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Roca Lizarazu, Maria

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"Integration Ist Definitiv Nicht Unser Anliegen, Eher Schon Desintegration". Postmigrant Renegotiations of Identity and Belonging in Contemporary Germany

Maria Roca Lizarazu

Department of Modern Languages, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK;
M.RocaLizarazu@bham.ac.uk

Abstract: This article examines the notion of "Desintegration" (de-integration), as introduced by German Jewish authors Max Czollek and Sasha Marianna Salzmann, against the backdrop of ongoing re-negotiations of identity, belonging, and "Heimat" (sense of home) in contemporary Germany. While many artistic contributions to the debates around "Desintegration" have come from the realm of performance art, I will pay special attention to Salzmann's prize-winning novel *Außer Sich* (*Beyond Myself*) (2017), as a literary approximation of the "Desintegration" paradigm, which showcases what I call a "non-authoritative" poetics of non-belonging. I will conclude by showing that the notion of "Desintegration" and its connection to a broader "postmigrant" trajectory enable novel perspectives on three of the central issues discussed in this article: the current location of German Jewish literature and culture; contemporary German-language contestations of "Heimat" and belonging; and the relationship between art and politics.

Keywords: German Jewish; integration; Desintegration; postmigrant; belonging; identity; minority; contemporary German literature and culture

1. Questioning the Integration Paradigm

The title of this article refers to a 2011 interview with Shermin Langhoff (Donath 2011), the then director of the Ballhaus Naunynstraße, who took charge of the Maxim Gorki Theater in 2012. Langhoff outlines the artistic and political trajectory of the Ballhaus, which became known for its "postmigrant" questioning of the labels attributed to so-called "migrant" artists and their contributions, as well as for its "active work on the diversity of the German theatrical landscape" (Stewart 2017, p. 56; on postmigrant theater, see also Sharifi 2018; on postmigrant art more broadly, see Schramm et al. 2019). For Langhoff, this work also includes scrutinizing, and even rejecting, well-established and powerful concepts or terms such as multiculturalism or integration.

Langhoff's stance is deliberately provocative given that "Integration" is still one of the magic words in contemporary German (but also European) debates around migration. It has risen to renewed prominence in the wake of the so-called "refugee crisis", during which Germany gave refuge to roughly one million displaced people, mostly from Syria and North Africa. Debates over how to best integrate these newcomers and whether or not they are integrable in the first place have dominated public discourse since. The website of the recently re-named Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat (BMI) hence identifies "(d)ie Integration der auf Dauer und rechtmäßig in Deutschland lebenden Zuwanderinnen und Zuwanderer [. . .] [als] eine der wichtigsten innenpolitischen Aufgaben" (the integration of those who have migrated to Germany permanently and lawfully as one of the

prime tasks of internal politics, bmi.bund.de).[1] The task of integration is presented in terms of a clear quid pro quo; the German state pledges to grant certain "Rechte" (rights), whilst those who are asked to integrate should meet certain "Pflichten" (obligations), which include learning the German language, acquiring basic historical and political knowledge, and abiding by the law (bmi.bund.de). The BMI website also emphasizes that integration concerns "uns alle—Alteingessessene ebenso wie Zugewanderte" (all of us—natives as well as non-natives). It is not supposed to be a one-way process that expects migrants to do all the work and adapt seamlessly; it should also involve the so-called "host society".

While for many years the centrality and necessity of "Integrationspolitik" (the political program of integration) has gone unquestioned in German discourse, recent times have seen the emergence of a critical counter-discourse; mostly in cultural studies and the arts (for an early manifestation of this, see Hess et al. 2009). The journalist, psychologist, and migration researcher Mark Terkessidis, for example, criticizes the "normativ orientierte Defizitmodell von Integration" (the normative deficit model of integration, Terkessidis 2017, p. 30), which assumes a binary division between us/natives vs. them/migrants, while also presupposing cultural homogeneity as the German norm, into which migrants should strive to fit. While this logic perceives migrants as lacking or deficient and in need of corrective and compensatory measures (Terkessidis 2017, p. 30), the so-called "host society" does not need to adjust, as it already represents the norm. The host society also has the last say in whether or not migrants are sufficiently integrated, thus deciding who does and does not legitimately belong to German society. The binary "us vs. them" logic is certainly central to the BMI website, which differentiates between "Alteingessessene" and "Zuwanderer". In addition, even though the ministry claims that integration is a task that involves "all of us", Terkessidis and others would claim that owing to its binarisms, normativity, and inherent power asymmetry, the integration paradigm necessarily and structurally precludes a more diverse and inclusive approach.

While Terkessidis suggests a new terminology—"Interkultur" rather than integration (Terkessidis 2010)—and a shift in perspective toward so-called "Vielheitspläne" (diversity plans, Terkessidis 2017, p. 42ff.) as possible solutions, others go even further by renouncing their allegiance to the integration paradigm and by opting for "Desintegration" (de-integration). One of the most visible proponents of this concept is the German Jewish author Mac Czollek, who for a number of years has been developing the notion and program of "Desintegration" across various artistic platforms (including articles, essays, poetry, and performance) and in collaboration with a range of members and institutions of the (Berlin) cultural sector. The immediate fruits of this labor are the "Desintegrationskongress" (De-integration Congress) in 2016 and the "Radikale Jüdische Kulturtage" (Radical Jewish Days of Culture) in 2017, which Czollek organized in cooperation with the author and Gorki-based playwright Sasha Marianna Salzmann; a themed issue of the Jewish journal *Jalta* dedicated to "Desintegration"; and most recently, a book-length polemic titled *Desintegriert euch! (De-Integrate Yourselves!)* (Czollek 2018).[2] In the following, I will examine more closely what the concept of "Desintegration" entails and how it relates and adds to renegotiations of identity and (non-)belonging in present-day Germany. I will then read Sasha Marianna Salzmann's recent novel *Außer Sich* (translated into English as *Beyond Myself*) (2017) in light of the de-integration paradigm, thus probing the specific contribution of literature to the recent artistic and political debates around "(Des-)integration". Advocates of "Desintegration", such as Max Czollek, have argued that it needs to be seen as part of a larger "postmigrant" project (*DE!*, p. 133). I will conclude by illustrating how the many overlaps between these two projects call for a revaluation of three of the central issues discussed here: the current location of German Jewish literature, contemporary German-language contestations of "Heimat" and belonging, and the relationship between art and politics.

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[1]   Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.
[2]   Henceforth cited in the text as *DE!*.

2. "Transzendieren", "Kanakisieren", "Verqueeren"—The Work of "Desintegration"

Czollek's book is primarily dedicated to a critical analysis of postwar German Jewish relations, which he, borrowing from the sociologist Y. Michal Bodemann, describes as a form of "Gedächtnistheater" (theater of memory, *DE!*, p. 19ff.). As the term theater implies, Bodemann's and Czollek's thoughts are concerned with questions of performance, i.e., the roles that certain groups of people play/are forced to play in a societal setting. In the case of Germans and Jews, Czollek argues that the Jewish position after 1945 has been defined and limited by a German desire for normalization and "Erlösung" (redemption) (*DE!*, p. 21) from the clutches of perpetrator guilt. Jews living in Germany are therefore continually forced to somehow affirm and stabilize the German nation's "Selbstbild" (image of itself, *DE!*, p. 23) as a country that has successfully dealt with the Nazi past and redeemed itself. This happens most visibly in a number of public memory rituals, in which Germans atone for their crimes and Jews are required to attend, so as to legitimate and sanction this process. These rituals turn the Jewish population into mere extras on the stage of the German "Gedächtnistheater", a position that severely limits its potential for expression and agency. If Jews accept the part that they have been assigned, they will be rewarded with not only cultural and social but also material recognition. Such a set-up does not, and structurally cannot, reflect the actual plurality of Jewish life in Germany, as it necessarily reduces Jews to a particular role that is dictated by German desires and needs.

For Czollek, the German Jewish "Gedächtnistheater" is underpinned by a logic that also affects other minority groups. This logic defines the position and role of minority subjects from the vantage point of a "German" center, whose structural significance is never made explicit and which is imagined as ethnically and culturally homogenous, i.e., white and Christian, as has also been noted by Fatima El-Tayeb (El-Tayeb 2016). This leads to a situation in which these subjects can only ever conceive of themselves in relation to this center and in which their agency is limited to, in some shape or form, stabilizing this center. For example, in the "Integrationstheater" (theater of integration, *DE!*, p. 63), they are either "good" migrants who assimilate, thus attesting to the superiority of supposedly German values, or "bad" migrants who serve as the Other and who still affirm the boundaries and existence of the norm. Even populations with no direct experience of migration, such as second- or third-generation descendants of former migrant families who were born in Germany, get caught up in this logic; according to El-Tayeb, they are perpetually "migrantisiert" (migrantized) and rassifiziert"(racified) because they are perceived to deviate from the white and Christian norm (El-Tayeb 2016). She demonstrated how this dynamic produces a compulsive and "ewige [. . .] Wiederholung des Neuankommens" (eternal repetition of the moment of arrival, El-Tayeb 2016, p. 8) for these subjects, which probably finds its most palpable expression in the repeated question: "where are you from?"

According to Czollek, the integration paradigm is not the solution to but a key part of this problem, as it is premised on the logic of the societal center and a "verinnerlichtes Ideal der Homogenität" (internalized ideal of homogeneity, Czollek 2019, p. 173). He echoes Terkessidis when he criticizes the inherent binarism and power asymmetry attached to the integration paradigm:

> Integrationsparadigma bedeutet, dass ein bestimmter Teil der Gesellschaft entscheidet, wer ab welchem Zeitpunkt Deutscher ist und wer Ausländer_in bleibt. Und es bedarf der Vorstellung eines dominanten gesellschaftlichen Zentrums, sonst ergäbe die Aufforderung zur Integration keinen Sinn (ibid.).

> (The integration paradigm implies that a certain part of society gets to decide who can become German and when, and who has to remain a foreigner. This process presumes the idea of a dominant societal center, otherwise the demand for integration would make no sense.)

In his short essay "Gegenwartsbewältigung" (overcoming the present),[3] Czollek emphasizes that there are differences between the two theaters and hence between the roles that Jews and migrants play/are forced to play in German discourse (Czollek 2019, p. 170). At the same time, these groups are united in their exposure to a "Dominanzkultur" (hegemonic culture) (*DE!*, p. 44) whose ideal of homogeneity inevitably produces exclusion and othering. In this context, Czollek develops his idea and practice of "Desintegration", which is not merely the opposite of integration but a strategy that, by revealing the dominant thought patterns, strives for transformation from within to affect structural change:

> Wenn ich Ihnen, verehrte Leser*innen, 'Desintegriert Euch!' zurufe, dann geht es um mehr als eine jüdische Emanzipation aus einer allzu engen Rollenerwartung. Es geht um die grundlegende Reflexion des Verhältnisses zwischen deutscher Dominanzkultur und ihren Minderheiten. Desintegration bedeutet, die Rollen kritisch zu reflektieren, die jede und jeder in diesem Spiel einnimmt (*DE!*, p. 45).

> (When I am calling on you, dear readers, to 'de-integrate yourselves', then I am asking for more than a Jewish emancipation from the strait jacket of role expectations. De-integration is about a fundamental reflection of the relationship between the German hegemonic culture and its minorities. De-integration is about reflecting critically on the roles that each and every one of us is playing in this game).

"Desintegration" is thus an attempt to enable Jewish emancipation and self-determination, to explore Jewish identity "außerhalb eines deutschen Begehrens nach jüdischen Opfern" (beyond a German desire for Jewish victims), as stated in the program to the 2016 "Desintegrationskongress" (Czollek and Salzmann 2017a). This process entails a revitalization and invention of alternative notions and traditions of Jewishness, which may include "negative" sentiments, such as rage and revenge, thereby countering the role of the passive Jewish victim. The problem with this approach, however, is that it ultimately does not escape the entrapments of identity politics, as replacing one set of labels with an alternative and supposedly more self-determined version is still reductive and leaves binary thinking intact. Czollek and Salzmann are aware of this when they stress that the Jewish "we" explored during the "Desintegrationskongress" is an "artifiziell(e) und strategisch(e)" (artificial and strategic) position (Czollek and Salzmann 2017b, p. 14), which, in the sense of Gayatri Spivak's "strategic essentialism" (Danius et al. 1993, p. 34ff.), allows for some form of representation and mobilization, which, however, is not the end goal. "Desintegration" aims at a more fundamental transformation of our very ways of thinking and, ideally, a transcendence of categories such as identity and belonging. It is then no longer a Jewish and/or migrant project but, rather, an exercise that truly involves "uns alle".

The cultural program of "Desintegration" can thus be contextualized within the broader field of postcolonial and queer approaches to questions of identity, minority, and representation. Many of these interventions are concerned with making visible the existence and (re)construction of normative, homogenizing, and exclusionary patterns, whilst also exploring the role of difference in generating and stabilizing what is perceived as the norm. In a similar manner to the work of "Desintegration", many postcolonial and queer theorists set out to then trouble these norms, with the aim of making space for more ambivalent, fluid, and heterogeneous notions of attachment, belonging, and identity. It is therefore not surprising that the work of "Desintegration" is repeatedly linked to "verqueeren" (queering) (Czollek and Salzmann 2017b, p. 10), while also being described as "(d)ie Kanakisierung der Gesellschaft bis in die feinsten Verästelungen hinein" (the kanakization of society that affects even its most delicate branches, Perinelli 2017, p. 50).[4] Framed in such a way, "Desintegration" appears as a

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[3]　This essay has recently been translated into English by Jon Cho-Polizzi, and I will use this translation from now on, see (Czollek 2020).

[4]　The word "Kanake" originated as a derogatory term in the German context for people who were perceived as foreigners, often with a Southern European, Turkish, or Arab background. In a similar vein to the term "queer", however, the word

variant of what queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz has described as "disidentification" (Muñoz 1999). Concerned with how "minority subjects" can position themselves toward and survive within a norm that questions their very right to exist, Muñoz outlines his idea of "disidentification", which, in a similar manner to "Desintegration", describes a third way between either conforming to or rebelling against the dominant culture:

> Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure, nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. Instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free from its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism), this 'working on and against' is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local and everyday struggles of resistance." (Muñoz 1999, p. 11f.).

Participating in the "Gedächtnis-" or "Integrationstheater" can be seen as form of assimilation and identification—this compliance may well be rewarded temporarily, but, as Czollek and El-Tayeb argue, the minority subject will never be assimilated enough and thus will be constantly forced to reaffirm its willingness to participate. Turning the expectations and stereotypes on their head, i.e., not being a forgiving but an angry Jew or being a "bad" migrant, is a form of counteridentification. However, such a behavior still perpetuates the dominant ideology, because becoming Other to the norm still affirms the existence of the norm. "Working on and against" this mechanism, via disidentification or "Desintegration", means to, first of all, become aware of these dynamics and realize that transcendence is not (yet) possible. It implies an awareness of the totalizing tendency of the very categories with which we operate, such as identity and belonging, which is why a new set of terms and novel ways of thinking are required. Disidentification/"Desintegration" are thus "interregnum" projects, to quote Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1971, p. 276; on the "interregnum", see also Bauman 2012), in the sense that they are trying to describe a world that does not yet exist.[5] They are thus provisional in nature and focused on the emergent, which makes them future-oriented. In their espousal of a not-yet realized but entirely possible alternative world, both projects have a utopian edge: "(D)isidentificatory performance offers a utopian blueprint for a possible future while, at the same time, staging a new political formation in the present" (Muñoz 1999, p. 200). In the case of "Desintegration", this utopia is described as "radikale Vielfalt" (radical diversity, Czollek 2019, p. 181), for which "Desintegration" serves as a "Scharnier" (hinge, Czollek et al. 2017a, p. 6). "Radikale Vielfalt" entails not only the recognition of the existing complexity and diversity of Jewish and other minority identities, but a more general acknowledgement of the fact that we all are composed of multiple and shifting aspects and attachments and that we all simultaneously belong and do not belong.[6] No single label can thus ever adequately describe the "innere [. . .] Fragmentierung [. . .], die jeden einzelnen Menschen ausmacht" (the inner fragmentation [. . .] that defines every human being, *DE!*, p. 192). Any claims about belonging and identity need to be provisional and accompanied by a reflection of their own fallibility. Against the entrenched binary of us vs. them, "Desintegration" furthermore promotes the

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5   has since been re-appropriated. One example of this is a loose association of individuals that was active in the late 1990s in Germany under the name "Kanak Attack". In their 1998 manifesto, "Kanak Attack" made many points that are similar to Czollek's program of "Desintegration", and Czollek also mentions them as an inspiration in his book, see https://www.kanak-attak.de/ka/about/manif_deu.html.

5   I am referring to Gramsci's famous quote from the *Prison Notebooks*: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear" (Gramsci 1971, p. 276).

6   As Czollek notes, what needs to follow from and accompany this shift in values is a change of policy and legislative frameworks, which enable "Gerechtigkeit im Sinne der materiellen und sozialen Teilhabe" (justice in the sense of material and socio-political participation, Czollek 2019, p. 181). "Radical diversity" thus entails more abstract, as well as concrete, material transformations. While Czollek's work is concerned with both levels, although less so with policy and law making, I am here focusing on the more abstract aspects and consequences of the "Desintegration" concept.

establishment of new "Allianzen" (alliances, Czollek et al. 2018; Czollek and Salzmann 2017a). In contrast to homogenous "in-"/"out-" groups, the alliance implies a spontaneous, ephemeral, and diverse mix. It is furthermore a coalition based on shared interests and a common purpose, rather than a shared essence, in the form of, for example, ethnicity. This understanding of the alliance echoes Kanak Attack's 1998 manifesto, which saw participation in its project as "eine Frage der Haltung und nicht der Herkunft" (a matter of what you stand for and not a matter of where you are from, https://www.kanak-attak.de/ka/about/manif_deu.html).

In the same manner that concepts such as belonging and identity are not free from contradictions, neither is the concept of "Desintegration". In the work of both Czollek and his collaborators, the notion oscillates between the descriptive and the prescriptive, between the analytical and the programmatic, between the abstract and the concrete, between reality and utopia, between the old and the new, and between politics and art. Many of the artistic contributions, such as the various performances at the "Desintegrationskongress" and some of the pieces that can be found in the *Jalta* issue, showcase an iconoclastic, avant-garde spirit that, however, is sustained (also materially) by the very institutions and structures it tries to abolish, as observed by Dimitrij Belkin:

> Auch die jüdische Pluralität wird in Deutschland staatlich gefördert. So dass das Desintegration-Projekt am äußersten Ende einer strukturell legitimierten Loyalität steht. Ein solcher geschützter kreativer Raum bildet einen offensichtlichen Dissens zum angestrebten radikalen Avantgarde-Gestus (Belkin 2017, p. 46).

> (Jewish plurality is also being subsidized by the state in Germany. The de-integration-project is therefore perched on the very edge of a structurally legitimized loyalty. Such a protected creative space contradicts the radical avant-garde gesture of the project in obvious ways).

As noted by Muñoz, the strategy of disidentification does not aim to transcend (for this is impossible) but to work "on and against" the dominant ideology—however, as Belkin points out, this necessarily creates a dilemma. He suggests a self-reflexive engagement with this "immanenten Widerspruch" (inherent contradiction, Belkin 2017, p. 46) as a possible solution. The work of "Desintegration" is thus not free from contradictions, be it in its use of "strategic essentialism" or in the complicity of its proponents with the very structures that they are seeking to abolish. Rather than denying these, however, the project seeks to reflect on them as a constituent part of itself.

3. Troubling Belonging and Identity in *Außer Sich*

Artistic practice appears as an integral part of the "Desintegration" enterprise. Although Czollek developed the theoretical underpinnings of his idea in dialogue with both the sociologist Bodemann and Leah Carola Czollek, who has a background in social work and education, the practice of "Desintegration" was, from the onset, tied to the artistic realm, most notably during the "Desintegrationskongress" and the "Radikale Jüdische Kulturtage". While, in the *Jalta* issue, Czollek and his collaborators thus claim that theater and literature, the visual arts, and music are integral to the idea and practice of "Desintegration" (Czollek et al. 2017b, p. 76), theater and performance art seem to have taken center stage so far. This probably makes sense for a discourse that is concerned with questions of collectivity, roleplay, and performance but also with the search for new forms of togetherness. I want to suggest, however, that the issue of creatively transforming the very categories with which we operate, which has been raised above, points to literature as another important medium and catalyst for "Desintegration". I will demonstrate this point by analyzing the award-winning novel *Außer Sich* by the Czollek-collaborator Sasha Marianna Salzmann (Salzmann 2017).[7] While Salzmann's text is not a literary (and literal) illustration of the de-integration paradigm, the ideas expressed

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[7]　Henceforth cited in the text as *AS*; all English translations of the text are taken from Salzmann (2019a); henceforth cited in the text as *BM*.

by Czollek and his collaborators can both be usefully applied to and extended by a reading of the novel. Apart from showcasing the diversity of contemporary Jewish positions in Germany by featuring a Jewish, Eastern European, migrant, multilingual, queer, and trans character, *Außer Sich* reaches much further by questioning—and disintegrating—key categories such as belonging, identity, and the autonomous subject (for a more detailed analysis of these topics, see also Roca Lizarazu; Bühler-Dietrich). This movement ultimately jeopardizes the narrative as such, which is why the work of "Desintegration" in the novel cannot be separated from the question of form and hence poetics. It thus seems as though fictional discourse, far from being merely one additional outlet for the program of "Desintegration", actually provides key opportunities for realizing the project's ethical claims about non-totalizing, emergent conceptions of belonging and identity. As I will demonstrate, the ability of literature to bring together multiple and shifting perspectives, temporal levels, and modalities paves the way for more contingent and changeable notions of the self and of belonging. These may well prepare the ground for the wider renegotiation and transformation of values that, according to Czollek, are required to bring about "radical diversity".

In an exchange with Czollek, Salzmann states: "Ausländerin, außerhalb des Landes zu sein, ist ein richtiger Gedanke. Ich bin außerhalb des Landes, eines jeglichen, eine wandernde Jidowka [. . .]" (To be an expatriate/foreigner, to be outside of a country, is a correct notion. I am outside of the country, outside of any country, a wandering Jidowka [. . .], Czollek and Salzmann 2017c, p. 98). It is exactly this condition of being "außerhalb" (beyond)—of being a foreigner or stranger—that is explored in more detail in *Außer Sich*, as implied by the novel's title. While the novel unfolds in the spaces between various countries and histories, it is not so much its transnational, travelling and multidirectional make-up that I want to explore here. Rather, I want to examine the condition of being an "Ausländer" on a principal level, as a condition that not only exceeds the boundaries of any ethnicity, nationality, history, or language but also goes beyond the boundaries of the self. The subject, for Salzmann, has to be thought of as fundamentally "außer sich" or "ec-static" in Judith Butler's sense (Butler 2003, 2004).[8]

One of the main issues Salzmann's protagonist Ali/Anton is facing in the novel is their inability to give an account of themselves,[9] to say and think of themselves as an "I", a clearly bounded, stable identity: "[e]in festgeschriebenes Я(the word/letter for "I" in Russian, MRL)" (A clear-cut 'Я', *AS*, p. 275; *BM*, p. 236).[10] This issue is reflected in the book by the continuous oscillation between a third- and a first-person narrative of Ali's/Anton's life. As we find out, Ali/Anton only arrive at a point where they can say and think themselves as an "I" after they have returned from their journey to Istanbul, where they went in search of their missing twin brother, Anton (*AS*, p. 142). However, even after their return from Turkey and the development of their narrative, their narrator-self remains distrustful of the idea of a stable, bounded subject and hence the possibility of giving an account of oneself:

> Immer wenn ich merke, dass es für Menschen eine Vorstellung von der Welt gibt, auf die sie ohne Zweifel bauen, fühle ich mich allein. Ausgeliefert. Sie sprechen davon, Dinge mit Sicherheit zu wissen, sie erzählen, wie etwas gewesen ist oder sogar wie etwas sein wird, und ich merke dann immer, wie sehr ich nichts weiß von dem, was als Nächstes passieren könnte. Ich weiß ja noch nicht mal, als was ich angesprochen werde—als ein Er oder eine Sie? Mein Gesicht überrascht mich jeden Morgen im Spiegel, und ich bin skeptisch gegenüber jeder Prognose (*AS*, p. 261).

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8   The following analysis has developed from an article of mine that will appear as (Roca Lizarazu).
9   I am using the name Ali/Anton and the pronoun "they" to refer to the protagonist of the novel, as this probably best captures their non-binary identity. While the protagonist is introduced as a female named Ali(ssa) at the beginning of *Außer Sich*, Ali decides halfway through the text to transition to the male gender and become Anton. This character of Ali/Anton needs to be separated from the twin brother, Anton, who is the central blank space in the text.
10   Phonetically, the Russian letter 'Я' sounds similar to the German word "ja" (yes), i.e., a gesture of affirmation. One could thus argue that the protagonist's inability to speak of themselves as an I/Яis connected to a more fundamental inability to affirm any form of "Festschreibung" (fixed definition).

(Hearing people talk of the world as if they could rely on it always makes me feel lonely and helpless. They speak of being sure about things; they tell you how something was or even how it's going to be, and it always makes me acutely aware of how little I know about what might happen next. I don't even know what I'll be addressed as when I go to buy cigarettes—a he or a she? Each morning I'm surprised by my own face in the mirror, and I'm skeptical about any attempts to predict the future (*BM*, p. 225).)

This inability to gain certainty and determine what has been, what will be, or who one is can be read as an expression of what Judith Butler describes as the "ec-static" make-up of the self. In *Undoing Gender* and, in more detail, in *Giving An Account of Oneself*, Butler argues that we can only become and think of ourselves as subjects in relation to various outsides—both in the shape of norms, discourses, and interpellations, as well as actual and fantasized Others—that become the precondition for the emergence of the self. She draws on Hegel's thoughts on the master–slave dialectic, which highlights the necessity of mutual recognition for the development of self-consciousness and the supposedly autonomous subject. She emphasizes that there is no sovereign, fully constituted subject going into (or out of) the scene of recognition, but an ec-static self that is only ever constituted in and by the encounter with the Other. There is no self before the scene of recognition, as being addressed/recognized is what enables the constitution of the subject. However, due to this unavoidable dependence on the/an Other, the subject that emerges after the process of recognition is also not autonomous—hence, we need to acknowledge that "the relation to the other is ecstatic, that the 'I' repeatedly finds itself outside itself, and that nothing can put an end to the repeated upsurge of this exteriority that is, paradoxically, my own. I am, as it were, always other to myself, and there is no final moment in which my return to myself takes place" ([Butler 2003](), p. 27). Thinking of myself as an "I", and developing an interiority, is thus always premised on an exteriority, which is largely inaccessible to me—norms that precondition what counts as a recognizable subject, interpellations that delineate what kind of subject I should and should not be, but also various real and fantasized Others. The subject is thus fundamentally "außer sich", to quote the title of Salzmann's novel (and the German translation of one of Butler's essays in *Undoing Gender*). Butler develops an ethics that is premised on embracing this unavoidable ec-stasy, stressing "the value of being beside oneself, of being a porous boundary, given over to others, [. . .]" ([Butler 2004](), p. 25).

Framing the subject as a "porous boundary", and as exposed to various outsides, is central to Salzmann's text: the novel is deeply concerned with the (im)possibility of encounters, be they familial, friendly, romantic, erotic, or sexual, which reiterates Butler's point that we exist in and through an openness to others who, to use Sara Ahmed's term, "impress (upon)" us ([Ahmed 2004](), p. 6), i.e., leave their mark on us, shape who we are and become, physically as well as emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically. The importance of encounter also de-centers the subject in Butler's sense, as the "I" is only thinkable as a network of relations. I would argue that being "außer sich", in the space of the novel, signifies exactly this unavoidable entanglement with others to whom we need to address ourselves and by whom we need to be addressed in our existence as subjects. This constituent dependence is also reflected in the twin motif in *Außer Sich*, which is taken to its extreme by the recurrent suggestion that brother Anton might actually be a figment of Ali's/Anton's imagination as well as by the incestuous relationship between the siblings. The psychological and physical enmeshment of the twins appears as a literal demonstration of how I am always dependent on an Other to construct a sense of self, to think myself. This ec-static character of the self is also demonstrated by the fact that Ali/Anton can only conceive of themselves and tell "their" story in dialogue with the stories of their family members and the stories of the people they encounter during their migrations and travels. While Ali/Anton eventually manage to perceive of themselves and tell their story as an "I", this "I" is thus not presented as stable, sovereign, and clearly bounded, but as open, porous, fluctuating, and transforming. *Außer Sich* urges us to endorse this dependency on others to think ourselves, who we can, at the same time, never fully comprehend or control; as Ali/Anton puts it, we are defined by "all die Leben [. . .], die ich

nicht kannte, in die ich eingesponnen war und die ohne mich weiterliefen" (all the lives I didn't know, all the lives I was entangled in, lives that went on without me) (*AS*, p. 364; *BM*, p. 316).

As Butler notes, the condition of ec-stasy implies that we can only ever approach our origins and our emergence as a subject in the mode of speculation—as a fiction or fable: "I am always recuperating, reconstructing, and I am left to fictionalize and fabulate origins I cannot know" (Butler 2003, p. 39). While fiction is here almost presented as a crutch, employed by a subject that is never in full possession of itself, I would argue that is it precisely fiction that allows us to envisage and embrace this alternative conception of the subject. Butler emphasizes that the necessary "moment of failure" in every self-narration does not preclude storytelling as such; however, "we will not be able to be very authoritative" (Butler 2003, p. 37) about the stories we tell. This echoes the program of "Desintegration" in the sense that its entire point consists in complicating authoritative, totalizing accounts of identity, the self, and belonging, so as to enable more ambivalent, contradictory, and provisional positions. What would such a de-integrated, non-authoritative, self-effacing account look like though? Arguably a lot like the novel *Außer Sich*, which employs some of the capabilities of fictional discourse in the service of what I term a "non-authoritative" poetics of "Desintegration", which is essentially a poetics of "Vielleichts" (perhaps) (*AS*, p. 86; *BM*, p. 69). It presents both the subject and the stories that it tells as merely one option amongst many and as open to influence and change.

The poetics of "Desintegration" also informs the text in a more literal manner, as the anti-chronological and non-linear narrative of *Außer Sich*, which stresses contingency and the "Kausalitätslosigkeit der Geschichte" (the absence of historical causality) (*AS*, p. 274; *BM*, p. 236), disintegrates the very form of the novel itself. The family and origin story of Ali/Anton is recounted in flashes, or, as Ali/Anton themselves put it, "Fetzen" (scraps, *AS*, p. 86; *BM*, p. 69), which do not sufficiently explain anything. The origins, motivations, and trajectories of many of the protagonists in the family's story are presented in an episodic fashion and hence remain opaque to Ali/Anton and to the readers. Additionally, the novel experiments with narrative reliability in a manner that questions the authority and the authorship that we have over the narratives of our lives (see also Bühler-Dietrich). Ali/Anton are unreliable because, as they repeatedly stress, their memories are failing them and they cannot bring order into their narrative; their (potential) recollections "ergänzten und widersprachen sich" (complemented and contradicted one another, *AS*, p. 138; *BM*, p. 114). The result of this amnesia and general unreliability of autobiographical memory is that we, as readers, cannot determine for certain which components of the story have been invented by Ali/Anton. This uncertainty even extends to the two chapters supposedly told by brother Anton, which are introduced right after Ali/Anton tell us: "Ich erdenke mir neue Personen, wie ich mir alte zusammensetze. Stelle mir das Leben meines Bruders vor, stelle mir vor, er würde all das tun, wozu ich nicht in der Lage gewesen bin [. . .]" (I make up characters in the same way that I piece together old ones. I imagine my brother's life, imagine him doing all the things I can't do [. . .], *AS*, p. 275; *BM*, p. 236f.). The remarks about the brother's (potential) life highlight that *Außer Sich* approaches the self and history more broadly in the subjunctive mood, imagining what might have been and what could (still) be. This mode of storytelling plays not only with notions of authorship, but also with the fact that any story is merely one option amongst many, whilst simultaneously problematizing the ideas of certainty and closure. Ali/Anton must come to accept that they cannot recuperate their lost brother and ever fully know and understand what drove him, but that they can imagine what might have motivated him. The chapters told by brother Anton might indeed be Ali's/Anton's invention, but this is not an escape into fantasy but an acceptance of the unknowability of the self and the other. Fiction, due to its potential to engage in multi-perspectival narratives, alternative temporalities, and different modalities, thus appears as a uniquely suited platform to express and foster "non-authoritative" narratives of the self and the other. The space of the novel allows Salzmann to create and tell stories of times, spaces, and characters that, in the spirit of "Desintegration", are provisional and emergent—they are never anything, but are eternally becoming something.

4. Postmigrant Recalibrations

My reading of Salzmann suggests that "Desintegration", whilst understood as a political project by many of its advocates, is in equal parts an aesthetic and creative enterprise. In an act of "worldmaking" (Muñoz 1999, p. 195), the work of "Desintegration" aims to develop new narratives and a new vocabulary for grasping the self, identity, and belonging. It is an "interregnum" project; as such, it is critical of existing notions of the self and belonging, but rather than coming up with definitive answers, it strives to trouble the categories with which we operate. *Außer Sich* provides an example of one such troubling narrative that embraces rather than eschews the ambiguities, contradictions, and transformations of identities and belongings. The project of "Desintegration" here overlaps with the broader "postmigrant" project, which, according to Naika Foroutan, is also concerned with a "narrative Neudeutung", [. . .], in welcher das Deutsche selbstverständlich als heterogen und plural wahrgenommen wird" (a narrative reinterpretation which takes for granted a heterogeneous and plural notion of Germanness, Foroutan 2015, p. 2). These narratives are particularly necessary at a time when German (and European) nations are in the grip of what Foroutan calls "Vereindeutigungspolitik" (the politics of disambiguation, Foroutan 2019, p. 14), which she reads as a defense mechanism against the actually occurring diversification of societies. This politics thus offers reactionary tales that promise to restore a homogeneity that never existed in the first place, rather than coming up with new narratives that represent the existing plurality of populations. This is potentially where the project of "Desintegration" comes into play, which sets out to develop precisely such alternative imaginaries. It thus make sense to read the "Desintegration"-project as part of the larger "postmigrant" shift, as is also suggested by Czollek and Salzmann themselves (*DE!*, p. 133; Czollek and Salzmann 2017a).

Although still very much under construction and debate (see for example El-Tayeb 2016; Foroutan 2019; Foroutan et al. 2018; Schramm et al. 2019; Terkessidis 2010, 2017; Hill and Yıldız 2018; Yıldız and Hill 2014), the "postmigrant" approach can generally be described as a shift in perspective that understands our present-day societies as fundamentally shaped by migration. It is no coincidence that the term emerged—and is being discussed vividly—in the German setting, as Germany has continuously struggled with the self-designation as an "Einwanderungsland" (country of (im)migration). In this context, the "post-" signifies that, over the last couple of decades, Germany and most other Western European societies, have witnessed continuing, large-scale migration movements, which have led to noticeable demographic shifts—they thus need to be perceived as postmigrant countries, i.e., countries that are faced with the aftermath of extensive migration movements. The construction of a sedentary, non-migrant lifestyle as the norm, coupled with idea that these societies are culturally and ethnically homogeneous (i.e., predominantly white and Christian), thus needs to be adjusted and challenged. Hence, the "post-" also implies a questioning of the binaries, categories, and labels with which we operate; this includes a critical engagement with the continued "Othering" and "migrantization" (Ring Petersen et al. 2019a, p. 4) of everyone who does not fit the white, Christian norm. These processes of questioning naturally entail conflicts and frictions, which is why Foroutan defines postmigrant societies as transitional societies of (re)negotiation: "In postmigrantischen Gesellschaften stehen die Aushandlungsprozesse nach der Anerkennung, ein Migrationsland bzw. Einwanderungsland geworden zu sein, im Fokus" (Postmigrant societies revolve around the processes of negotiation that take place after a country has recognized its status as a country of (im)migration, Foroutan 2019, p. 19). The "postmigrant" project thus seeks to catch up with changed realities, calling for a (belated) acknowledgment of the centrality of migration for present-day, Western European societies. Many contributions to the debate stress, however, that acknowledging the facts is merely the first step in a process aimed at radically transforming our discursive patterns, institutional structures, and practices of living together so that they may accommodate and reflect our diversified and continually diversifying societies.

The work of "Desintegration" is part of this larger "postmigrant" project, as it is concerned with precisely a questioning of labels and practices of inclusion/exclusion, a push for a more diverse perspective on society, and bringing together art and politics in a future-oriented and utopian search for

new imaginaries. If we thus read "Desintegration", in the words of Czollek, as a Jewish contribution to the larger "postmigrant" enterprise (*DE!*, p. 133), this allows us to productively reframe three of the central issues discussed in this article: German Jewish literature and culture; recent discussions around belonging and "Heimat" in Germany; and the relationship between art and politics.

Disintegrating and De-integrating from German Jewish studies: Most importantly, reading Czollek's and Salzmann's work on "Desintegration" as part of the "postmigrant" project enables us to re-evaluate the cultural location of German Jewish literature and culture. As Czollek points out in "Gegenwartsbewältigung", Jews are absent "im Kontext der derzeit bestimmenden Binarität von Integrierten vs. Parallelgesellschaft" (in the defining contemporary binary of the well-integrated immigrant and migrant parallel societies, Czollek 2019, p. 168). This is so because Jews are not seen as migrants, even though the majority of the Jews living in present-day Germany migrated from the Soviet Union in the 1990s, as Czollek notes (Czollek 2019, p. 168). Many of the prominent voices in contemporary German Jewish literature, such as Alina Bronsky, Lena Gorelik, Olga Grjasnowa, Vladimir Kaminer, Kat Kaufmann, Katja Petrowskaja, or Sasha Marianna Salzmann, to name just a few, share this background; yet, their work is often reduced to questions of Holocaust trauma and the (negative) German–Jewish symbiosis. While these issues are present in their writing and worth exploring, it seems necessary to complement this research focus with a more "postmigrant" approach. This would entail complementing the (still) dominant focus in German Jewish studies on questions of Holocaust memory and trauma with questions of displacement, diverse and shifting positionalities, migration, multilingualism, integration, and intersectionality. Such a perspective would simultaneously enable and require a more systematic engagement with the existing and emerging dialogues between German Jewish literature and culture and other so-called literatures and cultures of migration and/or ethnic literatures, such as, for example, German Turkish literature, Afro-German literature, or recent literature on the so-called refugee crisis (for an example of intersectional Jewish–Muslim dialogue, see Keskinkılıç and Langer 2018). Drawing on Leslie Adelson's notion of "touching tales" (Adelson 2000), this would engender more multidirectional perspectives and the exploration of new alliances. These could include intersecting experiences of violent pasts and discriminatory presents, whilst also featuring explorations of common ground on which new futures may be constructed. The "Desintegration" project is a good example here, as it connects, on an interpersonal as well as an artistic level, German Jewish artists with a wide range of contributors, most prominently from the German-Turkish community (for example Shermin Langhoff; Necati Öziri; Deniz Utlu).

On a more theoretical level, the proposed "postmigrant" shift brings us closer to an intersectional approach to Jewish studies, which is in dialogue with, for example, postcolonial and queer studies. While there are examples of such approaches in Anglo- (Cheyette 2014) and Francophone (Rothberg 2009; Silverman 2013) literatures, there seem to be very few attempts in the German-language realm to approach and think about Jewish literature intersectionally. At the same time, it seems as though many of the questions faced by German Jewish artists and writers today would benefit from exactly such a perspective, as Czollek's reflections on the relationship between the "Gedächtnis-" and the "Integrationstheater" suggest. This is most obviously the case when looking at the currently unfolding, complicated interplay between anti-/philo-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of racism in the German context, in which Jews are being instrumentalized as part of a supposed Judeo-Christian tradition to fend off Islam, which has become the prominent new Other. As Bryan Cheyette (and others) have observed, a postcolonially inflected, intersectional approach might enable solidarity rather than division, as it challenges the mechanisms of exclusion that connect anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other forms or racism in their relation to the creation of the modern, liberal nation state: "Similar processes are used to integrate minorities, [. . .], and to differentiate 'good' from 'bad' citizens in general. This discourse is so prevalent because it is promoted by successive governments in the name of integration into the liberal state" (Teichler and Vince 2019, p. 100). Such thinking guides not only Czollek but Salzmann's recent essay "Unsichtbar" (Invisible), which criticizes both Homo- and "Judeo-Nationalismus" (Jewish nationalism, Salzmann 2019b, p. 23), calling for solidarity

between all of those who share "[das] Wissen um das Aus-dem-Raster-Fallen" (a [...] knowledge about this not-belonging) and "das Niemals-normal-Sein" ([a] knowledge about never-being-normal, Salzmann 2019b, p. 26).[11]

Bryan Cheyette has pointed out that such intersectional approaches are necessarily "ill-disciplined" (Cheyette 2009), in the sense that they chart new territories and transgress disciplinary boundaries in the process. In the spirit of Czollek's and Salzmann's work, we thus might have to become more "ill-disciplined" and disintegrate and de-integrate from contemporary German Jewish studies, at least to an extent. This would entail broadening our focus beyond the exploration of Holocaust memory and trauma to take into account a range of additional disciplines and literatures. This echoes Leslie Morris' recent attempt at resituating German Jewish culture "outside the margins" (Morris 2018) and moving it "farther into the 'trans'" (Morris 2018, p. 6). Despite the difference in prefixes, I would argue that a "postmigrant" shift in perspective would allow us to continue on this path and go even further outside the margins.

Complicating Belonging: Reading texts such as Salzmann's *Außer Sich* through a "postmigrant" lens also enables us to situate it within a broader critical renegotiation of belonging and "Heimat" in contemporary German literature and culture. Recent volumes, such as *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum* (Aydemir and Yaghoobifarah 2019) or the 4. Berliner Herbstsalon at the Maxim Gorki Theater, which aimed to "Deheimatize it!", point to a re-negotiation of traditional understandings of belonging and "Heimat" in present-day Germany. While the organizers of the Herbstsalon cite the "Hochkonjunktur der Debatten von rechten und konservativen Kräften um Heimat" (the popularity of right wing and conservative debates about "Heimat") as the main target of their intervention, (https://www.berliner-herbstsalon.de/vierter-berliner-herbstsalon), one could argue that both these right-wing debates as well as the cultural counter-responses to them are part of a larger "postmigrant" reassessment of belonging and "Heimat". As Foroutan has argued, the underlying conflict in "postmigrant" societies unfolds over the issue of plurality, i.e., between those who accept and welcome it and those who reject it (Foroutan 2019). A strengthening of conservative notions of "Heimat", which correspond with homogenizing and, in some cases, "(neo-)völkisch" thinking, can be seen as one strategy of rejecting the actually existing and increasing plurality in a "postmigrant" Germany. On the other side of the spectrum, the organizers of the Herbstsalon and the proponents of "Desintegration" are trying to counter these strategies by acknowledging and promoting pluralistic, de-integrated, "deheimatized" notions of belonging.

Arguably, the so-called "refugee crisis" has contributed to and inspired these ongoing cultural re-examinations of belonging and "Heimat" in contemporary Germany, both in their conservative and in their more future-oriented manifestations. Fatima El-Tayeb notes, however, that the perception of this event as an unprecedented emergency, as suggested by the term "crisis", masks a more permanent, historically relatively stable dynamic. What we, following Czollek, could call "Flüchtlingstheater" (refugee theater), follows the problematic logic of integration and perpetual arrival described at the beginning of this article: while the Other is first welcomed, disappointment sets in sooner rather than later when the newcomers do not (want to) integrate in the ways that majority society prescribes, forcing them to constantly reaffirm their willingness to belong. As observed by El-Tayeb, this dynamic has accompanied most of the major post-war migration movements experienced by Germany, and she even goes so far as to suggest that German identity is being constituted through these "sich regelmäßig wiederholenden, krisenhaften Auseinandersetzungen mit einem 'Fremdem'" (these continuing engagements with the 'Other' in the mode of crisis, El-Tayeb 2016). The rhetoric of exceptionality and crisis conceals precisely this historic constant, i.e., the reliance on Othering practices for conceptualizing and maintaining Germanness. The "postmigrant" complications of belonging

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11　Salzmann's essay "Unsichtbar" has recently been translated by Lou Silhol-Macher, and I will be using this translation from now on, see (Salzmann 2020).

described here might enable us to break this cycle, by generating cultural narratives of the so-called "refugee crisis", which bring it into a historically sensitive, multidirectional dialogue with Germany's much longer and diverse history of migration. This would entail an emphasis on the persistent patterns of exclusion alongside a shift away from the binary (white, Christian) Germans vs. refugees toward an exploration of the more complex relationships between refugees and a diverse German population (i.e., members of other minorities, for example). Taking this long view would also allow us to recast the so-called "crisis" as part of a much larger, "postmigrant" renegotiation of questions of belonging, "Heimat", and togetherness in a Germany that is part of a global world. As emphasized by Foroutan, such reconsiderations necessarily entail friction and conflict, which is why we need to replace narratives of "integrationist participation" (Pultz Moslund and Petersen 2019, p. 73) with alternatives that better accommodate ambiguities, tensions, and transitions.

Artifying Politics: As demonstrated in this article, the "postmigrant" project and the work of "Desintegration", in particular, rely on the arts and on the space of theater in particular. The term "postmigrant" was initially coined by theater maker Shermin Langhoff as a "Kampfbegriff" (Schaper 2012) to counter the exclusion and labeling of so-called "migrant" art from the broader cultural sphere (see also Stewart 2017). It then made its way into sociological research, only to constantly return to the realm of (performance) art (for a genealogy of the concept, see also Ring Petersen et al. 2019a). In a similar vein, the initial impulses for Czollek's thinking on "Desintegration" may have come from sociology, but he only developed his concept further by engaging various artistic formats. Both the "postmigrant" and "Desintegration" projects thus testify to the central place of the arts in developing alternative, future-oriented models of togetherness. Their contributors claim that the political discourse of our times is lagging behind, in that it is unable to sufficiently acknowledge the actually occurring diversification and lived complexity of our societies of migration: "Political discourses are not the only forums, and rarely are they the first in which the effects and affects of migration and plurality are felt and negotiated. In fact, stories of postmigration [. . .] are created in everyday life and especially in the arts" (Ring Petersen et al. 2019b, p. 58).

The arts provide a space in which these creative acts can happen and in which new forms of identity, subjectivity, and togetherness can be developed and tested. This is echoed by Anne Ring Petersen, Moritz Schramm, and Frauke Wiegand when they claim that the contribution of the arts to the broader "postmigrant" project consists in creating "narratives and affective knowledge that includes the ideas and outlines of new ways of living together in diversity and beyond the demarcation lines of migration" (Ring Petersen et al. 2019b, p. 60). While I agree with these suggestions, I see a need for more sensitivity toward and reflection on the various different media engaged in "Desintegration" and/or "postmigrant" debates and the different contributions they might make. Many of the topics driving these debates—such as collectivity, role expectations, coexistence, and togetherness—have a special connection to the theatrical setting, but there seems to be little reflection on what other artistic formats might add (there are exceptions, such as Geiser 2015; Hipfl 2019). Additionally, a more thorough engagement with the question of what exactly makes artistic discourse more suited to explore and experiment with new forms of belonging and togetherness might be desirable—this is a question that is implied in many artistic and academic engagements but so far has remained unanswered. Drawing on my analysis of Salzmann's novel, I want to propose a more systematic exploration of literature as a medium of de-integrative, "postmigrant" exploration. I have demonstrated that, owing to its "non-authoritative" narrative form, *Außer Sich* enables the expression of ambiguous and emergent identities and belongings, which might pave the way for broader socio-political transformations. These observations suggest that some qualities of fictional discourse—such as multiperspectivity, multi-temporality, and multi-modality—might make it particularly suited for de-integrative and "postmigrant" work. Literature is in many ways the "ill-disciplined" medium par excellence, in that it charts new territories, relies on the imagination, and crosses and mixes times, spaces, perspectives, and discursive modes—what better platform could there be then for exploring and continuing the work of "Desintegration" in the future?

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