

INSTITUTIONEN FÖR TYSKA OCH NEDERLÄNDSKA

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# Transitorische Identitäten

Zur Identitätsproblematik in Barbara Honigmanns Prosa

INAUGURALDISSERTATION ZUR ERLANGUNG DER DOKTORWÜRDE IN  
GERMANISTIK  
MIT GENEHMIGUNG DER HUMANISTISCHEN FAKULTÄT ZU GÖTEBORG  
VORGELEGT

von

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DIE VERTEIDIGUNG FINDET AM 17. JANUAR UM 10.00 UHR  
IM GEBÄUDE „ARKEOLOGEN“, HÖRSAAL T 302,  
OLOF WIJKSGATAN 6, GÖTEBORG, STATT

## Abstract

**Title:** „Transitorische Identitäten – Zur Identitätsproblematik in Barbara Honigmanns Prosa.“  
[Transitional identities – The question of identity in Barbara Honigmann’s prose.]

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This thesis focuses on the communicative processes of the construction of identity in a context where different aspects of identity interact. Through a close analysis of Barbara Honigmanns novels *Roman von einem Kinde*, *Eine Liebe aus nichts*, *Damals, dann und danach* and *Ein Kapitel aus meinem Leben* it is shown that the construction of identity is a lifelong process where the complexity and fragmentary nature of identity continuously has to be claimed and reinvented. The attempt to capture the plurality of identity means a constant break-up in order to maintain diversity on the one hand and to persist one-sided fixations on the other hand. It follows that the main question throughout this study is in which terms a transitional poetic constitutes the identity of Honigmann’s characters

In the analysis of *Roman von einem Kinde*, it is shown that the dialogue as a structural element including both perspectives of an aspect turns the narration into a liminal space where the characters are able to raise the question of a diverse identity. Consequently, permeable boundaries of identity categories put Honigmann’s characters into an endless search - a search where different experiences of borders are investigated. Further, the idea of a liminal space is constantly established throughout Honigmann’s narration and is especially analysed in *Eine Liebe aus nichts*. An important aspect in this relation is the question of if and how different positions within an identity can be defined. This issue is then high-lighted through a closer look at *Damals, dann und danach*. ‘In-betweeness’ seems, in this context, a necessary concept in order to maintain the complexity of their identity. Lastly, to recall different experiences of the past is another important part in the construction of identity and in *Ein Kapitel aus meinem Leben* the main focus of the analysis is to trace the consequences of the borders of memory.

In a final section the results described above are evaluated in order to show that identity is a communicative process in a liminal space where all the different aspects of identity intersect in constantly changing constellations. Thus, it can be argued that it is not the different aspects of identity themselves but their literary reflection that is the main key to capture the complexity of the construction of identity.

**Keywords:** Barbara Honigmann, identity, transitory, liminal space, hybridity, memory, communication, dialogue, autobiographical writing.