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The Figure of the Exiled Writer in Comparison: Intertextuality in Lion Feuchtwanger's *Exil* (1940) and Abbas Khider's *Der falsche Inder* (2008) *TRANSIT* Vol. 13, No. 1

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Introduction

In his seminal study *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* [*Palimpsestes: La Littérature au second degré*] (1982), Gérard Genette claims:

The subject of poetics [...] is not the text considered in its singularity [...]. [T]he subject of poetics is transtextuality, or the textual transcendence of the text, which I have [...] defined roughly as “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts.” (1)

Taking this claim literally means to center the literary analysis of a piece of writing around the traces that other texts have left in it. The following discussion offers a case study in how a structuralist analysis focusing on transtextual qualities can be used to interpret similarities and parallels between two texts that otherwise differ vastly in terms of their narrative style as well as their temporal, spatial and cultural context.

This paper investigates two novels which, at first glance, seem to have little in common. Lion Feuchtwanger's *Exil* (1940) is a prominent example of so-called German-language ‘exile literature’ of the 1930s and 1940s. The voluminous novel is set in Paris in 1935 and narrates through multi-perspectival internal focalisation the fate of a diverse group of German refugees in French exile as well as their resistance against and dealings with the Nazis. On the contrary, Abbas Khider's short debut novel of 150 pages, *Der falsche Inder* (2008), centers on the experiences of the protagonist of the intradiegetic narration, the Iraqi refugee Rasul Hamid, and his experiences of flight as well as his struggles as an asylum seeker in Germany before and after the terror attacks of September 11th, 2001. Despite the differences that emerge from these two timeframes, plots and discourses, Feuchtwanger's and Khider's novels contain astonishingly similar traces of other texts—similar manifestations of what Genette calls transtextuality—namely, references to Rainer Maria Rilke's early work, Gottfried Benn's poetry, and Greek mythology. These intertexts are Rilke's two arguably most important early writings, *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke* (1904) and *Das Stunden-Buch* (1905), Benn's thematically connected poems, ‘Der späte Mensch’ (1922) and ‘Nur zwei Dinge’ (1953), and numerous allusions to mythological tales, predominantly Homer's *Odyssey*.

It is argued here that in both novels these intertexts—each of them featuring a young male writer who fled his country of origin and lives in precarity in exile—serve to characterize ‘the figure of the exiled writer,’ who is marked in a threefold manner:

by his ability to channel his potencies and potential into artistic productivity; by his capability of achieving self-determination through his writing; and by his willingness to use language as a tool of hope and resistance against oppression and discrimination.

Feuchtwanger's and Khider's novels are especially suited to a structuralist analysis centring on Genette's concept of transtextuality, as they can be classified as what Genette calls "massively and explicitly palimpsestuous" (ix). In quoting explicitly from earlier texts by Rilke, Benn, and Homer, the texts pursue a strategy of intertextuality—a specific form of transtextuality defined by Genette as "a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another. In its most explicit and literal form, it is the traditional practice of quoting" (1-2). Feuchtwanger and Khider use similar intertexts but place them into distinct contexts. This enables the legacies of these earlier texts to travel spatially (to different geographical locations), temporally (to different points in time), and also culturally (into different cultural systems). The shared intertexts connect Feuchtwanger's and Khider's texts to earlier writings in the German language and simultaneously form a bridge between these two authors' novels.

While these intertexts have attracted readers' attention for decades and have themselves moved from place to place, the writer-protagonists in both novels often remain unheard or unseen and are unable to move freely, which results to a great extent from their status as exiles. Their writings, however, are passed on from reader to reader, and thereby manage to achieve what their progenitors are prevented from doing themselves.

Through the use of a common body of intertexts, experiences of flight and exile become recontextualised in a transhistorical and transcultural manner, contributing to the dissolution of fixed genre-specific ascriptions and supporting the re-evaluation of so-called 'exile literature' and 'migrant literature.' While both Feuchtwanger's *Exil* and Khider's *Der falsche Inder* are first and foremost German-language narrations on exile, they are usually classified as examples of two different genres. As a genre-classification, the term 'exile literature' was coined in the German literary discourse only in regard to texts written between 1933 and 1945 by authors who fled the 'Third Reich' such as Lion Feuchtwanger, Anna Seghers or Alfred Döblin (Spies 538). The overarching quality of these numerous and diverse texts was the desire to represent 'the other' Germany, to concentrate on and refer to German national language and literature (Bischoff and Komfort-Hein 1).

While writers of exile literature were considered an integral part of German national literature, despite their geographical position outside the borders of the German nation-state, German-language literature produced by exiles *in* Germany *after* 1945 has been largely addressed in a way that "demarcate[s] and regulate[s] the boundaries between it and a body of literature considered by implication to be inherently German" (Adelson, "Migrants' Literature" 382). The term 'migrant literature,' which is frequently used to categorize Khider's writings, seems to confirm and even emphasize this demarcating tendency, in other words, that these texts are inherently a product 'from the outside,' or, as Leslie A. Adelson continues, "an addendum, an appendage that attests to cultural pluralism. What goes unchallenged are the epistemological and political implications of the notion that German literature has at its center something distinctly German to which foreign elements can be added or subtracted" (ibid.). I argue that through the use of similar intertexts, Feuchtwanger's and Khider's novels offer the possibility of overcoming this division between a perceived German national literature and the migrants' 'addendum' from the outside by foregrounding the transhistorical and transcultural dimension that is inherent to any writing on the topic of exile.

Independently, Feuchtwanger's *Exil* and Khider's *Der falsche Inder* have been the subject of previous research examining their relations to other texts. That said, the existing body of research lacks an in-depth interpretation of the respective intertexts themselves. Particularly in the case of *Der falsche Inder*, scholarly discourse has tended to leave open the question as to why Khider includes precisely *these* texts—and not those of any other writer, or any other passage from the selected writers' texts—to create a certain textual effect.

I demonstrate here how a comparative investigation sheds light on the question of how the use of these specific intertexts adds significance to the novels under discussion. A structuralist, comparative analysis of intertextuality in Khider's and Feuchtwanger's novels—two novels which have not been interpreted comparatively and whose shared transtextuality has not been addressed before—can expand the existing discourse on both novels by highlighting how the shared intertexts form a bridge between the two.

The case of Khider: Transtextuality, transnationality, transculturality

Scholars have acknowledged intertextuality as a central aspect of Khider's writing. Annika Jensen and Jutta Müller-Tamm highlight in their analysis of *Der falsche Inder* that intertextuality is used as a means of "literarischen Selbsterschaffung" ("literary self-invention"; all translation my own unless otherwise specified) noting: "Mithilfe von markierten Zitaten kanonischer deutscher Schriftsteller, die neu kontextualisiert und damit aktualisiert werden, schreibt sich der sich selbst erzeugende Autor in die deutsche Literaturgeschichte und die deutsche Kultur ein" ("With the help of accentuated quotations of canonical German writers, which are being re-contextualised and therewith updated, the self-generating author writes himself into German literary history and the German culture," 326). According to Jensen and Müller-Tamm, this re-contextualisation of widely known texts from the German language in a different cultural context lends Khider's novel additional significance, as it refers to what lays beyond the textual limits of the novel itself and to what was there before. This appropriation of German-language literature and its simultaneous re-framing due to its application to Khider's Iraqi refugee character symbolises the author's "Legitimierungsanspruch als deutscher Autor *und* die Behauptung einer interkulturellen Autorschaft" ("claim of legitimacy as a German author *and* the assertion of an intercultural authorship," 327).

Other scholars, too, have picked up on this transcultural notion of Khider's use of intertextuality.¹ Anne Benteler and Sandra Narloch describe it as "Beleg für das

¹ Although Jensen and Müller-Tamm speak of Khider's 'intercultural authorship', I believe that the term 'transcultural authorship' is more appropriate for the phenomenon they are describing, as the text transcends what is considered to be German or Iraqi. By using the term 'transcultural', I draw upon Wolfgang Welsch's understanding of transculturality as "a new conceptualization of culture" (59), which stands in opposition not only to Herder's "unificatory" and "separatory" (61) idea of culture, but also to notions of multiculturalism and interculturality. Welsch criticizes that these earlier conceptualizations portray "the different cultures as being things independent and homogenous in themselves" (64), as if they were "islands or spheres" (67). On the contrary, the term 'transculturality' expresses an understanding that "goes *beyond* the traditional concept of culture and *passes through* traditional cultural boundaries" (67). The prefix 'trans' therefore has a dual meaning: it stands for "'transversal' with respect to the mixed design of cultural determinants" as well as for "'beyond' with respect to the future and compared to the earlier form of cultures" (67).

lauter werdende Plädoyer gegen ein [...] Verständnis von ‘Exilliteratur’ als Epochenbegriff (1933-45) einerseits und für die Öffnung national(literarisch)-er Kategorien andererseits” (“evidence, on the one hand, for the growing plea against an [...] understanding of ‘exile literature’ as a term denoting to a specific period (1933-1945), and on the other, for the expansion of national-literary categories,” 3). Sarah Steidl emphasizes the transhistorical and transnational dimension of Khider’s intertextual references by stating: “Diese intertextuellen Bezüge können als Verweis Khiders gedeutet werden, dass staatenüberschreitende Wanderungen bzw. Entortungs- und Grenzerfahrungen nicht erst Erscheinungen der Gegenwart sind” (“These intertextual references can be interpreted as Khider’s rejection of the notion that transnational migrations and the experiences of delocalisation and border crossing are merely contemporary phenomena,” 315). In the latest discussion of intertextuality in *Der falsche Inder*, Willi Barthold delves further into Khider’s self-invention as a writer, which he sees as grounded on a “reflexiven Auto-Orientalismus, der eine westliche Diskurstradition zwar aufgreift, diese aber im selben Atemzug einer kritischen Reflexion verfügbar macht” (“reflexive auto-orientalism, which takes up a Western discursive tradition, but simultaneously enables its critical reflection,” 72).

Overall, there seems to be consensus that the intertextual references in *Der falsche Inder* are a means for Khider to position himself as a distinctively German author, while simultaneously playing with his own and his fictional characters’ Iraqi roots, thereby contributing to a transhistorical and transcultural reconfiguration of German-language literature. But while these conclusions appear valid, the majority of these studies discuss these references without analysing the intertexts themselves in any detail. Jensen and Müller-Tamm’s analysis is, admittedly, an exception in this regard, as it discusses the use of Heinrich Heine’s ‘Belsazar’ in detail (326-27). However, Barthold’s claim that intertextual relations in Khider’s novels have been “bereits von der Forschung detailliert herausgearbeitet” (“already worked through in detail in the scholarship,” 72) appears to be a somewhat short-sighted conclusion, particularly when considering the fact that every intertext opens up a new network of texts—and, therefore, intertextuality can never be analysed exhaustively. The claims expressed in the existing body of research fail to explain why Khider decided to include precisely these intertexts by Rilke, Benn and Homer to contribute to a transhistorical and transcultural understanding of German-language literature. Indeed, if the purpose of these intertexts were primarily to highlight the transhistorical and transcultural component of writing on exile and flight, references to ‘classical’ German-language exile writers, such as Anna Seghers, Bertolt Brecht, Stefan Zweig, or Klaus Mann, would have made this point even clearer. Why, then, do we not find these writers referenced in Khider’s novel, but instead Rilke, Benn and Homer, and why does Feuchtwanger’s *Exil* contain astonishingly similar references?

In order to respond to these questions, the existing research on transtextuality in Feuchtwanger’s writings will be discussed briefly in the next section below, which then allows for a comparison of the two fictional characters of exiled writers the reader finds in Feuchtwanger’s *Exil* and Khider’s *Der falsche Inder*. Based on this elaboration, a detailed analysis of the respective intertexts by Rilke, Benn and Homer follows.

The case of Feuchtwanger: Transtextuality and literary kinship

Lion Feuchtwanger is one of the best-known writers of so-called German exile literature, which refers traditionally to the period between 1933 and 1945.

Intertextuality in his writings has been addressed mostly in terms of artistic or ideological inspiration.² Klaus Modick claims: “L[ion]. F[euchtwanger]. hat in der deutschen Literatur eigentlich keine Tradition, auf der er hätte fußen können, weshalb er sich gern auf angelsächsische Autoren berief, die für ihn Modellcharakter hatten” (“L[ion]. F[euchtwanger]. had no tradition in the German literature upon which to base his writing, which is why he invoked English authors to serve for him as models,” 13). Thereby, he dismisses Feuchtwanger’s own reflections on his poetic role models. As early as 1927, Feuchtwanger writes in ‘Versuch einer Selbstbiographie’: “Von den Zeitgenossen haben drei mich stark beeinflusst, die Begegnung mit ihrem Werk das meine verändert. Heinrich Mann hat meine Diktion verändert, Döblin meine epische Form, Brecht meine dramatische” (“I have been strongly influenced by three of my contemporaries—the encounter with their works has transformed my own: Heinrich Mann transformed my diction; Döblin, my epic form, and Brecht, my dramatic,” 355). Scholars such as Peter Stolle have further argued that intertextuality is used in Feuchtwanger’s writings to emphasize the close literary kinship of German-language exiled writers as well as their “Anspruch, für das ‘andere Deutschland’ zu sprechen” (“aspiration to speak for the ‘other Germany,’” 76). Jan Hans und Lutz Winckler therefore claim about Feuchtwanger’s novel *Exil*: “als Roman des antifaschistischen Widerstands ist er ein zeitgeschichtliches und moralisches Dokument der deutschen und französischen Volksfront, zu der sich zwischen 1936 und 1938 in ganz Europa Antifaschisten und Hitlergegner zusammenschlossen” (“As a novel of the antifascist resistance, it is a historical and moral document of the Franco-German popular front which consolidated antifascists and opponents of Hitler from across Europe between 1936 and 1938,” 39).

While these, too, are plausible explanations for and elaborations on the effects Feuchtwanger achieves by including intertextual references in his novel, it remains unclear why he has chosen precisely the same authors as Khider and their texts to produce this impression. Rilke, despite his established position in German literary history, was not a refugee; Benn became a controversial figure in the realm of so-called ‘inner exile’; and a reference to Homer would tend to establish a connection to Greek antiquity and mythology rather than German literature. Hence, Feuchtwanger’s ascribed antifascist agenda as well as Khider’s alleged transcultural self-positioning could have been achieved more clearly by referring to different writers and texts; and yet, these two distinct authors allude in their two different novels to similar intertexts by the same writers. In order to elaborate how these intertexts add to the two novels under discussion here, the intertexts themselves need to be analysed in greater detail, thereby demonstrating how they are used in order to characterise the figure of the exiled writer.

The figure of the exiled writer: Feuchtwanger’s Harry Meisel and Khider’s Rasul Hamid

Investigating Feuchtwanger’s *Exil* and Khider’s *Der falsche Inder* in parallel proves a promising endeavour, not least because the study of intertextuality in these novels enables a comparison of the figure of the exiled writer. I must stress here that I do *not* use this expression in an autobiographical sense; I do not dwell on the fact that both Feuchtwanger and Khider experienced flight and exile in their own lives. This autobiographical component has already been the subject or guiding principle of

² See, especially, Fischer (19); Mayer (292); Wessler (2-7).

numerous articles³ and is more characteristic of earlier research on ‘exile literature’, ‘migrant literature’, ‘intercultural literature’ and all other labels invented to classify what could generally be called “von Migranten geschriebene Literatur” (“literature written by migrants,” Pokrywka 414). This essay focuses, instead, on the prominent *fictional characters* in these novels, who are themselves exiled writers, and thereby distances itself from previous research taking the authors’ shared autobiographical experience as a ready-made interpretative approach. Turning away from the authors’ biographies allows for an investigation that primarily focuses on the text’s artistic and poetic qualities.

In Feuchtwanger’s *Exil*, the figure of the exiled writer is represented by the nineteen-year-old Harry Meisel, who leaves Germany after his Jewish father bribes the Nazis in order to prevent the family’s expulsion. Harry Meisel chooses to live as a writer in poverty and precarity in the Parisian “Emigrantenbaracke” rather than return to his parents (“emigrant barracks,” 147). His literary talent secures him a job in Akron, Ohio. However, the night before he is due to leave for the USA, Harry is killed.

Harry’s counterpart in Khider’s *Der falsche Inder* is the Iraqi refugee Rasul Hamid, the protagonist of the intradiegetic narration. In Khider’s debut novel, an anonymous traveller finds a book manuscript on a train (this marks the extradiegetic narration). While reading the manuscript which narrates in eight different versions how Rasul Hamid flees Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and ends up in Germany, the anonymous traveller realises that Rasul’s story is his own:

[I]ch [habe] ein Manuskript gefunden [...], in dem meine eigene Geschichte zu finden ist, geschrieben von einem Fremden namens Rasul Hamid. [...] Sogar die Schrift gleicht meiner bis aufs letzte Pünktchen. [...] Er hat nur ein paar Namen und Beschreibungen einiger Erlebnisse verändert. Das ist aber ohne Bedeutung. Es bleibt meine Geschichte und nur meine. (153-4)

I found a manuscript, which contains my own story, written by a stranger called Rasul Hamid. [...] Even the handwriting mirrors mine to the last dot. [...] He only changed a couple of names and the descriptions of some events. But this doesn’t matter. This story is mine and mine alone.

The repeated narration itself could already be interpreted as an indication of transtextuality, as this narrative strategy draws on “the cyclical framework of Scheherazade’s *Arabian Nights*” (Müller 6).

Both Feuchtwanger’s and Khider’s novels reflect on two historically decisive moments of flight: namely, twentieth-century fascism and postcolonialism, respectively. Their protagonists represent two distinct groups which have been forced into exile in particularly large numbers: German Jews fleeing from the Nazis, and Arab Muslims facing the consequences of the (post)colonial order. Together, these texts depict Germany from the perspective of two flight trajectories: as the country from which and to which one might flee.

Whereas these opposing trajectories and temporal contexts have long provided incentive to separate these two narratives into different literary genres—‘exile literature’ in Feuchtwanger’s case and ‘migrant literature’ in Khider’s—this division has been slowly eroded by scholarship. This gradual erosion, although it implies a re-evaluation and re-contextualisation of the literary products, is often initiated primarily by the observation of the writers’ shared *autobiographical* experiences of flight and

³ See, especially, Barthold (70); Hilmes (135); Hofmann (103); Jensen and Müller-Tamm (322); Schramm (74-75); Steidl (308-10).

exile, which can be seen, for instance, in Christian Palm's plea for the umbrella-term "deutschsprachige Literatur exilierter Autoren" ("German-language literature [written] by exiled writers," 294) as an attempt to tear down the demarcation between 'exile' and 'migrant literature.' Whereas this overlap is indeed undeniable, an examination of Feuchtwanger's and Khider's texts themselves reveals that it is not only the writers' biographies but also their fictional narrations that display remarking similarities—not least thematically. They are what Adelson describes as "touching tales" ("Touching Tales" 93), meaning that these historical and contemporary tales of flight and exile are not simply analogous, but they stand in proximity to each other and hence "touch." What is of interest in *Exil* and *Der falsche Inder* is that both not only thematize transhistorical, transnational, and transcultural attributes of flight and exile from the perspective of a writer, they also draw upon the same corpus of intertexts.

Quoting Rilke: Potencies and potentialities of writing

The second chapter of Khider's *Der falsche Inder*, entitled "Priestertöchter," is pivotal for the analysis of the figure of the exiled writer, as this is where the reader learns why Rasul Hamid started writing. Before fleeing Iraq, he has an erotic dream in Baghdad in which he observes the semi-naked daughter of a priest absorbed in prayer. After she leaves the temple, he steals a sheet of paper and begins to write. Upon waking, this impulse develops into a neurosis, "[...]einen fast schon krankhaften Zwang zu schreiben" ("an almost sick compulsion to write," 45). Rasul speculates that this dream might have been influenced by his neighbour Fatima: "Fatima und ihr Busen erweckten in mir den Drang zu schreiben und trieben mich zum ersten Papierdiebstahl meines Lebens" ("Fatima and her bosom awoke in me a compulsion to write, and drove me to the first incident of paper theft in my life," 36). Rasul expresses his emotions for Fatima as follows: "ich fühlte genau das, was wohl auch der altehrwürdige Rilke gefühlt haben muss: 'Ich will ein blondes Mädchen, mit dem ich spiele. Wilde Spiele'" ("I felt precisely that which the venerable Rilke must also have felt: 'I want a blonde maiden to play with. Wild games,'" 37). This quotation is from Rilke's *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke*. That said, Rasul Hamid admittedly amends Rilke's text slightly, as the original reads: "Er denkt an ein blondes Mädchen, mit dem er spielte—daheim, wilde Spiele" ("He thinks of a blond maiden whom he used to play with—at home, wild games," 14). Rilke's alter-ego in *Cornet* is a soldier from Langenau fighting in the Ottoman Wars of the seventeenth century, who longs for his lover, Magdalena. In *Der falsche Inder*, Rasul Hamid compares himself to Rainer Maria Rilke's alias Cornet Christoph Rilke, indicating similarities between him and Rilke, namely, that for Rasul, Fatima remains as far out of reach as Magdalena is for the soldier on the battlefield. This comparison (and comparability) may be interpreted as affirmation of Khider's transhistorical, transnational and transcultural agenda: despite the different temporal, geographical and cultural context in which they live, the two distinct young men Rasul Hamid and Christoph Rilke are one in their longing for a woman out of reach.

With regard to the sexual innuendos in Rilke's *Cornet*, Wolfgang Braungart writes in his analysis: "Die Symbolik ist überdeutlich bis zur Peinlichkeit" ("The symbolism is painfully over-articulated," "Die Weise von Liebe und Tod" 214). One could say the same of Khider's "Priestertöchter" as Carola Hilmes argues: "Das Kapitel 'Priestertöchter' zitiert den Topos von den 'Musen des Dichters' [...] und überzeichnet ihn ins Erotische und Groteske" ("The chapter 'Priestertöchter' cites the topos of the 'poet's muse' [...] and exaggerates this into the erotic and grotesque," 140). The

accumulation of symbols appears almost hyperbolic: Khider covers the psychoanalytic repertoire, including dream and drives, the libido, mother and father, suppression and subversion, to name only a few. In the context of poetic production, however, the psychoanalytic vocabulary in general, and the sexual allusions in particular, can be regarded as metaphors for artistic inventiveness. Through sublimation, the writer protagonist converts his libidinous energy into artistic productivity. What emerges is the text that the reader finds in front of them as both the evidence and the result of this inventive process.

Similar libidinous innuendos are also prevalent in another of Rilke's early writings, namely, *Stunden-Buch*, in the discussions of "Glied" ("limb" or "member"), "Samen" ("seed" or "semen"), or "blühen" ("blooming") (168). Both *Cornet* and *Stunden-Buch* are considered Rilke's most influential texts within the corpus of his early period (Braungart, "Das Stunden-Buch" 216) and Rilke's *Stunden-Buch* is introduced as an intertext in Feuchtwanger's *Exil*. When Harry Meisel is asked how he ended up in Paris, he responds with a quotation from the third book of *Stunden-Buch*, "Das Buch von der Armut und vom Tode": "Wie die Dinge nun einmal lägen, gehöre er wohl hierher in die Baracke. 'Die Armut ist ein großer Glanz aus von innen', hatte Rilke gedichtet" ("The way things were, he belonged here in the barracks. As Rilke once said, 'poverty is a great inner glow,'" 145).

Relabelling poverty as "a great inner glow" means to reframe a life in hardship as an asset—a proposition which has earned Rilke the accusation of glorifying and romanticising people's misery (Braungart, "Das Stunden-Buch" 224-26). Harry Meisel, "verrufen" and "fortgeworfen" ("infamous"; "cast out," 93) in the city of Paris like the poor in Rilke's *Stunden-Buch*, dies cruelly at a young age, while his writing outlives him. In his posthumous success, the poor and marginalised Meisel, blessed with an artistic talent that no money could buy, fulfils the message of Rilke's *Stunden-Buch*: "Sie werden dauern über jedes Ende / und über Reiche, deren Sinn verrinnt, / und werden sich wie ausgeruhte Hände / erheben, wenn die Hände aller Stände / und aller Völker müde sind" ("They will persist further than any end, / outlive the rich, whose meaning seeps away, / and at last raise themselves like rested hands / when those of other lands, / peoples and classes weary," translated by Susan Ronson, 188-9).

That Harry Meisel indeed "persist[s] further than any end" and "outlive[s] the rich" is due to his artistic genius, which he develops and performs when living in exile. His writing encourages Raoul de Chassefierre—the son of a prominent Nazi propagandist—to follow his example and become a writer. Despite all his efforts, Raoul must confess that he—the rich, privileged, careerist Nazi sympathiser—will never be as good as the penniless refugee. Accordingly, despite all the misery that surrounded him, the outcast Harry Meisel maintains that "great inner glow" mentioned in Rilke's poem.

The intertextual reference to Rilke's verse enriches the figure of the exiled writer, demonstrating how Harry Meisel has something that Raoul de Chassefierre desperately desires but will never possess: the realignment of the concept of "Exil als produktive Erfahrung" ("exile as productive experience")—a concept which has been researched predominantly by Doerte Bischoff (105). This same notion is addressed by Feuchtwanger himself in his essay "Der Schriftsteller im Exil":

Denn wenn das Exil zerreibt, wenn es klein und elend macht, so härtet es auch und macht groß. Es strömt dem Schriftsteller eine ungeheure Fülle neuen Stoffes und neuer Ideen zu, er ist einer Fülle von Gesichtern [sic] gegenübergestellt, die ihm in der Heimat nie begegnet wären. (537)

Although being in exile may be crushing, although it makes one small and miserable, it also strengthens and makes bold. The writer is flooded with an enormous wealth of new material and new ideas, confronted with a plethora of new experiences which would not have been encountered at home.

It is as astonishing as it is revealing that both Feuchtwanger and Khider refer explicitly to the two central writings of Rilke's early period: Feuchtwanger embeds an intertext from *Das Stunden-Buch* and Khider includes an intertext from *Cornet*. These intertextual references establish the refugees' agency and their position as anti-victims, since both succeed in channelling their experiences—libidinous or traumatic—into artistic productivity.

Quoting Benn: Writing as self-determination

Before the intradiegetic narration of Khider's *Der falsche Inder* delves into the development of Rasul Hamid as a writer and the eightfold narration of his flight from Iraq to Germany, the intradiegetic frame is introduced by a peritext, namely, a quotation from Gottfried Benn (1886-1956): "Es gibt nur zwei Dinge: die Leere und das gezeichnete Ich" ("Two things remain: the emptiness and your accursed self [literally: the marked/branded or painted/constructed self]," 11). These are the final two lines of Benn's poem "Nur zwei Dinge." The quotation is placed in a prominent position within the body of the novel as it marks the threshold between the brief extradiegetic narration and the much longer intradiegetic narration which features Rasul Hamid, in other words, the novel's main plot. It can be argued that the quotation serves as a motto because Rasul Hamid only exists as a "gezeichnete[s] Ich": a literary invention the reader comes to know only through memoirs.

In her interpretation of Benn's poem, Friederike Reents emphasizes that the adjective *gezeichnet* may not only signify 'drawn' and 'marked' but also "'ausgezeichnet' im Sinne von 'erwählt.'" ("*ausgezeichnet* in the sense of 'select' or 'chosen,' 76). Reents explains:

Der Künstler aber ist der Erwählte: Als Kunstschaffender unterscheidet er sich vom Normalbürger nicht nur durch seine besonders tief gehende Leidensfähigkeit; auch wenn ihn sein Sonderstatus nicht vor dem Tod schützt [...], ist nur er befähigt, der Nachwelt quasi-testamentarisch etwas Bleibendes im Sinne Hölderlins zu stiften. ("Was aber bleibt, stiften die Dichter"). (77)

But the artists are the chosen ones: As artistic creators they distinguish themselves from the normal citizen not merely through their deep capacity for suffering (also when this unique status does not shield them from death) [...], but they are also called upon to endow the afterworld, à la Hölderlin, with a quasi-testament of something which remains. ("Poets endows that which remains").

Through artistic production—the process of 'drawing' his own self by writing his own story—the writer Rasul Hamid is 'chosen' to leave an impact on the world and the reader, a notion which may also be indicated in the name Rasul, the Arabic term for 'messenger' (Müller 6).

The notion of being simultaneously *gezeichnet* and *ausgezeichnet* is also thematised in *Exil*, in Harry Meisel's literary legacy, as mentioned above. The quotation from Benn's poem can therefore be read as an affirmation of the Rilke intertexts *Cornet* and *Stunden-Buch* as it further strengthens the idea of ingenuity, increased

inventiveness, and creative productivity, which is embedded in the Rilke quotations in both *Der falsche Inder* and *Exil*.

In *Exil*, another poem by Benn is referenced, namely, “Das späte Ich”, from which Harry Meisel quotes: “O Seele, um und um verweste, / Kaum lebst du noch und noch zuviel” (“Oh soul, utterly decayed, / hardly alive and yet too much,” 410). According to Edith A. Runge, Benn’s poems “Nur zwei Dinge” and “Das späte Ich” are connected as both express Benn’s nihilistic tendency (162). This nihilism also shines through in Harry Meisel’s use of this quotation to express his rejection of Europe and to justify his relocation to the USA: “ich erwarte, daß Amerika völlig entseelt ist. Ich finde das besser als dieses Europa, in dem noch ein Rest von Seele lebt” (“I expect America to be entirely soulless. I find that better than Europe, where there is still a rest of soul alive,” 410).

Although Harry Meisel addresses the dissolution of the European continent, the quotation may also be understood with regard to the dissolution of the self, particularly Harry Meisel’s own self. This interpretation is further supported by the reference to Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 66” (1609), from which Meisel draws artistic inspiration. The German translation of “Sonnet 66” forms the peritext to *Exil*’s second book; its first and last lines read: “Müd alles des, schrei ich nach Ruh im Tod” (“Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,” 275). This second book also contains the chapter which narrates Harry Meisel’s death; it is entitled “Sonett 66.”

This notion of *dissolution* of the self which is expressed both in “Das späte Ich” and “Sonnet 66,” is the opposite of Khider’s use of the Benn quotation in *Der falsche Inder*, which expresses the *construction* of the self through writing. In *Der falsche Inder*, the exiled writer Rasul Hamid only comes into existence for the reader through his writing; in *Exil* Harry Meisel’s writing becomes his death warrant. As Reents put it, the writer is especially capable of suffering, but his writing does not make him immune to death—it can only preserve his legacy. Harry Meisel’s fate may therefore be described as that of a tragic genius: he is invited to America only because of his artistic talent and his approaching departure for the US is the reason why he spends the night celebrating in the dubious Parisian establishment where he is killed (412-15). Although Harry Meisel’s death seems to confirm the young man’s nihilism—a mindset that also shines through in Benn’s oeuvre—Meisel’s friend Oskar Tschernigg interprets the passing of his companion as a self-determined act of liberation:

Harry Meisel hat sich [...] aus dieser Welt des Gemeinen herausgesehnt, er hat weiter gehen wollen als nach Amerika, er hat sich nach dem Untergang gesehnt. “Müd alles des, schrei ich nach Ruh im Tod.” Es war sein eigener Wunsch, umzukommen, er hat sich selber zerstört, und er hat recht getan, in dieser entseelten Welt nicht weiterzuleben. (415)

Harry Meisel longed to leave the mean and common world, he wanted to go further than America, he longed for [his own] demise. “Tired with all these, for restful death I cry.” It was his own wish to die, he destroyed himself, he was right not to live on in this soulless world.

Oskar Tschernigg’s interpretation of Harry’s death as an emancipatory act that he causes himself through his knowingly negligent behaviour supports the idea of the writer’s ultimate self-determination (Milling 295). In *Exil*, writing therefore increases Harry Meisel’s agency as an act of liberation, although this eventually leads to his own death. The connection to Khider’s Rasul Hamid is evident in that both characters use

writing as a response to the outside world as well as a tool for self-determination that preserves them for posterity. Dead or alive, these figural writers' textual output remains.

Quoting Homer: Hope and resistance

There are numerous other allusions to fellow exiled writers from the twentieth century to be found throughout the body of *Exil*, including allusions to Thomas Mann (45) and Bertolt Brecht (211). Such references to classical exile literature can also be found in Khider's wider oeuvre, which emphasises its transhistoricity:

Gerade das Beispiel Khiders zeigt [...], inwiefern das historische Exil auch als Vorgeschichte gegenwärtiger Entortungserfahrungen lesbar gemacht werden kann. So verweisen die Texte des [...] Autors immer wieder unmittelbar zurück auf das literarische Exil 1933-1945 und seine Auseinandersetzungen mit Fragen nach Heimat, Zugehörigkeit und Sprache. (Dickow and Narloch 2)

Khider's example in particular demonstrates [...] the extent to which historical exile is made explicit as the prehistory of contemporary experiences of delocalisation. These texts of the [...] author continually make direct reference to the literary exile of 1933-1945 and its negotiations with questions of homeland, belonging, and language.

While Khider draws on earlier writings—texts from the first half of the twentieth century—to compare the situation of his refugee characters at the end of the twentieth century, Feuchtwanger refers to earlier exiles as well, to shed light on the situation of German refugees in the 1930s. As Paul Michael Lützeler writes: “In Lion Feuchtwangers Roman *Exil* leidet die Hauptfigur – der Komponist Sepp Trautwein, der nach Paris ausgewichen ist – ähnlich wie das Ich in Ovids Lyrik” (“In Lion Feuchtwanger's novel, *Exil*, the protagonist, composer Sepp Trautwein, who has escaped to Paris, suffers similarly to Ovid's lyrical I,” 13).

Anne Benteler and Sandra Narloch offer a plausible explanation for this phenomenon of references between exiled writers, which adds another perspective to Khider's previously discussed alleged intentions of a transnational and transcultural literary agenda and emphasizes a forward-looking approach: “Das wiederholte Ins-Gedächtnis-Rufen der bereits zuvor vertriebenen Dichter und ihrer Werke dient [...] der Selbstvergewisserung, dass das je eigene Exil überwunden werden kann” (“The repeated calling-to-memory of prior exiled poets and their works serves [...] to assure that one's own exile can be overcome,” 2). Benteler and Narloch add that these references serve as a re-evaluation of the figure of the exile and as an attempt to overcome the feeling of isolation through the establishment of new forms of belonging (2). Khider himself has expressed this sense of community in an interview: “Ich hatte immer den Eindruck, wenn ich zum Beispiel Stefan Zweig lese, [...] dann weiß ich, was nach dem nächsten Absatz kommt. Ich kann mir ganz genau vorstellen, wie er sich gefühlt hat. Es ist unglaublich, es ist mir so vieles so nah” (“I always had the impression when I—for example—read Stefan Zweig [...] that I know precisely what will come in the next paragraph. I can imagine so exactly how he felt. The proximity is incredible,” “Ich bin ein Schönheits-Sammler” 14). Benteler and Narloch sum this up as follows: “Gezielt bemühen sich die Exilierten [...] um Anschluss an Autoritäten, die andere sind als die politisch Mächtigen und damit nicht für die ab- und ausgrenzende Gewalt bestehender Machtsysteme, sondern im Gegenteil für das Überschreiten von Grenzen stehen” (“Those in exile make a targeted effort to align themselves with authorities who

differ from those in political power—and so do not stand for the delimiting and exclusionary violence of existing power structures—but on the contrary represent the transcendence of borders,” 2). Benteler and Narloch’s analysis thereby stresses that intertextual references can also symbolise hope. Similarities between one’s own situation and that of earlier exiles are acknowledged and interpreted as a shared bond, forming a community of fate. Through intertextuality, different exiles become connected. In *Der falsche Inder*, this idea of hope is made manifest at the very beginning of the book through its dedication: “Für die, die eine Sekunde vor dem Tod noch von zwei Flügeln träumen” (“For those who still dream of wings a second before death,” 5).

The concept of growing wings to escape from death forms a mythological trope which became known as the myth of the Flying Africans: “First named in *Drums and Shadows*, the Flying Africans specifically refers to African born slaves flying from slavery in the Americas” (Smith Storey).⁴ In some versions of the myth, the slaves can fly away when they speak in their native African tongue, thus language becomes “a form of power that can successfully oppose the resources of the Overseer” (ibid.). Because re-acquiring the original language enables this escape, Katherine Thorsteinson argues that “the myth became a way of memorializing the past in order to look with shared hope for freedom in the future” (261). The future becomes linked to the past, in a similar manner to the ways in which contemporary narrations of exile are linked to historical forms of expulsion.

In her analysis of the myth of the Flying Africans, Lorna McDaniel stresses the universality of its theme by referring to the poem “O Daedalus, fly away home” (1966) by the Black poet Robert Hayden:

Hayden employs European mythology in “O Daedalus, fly away home” to express the universality of homeland longing. In Greek mythology, Daedalus with his son, Icarus, both fixed with wings, escaped prison through flight; but Icarus rode too close to the sun, causing his feathers to fall and [...] the gift of flight was recalled from Icarus.

Certainly, the vision of flight is a universal quest and the ideas discussed here are not exclusive to Black mythology and thought; we find identical themes and imageries in biblical references, in hymn language and in European folklore. (36)

The dedication at the beginning of *Der falsche Inder* may therefore not be a reference exclusively to the Flying Africans, but also to Greek mythology. This reading finds support when looking closely at the end of the novel, where another reference to an Ancient Greek intertext is made, and where Rasul Hamid reflects on his development as a writer: “Schon lange hegte ich den Wunsch, meine Fahrt auf dem Geisterschiff, meine Odyssee niederzuschreiben” (“For a long time I’ve wished to write about my journey on the ghost ship, my odyssey,” 154). Barthold interprets this reference to Homer’s *Odyssey* as follows:

Der Verweis auf Homers *Odyssee* als Prototyp der abendländischen Erzählung von mit (unfreiwilligen) Reisen verbundenen Strapazen verortet die Fluchterzählung nicht nur in der Tradition kanonisierter Literatur, er markiert diese auch als wertvollen Träger erzählenswerter “Erfahrung.” (76)

⁴ *Drums and Shadows* is a collection of African American folklore tales published by Mary Granger in 1940.

The reference to Homer's *Odyssey* as prototype for Western narratives of hardship born of (forced) travel locates the refugee narrative not only in the tradition of canonised literature, it also marks this as the worthwhile vessel for an "experience" worth narrating.

At this point, the parallels between Khider's *Der falsche Inder* and Feuchtwanger's *Exil* become apparent once more, as *Exil*, too, contains references to Homer's *Odyssey*, specifically to its hero Odysseus (Ulysses). Odysseus is referenced prominently in the second book of *Exil* in an attempt by the German professor Ringseis to comfort the migrant community, which has gathered for a communal dinner: "ein richtiges Berliner Abendessen aus der guten Zeit der Republik. Berlin, die gute Zeit der Republik, das war es offenbar auch, was die meisten hier suchten, sie tauchten mit Freunden unter im Gefühl des Damals" ("a real Berlin dinner like in the good times of the Republic. Berlin, the good times of the Republic—apparently this was, what most of them were looking for here, too. With their friends, they immersed in the feeling of those days," 283). After the dinner, a Nazi radio programme interrupts the nostalgic mood, leading professor Ringseis to say: "Die Freier [...] sind über das Haus des Odysseus hergefallen und verprassen sein Gut und vergewaltigen seine Leute. Aber Penelope webt und ist schlau, und die Freier kriegen sie nicht, und sie wartet, und Odysseus wird zurückkehren. Eleusetai" ("The suitors [...] invaded Odysseus' home, squandered his goods, and raped his people. But Penelope weaves and is wise, and the suitors do not get hold of her, and she keeps waiting, and Odysseus will return. Eleusetai," 288). 'Eleusetai' is a Greek exclamation meaning "er wird kommen" ("he will come," Pröll 47). In *Exil*, it is an expression of confidence that democratic forces will eventually beat fascism, or, as Fiona Pröll argues, that exile can be overcome (48)—a sentiment similar to the hope of overcoming slavery expressed in the Flying Africans myth. Ringseis' incentive for comparing the present exile with Odysseus' odyssey is to spread hope: the righteous cause will triumph in the same way that Odysseus overpowered his enemies. The message is clear: just as Odysseus returns home to Penelope, so, too, will the German refugees return to Berlin.

As in the myth of the Flying Africans, who escape death by reviving their mother tongue, language plays a significant role in Odysseus' victory over his enemies. In one episode of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus triumphs over the physically stronger Polyphemus—a cyclops—through a linguistic trick. When Odysseus is asked for his name by the cyclops, he alters it slightly, so that it sounds like 'outis' [no man]. Accordingly, after being harmed by Odysseus, the cyclops cries that it has been hurt by "no man." This misunderstanding prevents the other cyclops from helping Polyphemus, with the result that Odysseus and his fellow travellers can flee (Homer 74-75).

This completes the circle: explicitly referring to Homer's *Odyssey* in *Exil* and *Der falsche Inder* serves both to emphasise the transhistorical and transcultural dimension of experiences of flight and exile as well as to spread hope that one's current misery can be overcome, potentially through language. This aligns with the dedication at the beginning of *Der falsche Inder*, "Für die, die eine Sekunde vor dem Tod noch von zwei Flügeln träumen," as this dedication stresses the power of artistic creativity as a means of enhancing one's agency: either through the use of (magic) words in the case of the Flying Africans or by using an ingenious mind to build wings to fly in the case of Daedalus.

It should also be mentioned that Odysseus—like the Flying Africans, Daedalus, Khider's Rasul Hamid, and Feuchtwanger's Harry Meisel—remains yet another

example of a traveller longing for freedom and/or return. Susanne Gösde has gone so far as to describe him as follows:

Odysseus ist in der antiken Tradition der Überlebende und der Heimkehrer schlechthin. Seine Fähigkeit zu leiden und zu dulden, aber auch Widerstände mit List zu überwinden, Abenteuer zu bestehen und zu überstehen und schließlich zurückzukehren in seine Heimat, zu Frau und Sohn, ist gewissermaßen die Signatur dieser Figur. (164)

In antiquity, Odysseus is the paragon of the survivor and repatriate. His capacity for suffering and patience, but also his ability to overcome resistance through cunning, to survive adventures, to persist, and finally return to his homeland—to his wife and son—is virtually the signature of this figure.

Like Daedalus, the Flying Africans, Rasul Hamid and Harry Meisel, Odysseus is a world-traveller. For each of them, their use of words becomes the decisive means for reshaping their destiny. In the myth of the Flying Africans, mastering the native language enables the growth of wings to fly; in the myth of Daedalus, the ingenious mind enables the escape; in the myth of Odysseus, a linguistic trick enables him to overpower the physically stronger Polyphemus. All these intertexts utilise art, particularly (poetic) language, as a means of resistance for those who are oppressed.

These mythological intertexts feed into the prior discussions of intertexts by Rilke and Benn. The Rilke intertexts indicate that (sexual) potency can be the subject of sublimation by converting it into artistic productivity, and that creative potential works in favour of those who are otherwise targets of discrimination. Additionally, the Benn intertexts reveal writing to be an act of self-determination and liberation—whether in the form of constructing or dissolving one’s self, while preserving it for posterity. Finally, the mythological intertexts indicate that where is language, there is hope, and that language can be used by the otherwise defenceless to fight back.

Conclusion

This examination demonstrates how a comparative application of Genette’s theory of transtextuality can be a fruitful methodology to analyse the effects achieved in two stylistically, narratively and thematically distinct texts. Such an endeavour does not entail distorting the reality of any specific narration, but demonstrates, instead, what these “touching tales” have in common: an intertextuality used for both creating new layers of meaning, forms and connections, as well as characterizing the figure of the exiled writer as one who uses his writing to channel his creative energy, to rule over himself, and to remain hopeful and resistant.

When Carolin Müller concludes in regard to Khider’s *Der falsche Inder* that “Rasul and his helpers are alienated beings, but they have agency,” and that “[w]hat the reader is left with is a picture of ‘threshold people’ not as helpless beings, but instead as risk-takers and agents who try to withstand chaos” (18), it needs to be added that they are also decision-makers, and that this observation equally applies to Feuchtwanger’s Harry Meisel. Through their writing, Khider’s and Feuchtwanger’s figures of exiled writers channel both libidinous potency and artistic potential; they rule over themselves in either life or death; and they use language in order not to give up, connecting them with a community of fellow world-travellers from different eras and continents.

It is both remarkable and revealing that these two distinctive narrations of flight and exile draw upon the same canon of intertexts to stimulate these interpretations. The intertexts are put into different contexts and forms, allowing them to travel. Examining ‘exile literature’ and ‘migrant literature’ in connection and comparison to each other and with reference to their shared intertexts thus illuminates their shared inheritance as well as elaborates on the specific application of these earlier texts in different contexts. The decisive incentive for such a comparative reading is that both these texts thematize, portray, and negotiate exile (by drawing on similar intertexts), rather than simply index their respective authors’ biographies. Reading Khider’s and Feuchtwanger’s novels comparatively can (and indeed should) give incentive to rethink overly simplistic labels such as ‘exile’ and ‘migrant literature’ and may stimulate a discussion around a terminology which allows scholars and critics alike to refer to these texts in a precise and meaningful way without reducing them to their autobiographical content or historical context.

A detailed engagement with the specific intertexts has been shown to add to the existing body of research as it demonstrates the complex textual intertwining beyond rather superficial conclusions. If Khider’s use of transtextuality were primarily motivated by a transhistorical, transcultural agenda, he could have made this more explicit by quoting ‘classical’ German-language exile writers. If Feuchtwanger used transtextuality primarily to signify the influence other writers have had on him and his ideological agreement with them, the reader would not expect an author of ‘inner exile’ being referenced in his text. Instead, Feuchtwanger and Khider refer to the same authors and similar intertexts to characterise the figure of the exiled writer. This figure—a young male refugee, equipped with agency and artistic productivity—has been demonstrated to emerge with astonishing similarities in these two vastly distinct novels.

In the introduction, I argued that intertextuality enables an earlier text to ‘travel’ into different contexts, to persist over time, and to act as a bridge between two or more texts. As it turns out, the figure of the exiled writer encompasses these qualities, too. As he emerges through intertextuality and in great similarity in these two novels of so-called ‘exile literature’ and ‘migrant literature,’ the figure of the exiled writer binds these texts and their respective contexts together, thereby contributing to the transcendence of genre-specific borders, which stimulates new interpretations and contributes to the reassessment of genre classifications and conceptions of national literatures.

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