

# The Right to Difference

## Interculturality and Human Rights in Contemporary German Literature

*The Right to Difference* examines novels that depict human rights violations in order to explore causes of intergroup violence within diverse societies, using Germany as a test case. In these texts, the book shows that an exaggeration of difference between minority and majority groups leads to violence. Germany has become increasingly diverse over the past decades due to skilled labor migration and refugee movements. In light of this diversity, this book's approach transcends a divide between migrant and post-migrant German literature on the one hand and a national literature on the other hand. Addressing competing definitions of national identity as well as the contest between cultural homogeneity and diversity, the author redefines the term "intercultural literature." It becomes not a synonym for authors who do not belong to a national literature, such as migrant writers, but a way of reading literature with an intercultural lens.

This book builds a theory of intercultural literature that focuses on the multifaceted nature of identity, in which ethnicity represents only one of many characteristics defining individuals. To develop intercultural competence, one needs to adopt a complex image of individuals that allows for commonalities and differences by complicating the notion of sharp contrasts between groups. Revealing the affective allegiances formed around other characteristics (gender, profession, personal motivations, relationships, and more) allows for similarities that grouping into large, homogeneous, and seemingly exclusive entities conceals. Eight novels analyzed in this book remember and reveal human rights violations, such as genocide, internment and torture, violent expulsion, the reasons for fleeing a country, dangerous flight routes and the difficulty of settling in a new country. Some of these novels allow for affective identification with diverse characters and cast the protagonists as individuals with plural perspectives and identities rather than monolithic members of one large national or ethnic group, whereas others emphasize the commonalities of all people.

Ultimately, the author makes the case for German Studies to contribute to an antiracist approach to diversity by redefining what it means to be German and establishing difference as a fundamental human right

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