German border is also picked up in the dust jacket which shows a red thick bar with short braces right and left that seems to cut the cover into two halves. A green dashed line runs across this bar. This representation can be interpreted as a dead tree or even as a border protected by barbed wire.

a mad mind made a cut through a vital people's body and now is delighted at the pains of the twitching body. (Plate 128, our translation)

In light of this perspective, it is interesting to examine the representation of the inner-German border crossing procedures and how they impact on the main protagonists more closely. Apart from Karau's novel which depicts a regular transborder flow, all of the books under discussion include sections that deal with the young people's crossing of the border between East and West Berlin or the inner-German border. In most cases, this situation is associated with a feeling of trepidation, since the border crossers feel intimidated by the border guards. Therefore, the protagonists use different strategies. For instance, Detlef in *Das soll der Mensch nicht scheiden* resorts to the trick of asking the Soviet border guards on the train for a translation of a German sentence into Russian to avoid being subjected to closer scrutiny. In *Karlas große Reise*, the travelers in the train give each other good advice, throw Western newspapers out of the window, and have petty conversations about the weather, thus concealing a feeling of insecurity. The border is sketched as an unpleasant institution:

At this place and during this hour, in which the sad division of Germany reveals itself so impressively, every traveler is likely to become thoughtful. In order to move from one part of Germany to another, Germans are forced to let their suitcases be opened to be controlled. Who can be pleased with this? Passport, travel permit, permit of residence and what there also may be possible as documents, are looked at and are provided with notes and stamps. Moreover, the wallet must be shown and the amount one is carrying is noted on the passport and one has to show this amount when traveling back. All this might be understandable; however, it is nothing to be pleased at. (Hardel 91, our translation)

Similar experiences are described in Heyne's novel, in which Inka and her class make a trip to Berlin. When their bus approaches the inner-German border, everyone on board becomes silent and feels anxious, particularly when the pupils see the border fortifications and the armed border guards (Heyne 60). Markus, one of Inka's classmates, rightly points out that they know next to nothing about the GDR, which increasingly tends to be regarded as a foreign country rather than a part of former Germany.

The most elaborate description of the border can be found in Voorhoeve's novel, when Lilly and Pascal, a close friend of her deceased mother, are subjected to a long control at the inner-German border. Intimidated by the unfriendly guards, Lilly shrouds herself in silence. In addition, she looks at the threatening border installations with fright:

Even from the distance, it was clear that we were not dealing with an ordinary national border. An almost endless mesh- and barbed-wire fence stretched along both sides of the highway until it disappeared behind hills and trees on the horizon. It tore in two what had once belonged together, but now faced each other armed to the teeth: Germany East and Germany West, battleground number one, should there ever be an armed exchange between NATO and the states of the Warsaw Pact. (Voorhoeve 123, our translation)

Despite these experiences, Lilly continues to pursue her plan to travel illegally by train to Jena to see her aunt, although she realizes that this action will get her into trouble. At a time when people in East Germany increasingly tried to leave the GDR by officially applying for an exit visa or making daring escape attempts, Lilly swims against the tide, since “[n]obody goes to the GDR” (Voorhoeve 104), as her best girlfriend maintains.

By and large, these and other passages in our corpus circumstantiate the feelings and emotions of the young protagonists in view of the border. Three novels go a step further as they also elaborate on the dangerous, even life-threatening aspects of illegal border crossing. Birnbaum’s *Reise in den August* turns it into an exciting adventure, since Bärbel is not fully aware of the risks she takes when secretly crossing the border to East Berlin via a hole in a ruined house. She is immediately arrested by border guards and brought to a border station, where she is subjected to a long interrogation. Actually, she had naively expected to be welcomed with open arms, but instead is met with mistrust and disbelief after she has told her story. Voorhoeve’s novel reports about another kind of illegal border crossing, as Lilly crosses the border legally but does not return to West Germany in the evening, even though she does not have a visa for a longer stay in the GDR. By contrast, her mother illegally crossed the border by means of a West German passport given to her by a close friend. While her attempt to escape was successful, this very friend, as well as her sister who was suspected to be a confidante, had been arrested by the East German police and had to suffer the consequences. Heyne is the only author who depicts a failed attempt to escape with a fatal outcome. The main protagonist Inka gets a letter from her mother in which she describes what happened when she and her husband tried to cross the Czech border, since they presumed that this border was not so well-guarded as the inner-German border. Unfortunately, they were wrong, because they were caught while crossing the barbed wire fence. Her mother had to experience helplessly that her husband bled to death in no-man’s land after being shot, while she was arrested by the guards. Inka knows this heartbreaking letter by heart as she reads it again and again.

In view of these positions, Heyne’s novel *Treffpunkt Weltzeituhr* represents an exceptional case, since Inka feels she neither belongs to the FRG nor to the GDR, thus obtaining, metaphorically speaking, a permanent border-crossing position. This comes to

the fore when she recollects her first crossing of the inner-German border from the East to the West:

She was ten years old at that time, and alone as never before and never after, although her mother was waiting for her at the end of the street. But in those minutes, on that street, she did not belong to anyone. From one side she was not yet accepted and to the other side she no longer belonged. (Heyne 7-8, our translation)

The same feeling reemerges when she is standing again at the Brandenburg Gate, together with her class. While the tourist guide shows them the minefields and mentions the shooting order on behalf of the GDR guards, Inka recalls another guide to the same place many years ago when she still lived in the GDR. In this case, the official guide justified the necessity of these measures with reference to the class enemy in the West. This emerging memory causes Inka to suffer from nausea (Heyne 62). However, this new experience and the encounter with her former East German girlfriend encourage her to confront the past and finally be poised for accepting her new identity in West Germany, even talking with her mother about her father.

In retrospect, the authors of all six novels seem to agree that the division of Germany results in social and political distress, since it separates family members, friends, and lovers. Very often, the main protagonists are forced to choose one side as a permanent residence, which sometimes leads to an ultimate movement to the West or to the East. Despite this decision, the characters always have the impression that they need to leave people and important things behind, although they did not want to – a fatal situation which is summarized in Detlef's statement in Plate's novel, when he ponders on the emotional turmoil of split families: "Like Germany, you know. Wherever you are, one half is always missing" (Plate 228).

Overall, the key issues, economic attractions, ideological stances, and the experience of the German division as a political and social disaster are inextricably entangled and mirror each other in the plots. In addition, it is obvious that the search for a place where one belongs is foregrounded. It is the search for home which secures the main characters' development. By and large, this development is not primarily driven by opposition to institutions (the state, the FDJ, or the family), but by the search for one's own identity. Seen in this light, the crossing of borders, with the accompanying tension and the fear of oppression and persecution, acts as a catalyst for this search.

CONCLUSION: BORDER CROSSINGS BETWEEN TWO GERMAN STATES

We live in a bordered world, since borders surround us everywhere. When we leave the domestic or private environment, we cross the border to the public space. Within the public space, there are ample borders to trespass: for instance, the borders between neighborhoods, the borders between cityscape and landscape, or the borders between regions or federal states (Mezzadra and Nelson 7). Usually, borders are closely associated with the legal frontiers of countries which require different strategies for crossing, pending on the political agenda and the status of the border crossers. These different kinds of borders cannot always strictly be separated from one another, since they often go in tandem, thus establishing a network of borders. Not all of these borders are clearly recognizable by means of a border post or other visible markers. When crossing the threshold of such a space to which one does not belong, individuals may face some risks such as expulsion, mistrust, and physical violence. Hence, borders create a demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them’, or between an ingroup and outgroup, pointing to inherent power relations. As a field, border studies examines precisely these relationships by following an interdisciplinary path. This field includes studies from the realms of geography, political studies, sociology, psychology, linguistics, history, and cultural studies, among others (Diener and Hagen). Moreover, border studies have experienced a boost due to the global migration movements which increased since the beginning of the new millennium. We maintain that (literary) border studies is a promising approach with respect to the exploration of young adult novels that center on border crossings and the experiences of migration and displacement, and the associated search for one’s identity.

Against this backdrop, the six young adult novels investigated in this article represent different perspectives on the East-West conflict and its influence on the inner-German division. What these novels have in common is the observation that the main characters’ experiences with border crossing influence their individual maturation processes. It is not the struggle with authorities or “disturbing the universe” (1), as Roberta Trites puts it, that is at the core of these young adult novels, but an informed individual decision about the place where one actually wants to live.

With these novels, the authors not only reacted to historical turning points, such as the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the conflicted political situation caused by the division of Germany, but they also reveal shifts in their ideologically shaped perspectives. This comes to the fore in the represented border crossing experiences of the young protagonists which impact on their individual maturation as well as their increasing political and historical awareness. Noticing the significance of this topic, it is more than obvious that border studies can open new vistas on the analysis of young adult literature that tell stories of how crossing borders can impede or inflict people’s individual development and social relationships.

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