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READING IMMIGRANT LETTERS AND BRIDGING THE MICRO-MACRO DIVIDE

INTRODUCTION

The early 1980s were characterized by a paradigm change in history. The premises, research methods and research goals of the dominant paradigm of "social and structural history" were challenged by the "subjective turn" in history contesting the logocentrist and linear way of historical thinking, the established techniques of history writing and the systems of historical knowledge production. Methodologically, the debate focused on the pros and cons of interpretive and inductive methods. The paradigm change was very much pushed by developments outside of the history profession. Post-structuralism and postmodernism and the debate about how to overcome Eurocentric and "colonial" ways of thinking, how to deal with mechanisms of "othering" and perceptions of "alterity" changed the very foundations of literary criticism and cultural studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This, in turn, accelerated and reinforced new fields in history like the history of mentality and micro history that had developed in the early 1970s stimulated above all by new research approaches in early modern history (Natalie Zemon Davis, David Ginzburg). In addition, core historical concepts such as progress, modernization and identity and the focus on structural forces were confronted among others with "multiple modernities" (Shmuel Eisenstadt), the deconstruction of the "unified self" (Pierre Bourdieu), and the fragility of gender constructions and gender relations (Judith Butler).

The methodological discussion was also driven by the "linguistic turn" and its focus on narrativity and the textual representation of (historical) reality (Hayden White, Jörn Rüsen et al.[1]) going hand in hand with the revival and further

[1] H. V. White (1987), *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; H. V. White (1973), *Metahistory: The Historical*

development of interpretive-hermeneutical concepts (Anthony Giddens: "double hermeneutics"[2]). All this converged to a certain extent in the discussion about the very constructedness of history which again stimulated the interest of historians in the interrelation of *history* and *memory*.[3] The emerging new fields of research and research approaches – oral history, life histories, historical anthropology and history and memory – were closely interconnected, methodologically and with regard to their theoretical foundations. They also contributed to raise the awareness of historians for historical sources produced by private historical actors in most cases for private use only: diaries, autobiographies, private letters, eye-witness accounts, testimonies – in short: ego-documents.[4]

During the 1970s migration history became a prominent and thriving historical sub-discipline. Its research perspectives and methods were very much influenced by social history and historical demography and their interest in socio-structural developments, large numbers and quantitative methods. Migration history expanded during the 1980s and early 1990s relatively untouched by the described methodological and theoretical discussions in the history profession. It instead used the revolution in computer technology to refine quantitative and demographic methods. All this diverted the attention and research interest away from the significance of immigrant letters as ego-documents. Their value as historical source material reflecting the subjective dimensions of transcultural communicative contexts and the individual experience of cultural transfer processes remained under-explored. Instead they were used above all and primarily as illustrative material or as an additional proof for historical information gathered from other, more "objective" sources. Only recently,

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Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; H. V. White (1978), *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; *Formen der Geschichtsschreibung* (1982), Koselleck, R., Lutz, H., Rüsen, J. (eds.), München: DTV; *Historische Methode* (1988), Meier, Ch., Rüsen, J. (eds.), München: DTV; *Historische Sinnbildung: Problemstellungen, Zeitkonzepte, Wahrnehmungshorizonte, Darstellungsstrategien* (1997), Müller, K. E., Rüsen, J. (eds.), Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt; *Meaning and Representation in History* (2006), Rüsen, J. (ed.), New York: Berghahn Books; J. Rüsen (2004), *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation*, New York: Berghahn Books.

[2] A. Giddens(1984), *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

[3] See *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology* (1985), Le Goff J., Nora P. (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; M. Agulhon, P. Nora (1987), *Essais d'ego-histoire*, Paris: Gallimard; P. Nora (1984), *Les lieux de mémoire*, Paris: Gallimard; *Kultur und Gedächtnis* (1988), Assmann, J., Hölscher, T. (eds.), Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp; J. Assmann (2010), *La mémoire culturelle : écriture, souvenir et imaginaire politique dans les civilisations* antiques, Paris: Aubier.

[4] *Vom Individuum zur Person. Neue Konzepte im Spannungsfeld von Autobiographietheorie und Selbstzeugnisforschung* (2005), Jancke, G., Ulbrich, C. (eds.), Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.

researchers have started to think about the specific quality of immigrant letters and the way how historians might use these letters in order to learn more about the subjective dimensions of the migration experience and the everyday life of immigrants most of whom came from a lower class, were barely literate and were struggling with adaptation and assimilation processes.[5] But we are still far away from the establishment of "immigrant letter research" as a specific research field characterized by particular and distinct heuristic and analytic approaches.

Going back to some of the arguments put forward in the discussion about the linguistic turn in the 1980s, I will argue that in order to be able to "read" and understand immigrant letters historians have to approach them as "texts" and not just as illustrative historical source material.[6] It is necessary to not only look at content but also at the way the content is presented, i.e. the narration and the narrative structure of the letters. I will further argue that the four research fields mentioned above – historical anthropology, oral history, memory history, and the life history approach – together with their specific focus on narrative structures offer the basis for a heuristic framework that will allow going beyond the two extremes of research interests associated with immigrant letters so far: content analysis and historical contextualisation on the one hand and the reconstruction of the subjective dimension of the migration experience on the other. They instead help to bridge these two extremes offering tools to unearth information hidden behind the surface or beyond the first content layer of the text and allowing to grasp the social dimensions and the socio-historical relevance of the subjective accounts that they transport.

In the following I will propose a "reading" of immigrant letters based on considerations put forward by historical anthropology and the sociological life history approach. Both approaches are not merely oriented towards subjectivity in the sense of perceptions, values, definitions of situations, personal goals, and the like. They go beyond this and investigate for example different sets of social relationships and the social frames that structure action, and for that subjectivity. Moreover, the life history approach is particularly interested in gaining knowledge about the structural properties and the historical sequences

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[5] See W. M. Decker (1998), *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-writers, 1600-1945* (1999), Earle R. (ed.), Aldershot: Ashgate; *Letters Across Borders: The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants* (2006), Elliott, B. S., Gerber, D. A., Sinke, S. M. (eds.), New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

[6] For this differentiation see V. Depkat (2004), Nicht die Materialien sind das Problem, sondern die Fragen, die man stellt: Zum Quellenwert von Autobiographien für die historische Forschung, in: Rathmann, T., Wegmann, N. (eds.), *„Quelle" - Zwischen Ursprung und Konstrukt. Ein Leitbegriff in der Diskussion*, Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, pp. 102-117.

of life-course processes.[7] It does so by using the analytical tools of narratology.[8] Life course processes and narratives are two dimensions that not only help to structure our reading of immigrant letters but that also offer analytic perspectives going beyond the subjectivity of the presented content.

In order to elucidate the methodological bridging function of these two approaches and their contribution to overcome the micro-macro divide, I will in a first step contextualize the specific theoretical value of life history research by putting it in the context of arguments developed by historical anthropology. In a second step, I will apply the developed research framework to reconstruct the structural properties and historical sequences of life course processes as represented by the narratives of the letters of Ernst and Marie Kuchenbecker written between 1891 and 1932. This set of 90 letters is the largest subset of the letter series "Wehrmann/Bohn" that was collected in 2004 and is now part of the "Nordamerikabriefsammlung" (NABS) hosted by the Research Library in Gotha, Germany.[9] I will read the letters by focusing on three aspects: (1) the relationship between the individual microcosms described in the letters and the social relations and social settings structuring these microcosms; (2) the interdependence between personal agency and subjectivity and social frames and normative settings, and (3) the ambiguities and emotionality of national identity and sense of belonging negotiated in the letters.

BRIDGING THE MICRO-MACRO DIVIDE: LESSONS FROM HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND LIFE HISTORY RESEARCH

The discussion about how to reconcile the socio-structural and often quantitative approach of social history with the subjective perspective or at least the subjective bias of biographical or micro historical research goes back to the 1980s. Historical anthropologist Hans Medick summarized this debate in

[7] F. Schütze (1981), Prozessstrukturen des Lebensablaufs, in: Matthes J. (ed.), *Biographie in handlungswissenschaftlicher Perspektive*, Nürnberg: Nürnberger Forschungsvereinigung, pp. 67-156; M. Kohli (1978), *Soziologie des Lebenslaufs*, Darmstadt: Luchterhand; M. Kohli, G. Robert (1984), *Biographie und soziale Wirklichkeit: Neue Beiträge und Forschungsperspektiven*, Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler.

[8] J. Bruner (1991), The Narrative Construction of Reality, "Critical Inquiry", Vol. 18, Issue 1, pp. 1-21; F. Schütze (1976), Zur linguistischen und soziologischen Analyse von Erzählungen, "Internationales Jahrbuch für Wissens- und Religionssoziologie", Vol.10, pp. 7-41; M. Bal (1997), *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press; A. M. Hardee, F. G. Henry (1990), *Narratology and Narrative*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina.

[9] For information about the collection see www.auswandererbriefe.de.

a seminal article published in 1987 entitled "'Missionaries in the Row Boat'? Ethnological Ways of Knowing as a Challenge to Social History".[10] He criticized social history understood as "historical social science" as exclusively focusing on the socioeconomic circumstances, structures and contexts and for neglecting the actors and the agency of "subjects" and thus the "individualistic bias" inherent in all historical processes and structures. He called for a "mediation of the subjective and objective moments of the historical process" by combining social scientific methods with the "individualizing and understanding ones of hermeneutics".[11] As to the micro-macro divide in historical research Medick declares that:

> "At the crux of the debate about the relationship between structure and ways of acting in the context of everyday life are the problems of how, to what extent, and whether the new fields of investigation make possible the reconstitution of historical subjects, or rather, in what manner the traditional questions about the historical subject can be newly formulated."[12]

In addition to his plea for the reconstitution of historical subjects Medick suggests to look at "cultural forms and ways of expression as historical motor forces" that are present "as one moment that forms the expectations, the ways of acting, and their consequences in the historical event as much as in the 'structuration' of the social world of class, authority, and of economic relations".[13] Acknowledging the double reality of social order, for one the "objective" reality of institutions and structures and secondly the "subjective" reality of the imaginations of individual actors about society and social order[14] Medick affirms the necessity to look at changes and transformations of a society as the dynamic product of the activities and interpretations of historical subjects.

In a similar manner though starting from the opposite side of the problem, the German and French sociologists Martin Kohli and David Bertaux tried to rescue the life history approach in sociology by arguing that the subjectivist orientation in sociology should accept and analytically include the influence of social frames on individual behaviour whereas the objectivist orientation should recognize that social structures are the result of socio-historical processes shaped

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[10] H. Medick (1987), 'Missionaries in the Row Boat'? Ethnological Ways of Knowing as a Challenge to Social History, "Comparative Studies in Society and History", Vol. 29, Issue 1, pp. 76-98.

[11] H. Medick, 'Missionaries…, p. 77.

[12] Ibid., p. 84.

[13] Ibid., p. 89.

[14] P. L. Berger, T. Luckmann (1980), *The Social Construction of Reality: A Teatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Irvington Publishers.

by the contingency of individual action and behaviour.[15] They criticize the rather unsystematic way in which the life history approach developed in the United States in the wake of Thomas and Znaniecki's sociological study of Polish peasants in Europe and America published in 1927.[16] Scholars were drawing eclectically from a variety of orientations ranging from symbolic interactionism to phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnosociology, structuralism, and cultural variants of Marxism. In addition, life history research used a broad range of quite different source material supposedly composing life history – letters, diaries, personal records, open interviews, and finally, autobiographies and tape-recorded life stories – without reflecting the quality and the distinct character of the different sources and avoiding a systematic distinction between broader conceptions of personal documents, on the one hand, and life stories, on the other.[17] Kohli and Bertaux maintained that

> "accordingly, there is wide variation in the basic questions asked and the methods of data analysis used. Some authors focus on the actors' subjective points of view; others see their task as the reconstruction of meaning structures; still others try to discern social relationships of which the actors themselves are not wholly or even partially aware."[18]

As a solution to the observed incoherence of the life history approach Kohli and Bertaux suggest overcoming the orientation toward subjectivity in sociologically oriented life history research. Instead life stories should be investigated as expressions and reflections of patterns of historically given socio-structural relations and social frames. Kohli and Bertaux explain:

> "Many aspects take on a different meaning when examined along this dimension [social relationship, U.L.]. For instance, the question of the validity of retrospective data becomes much more important for those sociologists looking for patterns of historically given socio-structural relations than for those studying perceptions, values, definitions of situations, personal goals, and the like. Nevertheless, sociologists with a more subjectivist orientation have to acknowledge the existence of social frames (even if they conceive of them as

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[15] D. Bertaux, M. Kohli (1984), The Life Story Approach: A Continental View, "Annual Review of Sociology", Vol. 10, pp. 215-237; see also M. Kohli, *Soziologie*…; M. Kohli, G. Robert, *Biographie*….

[16] W. I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki (1927), *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf; W. I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki (1958), *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, New York: Dover Publications.

[17] D. Bertaux, M. Kohli, The Life…, p. 216.

[18] Ibid., p. 218.

> objectified meaning structures), and those with a more objectivist orientation have to take into account the fact that social structures are the result of socio-historical processes in which action, and therefore subjectivity, is playing its part."[19]

Hence historians and sociologists alike argued that any given social reality, its institutions, sets of rules and its normative orders are historically contingent. Moreover, social reality is the product of the agency of historical subjects which again are always part of and shaped by a given set of social frames, socio-structural relations and socio-cultural norms. The micro-macro divide or the divide between subjective and objective approaches to historical or sociological research is artificial and distorts historical and sociological analysis. It should be overcome by the recognition of the strong interdependence between "the individual/subjective" and "the social/objective".

This is exactly the starting point of David Gerber's attempt to offer a new interpretive perspective for the analysis of immigrant letters. In his book "Authors of their Lives" Gerber explains: "If we are to understand immigrant letters, we must begin with individuals and the significant others with whom they corresponded. … immigrant personal correspondence is … a social practice, which, within predictable rules and mutual understandings, inscribes personal relationships in letters in order to maintain these relationships and provide continuity for the correspondents".[20] With a strong focus on personal correspondence as an expression of social relationships Gerber uses the life history approach to reconstruct changing patterns of the construction of personhood, the social microcosm of the individual writer and the social relations in which the individual writers were situated.

Taking these observations and methodological requests as a starting point the following reading of immigrant letters will be guided by an awareness that all subjective accounts refer to social frames which shape the action and behaviour of individual actors. My reading will hence focus on the social dimensions of the individual and subjective accounts and observations that we find in these letters. And it will concentrate on the individual microcosm and how it relates to social structures and normative settings. By reconstructing the hidden social frames from the personal accounts presented by immigrant letters we hopefully will learn something about the interdependence between social structures and subjectivity, or to use the words of Kohli and Bertaux, learn something about how the structuration of the social world is shaped by and is also a result of

[19] Ibid., p. 219.

[20] D. A. Gerber (2006), *Authors of their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century*, New York: New York University Press, pp. 28, 56.

"socio-historical processes in which action and therefore subjectivity, is playing its part".[21] Since immigrant letters communicate between two cultural and social settings and by narrating the circumstances, experiences and new patterns translate between the "old" and the "new" world we not only learn something about the structuration of the social world by individual action and behaviour but also learn something about how patterns and structures from one cultural and social setting are reconfigured according to the exigencies of the new social and cultural environment. Thus, the proposed "reading" of immigrant letters also offers an analytical perspective for transnational and transfer studies.

THE LETTERS OF ERNST AND MARIE KUCHENBECKER: TEXT AND CONTEXT

From 1891 to 1932 Ernst and Marie Kuchenbecker wrote 90 letters to their relatives in Germany, individually and as a couple, which are preserved as part of the letter series Wehrmann/Bohn. Between 1891 and 1894 Ernst Kuchenbecker is the author of the letters. After his marriage in 1895, his wife Marie more and more takes over this task recognizable from the change in style, orthography and syntax. Whereas Ernst Kuchenbecker wrote in his Thuringian dialect and was obviously not an experienced writer, Marie presents herself as an eloquent and versatile author. All letters written between 1899 and 1932 are written by Marie with the exception of a very short piece of eight lines written by Ernst and attached to a letter written by Marie in 1922 in which she complains about Ernst being a lazy writer and probably no longer even able to write. From these eight lines that Ernst felt obliged to attach to the letter and that start by declaring "Meine Libe Frau hatt ja. / Schon alles, s'o weiht erzählt / Ich will blos. Erwähnen / …" [*My dear wife has already told everything, I will only mention ...*],[22] we can assume that Ernst read all the letters written by Marie before they were sent to Germany. We do not know whether he interfered with regard to the content, except for one letter in which Marie explicitly tells her inlaws in Remptendorf that she is writing for Ernst who is "dictating" the letter.

Ernst and Marie's letters are part of a letter series consisting of 202 letters written by different members of the Bohn family, a large part of which immigrated to the United States. Emigration started in 1845 with Christiane

[21] D. Bertaux, M. Kohli, The Life…, p. 219.

[22] All following citations from the letters refer to NABS, Z. Nr. 2004/005.949, Letter Series Wehrmann/Bohn, Research Library Gotha. Quotations are based on a literal transcription of the handwritten material. Individual letters are quoted with reference to the date they were written and can be retrieved accordingly.

Karoline Bohn leaving the Thuringian village of Remptendorf to settle in Warrensville, Ohio. Christiane Karoline was one of four children of Johann Heinrich Gottlob Bohn (1791-1838), a wealthy farmer and Schultheiß (mayor) of Remptendorf. Her younger brother and sister, Johann Heinrich Carl Bohn and Johanne Christiane Meisgeier (born Bohn), followed Christiane Karoline in 1852. They both immigrated with their families consisting of six children each. After a very dramatic sea journey during which one child died and others became seriously ill and did not recover, the two families continued their journey to settle in the neighbourhood of their sister in Orange, Ohio. This part of the Bohn family constituted the foundation of an American family network that expanded considerably during the second half of the 19th century. During the years 1852 and 1878, 13 additional children were born to Johann Heinrich Carl. The first family reunion in 1911 counted 105 relatives attending the reunion at the home of Hermann Meisgeier, one of the sons of Johanne Christiane.

Ernst Kuchenbecker was the son of Johanne Louise Werner, the only child of Johanne Heinrike Christiane, who again was the only one of the Bohn children staying in Germany. Johanne Louise, who married Karl Christian Kuchenbecker, had two sons: Christian Karl and Ernst. The family lived and still lives in Remptendorf. Ernst emigrated in 1891 when he was 25 years old. The rest of his family – his parents and his brother – stayed in Germany. He first lived with the Bohn family in Ohio and Wisconsin and later moved to New Jersey where he opened his own business, a slater company, in Carlstadt, near Hoboken. The letters of Ernst and Marie Kuchenbecker tell the story of a successful first generation immigrant family that was part of an extended family network in the United States. Ernst and Marie kept close relations with their relatives in Germany *and* with the American part of the family by writing letters but also by visiting relatives both in the United States and in Germany. Visits to Germany started in the late 19th century when steamships allowed a more comfortable way of traveling. Letters were thus only one communication channel. Personal visits also served as a means to transmit first-hand information for both parts of the family, the German and the American one. Episodes from these personal visits in Germany are mentioned in the letters as reference points for comments and further storytelling.

Ernst Kuchenbecker was married in Germany and the failure of his first marriage was probably the main reason for his emigration. In the United States he remarried in 1895.[23] Marie Kuchenbecker, his second wife, was born in Zurich and came to the United States in 1889. They had three children: Curt (*1895),

[23] The U.S. Census of 1910 indicates that Ernst and Marie were married since 15 years, which means that they married in 1895.

Else (*1899) and Alice (*1902). Ernst and Marie wrote all their letters to Karl Kuchenbecker, Ernst's brother who lived in Remptendorf. Ernst Kuchenbecker died in February 1930 of cancer, Marie three years later in January 1933 from appendicitis. The last letter Marie wrote home dates from 1932. Her oldest son Curt continued the correspondence and also took over his father's slater business.

Marie Kuchenbecker was a very sophisticated observer of social and political developments, both within the family and in the larger context of U.S. and German foreign policy. Political developments leading to World War I, the reparation question, the Anglo-American entente, France, the Great Depression, social welfare and many other political and economic aspects are covered in her letters. Whereas the first letters she wrote after the marriage with Ernst suggest that she discussed very thoroughly the content of what she wrote with her husband, later letters do convey a different picture. After four or five years of their marriage Marie took over in a very natural and smooth way the role of main communicator. She set the tone, chose what to write and how to write it and she thereby developed the role of her husband's spokesperson.

The subtle way in which Marie takes over the role of family communicator can be discerned among others from the signatures of the letters. This "formal" element of the letters gives us a lot of information about her role in the marriage and her gender identity. Marie obviously was a very self-conscious and intelligent person who supported her husband in many different ways. She did this in a very congenial and cooperative way following traditional female gender roles and avoiding a too self-assertive appearance. Marie signed the letters between 1899 and 1903 with "Ernst Kuchenbecker nebst Frau" [*E.K. and wife*] or like "Dein Bruder nebst Frau" [*Your brother and wife*] or "Dein Bruder Ernst und Familie"[*Your brother E. and family*] (1899-1902), although style and content of the letters support the assumption that she alone was the author. In 1903 a first change of the signing practice occurred when Marie signed the letter with "Im Auftrage Ernsts Eure Marie Kuchenbecker" [*On behalf of E. Yours M. K.*]. This was the first letter in which she made her role as letter writer explicit. Two years later we read "Mit herzlichen Grüßen von uns Allen verbleibe Eure Schwägerin M. Kuchenbecker" [*With cordial greetings from all of us I remain your sister-in-law M.K.*] (1905), or a year later in a more colloquial way "von Allen an alle Eure Marie Kuchenbecker" [*From all to all Yours M.K.*]. From 1909 onwards this varies with "Ernst und Marie Kuchenbecker" or "Ernst Marie und Kinder" [*E. M. and children*] (1912). Only two years after Ernst died did Marie sign a letter with her name only. All of the letters in this letter series were written to relatives of Ernst Kuchenbecker in Remptendorf. We unfortunately do not have letters written by Marie to her relatives in Zurich. Since Marie's relatives are

mentioned ever so often in the letters to the larger Bohn family in Remptendorf, and Ernst on his one and only visit to Germany in 1909 also visited Marie's family who at that time lived in the Black Forest region, it is most likely that she also regularly wrote home to her relatives.

TALES OF CONTINUITY AND RESILIENCE: FAMILY VALUES AND "*KAFFEE UND KUCHEN*"-NARRATIVE

The way the letters are structured and the dynamic of the narrative mirror very much the typical communication situation of a German Sunday afternoon family gathering with "Kaffee und Kuchen". The letters deal with the weather, the business or the farm, who is doing well, who needs help, how to organize help or financial support, and they also address the black sheep of the family. Marriage and childbirth and other changes and developments in the family are a topic, as well as mutual visits and family celebrations and, of course, politics and economics. Hence the letters address all problems associated with the family and comment on current political and economic developments. This "*Kaffee and Kuchen* Narrative" that characterizes and structures the letters obviously replicates the traditional face-to-face communication. Content-wise it reflects topics related to the social context and milieu of farmers and craftsmen and their strong embeddedness in family structures and values.

Interestingly the topics "church" and "religion" are conspicuously missing in the letters, although at least Marie seems to have been very religious and "church" and the church community were a core economic factor within the New Jersey craftsman milieu. The only time religion is addressed in the letters is in the context of "life and death", natural or war-related. Whenever a family member dies or has to go to war Marie includes words of consolation by referring to "God Almighty" who is deciding when and where "we have to go". Coming from Zurich, she probably was a member of a Protestant Church, and Ernst probably was too.

Protestant background, craftsman and farmer milieu and the adherence to family values circumscribe the social frameworks that characterized Ernst and Marie's action and behaviour and help to situate Marie und Ernst Kuchenbecker as historical actors. The family as a self-help institution not only supported Ernst Kuchenbecker during his first year in the United States when he settled with the Bohn family and worked in their lumber business. Later he himself acted accordingly by preferably hiring relatives from Germany or neighbours from his German village. He explains his policy with the well-known arguments: Germans have a better education in all crafts. They are trustworthy, hard-working, and

reliable. When Ernst Kuchenbecker's business was expanding he even invited family members, like his half-brother Kurt, to come to the United States and work in his company, and he sends a ship ticket to Kurt Hoepfner, one of the neighbors of the Bohn family in Remptendorf, enabling him to come to the United States and work for him.

Family values and the support provided by the extended family network on both sides of the Atlantic are perceived as an important social structure that needed to be nurtured and protected. Letter-writing was one instrument to cultivate the family network and to secure its functioning and continuity. Letter writing was hence also perceived as an obligation every family member had to fulfil. Family members like Karl and Ernst's half-brother Kurt, who wrote only sporadically, were heavily criticized and pinpointed as "lazy" or "unreliable". Kurt's misbehaviour is a recurrent topic in the letters written between 1898 and 1921. In their correspondence, Ernst and Karl complain that Kurt only writes to his family in the United States and visits his family in Remptendorf when he needs money. When he receives money he does not answer and does not show any sign of being grateful. In addition, both brothers complain that Kurt does not use the money that was given to him by family members in a decent way, e.g. to improve or further develop his business. Instead he is spending the money to just have a good life. Kurt is depicted in the letters as arrogant, irresponsible, thoughtless, lazy and untrustworthy. In a letter from 1899 Ernst explains to Karl:

> „Kurt ist mir wie es scheint ein Leichtsinn ich habe ihm mindistens 3 mahl geschrieben ob ehr das Gelt erhalten befor ehr mirs dann mittheilte, hätte ehrs do nicht gethan mußte ichs auf der Post anzeigen. … ich habe ihm das Gelt nicht geschiekt um es durchzublaßen … wenn er mit nicht eine bestimmte zeit setzt bies wann er mirs wieder zurick schieken kann, werde ich ihm Verklagen wegen falscher vorspigelungen, den ehr hatt mir geschrieben er wollte ein Geschäft kaufen, was nicht war ist. Es ist unverschämt, Du hast ihn 600 M. geschiekt ich 416 M. sein über 1000M. in zeit von ein bar Monnatten durch zubringen …"[24] (Jersey City No. 1th. 99)

22 years later, in a letter from 1921 Marie still complains about the same story and at the same time points to another function of letter writing: the conscious

[24] Paraphrase: Kurt seems to be frivolous; I wrote three times asking if he had received the money before he confirmed it. You sent him 600 Marks and I 416, a total of over 1000 [ca. $250] because he claimed to buy a shop, but he squandered it instead. Threatens to go to court for wilfull misrepresentation.

avoidance to answer a letter as a way to punish or at least to sanction family members who did not comply with family norms and expectations.

> „Kurt schreibt immerfort Briefe um Geld, 500 – 1000 Dollars möchte er haben wir haben ihm gar nicht geantwortet und werden es auch nicht thun, denn auf arrogante Briefe seiner Art gehört eine arrogante Antwort – wie kämen wir dazu, gerade ihm, auch wenn wir's thun könnten – mit Geldsummen auszuhelfen. Er hat uns früher – vor 20 Jahren schon immer nur um Geld geschrieben, wir haben ihm damals unsere ersten ersparten 100 Dollars geschickt und niemals einen ähnlichen dankesbrief erhalten, wie Höpfners und Albin für die Postpackete schreiben. Ihr habt uns geschrieben, sein Geschäft gehe gut – das ist mehr als wir von unserm rühmen können – da muß er sich eben selber helfen. Als Probe will ich seinen letzten Brief beilegen, dann werdet Ihr verstehen warum wir ihm nicht antworten."[25] (Carlstadt, Februar den 1sten 1921).

In addition to the economic and financial support the family network offered, for Ernst at least "family" also served as a psychologically and emotionally stabilizing factor. After his arrival in the United States Ernst worked for Christopher Bohn, the second son of Johann Heinrich Carl Bohn, who was the owner of a sawmill in Wisconsin and quite well to do. Ernst was happy to have found a job so easily but at the same time not yet sure whether emigration was the right decision. The way Ernst reflects his experiences during the first months and years is characterized by a negative tenor and conveys ambiguity. In a letter written to his brother in 1892, Ernst explains:

> „ich schaffe jetz jeten tag in Walt da magen wier Holz für die Schneidemühle, ich bin bei einen Sohn von alten Bohn derselbe hat zwei Schneitemühle und 800 Acker Lant wo früher alles Walthung gewessen ist, der hat sehr fühl arbeit, aber er Zahlt nicht zu fühl Lohn aus, ich weis nicht ob ich hier bleibe, Meine lieben es ist einen der erst hier ins Lant komt nicht reht angenehm es ist noch kein so Klüres Lant als wie in Deutschland und die sprage mus mann erst lernen, wen man aber sich daran gewöhnt hat geht alles und späder gefält es ein auch es komt eines früher zu etwas als wie draußen, kein Steuer giebt es. niht Schulgelt wieter niht und, die Kinder können in die Schule bis sie 21. Jahre alt sein…"[26] (Firne Ridge 25.1.1892)

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[25] Kurt keeps writing letters asking for money, he wants to have $500 to 1000. We won't even reply. It has been the same for 20 years, we sent him the first $100 we had saved and never received a proper thank you letter. You wrote his business is doing well –ours doesn't. He must help himself.

[26] Paraphrase: I work in the woods every day cutting timber for the sawmill. I work for the son of the old Bohn. He does not pay much, and I don't know if I will stay here. At first one does not

After his marriage with Marie in 1895 the ambiguous or even negative tenor of Ernst's reflections about his emigration and his life in the United States disappeared conspicuously and he writes to his brother that he is doing well.

> „Ich habe auch einen fehler begangen Das ich von Westen wieder nach Osten zurick bin, Da hätte ich nunmehr eine Farm, aber so geht es auch nicht mehr so gut da ich mich hier sehr schön eingerichtet habe, und, mir selbst ein Heim gekründet."[27] (Port Cester 14.1.1895)

During the first two years in the United States Ernst felt lonesome and insecure despite the fact that he was living with his family. The explanations that he gives in the letters for his distress were his bachelorhood and his economic and financial dependence on the family. Considering the fact that family values and the family as a self-help system are appreciated in almost every single letter as an important maybe even the most important social structure, the problematization of the dependency on the family points to one of the normative ambiguities the letters reveal. I will come back to this in the last part of this article.

From 1895 onwards, after the foundation of a new family and the birth of his first child Curt, Ernst's life is back on track and continues in a very straightforward and traditional way. He established his own business and moved into his own house and was, as he wrote to his brother in 1895, "mit meinen Schicksahl so weit zu friden" [*rather satisfied with my fate*] (Port Cester 14.1.1895). For Ernst's life course being married and being able to rely on the support and the tender loving care of a wife was of utmost importance. As Marie comments in a letter from October 15, 1915: "Ernst ist immer ziemlich derselbe, die Bohns meinten er sei gar nicht älter geworden. Er überlässt das Sorgen mir, und darum greift es ihn auch nicht an" [*Ernst does not change much, the Bohns think he has not grown older. He leaves the worrying to me, and therefore it does not trouble him*] (Carlstadt, Okt. 2nd 1915).

The social frames that structure Ernst and Marie's agency are very much characterized by traditional social values that continue to shape their lives as if they would still live in their German or Swiss environment. Both have a very high resilience capacity. Ernst and Marie are happy and content with their situation exactly because it does not change so much. In fact, the letters do not address any

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like the new land, new language ad all, but things become better after a while. Economic advantages, no taxes. Schools are free.

[27] Paraphrase: I made a mistake, returning East from the West. There, I would have a farm now. But going back would be difficult, since I have built a nice home here.

involuntary transformations or forced adaptations taking place during their lives in the United States. Marie and Ernst structure their social relations around the family. Family related moral and ethical standards of good behaviour support and provide the basis for a not very "exciting" but more or less uncomplicated way of living. The letters convey the impression that social relations exterior of the family network were confined to business relations or were at least business-related and restricted to other Germans in the United States. Hence, this immigrant family is a typical example of families who immigrated in the United States as part of a chain migration, taking with them not only relatives as persons with whom they continued to interact, but family oriented behavioural patterns and a whole family network, bridging the Atlantic and connecting Germany and the United States. This enabled a continuity of social frames (transplantation) helping to reduce the complexities of the new social and cultural reality in the United States. As a result the new environment in the United States was not perceived as threatening, migration was not experienced as a rupture or loss. The adaptation to the new environment took place very smoothly, over many years and started also in the case of Ernst and Marie with learning the new language (mostly for business reasons). However, even the adaptation to the new language seemed to have been a very slow process. Only after more than 30 years of living in an American environment, first interferences with the English language (lexis and syntax) appear in the letters, like e.g. in 1922 when Marie writes "Well wir danken Dir C. Schwager …." (Carlstadt May 22nd 1922), or in the same letter "Wie Du schreibst habt Ihr einen langen Winter gehabt, so auch wir". Other examples are: "Wenn nicht die Verhältnisse in Deutschland immer noch so ungesettelt wären …" (5tn Dezember 1922); oder "… die Völker haben die Consequences zu tragen." (April 10th. 1927).

Only once, after Ernst's visit to Germany in 1909 this stable state of "normalcy" turned into a state of uncertainty combined with plans to perhaps go back to Germany. Although Ernst and Marie corresponded regularly with the German part of the family, the face to face experience of meeting the German relatives in person had a deep emotional impact which in turn altered Ernst's perceptions and conceptions of "heimat". After returning to the United States Ernst even considered moving back to Germany. Marie concurred with this idea and wrote in a letter from December 1, 1909:

> „Eure beiden Briefe kamen wol an & hat es mich besonders gefreut, daß auch Du liebe Schwägerin einen Bogen beigelegt hast & wir wollen hoffen, daß unsere Bekanntschaft nicht immer blos brieflich, sondern auch noch eine persönliche werden wird. Wie wärs wenn wir mal zusammen am Spinnrad sitzen & die durchlebten Ereignisse einander erzählen könnten Ernst hat es draußen so gut

> gefallen, dass es wol möglich ist, wenn wir mal vorteilhaft verkaufen können, dass wir dann rauskommen."[28] (Carlstadt Dez. 21st 1909)

But very soon this emotional experience faded and lost its structuring impact on Ernst and Marie's life course. The American daily life, business routine and care for their three children took over again and remigration was not pursued seriously. The idea to move back to Germany popped up again during the early 1920s when high unemployment rates and economic problems challenged Ernst's business. He received an offer to buy a house of a German remigrant who after a year in Germany wanted to return to the United States. As a consequence of the heavy inflation in Germany, the "villa" in Northern Thuringia was inexpensive in terms of US dollars. Hence, Ernst was tempted to buy it. After his brother visited the object and wrote back describing its condition and the land property attached to it, Marie answered the letter thereby making clear that remigration would not be a realistic option:

> „Es ist ja nach unserm Geld billig, aber wir fürchten es würde uns gerade so gehen wie dem jetzigen Besitzer und wir möchten nach einem Jahre oder so, wieder verkaufen wollen und zurück nach hier. Man ist eben schon zu lange hier und die hiesigen Verhältnisse gewohnt, und alle die rausgehen um zu bleiben kommen meistens nach kurzer Zeit wieder zurück."[29] (Carlstadt, May 22nd 1922).

As already mentioned above, these tales of continuity and resilience are, however, only one layer of the letter texts. Interwoven with this "conservative" narrative are tales of ambiguity. Two of them are of specific interest because they ran counter to the two dominant socio-structural frames characterizing Ernst and Marie's life course analyzed so far: the adherence to family values and the support of the family network and the German-American political and cultural identity.

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[28] Paraphrase: We received your two letters, and we hope we will know one another not just by letter but personally as well. Ernst liked it so much in Germany that it's quite possible that we go back, if we can sell our business at a good price.

[29] It's cheap in our money, but we fear we'll have the same experience as the present owner and want to sell and return here. We've been here too long and used to circumstances here, and most of those who leave to stay come back here shortly.

TALES OF AMBIGUITY I: PATRIOTISM AND SENSE OF BELONGING

As part of their effort to continue a "German" life in the United States, Ernst and Marie were closely associated with the German cultural and linguistic environment in the United States. They were typical "German-Americans". They spoke, read and wrote in German, were readers of the New Yorker Staatszeitung and attended German cultural events. Their "German-American" identity became especially conspicuous in their comments about World War I. Marie reproduced all the stereotypes and enemy images a "good" German citizen of the late German Empire would allude to when speaking about France and Great Britain. Commenting on the outbreak of World War I Marie Kuchenbecker does not even try to conceal her support for the German Kaiser but asserts her German "patriotic" position when she writes in 1915:

> „Nun der schreckliche Krieg, Ihr könnts glauben es ist hier wie draußen jedes Deutschen erster u letzter Gedanke daß mit Gottes des Allmächtigen Hilfe Deutschland seine Feinde besiegen möge wir fühlen durch den Krieg unsere Herzen tausendfach enger mit unserer alten Heimat verknüpft, denn zuvor, wo wir schon manchmal glaubten, Amerika sei jetzt unsere Heimat geworden. Viel lieber würden wir Deutschen hier, mit Euch draußen in Reih u Glied, deutsche Art, u deutsches Gut u Blut verteidigen helfen als hier uns über die blödsinnige, englischdienernde Politik … zu ärgern. Was da Alles, England zu Gefallen, unterlassen wird, … , nämlich die Rechte u Interessen des eigenen Landes zu verfechten, und als neutrale Macht, keiner der kriegführenden Parteien extra Privilegien zu gewähren, das muß manchmal das deutsche Blut in uns zum gähren bringen u überkochen lassen. … Da lob ich mir mein Schweizerländchen klein u winzig gegen jeden seiner Nachbarn, lässt es sich von Niemand Uebergriffe bieten … England ist auch nach unserer Ansicht schuldig an dem ganzen furchtbaren Brudermord der weißen Völker …"[30] (4.1.1915)

After this letter only one more letter arrived in Germany in October 1915. There are no other letters preserved from the time of World War I. We do not know whether no letters were written or whether letters were intercepted. The next letters we have are written in 1919 and again England is pinpointed as the country

[30] Paraphrase:-This terrible war. Every German here like over there ardently hopes that Germany may win. The war immeasurably strengthens our attachment to the old country for us who sometimes believed America had been our home. We would much rather defend Germany than be annoyed here by … the crazy, servile policy towards Britain. I prefer tiny Switzerland that does not put up with any incursion by its neighbours … In our opinion, England is guilty of the whole horrible fratricide of the white peoples.

responsible for World War I and all the suffering that Germans had to endure. The enemy images vary, however. During the negotiations about reparations and the Versailles treaty France is depicted as the ultimate evil:

> „Wir dachten daß die Herren Abgesandten in Waschington zu einer Besserung der Lage Stellung nehmen und drauf dringen würden, doch haben die miserablen Franzosen immer noch das Gegentheil im Sinn, Deutschland gegenüber, und wie‘s scheint, sind die andern immer wieder Frankreich gefällig”[31] (Dec., 5th. 1921).

The German-American background of Ernst and Marie becomes also evident when we look at textual signifiers of belonging, especially possessive pronouns. Marie and Ernst speak of “our Germany” and in the same text even sometimes in the immediate following sentence we can read “our America”. There is no differentiation between “us” and “them”. Hence, also the usage of possessives indicates a double national identity which, however, is not translated into a dual political loyality. On a political level the Kuchenbeckers were German patriots and heavily criticized the policy of the United States during World War I.

At the same time, the language they use when they refer to Germany also shows a certain distance or at least ambiguity when it comes to the question of belonging. The old and the new *heimat* are referred to in the letters by using spatial concepts, like “drinnen” – “in here” (United States) and “draußen” – “out there” (Germany). This container image of national belonging corresponds with the contemporary way nation and nationalism was constructed. The Kuchenbeckers adapted these concepts by reconfiguring them in their own words as “drinnen” and “draußen”. “Drinnen” and “draußen” are used in the letters in a highly loaded and ambiguous way. The “draußen” is emotionally attractive but, as has been shown above, Ernst Kuchenbecker only once in his life visited his relatives in Germany and always very quickly discarded ideas of returning to Germany. “Drinnen” stands for security and normalcy, for the social knowns, for belonging, whereas “draußen” signifies longing, but also insecurity, things unknown or no longer known. The concept of “draußen” is also utilized as a means of establishing border lines and constructing distance, for example when it comes to invitations for visits which are debated in the letters almost every year. Ernst and Marie Kuchenbecker always find reasons why a visit to Germany is not possible, why they cannot go “nach draußen”: the geographical

[31] Paraphrase: We thought the representatives in Washington would insist on improving the situation, but the miserable French want the contrary for Germany, and apparently the others are again bowing to the others.

distance, the long travel and the cost involved or business (too much to do or not enough to do) are given as reasons why it is not possible to visit the relatives in Germany.

TALES OF AMBIGUITY II: FAMILY VALUES AND DIVORCE

In addition to Remptendorf, Thimmendorf and Lückenmühle are locations in Germany that play a role in the transatlantic life world of Ernst and his family. In the letters both places stand as a chiffre for family problems. Thimmendorf for example stands for Ernst Kuchenbecker's first wife from whom he separated and who was probably the main reason for his decision to leave Germany. When Ernst emigrated in 1891 he was still married. This, however, very soon became a problem and Ernst tried to get a divorce. For that he needed the help of the German part of his family, especially the help of his brother Karl. Divorce is a very prominent topic in the letters written between 1892 and 1898. At least every second letter mentions "divorce". Several times Ernst Kuchenbecker almost begged his brother to help him to solve his problem. His sometimes very emotional letters tell the story of a more or less disoriented person. And indeed, as we have learned above, during his first years in the United States, Ernst felt lonesome, experimented with different places and different occupations, was not sure whether to open a business of his own or to buy a farm. In one of the early letters to his brother dated 16 July 1892, Ernst closes the letter by signing it with "Dein unglücklicher Bruder Ernst" [*Your unfortunate brother E.*]. In the same letter he writes:

> „… ich weis aber nicht ob ich hier bleibe, mein (tun?) ist witer fon hier weg zu machen wither weiter in Lant hier bleibe ich doch nicht lange mehr ich denke noh 2 Monnathe zu bleiben, ich habe überrahl keine Ruhe warum weist Du selbst ich bin Unglücklich mein Lebenlang. Lieber Bruder mein Gewissen macht mir Vorwürfe u. lässt mich nicht zu Ruhe kommen Das Schicksal grollt, mir ist kein Glück kein guter Stern beschieden. da mein Herz aufs Neue wider blutet ein geheimes Weh erfüllt …"

His "sadness" and his unsteadiness resulted obviously also from the unsolved question of divorce and his desire to marry again. However, Ernst never mentioned his new fiancé and his plans to marry in his letters. Only in 1895 after his brother Karl explicitly had asked about Ernst's personal situation, Ernst wrote back that he is no longer alone:

> „Du willst gerne wissen ob ich Verheierathet bin oder noch allein ich bin nicht mehr allein, und, bin zufrieden – „ (Port Cester 14.1.1895).

As the census records tell us Ernst and Marie were already married in 1895. It is probably safe to say that he married in the United States without being properly divorced in Germany and that this situation produced normative inconsistencies that Ernst could hardly bear. Four years after he married Marie, he again asked his brother to go to the village Thimmendorf, to meet his former wife in order to inquire whether she would now like to be divorced:

> „Du solst einmahl in Thimendorf die eist mal geweßene fragen ob si fon mir ganz frei sein will das heist geschiten. Hast Du nichts gehört ob sie lust hat wieter zu heirathen, oder gefält es ihr so beßer. … Wen sie es will geht es ganz gut si darf bloß in Amt sagen das sie schon so fühle jahre nichts mehr von mir gehört hat u. das ich sie auf keiner weiße unterstütz, so brauche ich bloß das jawort dazu zu geben, sollte es fühl Gerigts kosten ferursagen so werte ich die hälfte oder alles bezählen. Was meinst Du dazu wäre es nicht fühl besser für sie u. auch für mich, den zusammen leben kan ich ja doch nicht mit ihr. Hat sie das Haus noch, oder hat sie es wieder ferkauft, Du wirst mir wohl meine bitte erfüllen? Oder sprigst Du nicht gerne mit ihr … “[32] (Jersey City 12.7.1898)

It remains an open question whether Ernst and Marie married legally or whether Ernst lived in bigamy. However, it is safe to say that the conflicts with his first wife and the unsuccessful attempts to divorce must have worried Ernst a lot. As has been shown in the previous section, the letters make quite clear that Ernst constructed himself as a family person. He defined his role in life as that of husband and father. Although he travelled a lot during the first years of his stay in the United States, he definitively was not an adventurer. Hence, separation and divorce do not fit into the normative frames according to which his action and behaviour were structured. The failed German marriage certainly was an experience of rupture, more so than the migration experience itself. During the first years of his life in the United States, before he met Marie, Ernst tried to reconcile the resulting normative conflicts and to compensate his “abnormal” marital status by maintaining close relations with members of his family, especially with his brother Karl. He supported his brother’s idea to emigrate and

[32] Paraphrase: If she wants a divorce, all she has to say in court is she has not heard from me for years, and I don’t support her in any way. I’ll be willing to pay half the court fees, or even all of them. What do you think, would it not be better for her and for me, since I cannot live together with her. Will you do that? Or don’t you like talking to her?

offered him to join him and work with him to establish a business of their own. On 16 July 1893 he wrote to his brother:

> „Lieber Bruder soltest Du einmahl wider zu dißen gedanken kommen nah Amerika auß zuwandern so zegere nicht hast Du Das in sinn so mußt Due s Duhn nicht warten bis witer andere gedanken in Kopf steigen, mir hat es die erste Zeit auch nicht reht gefallen woollen, ich habe mich jetzt gut daran gewöhnt, mir wierte es nicht mehr lange gefallen wenn ich zurik kommen sollte, warum hier bin ich ein freier mann, aber doch kann ich einmahl zurik auf besuch ist aber noch zeit niche befor 5. od 4. Jahr."[33]

After his marriage with Marie in 1895 Ernst tried to solve the normative ambiguity threatening his personhood by almost intently constructing a coherent life course. Hence, in this case letter writing was not only a communicative tool to support a transatlantic family network but served also as an instrument of identity construction along the lines set by the social and normative frames shaping the protagonist's life world. Via the letters Ernst and Mary constructed a "normal" and coherent life story and reconciled or even overcame normative ambiguities resulting from unsolved personal problems and Ernst's personal failure to live up to the social norms which so powerfully structured his life. Letter writing, at least in this case, was a powerful resilience mechanism.

CONCLUSION

Migration is without doubt a challenging experience. It includes multiple ways of "border crossing", of change and adaptation. Ernst and Marie Kuchenbecker used letter writing as a means to cope with the challenges of "border crossing". The content of the letters and the way stories are told reflect their endeavour to produce coherence in a situation characterized by normative and cognitive inconsistencies. The stories told in the letters were meant to straighten out edges, ambiguities, and deviation from the normative ideal of a coherent life course. They do so by almost obsessionally accentuating the continuity of a family oriented value system and the family as a support network. In this sense, letter writing was also an instrument of creating and sustaining a strong "family relationship" and promoting family cohesion. The flip side of this function was that the conscious denial of responding to letters was used to sanction misbehaviour. Leaving letters

[33] Paraphrase: At first I didn't like being in America, but now I have gotten used to it, and I would not like it very long if I returned, since here I am a free man, but I can come for a visit, though only in four or five years.

unanswered excluded the potential recipient from the communication network established through letter writing. Being excluded from the communication network also meant being excluded from the material and emotional support the family offered.

In addition, letter writing was also a mechanism to emotionally and psychologically stabilize the inherently unstable situation produced by the dislocation and the separation from the core family in Germany. And letter writing was also a means to overcome normative inconsistencies and ruptures in the individual life course. Letters were used to construct a coherent life story fitting the socio-structural frames and normative systems structuring the lives of our immigrants. In this regard letter writing has to be interpreted as a coping or resilience mechanism. The construction of normative coherence, however, also produced ambiguities and even contradictions. A close reading of the letters trying to identify both the patterns with which the obvious ruptures and changes that migration produced are reconciled and the ambiguities and contradictions resulting from the reconciliation efforts offers a new perspective on the question of how immigrants adapted their social and cultural package to the new circumstances, how they interpreted "new" cultural phenomena in the context of "old" social and cultural frames, and how appropriation and rejection of new patterns resulted in a transcultural transformation of existing social and cultural norms.