Thinking outside of the cardboard box: the conditions, meanings and myths of "Obdachlosigkeit" in German fiction and film

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Abstract
This dissertation identifies a small range of German literary and filmic works beginning in 1898 and ending in 2009 in which the embodiment of homelessness demonstrates a reassertion of space. Despite the recent attention paid to space and the sense of permeability and movement that they can suggest in narratives, literary experts have published little on what surely must be one of the most politically and socially-charged of all spaces—uncanny spaces that include individuals so common to us and yet also so varyingly different—that is, homeless spaces. This liminal zone frequently opens up the potential for inner transformation and unforeseen possibility for not only the homeless character but quite possibly for other marginalized groups as well.

The work done here looks for homeless instances in modern German artistic expression that suggest productivity, possibility, change and even power in the transient literary and filmic character and how such manifestations relate to Germany's larger social, historical and political contexts. I juxtapose my textual findings on German homelessness with relevant theories like liminality, geocriticism and ecofeminism in order to illustrate how the transgression of boundaries can tell us much about the deconstruction of binaries such as domestic/public, male/female, young/old and the transfer of power; and to demonstrate that a German homeless condition is constructed differently through discrete social and cultural networks and through alternative spaces. I am particularly interested in the lack of analyses concerning homeless women and children and what this suggests about broader trends in gender and age formation with regard to a person's home or lack thereof. My attention to the textual aesthetics and narratological devices that underline homelessness offer additional insight into its poetics and literary significance.

In sum, the dissertation at hand contributes to finding value in the homeless population's spatial transgression by actually locating it literally. The following chapters consider homelessness first and foremost as linked to a spatial concept in which the homeless figure's act of moving and transgressing normative boundaries is considered paramount. The German texts and films herein are linked by their relationship with the space in which they evolve.
'Think outside the box' originated in the USA in the late 1960s/early 1970s. It has become something of a cliché, especially in the business world, where 'thinking outside the box' has become so used as to be rather meaningless. Various authors from the world of management consultancy claim to have introduced the phrase. The earliest citation that I have found comes from the weekly magazine of the US aviation industry - Aviation Week & Space Technology, July 1975: "We must step back and see if the solutions to our problems lie outside the box." The 'b... Thinking outside the box means that you cast off the atmosphere that envelops you, step out of the box, leave all your experiences, mindsets and attitudes behind and start to view things from a completely different perspective: outside of the box; unfiltered, unbiased, open to suggestions, willing to empathize with others opinions, but also ready to swim against the flood and to think. what no one else has ever thought of. Reframing gives you the possibility to change the meaning of a situation, task or problem. In general: it allows you to choose what it means for you, which gives you the freedom to change your point of view. Question things. These people "Thought Outside the Box." The writer Sarah Susanka, the author of "The Not So Big House," once said that "The ability to think creatively, moving to needs and wishes, not to preconceived ideas of what something should look like, then the problem will be solved." [SIC] What I think she means by this is if you are going to make or do something for the people of the world, don't assume or pretend you know what they want. Go out, ask them, figure it out and then when you have completed the finished product it will be successful. Many p