I, Michelle E Dietz, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Germanic Languages & Literature.

It is entitled:

Attempting “Zeitschaft:” Multilingual Inadequacy and Unrepresentable Excess in Ruth Klüger’s weiter leben: eine Jugend and Inge Deutschkron’s Ich trug den gelben Stern

Student's name: Michelle E Dietz

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Valerie Weinstein, Ph.D.

Committee member: Harold Herzog, Ph.D.
Attempting “Zeitschaft:” Multilingual Inadequacy and Unrepresentable Excess in Ruth Klüger’s weiter leben: eine Jugend and Inge Deutschkron’s Ich trug den gelben Stern

A thesis submitted to the

Graduate School

of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In the Department of German Studies

of the College of Arts and Sciences

by

Michelle E. Dietz

B.A. Northern Kentucky University

May 2014

Committee Chair: Valerie A. Weinstein, Ph.D.
Abstract

A Hebrew play on words, an insult in Yiddish, and American indifference to suffering populate two notable German language Holocaust memoirs. Weiter leben: eine Jugend by Ruth Klüger and Ich trug den gelben Stern by Inge Deutschkron are prime examples of the complexities and benefits of multilingualism for the representation of traumatic memory. The authors, both young women during their persecution at the hands of the Nazis, narrate their experience through a variety of literary and rhetorical styles. Recounting their time in concentration camps, ghettos, and in hiding in Berlin, the two authors reopen wounds and reencounter trauma that exceeds the limit of human language. Since neither is monolingual, situations that occurred in another language or that are best represented through another language appear throughout the memoirs in contexts outside of German. The authors’ abilities to express themselves in this manner impact the narrative structures of their work, and help them to re-create places and a time lost to history.

This exploration focuses on the functions of multilingual representation in the works, specifically as concerns the authors’ abilities to express the trauma in their past. Klüger and Deutschkron often narrate situations with an “unrepresentable excess” of trauma with additional languages, which reveals the nature of their experiences and the difficulty they have translating them into language. The concept of Zeitschaft, or “timescape” will weigh heavily in this evaluation, and the inadequacy of language to represent memory and identity will demonstrate the limits of human expression vis-à-vis these two memoirs.
© Michelle Dietz 2014
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone who supported me as I worked on this thesis over the last year. To Dr. Valerie Weinstein: thank you for your diligence in reminding me to write, reminding me to breathe, and reminding me that I am not, in fact, the world’s worst graduate student. Without your guidance and tolerance of my Star Trek references, I would never have finished this project. To Dr. Todd Herzog: thank you for your helpful comments, encouraging words, and willingness to lend an ear when things were stressful. Both of you were incredibly busy people this year, and despite that returned emails with superhuman speed, took the time to pick me up when I needed it, and motivated me to make this project a valuable experience. I would like to thank the graduate students in the Department of German Studies for their commiseration and words of advice. Thank you to my family and friends for accepting my disappearance from society as I wrote. Thank you, Joseph Groeschen, for always being there for me and encouraging me to pursue my goals. Finally, I would like to thank Ruth Klüger and Inge Deutschkron for braving the depths of their traumas to show the world the price of hatred. May their work to memorialize heroes, to stand against those who deny their persecution, and to make Nie Wieder a way of life challenge and educate us all.
# Table of Contents

**Chapter 1. Introduction**

**Chapter 2. Ruth Klüger’s weiter leben: eine Jugend**

- Klüger’s Languages
- Biographical Background
- Use of German
- Use of English
- Use of Yiddish
- Use of Hebrew

**Chapter 3. Inge Deutschkron’s Ich trug den gelben Stern**

- Deutschkron’s Languages
- Biographical Background
- Use of German
- Use of Hebrew
- Use of Yiddish

**Chapter 4. Conclusion**

**Bibliography**
Chapter 1: Introduction

“I have read it over. I could hardly understand it. And the reader? No wonder, that the memoirs are incomprehensible to the reader. Is it possible to understand someone else’s life? It seems that I ought to be able to perceive without effort what I myself write about. Ah, but is it possible to understand one’s own remembrances?” (Korczak 77).

When rereading his own diary, Polish pediatrician, philosopher, and Holocaust victim Janusz Korczak cannot make complete sense of its contents, and wonders about the ability of a reader to comprehend his narrative. How can a reader come to understand another person’s life translated into language, especially when that person experienced great trauma, if the author himself cannot? This study aims to explore possible answers to this question through analysis of the limitations of two German Holocaust memoirs. Specifically, it will examine the methods that Ruth Klüger uses in weiter leben: eine Jugend and Inge Deutschkron uses in Ich trug den gelben Stern in an attempt to overcome those limitations. The enormity of their task compels them to capture the world of the Holocaust where “there is no why” (Ferme 56) within language incapable of holding it. The authors, whose multilingualism gives them added vocabulary, choose to represent their experience through additional languages in order to communicate their memories to the reader. Reference to existing studies of memoir and testimony, comparison with

---

1 Janusz Korczak, (1879-1942), was murdered by the Nazis at Treblinka after being deported from the Warsaw Ghetto. While in the ghetto, he cared for Jewish orphans, scrounging the streets and relentlessly advocating for “his children” in order to get them necessities. He wrote his diary between 1939 and 1942, and it details the struggles of ghetto life during the Holocaust. When the Nazis rounded up the orphans, Korczak refused offers by Nazi officers and Polish friends to help him escape, and instead accompanied them to their deaths.

2 Korczak’s lamentations about his inability to understand testimony, even his own, relates to Fridman’s assertion that when people use literature to express their experiences of horrors like the Holocaust, they attempt to “tell us what cannot be told” and to “perform special communal and cultural tasks in society at large” (100).

3 Ferme’s work looks at language as a weapon and element of humanity. It informs this study in many ways, specifically by portraying the “impossibility of communication between oppressors and victims in the tragedy of the Shoah” (53). His examples from Levi’s If This is a Man translate to weiter leben and Ich trug den gelben Stern through their demonstrations of the inadequacy of language that plagues those works as well.
other works of memoir, and close reading of the texts will reveal that Klüger and Deutschkron use multiple languages in an attempt to re-create a time and place lost to them. The authors themselves acknowledge that there is an abundance of trauma surrounding their memories and that no language can represent this excess at several points throughout their respective works. For these reasons, they use multiple languages to express their memories to the reader.

There are several concepts that are indispensable for this examination and must be defined. The first of these is trauma, as it is the pervasive something that both authors seek (and fail) to express fully. For the purpose of my argument, I will use Luckhurst’s definition that trauma is, “[...] a response to events outside the bounds of normal experience, an excess or exorbitance that takes one beyond oneself, after which self-identity is hard if not impossible to recover in the same terms” (Luckhurst 11). Klüger and Deutschkron both experience events of an abnormal nature that cause them to question who they are in relation to the worlds and lives they knew before their persecution by the Nazis. Luckhurst focuses mostly on examples from the post-9/11 world, but many of his frameworks also apply to Klüger’s and Deutschkron’s works as well. He opposes Sonntag’s assertion that exposure to traumatic representation desensitizes the reader or viewer, and takes issue with the idea that these types of expression should follow certain formulae. This leaves open the door for Klüger and Deutschkron to use multiple languages, non-sequential narration, and other techniques to represent their experience, while allowing their work to fall under the umbrella of trauma literature without criticism from Luckhurst’s position. Both authors encounter an excess that exceeds their capacities to represent their emotions and themselves adequately in multiple languages, let alone a single one. Examples where they use languages other than German are also attempts to recover identity lost via Nazi persecution, so Luckhurst’s definition is fitting for the purposes of this analysis.
The excess noted in the definition of trauma above ties into a second concept that requires definition before analysis of the texts themselves. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra looks at the relation between historiography and testimony. He discusses the term “unrepresentable excess,” or traumatic experience that lies beyond linguistic ability to represent it put forth by Friedländer and others (LaCapra 91). LaCapra accepts “unrepresentable excess” as a valid interpretive tool, but notes that one needs to be careful when using it as the reason for inadequacy of expression. He writes:

“Then, though, the question is how one comes to terms with it. One of the things I’ve written is that in certain thinkers there is, at times, the tendency to overdose on the antidote or simply go with the flow—of excess, of desire, of symptomatic behavior. This is to say, to participate too fully in excess and to affirm excess, with almost an oblivion of the problem of how to relate excess to legitimate limits (or desire to desirability), which is the ethical problem” (LaCapra 155).

In other words, excess and the limit of language to represent it are intertwined, and one must look at both in relation to one another when producing scholarship that discusses either. I accept LaCapra’s view that there can be such a thing as giving excess too much attention, but with my analysis of Deutschkron’s and Klüger’s memoirs, I avoid that by including both the limits of language to express trauma and the “unrepresentable excess” in the conversation. Klüger and Deutschkron use multiple languages to combat the inadequacy of human language to deal with their respective “unrepresentable excesses” that lie past the limit of language to convey them. These languages aid representations of their Holocaust experiences by informing passages in a

---

4 LaCapra delves further into this issue, exploring the radically negative possibilities that exist when one emphasizes excess and fails to view them in relation to the ability of language to express portions of it. He does conclude, however, that one needs the notion of this excess to come to terms with the traumas of the Holocaust, and allows that one must work with the concept, but cautiously and ethically.
way that German alone could not. They thereby bring the reality of time and place to the reader through multilingual expression.

The final term requiring definition is the aim of both authors: *Zeitschaft*. The word is an invention of Klüger’s, who inserts it into a discussion of collective memory. She criticizes the inability of concentration-camps-turned-museums to embody the trauma of those whom the Nazis imprisoned during World War II. She writes, „Aber das KZ als Ort? Ortschaft, Landschaft, landscape, seascape—das Wort Zeitschaft sollte es geben, um zu vermitteln, was ein Ort in der Zeit ist, zu einer gewissen Zeit, weder vorher noch nachher” (Klüger 78). Klüger essentially, “doubts whether the site of a former concentration camp can ever be a mere *Ortschaft* (place) and proposes instead the neologistic concept of a *Zeitschaft* (timescape) (78)” (Goertz 167). Klüger feels the need to create this term because a place was never and can never be the same as it was during a specific situation. This gap, which Klüger acknowledges with her concept of *Zeitschaft*, is closely related to the inability of language to represent trauma. Since anyone who was not there with the author cannot comprehend places, events, and experiences exactly as they were during specific memories, there will never be a memoir that can help the reader to do so. The authors attempt to create, “A time-scape [that] encompasses the meaning of a place through time and suggests that past occurrences resonate in the language of the present” (Goertz 167).

These terms interact with Young’s concept of creating a factual narrative, where, “In an ironic way, the violent event can exist as such (and thus as an inspiration to factual narrative, it seems) only as long as it appears to stand outside of the continuum, where it remains apparently unmediated, unframed, and unassimilated” (Young 15-16). Klüger’s and Deutschkron’s ability to express the violent events that exist within their “unrepresentable excess” is hampered, “For
once written, events assume the mantle of coherence that narrative necessarily imposes on them, and the trauma of their unassimilability is relieved” (Young 16). Essentially, the multilingualism in the memoirs builds this mantle of coherence, causing the memories of the authors to appear less raw and more mitigated. Even as they use multiple languages to express themselves, moreover, the narratives they build demonstrate the inadequacy of language as vehicle for transmission of traumatic memory.

In order to do so, Klüger and Deutschkron, whose Holocaust experiences included additional languages and whose post-war lives added more, use language as a means to attempt Zeitschaft. Their narrations incorporate German, Hebrew, Yiddish, and English in ways that help them come closer to the elusive goal of expression. They include examples that help them identify or distinguish themselves, and utilize their abilities in other languages to represent their trauma through avenues that would be limited by using a single language. Klüger and Deutschkron portray themselves and events in the language of a Zeitschaft they cannot convey in order to give themselves and their readers the best chance of comprehending their trauma.

Three terms will appear throughout this thesis, as they show the pain, difficulties, and function within the memoirs. The analysis will center around Zeitschaft, “unrepresentable excess,” and trauma to demonstrate the impact that other languages have on the narration. While the language of the trauma for these authors is not always German like the majority of the memoirs, Klüger and Deutschkron are more able to express portions of their excess of trauma

---

5 Goertz’s discussion fits in with others who explore Klüger’s stance on memorializing the Holocaust, specifically as it concerns collective memory. Namely, Wickerson notes that Klüger’s concept of Zeitschaft enables her to avoid the tropes of representation that detract from authenticity. By viewing places as they were, and not memorializing them for what they are, Klüger comes as close as she can to relating experiences as they happened to her.

6 Patterson discusses the need to remember and tell others about one’s experiences, especially as it concerns trauma. He differentiates between types of memory by writing: “By now one can see an important distinction between reminiscence and remembrance. Whereas the former is a nostalgic musing over days gone by, the latter arises from within and from beyond the human being in response to a calling and a need” (139).
with these various languages; such usages add layers of complexity to the texts and bring them closer to creating Zeitschaft for their readers.

In addition to their usage of multiple languages to represent their experiences, Klüger’s and Deutschkron’s memoirs are unique for other reasons. Both works were published long after the authors had emigrated from Germany, were published in German, and were published in Germany upon first printing. If the reader considers this choice in light of the notion that “unrepresentable excess” exists in survivor experience, there is discernable logic behind it. A person’s native language is naturally the most comfortable and expressive one they have, and is, therefore, the best medium through which to narrate one’s life. When dealing with an experience that exceeds the capacity of words to express it, it makes sense that an author would choose her or his strongest language to do so. Using German becomes problematic for the immigrant Holocaust survivor, however, because, “Most German-Jewish survivors, and certainly those who emigrated, would not write or publish their memoirs in German and publish them in Germany. Usually, the relation to the language and to German identity had become too ambivalent and the majority of German Jews chose to do away with both after 1945” (Bos 72). This makes Klüger and Deutschkron exceptional for their use of German, but it also complicates matters when it comes to critical reception of Klüger’s memoir. Despite all of her efforts to convey her trauma and life-long suffering as a result of the Holocaust, many, including her close friend Martin Walser, missed the message of her memoir. His interpretation, as detailed in Goertz’s work, was that Klüger’s German memoir served as a return to German and Germany for her. It concluded that she had found a happy end by living her life and reclaiming German, which is precisely the opposite of Klüger’s tone in the work.\footnote{On page 84 of her work, Bos also discusses the ways in which this reception stripped Klüger of her Jewish identity. Reviews like Walser’s looked over her Jewishness that Bos argues has been tied into the past as related to the}
relay desperation, pain, and alienation from German because of her persecution in the Holocaust, as well as an anger that people negated her experiences for reasons much like Walser’s. I will explore this example further, compare it to examples where both Deutschkron and Klüger are misunderstood in multiple languages, and thereby demonstrate that the inadequacy of languages (and even multiple languages) to convey trauma results in these two authors relying on all of their languages to express themselves.

A major reason that people misunderstand Klüger and Deutschkron is that within every language there is what Leshem calls, “a framework of collective understanding” (Leshem 12). Essentially, words are only as good at relaying information as the ability of their recipient. Since Jews were a minority in German-speaking countries (both during the Holocaust and at the time of the memoirs’ publication), elements of Jewish life mostly fall outside of the German framework. Because of this, Klüger and Deutschkron often use either Hebrew or Yiddish to represent such things. In the sections that follow, examples will be analyzed that show the impact this has on the narration, as well as the ways that choices like these to use languages other than German contribute to the accuracy of the memoirs.

Klüger mentions the inadequacy of language to represent her excess of trauma several times throughout weiter leben, but a quote from an interview demonstrates why it is so hard for her and Deutschkron to attempt Zeitschaft: “We were completely starved. But it is hard to share experiences like that. You can’t actually describe hunger. You can say two or three sentences about it, but in reality right up to the end of the war everything was infused and underpinned by Holocaust only. There is, therefore, a misunderstanding on both a textual level and a personal one for Klüger, since even close friends of hers negate her suffering in favor of creating a positive, German achievement. Klüger’s writing is neither German (since she is Austrian) nor positive (since the work expresses great pain and an inability to escape ghosts of the past), and this situation is exemplary of the issues surrounding representation of Holocaust trauma through memoir that require both authors to use multiple languages to convey their stories.

8 This will be explored further in the section about Deutschkron’s use of German. (See pgs. 37-38).
hunger” (Doerry). Statements like this one show that despite their best efforts, there are some parts of their trauma that Klüger and Deutschkron cannot impress upon their audience. This thesis will analyze each author language by language to show the ways in which they both combat their inability to express themselves. The examples within those languages will reveal that multilingual persons rely on their abilities outside of their mother tongue to write more than two or three sentences. They do this, “For both events and their representation are ultimately beholden to the forms, language, and critical methodology through which they are grasped,” and Klüger and Deutschkron, wishing to be understood, use every form, language, and methodology they can to attempt Zeitschaft (Young 1).

The following sections will examine each author and the languages she uses in her memoir separately. After a brief summary of the different languages and their functions as a whole, a short autobiography will inform the sections about specific languages that follow. Each language (German, English, Yiddish, and Hebrew for Klüger, German, Hebrew, and Yiddish for Deutschkron) will be discussed at length, using the concepts of Zeitschaft, “unrepresentable excess,” and trauma to examine the role that languages play in these multilingual memoirs. This analysis will demonstrate the inadequacy of German alone to translate the memories of Klüger and Deutschkron into language. Additionally, it will reveal the ways that Hebrew, Yiddish, and English contribute meaning to the memoir that German cannot because the concepts they convey lie outside of German’s “framework of collective understanding.” Klüger and Deutschkron insert other languages with other frameworks to address this inadequacy; viewing these in relation to each other and to German will show the ways in which these two authors attempt to represent the Zeitschaft of the “unrepresentable excess” of trauma resulting from their persecution during the Holocaust through language.
Chapter 2: Ruth Klüger’s weiter leben: eine Jugend

In this chapter, there will be analysis of Ruth Klüger’s weiter leben: eine Jugend through close reading, connections to her biography, and references to established studies on Holocaust memoir. These will show the functions of English, Yiddish, and Hebrew as they stand alongside German throughout the work. Their ability to convey portions of Klüger’s traumatic experience will demonstrate that these secondary languages are an attempt to complement German as she strives to recreate her memories for the reader.

Klüger’s Languages

German is the principal language of weiter leben, and Klüger writes the work to, „Den Göttinger Freunden—ein deutsches Buch“ (Klüger 284). Combined with the fact that it is her native language and the language through which she experienced the Holocaust, her usage of German is a logical one. Despite her assertion to the contrary, weiter leben is not, however, an entirely German book. Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and academic Latin pervade the memoir, representing Klüger’s life experiences before, during, and after World War II. She utilizes these varied languages in an attempt to exorcise her traumatic experiences, in much the same fashion as she tried to exorcise the ghost of her father:

„Ich schrieb ihm Gedichte, deutsche und englische, eine Art Exorzismus, oder vielmehr, ich schrieb sie nicht nur, ich verfaßte sie im Kopf, gedächtnisfreundliche Verse, mit denen ich wie mit leichtem Gepäck herumlaufen konnte, die einzelnen Strophen sozusagen auf der Zunge zergehen ließ und immer wieder ein Wort daran verbesserte. Ich zündete Jahrzeitlichter, wie sie auf Jiddisch heißen, für ihn an, Wachs im Wasserglas, die man in Amerika für diesen Zweck, mit papierenem Aufkleber und teils hebräischer Aufschrift, den Zweck
verbürgend, im Supermarkt in jeder Gegend, wo es Juden gibt, kaufen kann“ (Klüger 35).

This passage not only includes the major languages of weiter leben, it also shows a specific instance where the “unrepresentable excess” of trauma about her father’s disappearance and death cannot be healed through German and English poems or Yiddish commemorative candles with Hebrew writing bought in America. The image of “wax in a water glass with paper stickers, purchasable in a supermarket” demonstrates the inadequacy of Klüger’s rituals to memorialize her father. She treats his memory with respect and commemorates him in the Jewish tradition, but her loss exceeds the comfort of her poetry and a cheap candle. In parallel fashion, her application of so many languages to her “German” memoir reveals German’s inability to bring her trauma to language in a way that attempts to re-create the Zeitschaft in which it occurred. Klüger endeavors to convey her experiences through German, but, unsatisfied in the same way she was with the candles, she turns to other languages for another method of expression for her “unrepresentable excess” of trauma.

Klüger’s Biographical Background

Ruth Klüger was born in 1931 in Vienna. She recalls her upbringing as, “emancipated but not assimilated” (Klüger 42). This essentially meant that her family was not overtly religious, but they celebrated festivals and Klüger’s conception of her Jewishness was stronger at a young age than Deutschkron’s. Her father, Viktor, was a doctor who was arrested for performing an abortion in 1938. After his release from prison on that charge, he attempted to escape through Italy and France. He was turned over to the Nazis by the French government, soon after which he was murdered under unknown circumstances. Like Deutschkron, Klüger and her mother were on their own for a substantial portion of Nazi persecution, but their
experiences of this time period were vastly different. Largely arising from the efficiency of the Viennese Gestapo, Klüger’s city was “purged” of Jews much more quickly than Berlin, where the Deutschkrons lived. Klüger’s mother refused to be separated from her child, and Ruth, therefore, did not immigrate to Palestine on one of the last Kindertransporte. Without the means to pay the Reichfluchtsteuer, Klüger and her mother were deported in 1942 to Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and finally Christianstadt, from which they were able to escape during a death march toward the end of the war in 1945. Post-war, Klüger settled in Bavaria with her mother, who worked in various capacities with organizations helping displaced persons. In Straubing she completed gymnasium and she began study at the University of Regensburg thereafter. She and her mother immigrated to the United States in 1947, settling in New York City. While in New York, she studied English Literature at Hunter College. In 1952, Klüger earned an M.A. in Library Science and German at the University of California, Berkeley. She earned her Ph.D. from Berkeley in 1967 in German. Since then, she has worked as a Germanist and professor at various universities, and is currently Professor Emerita at the University of California, Irvine.

Klüger’s Use of German

Even before the start of Klüger’s weiter leben, the author shows the reader what to expect from the rest of the work. Klüger starts with a quote from Simone Weil, „Das Mißverhältnis zwischen der Einbildung und dem Sachverhalt ertragen. ‘Ich leide. ‘ Das ist besser als: ’Diese Landschaft ist häßlich‘“ (Klüger N.pag.). Klüger’s use of this quote is instrumental to the analysis of her memoir for a variety of reasons. Chiefly, the concept of inadequacy of expression precedes the rest of the work and reconnects with it in various portions of the text. Inclusion of Weil’s quote indicates that no matter the reality of the situation, the feelings, memories, and emotions that accompany it cannot be expressed in a way that nears being complete to anyone.
but the owner of the history being told. That the snippet was written by a noted feminist intellectual and prefaces the memoir is also significant to Klüger and the memoir. Due to the combination of Weil’s biography as a Jewish woman who pursued Christianity, and Klüger’s insistence that while she considers herself to be an atheist, „Trotzdem denke ich theologisches Denken gern mit, und Simone Weil möchte ich gerne entschristianisieren, die Jüdin in ihr finden, die sie verdrängte, und behalten möchte ich die Verquickung von Politik und selbstentfremdender Reflexion,“ the inclusion of this bit of prologue shows Klüger’s resolution to represent her story as honestly as possible from a position of “removed reflection.” (Klüger 254). The quote reminds the reader and Klüger herself that the goal of this memoir is to wade through the gulf between reality and imagination to represent the totality of Klüger’s experience as it exists to her. One of the ways she pursues this objective is through the application of languages that best represent her memories.

Klüger’s quest for accuracy in articulation occurs primarily through use of the German language. Though many of the languages Klüger uses to narrate her memories are complicated and embody both positive and negative experiences, German is the most complex to analyze. Several issues arise from her choice to write in German, not the least of which is the trauma that Klüger endured at the hands of German-speaking torturers. In addition to the fact that the Nazis were German and spoke German from a position of power over people’s lives, there are also instances throughout weiter leben where Klüger expresses disdain and disgust toward people or events through the German language, even during her time in the United States. An episode involving her uncle demonstrates the equation she makes between German, the Holocaust, and general violence—a connection to her past forged in language. She marries her first husband and moves away from her mother who has, per Klüger’s narration, always been dependent upon her.
Her uncle then calls her to berate her for “leaving her mother.” At this point, she notes that this uncle left his own mother behind in Vienna when he emigrated, and that she eventually died in Theresienstadt. In a whirlwind sequence, Klüger then intimates that her uncle uses this opportunity to project his own guilt and self-loathing resultant from leaving his mother behind onto her, and writes, „Ich bilde mir ein zu hören, was hier mitschwingt, Ungesagtes seinerseits: ‚Du hast kein Recht auf dein Leben.’ Er legt auf, unversöhnt, er hat mir die Meinung gesagt, jetzt ist ihm wahrscheinlich besser“ (Klüger 266). Klüger fuses this negative experience to another brutally violent episode from her childhood. She hangs up the phone and screams in the same manner, „Wie als Kind in Wien, als das neurotische Hundsvieh Opapas Papagei in Stücke riß “(Klüger 266). The recollection of Laura the parrot’s death ties this new scream and situation to her “first corpse” (Klüger 40). These passages combine several traumas into an intense moment of agony and “unrepresentable excess,” and demonstrate the inseparability of her Holocaust experiences from violent usages of the German language. The scream in New York is the same scream that resulted from watching a beloved bird torn to shreds, and the interconnection of the two events initiated by the loss of verbal capacity to represent them lies at the heart of Klüger’s failure to re-create her experience.

This section is significant because Klüger attempts to convey the Zeitschaft of the frustration she felt with her uncle and the terror of watching an animal getting killed in the language through which she experienced the major trauma addressed in her work. Her decision to involve herself with German through career and memoir is one about which Mugnolo writes, „Mit dieser Entscheidung und dem erneuten Erlernen der deutschen Sprache brechen in ihr die Dämme der Erinnerung: Nicht mehr in stummen und losen Fragmenten sieht sie nun ihre eigene Geschichte, sondern in größeren Zusammenhängen“ (Mugnolo 227). Essentially, as was
evidenced by the situation involving the parrot and her uncle, German allows her view her “unrepresentable excess” as connected to other life experiences, instead of as random fragments of memory. Goertz directly associates this linking of memory with the concept of Zeitschaft and writes, “A time-escape encompasses the meaning of a place through time and suggests that past occurrences resonate in the language of the present. Divergent memories can and should coexist rather than replace one another” (Goertz 167). In this particular example, Klüger ties many memories together and attempts to express the trauma of the phone call with her uncle through equation with the trauma of her grandpa’s parrot’s death. Klüger thereby uses the German language to contextualize her life during the Holocaust with other memories to give herself the greatest chance of re-creating a time and experience that language cannot express.

Although words fail her in her endeavors, Klüger attempts to create a Zeitschaft of memory largely in German because the language is arguably the aspect of her identity to which she feels most attached. In fact, she is rather annoyed that people locate her identity in Auschwitz, rather than the city in which she was born:

„Auch von mir melden die Leute, die etwas Wichtiges über mich aussagen wollen, ich sei in Auschwitz gewesen. Aber so einfach ist das nicht, denn was immer ihr denken mögt, ich komm nicht von Auschwitz her, ich stamm aus Wien. Wien läßt sich nicht abstreifen, man hört es an der Sprache, doch Auschwitz war mir so wesensfremd wie der Mond. Wien ist ein Teil meiner Hirnstruktur und spricht aus mir, während Auschwitz der abwegigste Ort war, den ich je betrat, und die Erinnerung daran bleibt ein Fremdkörper in der Seele, etwa wie eine nicht operierbare Bleikugel im Leib. Auschwitz war nur ein gräßlicher Zufall“ (Klüger 139).
In addition to showing the attachment that Klüger has to the Vienna that manifests in her thoughts and speech, this passage provides an excellent simile through which to understand the author’s inability to bring her experience to full expression. Not only must Klüger deal with an “unrepresentable excess” of trauma, but in this case, Auschwitz (understood as the representative for her trauma) is also an inoperable bullet that time and words cannot extract. Klüger has a wound from a foreign body that is hidden within herself, and while she and the reader can be aware of its existence through translation into words, they can neither see it entirely nor remove it.

Klüger details her relationship with her mother through the German language. German demonstrates a distance and strain between mother and daughter, particularly because Klüger’s mother refuses to understand or endorse her career choice in German Studies (Klüger 96). The two also do not see eye to eye when it comes to moving beyond the Holocaust through language. In a section where she describes having a closer relationship with the ghosts of her past than with her mother, Klüger explains that she and her mother have “no common language,” and that her concept of who she is differs greatly from her mother’s. Klüger writes, „Meine Mutter ist nicht identisch mit ihrer Sprache, war es nie, ihre Sprache ist wie die Garderobe der Schauspieler, sie sucht sich aus, was gerade in ihre jeweilige Rolle paßt“ (Klüger 255-256). The implication here is that Klüger, in contrast to her mother, is identical to her language and that by virtue of being so, she conveys parts of who she is through usage of specific tongues, instead of simply putting on a show. Klüger is Austrian, speaks German, and cannot cast that off, despite her mother’s wish to do so. She finds a need to confront her past through German instead of through English or another language because it is a part of the Zeitschaft of her memory that she cannot set aside in favor of something else.
Klüger’s use of German makes a defining statement about how she wishes people to perceive her and how she perceives herself. In her work exploring the ghosts of Klüger’s memoir, Siguan notes that this is a compelling issue for psychiatrists exploring identity: „Den Psychiater interessieren weder die Problematisierung von Sprache als Ausdrucksform der Intimität noch die Sprachphilosophie, sondern die Konstruktion des Subjekts, ausgehend von seiner Intimität, seinen Gefühlen, eine Konstruktion, die sich über Sprache und Interkommunikation realisiert“ (Siguan 140). Through this lens, the psychological function of constructing self through communication and language fits into Klüger’s narrative, and the example of interpersonal conflict demonstrates how Klüger’s use of German constructs and reflects upon her identity.

While Klüger uses the German language to construct and connect to her identity as an Austrian and distances herself from her mother in weiter leben, it serves a reverse function in relation to her father. Klüger resents that her mother views him as a weak person, and uses German in various ways throughout the memoir to bond herself to him and describe their relationship as best she can. The structure and nature of German itself is one of the fondest memories Klüger relates about Viktor in the whole work. She writes, „Auf dem kleinen Schild unten am Haus stand ’Frauen- und Kinderarzt‘ und darüber Doktor Viktor Klüger, und ich fand die Verdoppelung der Silbe ’tor‘ lustig, als ich sie zum ersten Mal richtig lesen konnte“ (Klüger 25-26). Her memory of German syllables in her father’s name and the long German list of things Klüger learned or received from her him that follows show the relationship as one centered upon books, chess, and fear. The stories that she remembers from her time as a young girl are also the only things she has left of her father. She nearly admits embarrassment for her “childishness” in memory of him, but when she recalls her father, she was a child. She spoke German, she
connected to him through German, she told him goodbye for the final time in German. It is the German language that gives her these memories, and in order to approach the Zeitschaft inhabited by her father, she necessarily uses German to express the “unrepresentable excess” of her loss.

Klüger reconstructs her father’s final moments in German by inserting knowledge she has of gas chambers in order to attempt closure for herself. She knows that her father was murdered, but she does not know under which circumstances. This leads to dangerous time spent in the very world of imagination against which the introductory Weil quote warns. This is, as she notes on page 29 of weiter leben, an impossibility, and this deviation in German from reality contributes to the inadequacy of expression present throughout the work. Klüger’s contextualization of her father’s murder takes away from its violent reality by pulling what Young calls the “mantle of coherence” (Young 16) around it and inserting it into a story that did not occur in its Zeitschaft. This mantle makes a smooth story out of separate traumatic events by virtue of translation into language within a memoir. Klüger loses the ability to convey the trauma of this situation adequately and honestly because the context is lost through the positioning of the story within a larger narrative. Various sequences throughout weiter leben do the same, and they hinder Klüger’s efforts to express her experiences through language.

In addition to utilizing German as a means by which to identify herself in relation to her family and homeland, Klüger also uses it to alienate herself from specific groups of people throughout weiter leben. Jews who remain in the camps after Klüger escapes and Nazi guards are two main groups in this category. Klüger’s use of German dissociates her from prisoners in a KZ vis-à-vis the feelings of betrayal that escape to “Germany” causes for her. The complicated emotions surrounding her escape are pivotal to the Zeitschaft of that point, and German is
essential to Klüger’s attempt to express the inexpressible. As Klüger, her mother, Ditha (her adopted sister from Auschwitz), and three other women escape, she writes, „In den nächsten Minuten, als wir zu sechst die Straße hinunterliefen und uns immer weiter entfernen von den obdachsuchenden, frierenden, hungrten Häftlingen mit ihrer erzwungenen Geduld, überschritten wir eine Grenze: aus der Lagerwelt nach Deutschland,“ Klüger provides the reader with a picture of the physical boundary that she and her companions crossed en route to crossing another, less concrete one (Klüger 171).

After their escape from the march, Klüger, her mother, and Ditha flee to Straubing in Bavaria. There Klüger goes shopping and encounters a train full of Jewish prisoners on the street. Detailing the otherness of the prisoners and the fact that „Ich hatte ‚uns‘ noch nie von außen gesehen,” Klüger explores the feeling that she is, „[…] ein Fremder aus der Welt der Bewaffneten” (Klüger 184-185). She states explicitly that, „Ich war ein deutsches Kind geworden…“ and that in this line, „[…] da waren sie nun, meine Leute” (Klüger 185). This meeting between Klüger and a group of people to which she recently belonged causes a reversal of identity for her and creates a distance based upon language and circumstance. Although it is not explicitly stated, since Klüger has “become a German child,” the implication from the text is that the prisoners on the street are not. Bearing in mind that the vast majority of Jewish Holocaust victims were not German-speaking or from Germany (Benz 152-153), the fact that Klüger is a German child has both linguistic and geographical implications for the distance between Klüger and her former campmates. This situation is difficult for Klüger, who describes feelings of betrayal and survivor guilt in the surrounding paragraphs. She uses none of the other languages present throughout the memoir in these pages, and this is telling because it unequivocally defines Klüger as a German at that point in time. There arise complications for
her during this time because she is Jewish, a member of that group she sees from a distance, and is not German, but Austrian. The experience conveyed by this section show an attempt to capture and describe a point in time that was intensely emotional, incredibly confusing, and impossible to reclaim fully. Both at the instant of her writing and in the moment she describes, Klüger feels her inability to transmit the gravity of this experience. She stands alone among the other Germans who do not “absorb or perceive” the situation and deny having known about the prisoners when Americans arrive (Klüger 186). „In diesem Sinne hatte nur ich sie gesehen,“ Klüger could argue, both at the time when they were physically on the street and when she is at her desk attempting to re-create a Zeitschaft lost to time and language.

The structure of German and its forms of address create one of the most powerful scenes of distinction between the German and Jewish worlds in the whole memoir. Klüger hears a rumor that there will be leftover scraps outside the kitchen and sneaks out with Ditha and some other women from their barrack after dark. An SS man spots them and calls Klüger over to interrogate her. She truthfully tells him that she heard there would be something to eat, and he slaps her in the face, sending her reeling without her shoes and dinnerware back to the barrack. During the trip from the kitchen to the barrack with the others, the burning consequences of the slap are not Klüger’s main concern, but the form of address, Sie, which is used only for communication between unacquainted adults or from children toward adults, not vice versa. Klüger writes that she complained, saying, „Das Schwein hat mich gesiezt‘, als sei so etwas die Höhe des Hohns…“(Klüger 164). As Klüger writes the memoir, she realizes what she did not at the time—namely that being called Sie is not the height of scorn. The fact, however, that she comments on the situation as 60-year-old Ruth Klüger in Irving, California instead relaying the feelings of 12-year-old Ruth Klüger in Auschwitz detracts from her expression of the Zeitschaft.
She links the two memories in order to get as close as she can to representing a section of her “unrepresentable excess,” but at the same time, she lessens the expression of that traumatic memory as it actually occurred. In this example, the German language provides an incident that she evaluates from a distant time in the future, which lessens the accuracy of the recollection.

The clearest example of German’s insufficiency to represent Klüger’s experience appears through description of a scene in Straubing. She and others in the town hide in a basement during a bombing raid, and miss being hit by a bomb by mere meters. After the all clear, Klüger writes, „Wir zerstreuten uns, gingen unsere Wege und sprachen nicht mehr von dieser Kellerstunde. Gerade über solche extremen Erlebnisse ist ja erstaunlich wenig zu sagen. Menschliches Sprechen ist für anders erfunden und gemeint“ (Klüger 190). It is this example, the thin line between life and death becomes concrete. The entire memoir is an attempt to deal with and express the very emotions that Klüger felt in that cellar: fear of death, luck of survival, and the silence that surrounds “extreme experiences.” In attempt to create the Zeitschaft of her experience, Klüger admits the inadequacy of human language, which was “invented and meant for other things.”

**Klüger’s Use of English**

Since she had been a resident of the United States for over 40 years at the time she wrote weiter leben, it is unsurprising that English is the second most often used language in Klüger’s memoir. For this reason, its usage is nearly as complicated for Klüger as German’s, and there are many elaborate hurdles she must overcome to reconcile her American life with the negative memories she experienced as a result of English-speaking acquaintances over the course of her lifetime. A complication that Klüger has with the English language is the fact that her tutor was a British woman who was also a Nazi sympathizer. Adding insult to injury, her mother liked this
woman for the superficial reason that, „[…] der schöne britische Akzent sei die Hauptsache und die politische Ansichten meiner Lehrerin gingen mich nichts an, ich könnte so oder so was von ihr lernen“ (Klüger 17). This early association of English with negative or aggressive tendencies on the part of those who speak it sets up Klüger’s own usage in her work. Additionally, the approval of this woman and her belief system from her mother, with whom Klüger characterizes the relationship as strained at best, gives the trauma associated with the English language another adverse element. Informed by this background, the ways in which Klüger uses English throughout *weiter leben* fall into certain paradigms that represent her desire to transmit a trauma bigger than the vocabulary of a single language.

Klüger uses an English term from the technological age to make a statement about traumatic memory. This is the most significant instance of the language because she uses an applicable yet inadequate metaphor from outside of the *Zeitschaft* of her memory to represent memory. She writes, „Bei den Computern gibt es ein ‘unerase’-Programm. Gelöschtes kann wieder aufgerufen werden, weil die elektronischen Impulse noch auf der Festplatte oder der Diskette auffindbar sind, solange nicht darübergeschrieben wurde“ (Klüger 271). Klüger uses this section to convey her need to recount her experience through comparison with a mechanical, scientific apparatus to give account of what memory is. In doing so, however, she once again demonstrates the inability of language to transmit testimony, since equating her fluid and multilingual expressions to electrical impulses on a disk drive reduces a dynamic and living process to a set of coded inanimate interactions between energy and chemicals. This usage of English amid the German covering the rest of the page is a flattening of her narrative. By this point in the text, the reader has encountered the snarky, critical, colorful expressions of Klüger for more than 250 pages, and this metaphor does not fit in with the rest of the work. This
particular example of language is inadequate not simply for its inability to portray the trauma of recalling Holocaust memories, but also for its unsuitability stylistically to match the rest of the work. There is “unrepresentable excess” that Klüger cannot incorporate into her memoir in a way that creates *Zeitschaft*. This leads her to use this metaphor to come as close as she can. The fact that it is in English lends credence to its usage, since computers were not commonplace during the Holocaust, but the odd positioning, stylistic differences, and flattening effect show language’s inadequacy to translate memory into words, even as the metaphor itself suggests permanent retention of accessible experience.

A final example of English as a negative and traumatic language unfolds after Klüger has children of her own. She tells her sons that she was in German camps, but their classmates do not believe them:


Her sons speak no German, go to school in the United States, and speak English as their native language. Klüger chooses to represent her children’s rejection at the hands of their classmates in English to make that apparent, but there is another consequence of that decision. This example renders English an additional failure of expression to Klüger’s failure to be understood in German by Germans. Even without delving into the issues of feminism that pervade *weiter*
leben in situations such as this, new complications arise because of this passage. There are now two languages in which people misinterpret or reject her story. About German’s flaws Bos writes:

“The focus in these analyses falls on Klüger’s prewar life as a Jewish girl in Vienna, her miraculous selection that took her out of Auschwitz and saved her life, and on her postwar success as a Germanistin. Little mention is made of the profound desperation to which the memoir attests. Instead, Klüger’s achievement as a postwar academic is hailed as a sign that she managed to become highly successful professionally, and more importantly, that she has ‘returned to Germany,’ after all. For instance, renowned author and critic Martin Walser (in real life a close friend of Klüger’s, after whom the figure of Christoph in weiter leben is modeled), suggests that her work is a ‘miracle of language,’ a Sprachwunder, with which Klüger has achieved a return to Germany. He thereby explicitly ignores that she did in fact not return: ‘regardless of where she now resides…it is not the passport which tells where one belongs, but language…Ruth Klüger has returned to the German language, and in a masterful way.’ This kind of German review is common, even though Klüger herself suggests throughout the entire narrative that this return is in fact not possible” (Bos 79).

Such fundamental misinterpretation of her memoir in Germany is compounded by the unwillingness of Americans to believe that Klüger’s experience was real. Klüger uses a mix of German and English in attempt to remain true to the Zeitschaft she narrates, but there is an excess of experience that cannot be contained within either language. English remains
inadequate to translate her memory in both reality and the memoir, and this causes Klüger to rely on even more languages to try and express her trauma.

**Klüger’s Use of Yiddish**

Although she uses mostly German to write her memoir and impress its details upon her reader, Klüger senses the inadequacy of all languages, not just one, to represent her experiences. She feels that the modes of communication provided by language are simply not meant to carry the weight of near-death situations and writes as much in several places throughout *weiter leben*. Examining her work as a whole, the multilingual Klüger’s sense that her memoir is in some ways an inadequate recounting causes her to employ every language at her disposal to come as close as she can to representing her experience in accurate fashion. Translating her memory into language to achieve this representation also involves relaying herself through her literature, which is complicated by the fact that, „Die erste Feststellung in diesem Problemkontext ist, dass für alle diese Schriftsteller das Ich, das sie aufbauen, ein mit Literatur geradezu ,aufgefülltes‘ Ich ist“ (Siguan 143). In the case of Yiddish, as with the other languages she uses, Klüger does build a “filled in” self, but she does so by filling in the aspects of her story best represented by languages other than German with those very languages.

Yiddish is the language with which Klüger comes nearest to creating *Zeitschaft*. Klüger’s use of Yiddish to describe people and things that no longer exist helps her to distinguish herself as distinct from Jews who perished in the Holocaust, most of whom were Yiddish speakers. She survived, and a majority of the scenes that involve Yiddish in her work detail groups or social structures destroyed by the Nazis. A prime example of this is the first instance of a Yiddish word in the text which occurs on page 12. Klüger uses *Mischpoche*, a Germanized transliteration of the Hebrew and Yiddish word for family to describe people whom she never knew and for
whom she was expected to mourn. Klüger simultaneously tries to define and avoid her extended family in this passage. She detests the notion that she should count the members murdered by the Nazis, chiefly because she never felt close to them. Klüger writes:


Her view that she is more of an “atom alone in the room” instead of a “link in a broken chain.” Klüger finds German inadequate at this point to convey the concept of family as it pertains to the „jüdischen Kreisen auf der ganze Welt“ who feel compelled to count the murdered members of their family and have that number at hand (Klüger 12). Her use of Yiddish at this point suggests an attempt to convey the Zeitschaft of her experience, since right after she uses the Yiddish term, she clarifies with the German „Sippschaft.” At this point in time, she lived in a world that mixed Yiddish and German, both on a linguistic and an experiential level. Her mention of the Yiddish term connects her to her family, but she attempts to convey the complexity of that relationship when she uses German to clarify and distance herself from them right afterward. There is a larger memory of a reality that includes loss, pain, and confusion than can be contained within one language; Klüger therefore uses the applicable ones she has mastered to try and represent an “unrepresentable excess” of trauma.

Another notable example of Klüger’s use of Yiddish is her description of her father’s actions, which eventually led to his death. Klüger frames the segment by telling the reader that
she, “does not like to tell things that she only knows from hearsay,” and continues with her mother’s version of the story:


This is an interesting passage because it is another instance where Klüger uses a Yiddish term for something she could (and does, immediately after) give to the reader in German. Such usage is indicative of her desire to represent her “unrepresentable excess” in a way that allows her to come as close to the Zeitschaft of the situation as possible. Since much of that section is in the form of quotes from her mother, the reader assumes that her mother, not Klüger, originally used the Yiddish. By using an unfamiliar term, especially when a familiar one for readers of German was at her disposal, Klüger tries to relate the situation accurately and as it happened. She wants to make that impression while still being understood (hence the German definition), and tries to use multiple languages to achieve her aims.

The topics and languages in this section also help to set Klüger’s work apart from other survivor memoirs. In her work about memory in Klüger’s and Delbo’s memoirs, Goertz writes, “Whether emphasizing issues of language, discursive strategies, the body, or gender, Charlotte Delbo and Ruth Klüger challenge readers to experience memory ‘from the inside,’ that is, from the perspective of a survivor, beyond words on a page and beyond the superficial layers of memory that have been spun around the Holocaust” (Goertz 179). Essentially, by using multiple
languages and delving into issues of women’s health, Klüger gives the reader insight into the
world that is often neglected in other works of testimony. She does this to give emotion to her
narrative, especially since her father was a doctor who performed abortions (even on his own
wife) out of sympathy for their situations, and who would end up murdered for that “crime.”
The Yiddish *Rachmones* symbolize the compassion that Viktor Klüger had for a poor young
woman and for his own Jewish household in virulently anti-Semitic Vienna. A short passage
thereby represents the trauma that Klüger’s father’s death causes her, and becomes her attempt to
deal with the “unrepresentable excess” that surrounds it.

The final example where Klüger uses Yiddish to enhance the *Zeitschaft* of her memoir
describes a trauma at the hands of her mother after they escape the death march. They are on the
run and looking for food and shelter. During this time, Ditha and her mother try to keep her out
of sight because she is the “most Jewish” of the three:

„Mich versuchte man ohnehin im Hintergrund zu halten, wenn nicht gar zu
verstecken, weil ich so unverkennbar jüdisch aussähe, wie Ditha und meine
Mutter mir unentwegt vorhielten. Von uns drei entsprach ich dem landläufigen
Bild vom Juden am ehesten, nicht nur dem Aussehen nach, auch weil ich in
Christianstadt viel Jiddisch gelernt hatte und, wenn ich nicht scharf aufpaßte,
leicht eine jiddische Redewendung gebrauchte. Zudem kritisierten die beiden mit
Vorliebe meine Körperhaltung, meine Bewegungen und meine Art zu gehen, zum
Beispiel mit den Händen auf dem Rücken. Wie ein Bocher in Cheder (ein
Schüler in einer orthodoxen Schule), spotteten sie, was mich nicht wenig ärgerte“
(Klüger 178).

27
In this section, Klüger uses Yiddish to distance herself from her mother and friend. Klüger resents the judgment that she is too Jewish to be out for extended periods in the streets, and then includes a Yiddish insult from them in the memoir. They call her an orthodox elementary school student in Yiddish, which is ironic because Klüger mentions earlier that she was, „Ein dunkelhaariges, verhungertes Sträflingskind, das aber einwandfreies Deutsch sprach, ein Mädchen noch dazu, ungeeignet für diese Arbeit, eine, die in die Schule gehörte“ (Klüger 157).

The pain is twofold because she struggles with her Jewish identity due to its link with her persecution, but also because she frequently notes that she belonged in school, not in camps. An “unrepresentable excess” of trauma surrounding this situation manifests in the use of multiple languages, wherein Klüger expresses her pain by inclusion of the Yiddish phrase to represent her experience more accurately within its Zeitschaft. Without Yiddish, much of the gravity and irony would disappear from the narration, and Klüger’s story would be further away from the translation of memory into language that it seeks. With Yiddish as a complement to German, however, she represents this struggle more subtly and more completely than she could with German alone.

Klüger’s Use of Hebrew

Klüger, like Deutschkron, uses a fair amount of Hebrew in her memoir. Hebrew in weiter leben is either a reference with positive connotations about hope and festivals or negatively connoted to the Holocaust and prayers. Also like Deutschkron, Klüger’s Hebrew words are all transliterated from the Hebrew alphabet, and some of them take on different spellings than the standard German translations. Klüger uses Hebrew to represent a part of Jewish culture that lies outside of what Leshem calls a “framework of collective understanding” (Leshem 12) for German readers; as such, Hebrew helps her to distinguish herself as Jewish
within the sea of German in her narrative and is an attempt to portray her experience as it occurred. The blending of Hebrew words into the Roman alphabet also suggests a blending of identity for Klüger, whose narrative is a veritable mixture of German and Jewish life.

The most positive memory that Klüger narrates using Hebrew is from her time in Theresienstadt. In her room at the camp, the young girls became enthralled by Zionism, something Klüger calls “the obvious answer” to finding a way out of their situation. This passage contains multiple translated Hebrew words that attempt to portray the camaraderie of this place and time:

„Wir lernten was wir konnten, über die Geschichte der zionistischen Bewegung und über das Land Palästina, das wir Erez Israel nannten, wir sangen zionistische Lieder und tanzten stundenlang die Hora im Kasernenhof, ließen uns mit ‚Chaverim und Chaveroth‘ (‘Kameraden und Kameradinnen‘) ansprechen, und abends vor dem Einschlafen sagten wir ‚Leila tov‘ statt ‚Gute Nacht‘“ (Klüger 90).

This section demonstrates Klüger’s near fondness for Theresienstadt, as well as her desire to distinguish herself from her torturers. When she mentions that Modern Hebrew, socialist terms were used for address, that the Hebrew (Biblical and Modern) name for Palestine was the goal for these children, and that they told each other good night in Modern Hebrew instead of in their native languages, Klüger attempts to re-create a Zeitschaft of defiance and hope. The defiance stems from the reclamation of language and identity through a new common tongue, resisting against Ferme’s concept of homogenization. There were Jews of many nationalities within the camps, and not all of them shared German with their oppressors as Klüger did. This harkens back to the situation within Levi’s work were he and the other Italians were unable to
communicate in the language of the camp. Ferme writes of Levi’s *If This is a Man*, “By taking away the prisoners’ clothes, their hair, and their language, the Nazis have begun the process by which personal and linguistic differences are transformed into the muted sameness they require of their victims” (Ferme 55). Klüger and her bunkmates take back their differences and refuse to be silenced by the trauma of the camp. Their use of the language spoken exclusively in the “escape” from their situation offers hope of living there and leaving the “muted sameness” behind. Klüger tries to convey the *Zeitschaft* of Theresienstadt when she was there through use of the language that helped her to persevere. The insertion of so many terms outside of the German lexicon, some of which Klüger feels the need to define in German, demonstrate that this experience was not containable by one language, and that she felt the need to attempt representation of “unrepresentable excess” through usage of another.

Unfortunately, Hebrew is not only a language of positivity and hope in *weiter leben*. Klüger discusses the Holocaust as phenomenon during the section where she details her time in concentration camps. The insanity of the events that occurred between 1933 and 1945 has haunted her for years:

„Schon damals hat mich der Gedanke gestreift, der heute leider bei mir noch tiefer sitzt als die Empörung über das große Verbrechen, nämlich das Bewußtsein der Absurdität des Ganzen, das Widersinnige daran, die völlige Sinnlosigkeit dieser Morde und Verschleppungen, die wir Endlösung, Holocaust, die jüdische Katastrophe und neuerdings die Shoah nennen, immer neue Namen, weil uns die Worte dafür schnell im Munde faulen“ (Klüger 148).

Klüger demonstrates the inadequacy of language to represent the trauma of the Holocaust by using two languages, German and Hebrew, showing the progression of nomenclature that
accompanies this inadequacy. She uses several German terms, and the Hebrew one, Shoah, to portray the absurdity of using language to represent the Holocaust. In the same way that the senseless murder of millions evades logic, that event evades linguistic representation. “Lazy words,” even when they come from multiple languages, are not enough to convey the trauma of the Holocaust for the collective, nor are they sufficient for Klüger.
Chapter 3: Inge Deutschkron’s *Ich trug den gelben Stern*

This chapter, following the paradigm of the Klüger chapter before it, will explore Inge Deutschkron’s usage of languages in her work. A summary of this usage, biographical information, and then separate sections about German, Hebrew, and Yiddish will demonstrate the ways in which Deutschkron uses multiple languages in an attempt to express her “unrepresentable excess” in her memoir.

**Deutschkron’s Languages**

German is a problematic language for Deutschkron, not only in a personal, but also in a narrative sense. Deutschkron, like Klüger, is a woman who “[…] now lives in two worlds and enjoys the best of both” (Reis). She describes her life in two worlds in an interview, where she explains, “What ties me to Israel is all the members of my generation who were persecuted. We share a common language. But,’ she adds, ‘the language of Berlin is the only one in which I can make myself understood completely. It is my culture, my atmosphere’” (Reis). This quote demonstrates the attachment that Deutschkron has with Germany and the German language, and also suggests that there is an excess in the experience of Holocaust survivors that cannot be translated completely from memory to language. This arises because the quote conflicts with the reality of the narrative structure of the memoir. True, German, the “language of Berlin” pervades the work, but there is a significant amount of other tongues scattered throughout the work. She uses languages she speaks (Hebrew, English) and languages she only encounters briefly (Yiddish, Russian) to convey as much of her experience as possible. In light of the quote above, this raises questions about Deutschkron’s usage of the other languages: If she can make herself totally understood in German, what reason does she have to utilize other languages in her memoir? I argue that she does this because there is so much story to tell and not enough words
or connotations in one language to do so. This excess comes in the form of complicated emotions about a country of refuge, an inability to state a feeling of difference from some groups of Jews plainly, or word play that reveals resistant behavior. Through these avenues, she uses multiple languages to try and recount an “unrepresentable excess” in as representative a fashion as she can.

### Deutschkron’s Biographical Background

Inge Deutschkron was born in Finsterwalde in 1922 to atheist, socialist parents. The family moved to Berlin in 1927. Her Jewish identity was not particularly strong as she was growing up, specifically as concerns religious aspects. In fact, she notes on the first page of her memoir that she was ten years old the first time she was informed that she was Jewish, under the admonition from her mother that, „‘Du bist Jüdin’…‘Du mußt den anderen zeigen, daß du deshalb nicht geringer bist als sie’” (Deutschkron 9). This quote characterizes much of her interaction with Judaism; for the most part, that element of her identity surfaces when she is proud of herself for her heritage or when she questions society in various places throughout her memoir. During the war, her family relocated several times to increasingly smaller quarters. While moving from place to place, they had several close calls with the Gestapo, owing largely to her parents’ involvement with the SDP. Her father, Martin, a veteran of World War I and a multilingual teacher, lost job after job during this process due to being Jewish. He immigrated to Britain before the worst parts of the “Final Solution” were in place, but Inge and her mother, Ella, were forced to stay behind in Berlin and survive the war in hiding due to financial circumstances and immigration policies. They stayed with several different families from 1943, when Martin left, until the end of the war, during which time they received aid from friends and did anything they could to survive. One of their benefactors was Otto Weidt, a man honored
posthumously as “Righteous Among the Nations” by Yad Vashem for helping several Jews, many of whom were blind and worked in his “blind workshop.” He was instrumental in supporting Inge and Ella when they went into hiding through arrangements for food and safe places to stay. Inge and Ella, through their own savvy and the assistance of others, were never discovered or captured by the Nazis, despite a few close calls, and their experience of persecution as told by Deutschkron is different from that narrated in most Holocaust memoirs because of this. In 1946, Deutschkron and her mother joined Martin in Britain. Deutschkron studied languages there, but due to animosity from the government and a general feeling of uneasiness that stemmed from being termed an “enemy alien” when she immigrated, Deutschkron returned to Germany in 1955 (Reiss). She took a job as a correspondent with the Israeli newspaper *Ma’ariv*, and moved to Israel in 1972. Deutschkron now splits her time between Tel Aviv and Berlin. In Berlin she works to raise awareness of the Germans who aided Jews during the Holocaust through chairing the *Förderverein Blindes Vertrauen*, her support of the *Museum Blindenwerkstatt Otto Weidt*, and public speaking events.

**Deutschkron’s Use of German**

German for Deutschkron is similar to German for Klüger in one major way. It is a language of the past for both authors. When Deutschkron wrote *Ich trug den gelben Stern* in 1978, she had been living in Israel for six years, and was disillusioned with the Germany to which she had returned in 1955 (FitzGerald). For this reason, the photocopied letter to her father that appears before the opening pages of the memoir is quite fitting. When detailing her impetus for writing the memoir, she explains, “will ich versuchen nachträglich für Dich ein Tagebuch zu führen damit Du mitleben kannst, was uns in diesen furchtbaren Jahren unserer Trennung hier geschah“ (Deutschkron N.p). Due to its position, this letter serves not only to show
Deutschkron’s desire to share her experiences with her father, but also with those who read the memoir that follows it. The words that she writes on those first pages and throughout are an attempt to convey reality that must be filled in for the reader due to a gap in time and proximity, either in the period between seeing her father off to England and seeing him again post-war, or in the time between the occurrences and the moment she began to write her memoir. German, the main language of the work, is, therefore, complicated because of the detachment of time, place, and ideology it represents. The fact that it was the language of the oppressor that most immigrant survivors subsequently abandoned (Bos 72) also adds to the complexity of its use. The following section will examine more closely the implications of a socialist, Zionist Holocaust survivor writing in her native tongue/the native tongue of her persecutors three decades after the end of Nazi rule. This analysis will show that while German is the best chance Deutschkron has to represent the Zeitschaft of her memory, it falls short due to the aforementioned chronological, geographical, and worldview chasms. This means it must rely on other languages to try and complete a representation that ultimately fails to bridge these rifts between the narrative and Deutschkron’s experience of “unrepresentable excess.”

There are complications with the relationship between Deutschkron and German from the start. During the process of his emigration, her father registers himself with the Gestapo. The clerk checks his name and asks, „„Sie heißen Deutschkron?’ Ohne Antwort abzuwarten, brüllte er: „Ein Jude hat kein Recht, einen Namen zu tragen, in dem das Wort deutsch vorkommt!“ (Deutschkron 51). In this instance, a family of assimilated German Jews, whose name itself contains the German word for German, is denied the right to be who they are. This is the central issue of Deutschkron’s inability to express the excess in her story. There is no language or even set of languages that can represent the crisis of identity and betrayal that Deutschkron felt when
she was denied her name and nationality. In this case, it is the irony of her use of German to recount her loss of German-ness (both in a linguistic and legal way) that is as close as she can come to describing her emotions to the reader. Additionally, episodes like this problematize her relationship with her native language, further stripping her of the ability to express herself by virtue of self-doubt and feelings of exclusion. For this reason, she chose to use a particular situation, narrated in German, as a symbol for many other situations, illustrating both the moment she describes and the enormity of confusion and suffering that surrounded her loss of identity.

For Deutschkron, German is also a language of contradictions that highlights the complex nature of the history she tells in *Ich trug den gelben Stern*. She uses her mother tongue to express her identity and desire to be read as a German woman, but the language and the situations she describes with it barrage her comfort in that role with self-doubt and pain. As noted previously, her Jewishness was not a major identifying factor for Deutschkron, and since she uses German to state as much on the first page of the work, one sees that she attempts to connect herself to Germany through language as much as through narration. Many of these instances of self-identification involve situations where German, though the native language of the author, serves to disconnect Deutschkron from the world of German and Germans in subtle fashion. In these cases, it is not necessarily the description of emotion surrounding the events that makes this distinction; Deutschkron’s biography and a knowledge of history of the period allow the reader to interpret representative sentences in a way that aids understanding and helps Deutschkron to impress portions of the *Zeitschaft* that was living illegally in 1940s Berlin as a Jew.
An area where Deutschkron’s use of German disconnects her from her German identity and stands for a large and indescribable pain involves the language as an agent of discomfort and fear. Early in *Ich trug den gelben Stern*, she describes phrases she remembers playing continuously over German radio, „Ständig ertönte im deutschen Rundfunk: ‚denn wir fahren, denn wir fahren, denn wir fahren gegen Engeland‘ und ‚Heute gehört uns Deutschland und morgen die ganze Welt‘“ (Deutschkron 64). This is an example of German serving as a barrier and alienating element in her memoir. She hears words that to other Germans are comforting and encouraging, while, „Für uns Juden war das alles unheimlich; Furcht erfüllte uns. Was sollte geschehen, wenn Hitler wider Erwarten den Krieg gewinnen würde? Die kleine Frau Oppenheimer, ihr Mann einst Anwalt und Freund meines Vaters, sagte es meiner Mutter im Gespräch auf der Straße: ‚Wir werden das nicht erleben. Für uns wird es kein Überleben geben‘“ (Deutschkron 64). In this example, the reader once again sees native Germans in fear because of what “victory” for their own country, described with their own language, implies for them. Success for the group who identify as German means the annihilation of the group whom the Nazis identify as Jewish. This has far-reaching social and political effects for people such as the author, who identifies herself with both groups. Specifically, in the case of Deutschkron’s family, patriotic, politically engaged citizens are forced to abandon support for their country because its success includes their demise. Through narration of the simpler situation of German radio broadcasting propaganda and the adverse reaction of some Jews to it, Deutschkron uses fewer words with more nuance to illustrate this “unrepresentable excess” of identity crisis and terror. Deutschkron uses this passage and others like it to create as much *Zeitschaft* as she can. She falls short of completely capturing the moment, but her use of German in a situation where
she feels alienated by German comes closer to expressing the reality of her experience than another language could have.

As the main language of *Ich trug den gelben Stern*, German factors heavily into Deutschkron’s quest to express chapters of a tortuous past, such as the one above. The truth remains, however, that she can neither reconcile with herself nor explain to others. In fact, German and the connections (or lack thereof) it makes between her and the German people contain what for Deutschkron is arguably the most frustrating part of living and witnessing as a Holocaust survivor. Her own mother tongue fails to convey her message adequately, and even worse, causes her to be misunderstood in much the same way as Klüger. Her memoir leads to lectures from people who tell her not to expect others to understand or accept her testimony as truth. She also encounters and details the enormity of the past and the inability of non-survivors to grasp it in *Ich trug den gelben Stern*. Deutschkron maintains a generally positive attitude throughout most of her memoir, even in light of these complex and frustrating ties to German. There are, however, situations such as toward the end of the work, where she becomes bitter about a lack of understanding and compassion from her German colleagues and friends. Exasperated, she writes:

unbedeutende Zahl von Unverbesserlichen. Im übrigen rieten sie mir, nicht die Vergangenheit zu Richtschnur meine Denkens und Handelns zu machen und dies auch nicht von anderen zu verlangen. Diese Haltung war mir um so unverständlicher, als ich zum heutigen Tag nicht begreifen kann, wie es möglich war, daß Menschen zu so bestialischen Morden fähig sein konnten. Diese schreckliche Frage mußte doch jeden quälen!” (Deutschkron 196-197).

This section demonstrates the main complication of creating *Zeitschaft* for Deutschkron in the German language. Directly before this passage, she criticizes the fact that very few Germans risked death to help save Jews, and that those who did receive recognition for doing so were often viewed ambivalently by the German public. Following that lamentation of misunderstanding, Deutschkron handles the issues that surrounded getting Germans to believe her story and to understand the enormity of the horror she sought to explain. In essence, Deutschkron has found that neither of her two biggest causes (attempting to describe 1940s Berlin as she experienced it and seeking recognition for benefactors of Jews) are comprehensible to a public that speaks the same language as she does. This passage, therefore, is the culmination and symbolic representation of a memoir’s worth of alienation and oppression at the hands of Germans and the German language.

Deutschkron is not alone in her frustration. All of the issues that she encounters with German demonstrate a larger problem of expression for Holocaust survivors. Deutschkron is a German, has a German frame of reference, and communicates most fluently in the German language. Similarly to the previous example, it would stand to reason that she could express herself and be understood by other Germans. The enormity of her trauma, coupled with her identity as a Jew, renders such an exchange impossible. By using words to convey her story she
has translated memory into a medium for which it is not suited. Leshem speaks specifically to this point when he writes,

“However this translation of amorphous and overwhelming events into lexical choices limits the possibility of communication. Words can communicate only within a framework of collective understanding. Communities of speakers establish the definitions of words based on daily needs. Liminal experiences fall outside of normal linguistic paradigms. In testimony, survivors communicate these excesses through infusing meaning into silences, generic ruptures and a variety of other means” (Leshem 12).

In this passage, Leshem points out that a language is only as good as the comprehension of its speakers. Because of this, when Holocaust survivors seek to communicate their experiences to others, they must do so through different methods because language simply is not equipped to handle the trauma therein. As in the testimonies described by Leshem, Deutschkron relies upon the meaning of words left unwritten, alienation via ruptures between herself and her native language, and the infusion of other languages to attempt portrayal of an experience that exists on the edge of indescribability. In such examples, the silence and absence of further explanation carry meaning that the reader must infer based upon outside knowledge. Deutschkron personally does not require that sort of knowledge, because when the situations occurred, she was present in the Zeitschaft that cannot be replicated for the reader. Ruptures in Deutschkron’s sense of German identity that arise due to the language are another effort on her part to explain the complexity of being a German who could neither support Germany, nor belong to it. Her infusion of other languages materializes as an answer for the inadequacy of expression connected to the ruptures and filled silences. In sum, a lack of “collective understanding” on the part of
Germans during the war and after causes her to seek words outside of “normal linguistic paradigms” through which she can represent her experience.

In addition to expressing frustration, German also plays a more positive role in *Ich trug den gelben Stern*. Another reason that Deutschkron clings to German and chooses it as the language of her memoir is that she seeks to reclaim the identity she lost when her name was taken from her, when her ability to be a proud German citizen ceased to exist, and when her countrymen either chose not to understand or were unable to comprehend the essence of her story. These effects are the most extreme consequences of Nazi persecution for Deutschkron.

She and her mother suffered great hardship during the war, and the scars of that time are visible throughout Deutschkron’s narration. The lasting impact is that this horror takes away her ability to express herself in German. This is a product of disregard for Deutschkron’s German identity and a situation Ferme describes from Primo Levi’s *If This is a Man*: “By taking away the prisoners' clothes, their hair, and their language, the Nazis have begun the process by which personal and linguistic differences are transformed into the muted sameness they require of their victims” (Ferme 55). Deutschkron’s hair and clothing remain intact, but the regime strips her of efficacy of language and German identity. As an immigrant survivor, her unusual choice to write in German is an attempt to reclaim that German identity and an assertion of the same. Despite the issues surrounding this choice, it is a deliberate one. Essentially, writing in German is an attempt to frame the majority of her *Zeitschaft* in as authentic a context as possible.

Although German is certainly a problematic language for Deutschkron, she also has great attachment to it due to her desire for authenticity and the creation of *Zeitschaft*. She conveys this in part when she writes that after the war had ended her and her mother, „hatten Hunger wie alle Deutschen” (Deutschkron 182). This connection to German identity through the German
language is not without its complications. Despite surviving and suffering like all Germans did, she explains, „Wir waren noch ‚die Richters,‘ denn wir hatten keine Ahnung, wie wir zu unserer Identität zurückkehren könnten“ (Deutschkron 182). She and her mother still lived under an assumed identity for their protection, and this created a crisis for them after the war when they tried to reclaim their true identities as Deutschkrons. As much as any other excerpt, this one demonstrates the crux of Deutschkron’s memoir. Without writing it explicitly, Deutschkron expresses her connection to German life through the German language, while also revealing the identity and agency it took from her. Simple, factual statements in German serve as Deutschkron’s vehicle of choice to convey the immense suffering that she cannot discuss openly in another fashion.

In an endeavor to create Zeitschaft, Deutschkron also seeks to redefine herself to the reader. Her experiences during the Holocaust distance Deutschkron from her German identity, and the inability of some German speakers to understand elements of that identity is significant; since there are portions of identity and the “framework of understanding” that do not overlap between these parties, this mandates that Deutschkron reconstruct herself in Ich trug den gelben Stern. Siguan, moreover, argues that the representation of experience and the representation are inextricably linked. About the experience of Holocaust survivors who write memoirs, she notes: „Sie wollen den Schmerz, die Erfahrung des radikal Bösen, die Erfahrung der Auslöschung, die sie überlebt haben, zur Sprache bringen, um Zeugen dafür zu sein, um überhaupt überleben zu können, um auf diese Weise eine eigene Identität aufzubauen“ (Siguan 140). In light of this, who she was and who she currently is are enormous parts of the Zeitschaft that Deutschkron seeks to represent as she writes her memoir. She uses German because she identified and identifies herself as a German. She uses other languages, as will be explored in the following
sections, to construct portions of her identity that do not strictly coincide with that German identity and to try and present herself fully as she was under Nazi persecution.

**Deutschkron’s Use of Hebrew**

Hebrew is the first foreign language Deutschkron mentions in the memoir, and it carries additional meaning for her because it is a Semitic language. Despite her atheistic upbringing, Hebrew becomes an important connection between Deutschkron and the world of Judaism when she begins to learn it in middle school (Deutschkron 26). Even though it is not a language that most people in Germany spoke, the ways in which Deutschkron uses it are closely intertwined with the German language and her German identity. Three times throughout *Ich trug den gelben Stern*, she uses Hebrew to demonstrate her father’s sense of humor about their situation, describe an intense episode of anti-Semitism, and represent her Jewish identity. Due to the small number of Jews who lived in Germany (as a percentage of the population), Hebrew was not a commonly spoken language. One might assume, for that reason, that Hebrew would only play the role of alienating factor from German identity in Deutschkron’s work. This is not, however, the case, as Deutschkron prefers transliteration into German over using the Hebrew alphabet, and one of the occurrences involves a play on words between German and Hebrew. In sum, Hebrew gives Deutschkron an eloquent method through which to portray the positive and negative excesses that German alone could not. Deutschkron moves a complex issue of identity closer to description through utilization of multilingual ability. Her world during the Holocaust mixed the two languages through transliteration and description of terms outside of German contextual understanding; in order to attempt *Zeitschaft*, she must combine and include them in *Ich trug den gelben Stern* as well.
The most significant and personal usage of Hebrew in *Ich trug den gelben Stern* appears in Deutschkron’s description of a joke from her father. In 1938, German Jews were forced to obtain Jewish identification papers and to change their middle names to either Sara for females or Israel for males. His *Witz* actually involves a mixture of Yiddish, Hebrew, and German. Deutschkron describes it as follows:


In this scene, Deutschkron’s father uses the Yiddish *Zores* to create the pun via its similarity to the pronunciation of the German Sara. Since *Zores* is taken from the Hebrew *Zaroth* and Deutschkron acknowledges as much, there is an added layer of associations that come into play. The first progression from one language to another creates a bridge between Deutschkron and “other” Jews who speak Yiddish in a lighthearted fashion. Her explanation of the origins of *Zores* connects her German identity and the Yiddish-speaking identity under the umbrella of Hebrew. On the whole, a crisis of German identity caused by mandatory name changes results in a strengthening of ties to her Jewish identity, while still maintaining a rooting in the world of German through the pun. This is a prime example of Deutschkron using multiple languages to express an excess that she cannot represent accurately in order to create *Zeitschaft*.

The second instance of Hebrew in the text is an example of cultural appropriation used to alienate the Deutschkrons in humiliating fashion. After *Kristallnacht* and a mere five pages later, Deutschkron and her parents are accosted on the street by a barber. As they pass by, he yells,
„Telech man, du Jude, telech man!” (Deutschkron 35). Deutschkron notes that “his fat face expressed Schadenfreude” as he told the family to leave in a mixture of Hebrew and German. She does not give details about the origins of this man’s Hebrew knowledge, but his use of the language is certainly a unique brand of anti-Semitism. Her father tries to hurry the family away from the bellowing man; her mother, however, has other plans. She hurls a pile of insults at the man in a fit that arose due to the fact that she “knew no fear.” It is telling that Deutschkron narrates her mother’s response in German, and the insults themselves are in German. A man with seemingly no Jewish identity appropriates the language bound to that identity to insult the Deutschkrons on the basis of their Jewish identity. Ella Deutschkron insults this “verfluchtes Schwein” using her own language as retribution for this offense. She reestablishes herself as German through this passage, and defends one of her identities with the language of another, representing the strength of both. This sequence thereby demonstrates the Deutschkrons’ willingness to live as multidimensional individuals who assert themselves, even when the risk of doing so is great. This is another instance where her infusion of other languages into the storyline enhances her ability to convey meaning in a fashion that comes closer to capturing reality. There is still “unrepresentable excess” stemming from the inadequacy of memory translated into words, but using different languages with connotations outside of the German “framework of understanding” described by Leshem allows Deutschkron to come nearer to Zeitschaft.

Deutschkron’s final usage of Hebrew is another transliteration used in a positive manner. She details her parents’ “overnight” conversion to Zionism that occurred after Kristallnacht. This is a situation that shows the reader the growth the Deutschkron undergoes between her childhood and her life after the war because at this point in the text, she feels differently than
some of her classmates about living in Erez Israel. Unlike other students who would find living there “the height of fortune,” Deutschkron writes that, “Ich fand das ein wenig albern und kam mir sehr viel erwachsen und ausgeglichener vor, indem ich die Argumente meiner Eltern akzeptierte, daß das alles vorübergehen würde und wir gewiß eines Tages wieder in Ruhe und Frieden in Berlin leben könnten” (Deutschkron 47). In light of her strong Zionistic leanings after the war and her decision to live in Israel because Germany was still too anti-Semitic in the 50s, this passage is significant. Zionism seeks to establish a country and life for Jews in the land of Israel, and Erez Israel is a prominent focus in other parts of Judaism. Deutschkron’s move from accepting her parents’ beliefs about the war and preference to remain in Germany to a completely opposite perspective demonstrates two things to the reader. Firstly, it shows Deutschkron’s development from a child to an adult with her own opinions. Secondly, and more pertinently to my argument, it shows Deutschkron’s attempt at Zeitschaft. In this section, she has not changed her memory of the past to reflect her current views, but rather uses a Hebrew word to express the unspoken in the text; namely her transition from a teenager to a young woman, with all of the trauma of the Holocaust and its effects on her politics and beliefs. Instead of allowing her views at the time of writing tint her portrayal (as she does with Yiddish in examples to follow), Deutschkron’s honesty and clarity helps her to relate her actual experience to the reader through her use of language.

**Deutschkron’s Use of Yiddish**

As in Klüger's, Yiddish plays a role in Deutschkron’s work. It is less represented in sheer number of occurrences in the text, but it carries the same (if not more) significance for the aims of the memoir. Despite comparable impact on the narration, Deutschkron’s use of Yiddish has fewer layers than Klüger’s, and carries a similar message with every usage. In weiter leben, the
examples of Yiddish used as an alienating factor are the exception rather than the rule. Deutschkron flips that on its head, and never mentions or quotes Yiddish without an air of difference or disdain. In fact, Yiddish often stands to represent national difference for her, since the two instances of the language in the text are quotes from either Russians or Poles. This usage represents a truth and underlying theme that is either too difficult or too painful to state in German: Because she is neither Russian, nor Polish, nor a shtetl Jew, Deutschkron’s connection to the Judaism most closely associated with the Holocaust is not a strong one. Her family was assimilated, and her descriptions of Yiddish speakers and non-assimilated Jews demonstrate as much.

This distance between Deutschkron and Yiddish speakers during the time of World War II will be detailed in examples to follow, but parts of her biography also inform her assertion of difference throughout Ich trug den gelben Stern. Deutschkron has additional bias against Yiddish-speaking Jews that arises from her post-war politics. The last words of her memoir are, „Umstrittene politische Reaktionen des Staates Israel sind oft Ausdruck des Trotzes und der Ungeduld, der Ungeduld eines Volkes, das so viel Leid erfahren hat und sein Überleben garantiert wissen will“ (Deutschkron 198). In this section, she describes her feeling of belonging to Israel, a place where, „Ich hatte keine mehr ‚Verständigungsschwierigkeiten’ wie in Deutschland“ (Deutschkron 197). These two passages illustrate that Deutschkron has found a home in a country where people have similar experiences to hers and where a major aim of the government and citizens is to make sure, „[...] daß sich Juden nie mehr wie Schlachtvieh abführen lassen würden“ (Deutschkron 197).

Deutschkron’s choice to write in German from Israel, then, with far more references in transliterated Hebrew than Yiddish, demonstrates her socialist, Zionist postwar Judaism. With
declarations like the one at the end of her work, she aligns herself with the active, defensive movement of Zionism, one that replaced the thriving world of Yiddish-speaking eastern European Jewry destroyed in the Holocaust. In the years after the war, Zionists in Israel rebuked Ashkenazi culture, in which pacifism and a willingness to die for the sanctification of the name of God were points of criticism (Katz 309). A “failure to go down fighting” (Katz 309) by Yiddish-speaking diaspora Jews explains why Deutschkron, an atheist and Hebrew speaker, also tries to distance herself from Yiddish due to her beliefs. She survived by ignoring orders, choosing a path of great risk and effort, and cannot identify with those who, as a majority, did not.

Her portrayal of Yiddish helps Deutschkron to make these distinctions between herself and Yiddish-speaking Jews, but it also fails at creating Zeitschaft because it pulls in other times to give weight to another. Deutschkron’s parents did not become Zionists until right before her father emigrated, and she does not write of any strong ties to Zionism until late in Ich trug den gelben Stern. Also, although there were certainly differences between Yiddish speakers and assimilated Jews, the major battles between Yiddish and Hebrew occurred in Israel at this time, not in the diaspora. For this reason, the reader can see that her experiences with Zionism and the like are stronger after the war. This essentially means that in detailing a specific time, she gives extra weight to ideas and positions that she did not have when she experienced it. She cannot re-create the timescape of her life in Berlin through Yiddish because she cannot separate her life and feelings nearly 30 years later from those events.

Deutschkron’s use of Yiddish in her work, then, does not seek to represent the immense, “Jewish heritage that was tragically destroyed in Europe,” but rather to separate the author from that heritage through language and culture without requiring her to state as much explicitly (Bilik
Deutschkron is and wishes to be read as a German who happens to be Jewish, not as a Jew who happens to be German. In tandem with the rest of the memoir, this distinction through Yiddish causes separation nearly as stark as the one between Deutschkron and the German public that arises through German. Once again, it is language through which she experiences that difference as she first perceived, and language through which she tries to capture it to represent that lost Zeitschaft.

In addition to the fact that she views the young Jewish girls in her school as smaller and weaker than the other students (Deutschkron 23), Deutschkron also views Yiddish speakers and outwardly “Jewish-looking” adults in a light that is neither positive nor in line with the way she identifies herself. She describes Lotte, another Jew who hid in Berlin during the war, as, „[…] groß und dunkel” (Deutschkron 135). She then explains that she was ashamed to be in Lotte’s presence, „Ich schäme mich, es zuzugeben, aber ich ging nicht gern neben ihr—sie sah meines Erachten jüdisch aus, oder was man damals darunter verstand“ (Deutschkron 135). This distance from these “other” Jews throughout her life is uncomfortable for Deutschkron, who left Germany again due to anti-Semitism, lived in Israel, and is a prominent Zionist. It is for this reason I argue that Yiddish serves the purpose of alienating Deutschkron from its speakers in a more subtle and nuanced way that simply stating that she felt different could. It enables her to assert disparity while attempting to recapture the Zeitschaft of an experience she no longer has. That is, while Jews today are hardly homogenous, there is not a distinction to be made between eastern shtetl Jews and assimilated western Jews like there was in the period before and during World War II. Deutschkron uses Yiddish to try and recreate that difference and carefully handle the emotions she has surrounding it.
The chief declaration of difference between Yiddish-speaking and German-speaking Jews in Deutschkron’s memoir also involves difference of nationality. Deutschkron describes Horn, a Polish immigrant worker in Weidt’s shop, whose, „Deutsch verriet jiddische Anklänge“ (Deutschkron 90). Her portrayal of this man goes on to note the curly hair, big nose, and tearful facial features of this man who, „schien immer in Angst zu leben“ (Deutschkron 90). When she states that his German sounded Yiddish, she gives Horn the characteristics of an eastern Jew and distances herself from him. He is a weak and stereotypical figure in this passage, and his inclusion contributes to the contrast between Deutschkron and Yiddish speakers. This difference is not one that Deutschkron explicitly states, but her description of Horn does that for her. Essentially, she accomplishes expression of an excess of emotion and truth as it concerns eastern Jews through a linguistic channel. Rather than using only her shared language of the oppressor to describe this distance, Deutschkron invokes a subtler method and separates herself from this man with language.

The only place in the work where an actual Yiddish word is recorded is near the memoir’s conclusion. Once again, language and nationality play an enormous role in its usage. This time Deutschkron asserts the difference between herself and Yiddish-speaking Jews in a way that expresses fear of the Russian soldiers who come to her door. When they announce that they are Jews and one says, „er würde gern ‘Chassene’ mit mir machen,” the friendly atmosphere that had existed previously as the Deutschkrons sat and joked with the soldiers disappears, replaced by a panic that causes Deutschkron to seek a hiding place (Deutschkron 180). Deutschkron, despite knowing the term because of her background with Hebrew (‘Khasene hobn’ is a periphrastic verb in Yiddish that uses the Hebrew for wedding, חתונה), pretends not to understand, whereupon the soldiers scream that she and her mother are not Jews. In light of the
fact that other Russian soldiers had been terrorizing the countryside, raping, and stealing, one
could see Deutschkron’s fear as understandable. Upon closer inspection, however, these were
men who sat at the table with two German women having a pleasant conversation with bits of
Yiddish interspersed, who did not threaten them, and only became angry when Deutschkron fails
to take a compliment in Yiddish. Although she does not explicitly say as much, the use of the
Yiddish allows her to make a subtle distinction between these eastern Jews and herself. Again,
without using German alone, she succinctly demarcates the barrier with the Yiddish language,
infusing the connotations, geographic differences, and ideological distance that Deutschkron ties
to Yiddish into the memoir through her multilingualism.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

Through the use of additional languages, Ruth Klüger and Inge Deutschkron supplement their German memoirs in an attempt to express the “unrepresentable excess” of their experiences during the Holocaust. Both authors have an intense need to tell their stories, and their memoirs are evidence that memory is neither one-dimensional nor completely transmittable. Instances of Hebrew, Yiddish, and English are an attempt to represent the Zeitschaft in which their memories occurred as accurately as they possibly can. The places of their trauma remain, but for the reader, the reality of the timescape is elusive. The authors strive to re-create that nonetheless, and their multilingual narration signals this undertaking.

While words in languages other than German enhance their works, the presence of linguistic elements outside of the German “framework of understanding” in the texts is also telling. It signals experience for both authors that cannot be conveyed by German because it is either a Jewish, American, or Israeli concept. Despite the fractured nature of their identities and memories, Klüger and Deutschkron are compelled to convey the enormity of their traumas. Though it ultimately fails, their multilingualism gives them more avenues through which they are able to do so. By using languages related to specific identities, times, and places, the authors approach the reality of what they endured as nearly as they can.

There are certainly further questions to be explored in this area, even within weiter leben and Ich trug den gelben Stern themselves. For instance, in what ways do the representations of parts of this excess help to bring closure to the authors? Is the inclusion of other languages a buffer between Klüger and Deutschkron and the German language most closely associated with their trauma? These important issues lie outside the scope of this thesis, but merit consideration for further study.
What Klüger and Deutschkron do demonstrate in their works, in any case, is that language, however inadequate it may be to translate memory, is intimately linked to it. They present their lives as they recall them to their reader, and as multilingual individuals, their languages factor heavily into the pictures they paint. The places and times they describe also share these various languages, and Klüger and Deutschkron are in a position where they are able to use their lives before, during, and after the war to inform their memoirs.

Even after consideration of their attempts to know themselves and have their audience know them through multilingual representation, it is apparent that Klüger’s and Deutschkron’s, “[...] memory contains fissures, wounds, and points around which the narrative does not, should not, and can not cohere or resolve itself” (Goertz 180). Both authors valiantly and tirelessly craft their stories to contain as much of their experience as possible, but in the end, they work within a medium that cannot capture all of it. The “unrepresentable excess” of their trauma haunts them, and their lack of full representation demonstrates Klüger’s notion that when dealing with Holocaust memory, „Das reine Faktum gibt es ja für den menschlichen Verstand nicht.“ (Gelesene Wirklichkeit, 85).
Bibliography


