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# **German Studies in a Post-National Age**

The 2009 Craig Lecture

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## *Willi Goetschel*

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## German Studies in a Post-National Age

Willi Goetschel

We live in precarious times. It is a time of a global political upheaval with large-scale implications that we have yet to understand in their full significance and consequences. Territories are being redefined and border disputes negotiated. But territories and borders are no longer defined by the conventional terms that we have come to take for granted in the past. The very parameters of what constitutes a territory are being challenged. Borders are no longer clearly identifiable but have become moving targets in international disputes. Simply put, distinctions like inside/outside, here/there, and other kinds of demarcations once thought indisputable have become directly challenged as a result of the most recent changes in warfare technology. Enemy forces are engaged in spaces that can no longer be described according to conventional notions of territory, border, and sovereignty.

International terrorism, conducted by quasi-state operations and conventional states alike, has made it increasingly difficult to maintain traditional notions of nation, nationhood and nation state. You may wonder what this has to do with the study of German literature, culture, and the strange animal called *Germanistik* – a term for which German Studies is only a weak stand-in that does not reflect the emphatic fervor that the normative charge of its German cousin's claim to positivist objectivism carries. This normative charge has informed the project of German Studies from the days of the discipline's institutionalization by the Grimm brothers, the founding fathers of a project of constructing a national literature and language regime whose more problematic implications have yet to be fully understood. Initiated as part of the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century move to reaffirm and mobilize national consciousness for the purpose of nation building, *Germanistik*, just like other disciplines of national philologies, remained problematically linked to 19<sup>th</sup>-century concepts of nation. That languages and literatures may have their own lives independently and free from national claims, dreams, and realities is a fact still unwillingly conceded by many. The difficult and conflicted position that Goethe's visionary notion of *Weltliteratur* or World Literature still signals is a stark reminder of how close to the heart of the

disciplines of the study of literature this concern cuts.

Let us start then with some concerns closer to “home” – home being the *institutional settings* of German Studies today, and not only of German Studies. If the balkanization of national language and literature departments has been the result of a Cold War politics and its surrealist imposition of a free market scheme in which these departments compete for institutional recognition, acceptance, and (which is ultimately more decisive) operating budgets, just as their “real world” equivalents in the private and the public sectors are forced to secure theirs, the situation has drastically changed with the end of the Cold War. With the “New Order” that has been defined in the last decades and whose vision is currently undergoing re-examination as a new U.S. administration has been ushered in, we have been experiencing in the last decades a paradigmatic shift towards what Habermas has aptly called a “post-national constellation.”<sup>1</sup>

I suggest that approaching the question of German Studies from this global perspective will allow us to comprehend the pressures to which our field of study is currently exposed. Rather than seeing these as an anomaly, we can instead understand the pressures as the consequence of a larger context of a development that is often conceived as having come now to a head for the simple reason that the long-term development has been so rigorously ignored by institutional forces and their critics alike. In other words, as the status, function, and role of national languages and literatures change over time, the focus and significance of institutional instruction and research changes as well. German Studies as we have known it is unlikely to continue in perpetuity. It instead requires a complete reinvention, and this includes a change of the status quo in terms of its institutional positioning. But while the field of German Studies has responded by accommodating this challenge, reinventing itself as a curious brand of hybrid cultural studies and often adopting hegemonic and unexamined notions of culture, it has preserved uncritically the baggage of its past as just that: a history from which it claims to be breaking free. This response has exposed German Studies to grant unwarranted purchase to claims and assumptions that have become institutionalized or, if you will, “naturalized” in the course of a process of institutionalization whose genealogy has yet to receive full critical examination. Such critical attention is urgently needed if we are to break free from the hold of the perspective of the nation-centered, national, and yes, often nationalist visions that still inform the discipline and its discourse.

However, I would like to argue that the need to rethink the field of our study is more than a necessary chore or exercise for a long overdue revision. The challenge of the post-national constellation that defines the current situation might call for apologetic reactions. But a more promising response would be to recognize this challenge in its paradigmatic significance as an opportunity to open up the ways in which we rethink the principles that define the disciplinary boundaries of German Studies. In other words, the question can no longer simply be to change direction, to “switch gears” and adopt a new theoretical apparatus. More importantly, rethinking our field of study from a post-national point of view means revisiting the question of how to read German literature *überhaupt*, i.e. in general and in particular. (*Überhaupt*, by the way, was one of the cherished terms William James used to employ, so I feel justified to use this loan word today, as a historical reminder that not so long ago German had some critical purchase in American English.) That means, not just abandoning the conventions of national canon building and its protocol for reading and interpretation, but returning to the old canon itself and approaching it with fresh eyes. Post-national sensitivities can re-open texts and give us access to readings that seem to have been closed and exhausted. As we will see, this can often be true in the case of those authors who have been claimed most exclusively as property of precisely the kind of national heritage they themselves had challenged the most. And this is not just true for some individual exceptions that would confirm the rule – i.e. the supposedly normative national orientation of literary production during what we like to call the classical and post-classical period, the “Age of Goethe,” or, more precisely, the period from Enlightenment and Romanticism to Realism. These are of course all historical hindsight constructions. Historically, the “Age of Goethe,” for instance, exists only in the books of a coterie of literary critics and historians. The reality looks rather different. What is crucial here is that these are no exceptions. Instead, an examination of German literature from a post-national point of view promises to open up perspectives that, upon closer examination, suggest not just more interesting readings but also arguably some that attend more closely to the texts in question.

Once we cast off the restrictive shell of the national vision or perspective through which *Germanistik* determines that the canon of German literature be examined, we can find a curiously critical agenda at work in the texts themselves that suggests a great deal of defiance against the normative presumptions a national agenda had imposed.

One of the more curious notions still current today in German spheres is that of *Auslandsgermanistik*. (To translate this for those not

familiar with German, this is simply the work that we and all those do who read and write on German literature outside of the borders of Germany.) As a Swiss, I always wondered about this idea – if it is one. For as a Swiss citizen, this would make me an *Ausländer* or foreigner to a land beyond the borders of my own. And what would this mean for reading Swiss authors like Gottfried Keller, Jeremias Gotthelf, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, Carl August Spitteler, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, and Max Frisch, among others?

### **Entering the Nation: Gottfried Keller**

But let's just look closely at a passage in the opening pages of Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* (*The Green Henry*), written in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and one of the paradigmatic *Bildungsromane*<sup>2</sup> of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to see what a Swiss voice has to say. Here is the young protagonist Heinrich, from Zurich. This is the city of the most creative follower and critic of Rousseau, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, whose vision of education had strongly influenced the same Fichte who was to become a rabid nationalist. This young Heinrich is eager to travel to Germany to educate himself, to learn what German culture has to offer at the source and center. To do so he is about to cross the border, represented by the river Rhine – the river pregnant with symbolic meaning that we will encounter again later. The thoughts of this young character about to enter the German nation highlight in subtly critical fashion the problem of both the hopes and aspirations, but also the dialectic of constructing, national identity. *Bildung* and nation, the narrator suggests, relate to each other in a dialectical interdependence whose tension is anything but easy and comfortable. As Henry sets out to approach the sources from which, he imagines, his own culture originates, the novel stages, in addition to Henry's own challenge, the problem of the national culture whose hegemonic claims pretend to rest on the closing of the borders. This is a proposition that Keller's narrator directly questions.

Aber schimmernd umfaßte die Rheinflut den steinigen Strand, und ihre Wellen zogen gleichmäßig kräftig dahin, hellglänzend und spiegelnd in der Nähe, in der Ferne in einem mildern Scheine verschwimmend. Und über diese Wellen war fast alles gekommen, was Heinrich in seinen Bergen Herz und Jugend bewegt hatte. Hinter jenen Wäldern wurde seine Sprache rein und so gesprochen, wie er sie aus seinen liebsten Büchern kannte, so glaubte er wenigstens, und er freute sich darauf, sie



nun ohne Ziererei auch mitsprechen zu dürfen. Hinter diesen stillen schwarzen Uferhöhen lagen alle die deutschen Gauen mit ihren schönen Namen, wo die vielen Dichter geboren sind, von denen jeder seinen eigenen mächtigen Gesang hat, der sonst keinem gleicht, und die in ihrer Gesamtheit den Reichtum und die Tiefe einer Welt, nicht eines einzelnen Volkes, auszusprechen scheinen. Er liebte sein helvetisches Vaterland; aber über diesen Strom waren dessen heiligste Sagen in unsterblichen Liedern verherrlicht erst wieder zurückgewandert; fast an jedem Herde und bei jedem Feste, wo der rüstige Schatten mit Armbrust und Pfeil herauf beschworen wurde, trug er *das* Gewand und sprach *die* Worte, welche ihm der deutsche Sänger gegeben hat.<sup>3</sup>

The tide of the Rhine covered the stony bank and the waves rolled by in steady measure. Powerfully moving, brightly scintillating, and dazzling close by, blurring away in a milder glow in the distance. And across these waves had come almost everything that had moved Henry's heart and youth in his mountains. Behind those forests his language was spoken purely and as he knew it from his favorite books, so at least he believed, and he rejoiced to be soon allowed to join along in speaking it without seeming precious. Behind these quiet black river banks lay all the German regions with their beautiful names, where the many poets were born, among whom each has his own powerful canto, unique in its kind, and all of which in their totality seem to express the wealth and profundity of a world, rather than of a single people. He loved his Helvetian fatherland; but across this stream its most sacred sagas had returned, glorified, in immortal songs; almost at every hearth and at every celebration where the sprightly shadow with crossbow and arrow was invoked did he carry that robe and speak those words that the German bard had given him.<sup>4</sup>

But not just Schiller, whose *Wilhelm Tell* is invoked here as the founding myth of the Swiss Federation, but also the symphony of creative German literary voices invite young Henry to visit their lands. Notice that the poetic weave of this passage does not just resonate nostalgically with the great names of German poetry but places this text itself boldly on a par with them:

In seiner Vorstellung lebte das poetische und ideale Deutschland, wie sich letzteres selbst dafür hielt und träumte. Er hatte nur mit Vorliebe und empfänglichem Gemüte das Bild in sich aufgenommen, welches Deutschland durch seine Schriftsteller von sich verfertigen ließ und über die Grenzen sandte. Das nüchterne praktische Treiben seiner eigenen Landsleute hielt er für Erkaltung und Ausartung des Stammes und hoffte jenseits des Rheines die ursprüngliche Glut und Tiefe des germanischen Lebens noch zu finden. Dabei hatte er alle Richtungen und Färbungen desselben ineinander geflochten, ohne Kenntnis und Beurteilung ihrer natürlichen Stellung unter und gegen einander. Dem Rationalismus hing die romantische Caprice am Arm, das Schillersche Pathos und der britische Humor, Jean Paulsche Religiosität und Heinesche Eulenspiegelerei schillerten durcheinander wie eine Schlangenhaut; die Beschwörungsformeln aller Richtungen hatte er im Gedächtnis und sah darum begeistert das vor ihm liegende Land als einen großen alten Zaubergarten an, in welchem er als ein willkommenener Wanderer mit jenen Stichworten köstliche Schätze heben und wieder in seine Berge zurücktragen dürfe.<sup>5</sup>

In his imagination lived the poetic and ideal Germany as it thought and dreamed of itself. He only received with fondness and receptive disposition the image that Germany had its authors manufacture of itself and exported across its borders. He thought of the mundanely practical hustle and bustle of his own compatriots as of a growing cold and degeneration of the clan and hoped to find still across the Rhine the original glowing and profundity of Germanic life. In doing so he had blended together all tendencies and colorings of this life without knowledge and insight into their natural relationship among and vis-à-vis each other. Rationalism had the Romantic caprice on its arm, Schiller's pathos and British humor, Jean Paul's religiosity and Heine's joyous trickery were shimmering promiscuously like a snake skin; he had memorized the magic spells of all tendencies and saw thus the country in front of him as a great old magic park in which he as a welcome wanderer would be allowed to use them to seize delightful treasures to carry back home to his mountains.

As Henry lingers over such thoughts, his boat carries him across the Rhine. But already before he sets foot on the promised land of his dreams and aspirations the description of this simple act of crossing the border anticipates in overture-like tones the lessons he is going to experience. Among these is the painful realization that the quest for origins will redirect him to his own resources, his own form of transmissions of the very culture he so desires to encounter. The German culture he chooses thus for his guiding star itself turns out to be sending him literally back home from where he came. Moreover, the very source for inspiration of the first example the novel gives for the culture Henry is so eager to experience from close up is his own as it conquered the German stage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, the epic of liberation, freedom, and autonomy that from this side of the border had entered the German imagination and inspired it to produce one of the quintessential German dramas.

Neugierig schaute Heinrich, näher hinzufahrend in die dämmernde Waldnacht hinein, welche nur spärlich vom Mondlicht durchschienen ward, und als ein Reh aus dem Busche an das Ufer trat, ein in der Schweiz schon seltenes Tier, da begrüßte er es freudigen Mutes als einen freundlichen Vorboten. Es war übrigens gut, daß er keine solidere und gefährlichere Schmuggelware in seinem leichten Fahrzeuge führte als solche Hoffnungen; denn ein Wächter des deutschen Zollvereins war dem Schifflein schon geraume Zeit mit gespanntem Hahn nachgeschlichen, um zu spähen, wo es etwa landen möchte. Sein Rohr blinkte hin und wieder matt vom Scheine der mondbeglänzten Wellen.<sup>6</sup>

Moving closer, Henry curiously looked into the dawning forest night, which was only dimly lit by the moonlight; and when a deer stepped out of a bush and onto the river bank, an animal that had already become rare in Switzerland, he saluted it with cheerful spirit as a friendly harbinger. It was, by the way, good that he carried no more solid and dangerous contraband goods in his light vessel other than such good hopes, for a guard of the German *Zollverein* [tariff union] had been shadowing the little boat for a while with trigger in position, spying where it might wish to land. His rifle glinted occasionally, dimly reflecting the light of the moonlit waves.

The so eloquently painted landscape of Romantic poetry turns out to be also populated by a less attractive species, that of border police, and that of the German *Zollverein* in particular, a species that invokes associations of tight control not just of borders, but also of the freedom of speech that had been so ruthlessly clamped down on by Metternich and the brute implementation of the German doctrine of containment of the 1830s and 1840s. Just like the rifle, which this border police holds as a reminder of the more violent aspects of nation building, and which shines in magic reflection of the moonlight, German culture and literature is figured here as that dreamy reflection of the real power relations it so esthetically sanctifies with its naive pseudo-innocence and ignorance. Or as Marx would put it eloquently: “In Germany, therefore, we are beginning to recognize the sovereignty of monopoly within our borders by granting it *sovereignty without them*.”<sup>7</sup>

*Bildung*, young Henry learns through his quest for origins, consists less in enjoying the temptations of art and culture, and more decisively in the disenchanting process of realizing that genuinely creative self-realization is the very opposite of shutting down the borders. Not until he realizes that exchange and cross-fertilization enable a nation – his own as well as Germany’s – to thrive and that he has already begun to participate in this process himself as he ventures out on his journey, will he arrive at the insight that will bring his journey to an end.

If German culture seems to suggest that anything outside its territory is bound to be *Auslandsgermanistik*, already Keller’s narrator suggests that German Studies in German lands would be what we could call *Binnengermanistik*, or in English, “land locked,” i.e. “internal” German Studies. Both the German and the English expression signal the confused presupposition of such a notion. The assumption that a scholar or critic on the inside would have an epistemological advantage rests on a faulty logic whose fallacy, however, is worth exposing for its instructive purpose. As we know from systems theory, an observer is by definition situated on the outside rather than the inside of a system she or he observes. That is the very condition of observation. Difference, in other words, is necessary if observation is to occur. If the very distinction therefore between an “external” and “internal” *Germanistik* rests on shaky ground, it is nevertheless symptomatic.<sup>8</sup>

Keller’s narrator presents the reader with a roll call of German literature that defies the very attempt at a national construction of a canon. The motley crew of authors it introduces is staged in a manner that challenges rather than consolidates any attempt at national unification. The mix of the voices of these authors questions directly the desire for, and the tendency of, the kind of national history writing that

did not just dominate the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, but continues to impose itself often in the most curious forms of reincarnation.

### **Down the River: Heine's Dis/Enchanting National Symbolism**

A quarter century earlier, Heinrich Heine composes the famous lines of "Loreley." This poem still continues to pose a challenge: how are we to read, or more precisely, how are we not to read this poem? Is this still the hyper-Romantic Heine most likely never was, or the caustic ironist whose project of disenchantment and exposure of the repressive force of myth has become his trademark? In order to assimilate these lines into the canon of national imagery, popular readings have sublimated the poem's stirring melancholy into the mourning of an irretrievable loss, pain, and fatality. And the apparatus of scholarly interpretations has followed suit. Heine reception neutralized the critical impulse of Heine's literary project by dividing his work neatly into an esthetic and a political body. It did this to tackle the challenge of maintaining a national canon in the face of Heine's provocative program of undoing the classic distinction between politics and esthetics. But esthetics divorced in this way from politics only led to a new imposition of a hidden political agenda that informed esthetic production more effectively than any type of openly politically engaged literature could have achieved. As a consequence, some of Heine's writings were claimed as literary, and thus as part of the canon of German literature and therefore national heritage. What did not qualify for this canon was to become his "critical writings": the default label for those writings where the political and, yes, Jewish voice were difficult to ignore. As a consequence, his literary writings were retrospectively romanticized and the very critical impulse of his poetry was either muted or declared "bad poetry" as it was not up to snuff, or so the argument would go.

There was now a good and a bad Heine, a German and poetic – that is, pleasing – Heine on the one hand; and a political, leftist, quasi-Marxist, and Jewish Heine on the other. When Karl Kraus dealt the death blow to Heine (as it then seemed), he was just following the conservative, assimilationist readings *Germanistik* had rehearsed to cordon off the literary Heine from the political one claimed by the motley group of Marxists, modernists, and Jews. Even today, the debate about whether Heine is a serious poet up to par is curiously enough still controversial. There are experts who continue to argue that his poetry lacks esthetic quality, arguing that it is poorly done. "Too German to count for being authentically German" was the old version of this line. In other words, only an assimilated Jew could produce such exemplary

German. And the Philo-Semitic argument about Heine's German betraying a Yiddish accent, well intended as it may be, ignores the fact that Yiddish had at that time long ceased to serve as the primary language, among German Jews, but rather continued to be only spoken side by side with German. Presuming that Yiddish would have been his first and German his second language operates with historically, biographically, and linguistically problematic assumptions with regard to a generation of German Jews who effortlessly moved between different linguistic communities where code switching was of essential importance.<sup>9</sup> Historically wrong, the argument is nonetheless symptomatic of an obsession with language ownership curiously at odds with critical theoretical reflection.

We will return to this point later, moving on for now to an attempt to re-read "Loreley," a poem that assumed emblematic significance. The poem is from the *Book of Songs*' section entitled "Homecoming" (*Heimkehr*). Its reception has its own history. It has been set to music, and its diction, pitch, and melodic flow have become paradigmatic for the understanding of Romantic poetry. But despite or because of this tradition, and reading against it, let us pose the question again: how are we to read the poem, or to follow Derrida: how are we *not* to read it? Germany's central waterway, the Rhine, has become the metonymic name for Germany. But is the Rhine German? Its springs are – courtesy of Friedrich Hölderlin – in the Swiss Alps, and the stream joins the sea in what is Dutch territory. On certain stretches the river Rhine represents the natural border between Germany and France, and initially Switzerland. In a way, the Rhine constitutes the European space, the water that separates and unites the grounds on which political space is projected and constructed. In Heine, father Rhine is not the mythical authority that endorses 19<sup>th</sup>-century national identity formations, but instead the cosmopolitan river deity who does not distinguish between his children, be they French, German, or Jews settled for centuries along his riverside. *Germany. A Winter's Tale* and *The Rabbi of Bacherach* are the intertextual proof texts here. This is the father Rhine who gently rocks to sleep his frightened charge, Sarah, on her escape from the pogrom in Bacherach – a Rhine where, besides the treasure of the Nibelungen, there is ample space for the Biblical figures and Jewish treasures like the silver washing bowl that Abraham drops into the river to facilitate the escape. This Rhine is distinctly European, ancient but therefore also immune to the pseudo-historicist claims of authenticity of the rising German nationalism. Contrary to the Romantic and post-Romantic efforts to inscribe the national project in mythic nature, Heine's Rhine deity is pointedly aware of current affairs. This is not Fichte's Rhine, just as the famous "Fichtenbaum," a northern tree whose

name reminds attentive readers playfully of Jewish family names, stands in “Lyrisches Intermezzo” for the counter claim to the militantly German Fichte of the *Speeches to the German Nation*.

The rock of the Lorelei then stands not as secure symbol of a phantasmagoric German national identity, but rather as the problematic imaginary that gives no ground to those who wish to ground myth on it. Literally to take it as foundation would mean to ground fatally:

Den Schiffer im kleinen Schiffe  
Ergreift es mit wildem Weh;  
Er schaut nicht die Felsenriffe,  
Er schaut nur hinauf in die Höh.

The boatman listens, and o'er him  
Wild-aching passions roll;  
He sees but the maiden before him,  
He sees not reef or shoal.<sup>10</sup>

Notice that while the translation like most readings suggests that the captain turns his eyes to “the maiden,” the poem does not suggest such a reading but simply states that the captain “just looks up high.” Fixing his view upwards upon the rock called Lorelei, and its mythic beauty, the small boat’s captain takes on the appearance of what he sees or rather imagines for his guide. More precisely, it is not even what he sees or imagines but the unfortunate perspective or focus that will cause the disaster: the privileging of attending to the above over and against the beneath of the very real and lethal reefs. Whether it might be the lures of mythical enchantment or, as one reader suggests,<sup>11</sup> the blinding rays of the sun thus positioning the boat in the uneasy spot between Romanticism and Enlightenment, the result will expose the fatal limits of either one. In both cases, the captain’s gesture betrays that of the speculative thinker, the idealist philosopher, and the ideologue, a gesture that will be the source for the captain’s and his boat’s end rather than any cause by a miraculous appearance. Ignoring the sharp ridges, he has only eyes for what he imagines and desires. But the sinking of the boat is anything but a case of fatal attraction. If anything it is fatal repulsion disguised as attraction:

Ich glaube, die Wellen verschlingen  
Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn;  
Und das hat mit ihrem Singen  
Die Lore-ley getan.

I think, at last the wave swallows  
The boat and the boatman's cry;  
And this is the fate that follows  
The song of the Lorelei.<sup>12</sup>

If the obsession with the rock turns out to be deadly, the poem reminds us to remain suspicious with regard to a lyric I that does not exactly exude reliability. From the poem's opening line "Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten" (I don't know what it is supposed to mean) to the concluding stanza "Ich glaube, die Wellen verschlingen" (I *believe* the waves swallow) knowledge and faith both have become problematic. Doubtful meaning is underscored by the uncertainty of the fact the lyric I narrates. On the other hand, the uncertainty of the sinking ship and drowning captain are stipulated as assumptions in the present tense:

Ich glaube, die Wellen verschlingen  
Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn.

I think, at last the wave swallows  
The boat and the boatman's cry;

is then linked to the claim of a constative statement suggesting causal relationship and responsibility surreptitiously as the shift to the perfect tense begs the question:

Und das hat mit ihrem Singen  
Die Lore-ley getan.



And this is the fate that follows  
The song of the Lorelei.

Yet the link is problematically performative. As the responsibility is shifted from the boat's captain to the mythical figure of Lore-ley, the poem exposes the structure of mythical explanation. The poem shows how the fantasy of mythology and its appropriation of nature are instrumentalized for a national identity construction that shifts agency from the human to geography.

If the poem has been traditionally read as a melancholy commemoration of lore that authorizes the national imaginary, we might ask whether the poem does not rather point in another direction, motivating us to recognize that the claim to the space of nature for ideological purposes would not literally undermine the reader's point of view. Heine's "Lorelei" would then teach us a lesson or two about the precariousness of claiming a space for a national purpose. Claiming a space to such ends, it would suggest, would be tantamount to causing a hermeneutic failure whose costs could be deadly. The poem's melancholy would then resonate from the lyric voice that cannot give up a claim it recognizes as fundamentally impossible, i.e. a claim that has no foundation, but that rides on the waves of the Rhine. This lyric I presents the Rhine no longer in terms of national identity, but asks us instead to recognize the Rhine as trans-national, trans-cultural, and trans-latable, i.e. a river that not only divides and cuts up and cuts off, but that connects, facilitates exchange, and makes translation possible in the first place – a river onto which figurations of national spaces may well be projected, but that washes such exclusionary claims away with the force of hydraulic pressure.

"Lorelei" leaves the reader with the challenge that it is not so much the narrative that is mythic, but the objectified mode of thinking that functions as fatal accomplice for reifying our desires, dreams, and the language we rely on to enchant and disenchant the spell they hold on us. "Lorelei" can then be read as a case study of the impossibility of maintaining the fiction that language can conjure and call into presence what is absent, what is signified. The poem's powerfully enticing melancholy is thus less about a loss than about what never existed. Posing as what appears to be a myth, the poem translates mythical representation into critique of the myth.

### American Relations: The Uncle from Philadelphia

We have moved across the border with the Swiss Gottfried Keller and traveled the waterways of Germany's fluid border, the Rhine River, with Heinrich Heine. Now that the hydraulic illusion has been washed away, we learn that the "German" – that elusive project of identity – has already experienced a critical dislocation and displacement before we have managed to put our hands on it. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years* is, among other things, a pointedly modern novel signaling critical awareness of the new loss of place, ownership, and traditional forms of identity. When Nietzsche sarcastically notes the German obsession with the perpetual question "what is German?"<sup>13</sup>, he highlights the illusory desire the cosmopolitan Goethe likewise had in mind when he suggested that Wilhelm's formative final experience of coming of age is the recognition of the futility of colonization in what has already become a post-colonial world. The dreams of colonization overseas in the United States prove more problematic than those sympathetic towards such an adventure may wish to recognize. Likewise, colonization of the East is just as questionable as the decision to stay at home, a place, too, as Wilhelm must recognize, that is in profound transition. Lenardo, Wilhelm's friend who wishes to turn Wilhelm's eyes to the opportunities of the New World, the narrator assures us, is just as problematic as Odoard, the enigmatic political leader of the colonization project within the German provinces in the East. Problematic too is the figure whom the novel calls the "third problematic man, whom some called Wilhelm and others Meister."<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the keen enthusiasts of colonization whom Wilhelm encounters, however, the "uncle" and his aunt, Makarie (the enigmatic, ethereal, and spiritual mentor of the society whose emissaries seek to run Wilhelm's life), stand aloof with regard to those plans for colonization. For they approach the world from a post-national point of view. The "uncle," the narrator notes, hails from America. While his grandfather had emigrated there during the time of William Penn, his father was born in Philadelphia. His son, the "uncle," however, born there as well, has returned – or more precisely (re-)immigrated to the old world whose ways he seems to prefer. The narrator also reminds the reader that both the uncle's father and grandfather "took pride in having contributed to the increased general freedom of religious practice in the Colonies."<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, however, those colonies declared their independence – a fact of which Germans had been made painfully aware when many of their countrymen were shipped across the Atlantic to serve the British army. The "uncle" is thus a distinctly post-colonial figure. Returning from the New World, he does not nostalgically return

to the old ways from a yesterday he never knew. With his relocation comes a dislocation and renegotiation of the old order, which the uncle imbues with new visions and aspirations of both change and preservation. His existence rests on an exchange between the New and Old World, something the novel's Old World characters have yet to realize in its dynamic trajectory.

The post-colonial experience, Goethe's novel proposes, is one that is not just confronting us overseas but also in equal measure, if not more critically so, at home – a home that has, through the uncle's figure, and Makarie's literally stellar perspective, become *planetary*, to use Gayatri Spivak's term.<sup>16</sup> Philadelphia, Penn's utopian city of brotherly friendship, is that post-national place from which the uncle hails and whose vision he brings to a Europe from whence it originates. The visionary transfer and exchange turns out to feature, in the figure of the uncle, as an engagingly creative project. It figures not just as an episode of the novel, but also provides the critical protocol for its reading. For if the novel is still primarily read as nostalgic surrender to modernity, closer attention indicates that the novel reclaims another modernity that has already begun and opened opportunities that national discourse could literally only dream of.

The novel addresses its concern about the decisive shift from landed property and territory to new forms of mobility. Moving from traditional property regimes to a new vision of modernity, migration assumes in this context central importance. Goethe stages the moment of this profound crisis at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup>-century German culture as a crisis that the novel takes through different levels of meaning. In shifting its anxieties to questions of landownership, migration, colonialism, and modern forms of nomadism, the text reflects the central significance that Goethe assigns to colonialism as a problem directly tied up with, and exposing, the problematic of the domestic arrangements of an old world whose imagined cosmopolitan importance is curiously at odds with the pressures of modernization. The recurring theme of signification that Goethe has, so playfully, moving up and down the infinite chain of signifiers, includes the occasional narrative break that lingers on the symbolism of a narrative landscape whose self-referential excess conjures the effect of repeated, infinite mirror-reflections (*wiederholte Spiegelungen*) of modern self-conscious anxiety. This play with signification is artfully matched with another motif that seamlessly fuses, repeats, and varies the problem of signification. Migration, emigration, and re-immigration serves as the guiding motif. But the German *wandern*, *auswandern*, and *einwandern* signifies more than just migration. For Goethe, and particularly in the Wilhelm Meister novels,

*wandern* indicates not only programmatic and utopian promise, but is also, and more problematically, fraught with apprehension, ambivalence, and anxiety. It is not without literary historical irony that “wandern,” once the battle cry of the Storm and Stress, now goes, in the writing of the mature Goethe, hand in hand with the key term of the novel’s subtitle and the watch word of Goethe’s late period in general: resignation (*Entsagung*). There is a curious parallel in the way the prefixes “aus” and “ein” are attached to another key notion of the novel: “bilden” – the central concern of the Wilhelm Meister novels – is expanded, transformed, and undermined when the narrative turns the good intentions of *Bildung* into *Ausbildung* – what happens in the pedagogic province – and *Einbildung* – the German word not just for imagination but also for arrogance and self-delusion. Modern differentiation, in other words, comes on Goethe’s analysis with certain consequences that require careful critical attention: *Ausbildung* and *Einbildung* at the expense of genuine *Bildung*, and *Wandern* at the expense of emigration and re-immigration. Goethe’s eloquently concise economy of words could not pose the problem more clearly. All hinges around the *aus/ein* divide, the opposition between inside and outside that this novel argues has become increasingly difficult to maintain. *Wandern* thus becomes travel along the borderland between inside and outside, a continuing reflection on what it means to emigrate and immigrate.

This nexus is already announced in the opening paragraph of the novel, on the edge of a mountain at an awesome if not terrifying and significant spot – “an grauser, bedeutender Stelle”:

Im Schatten eines mächtigen Felsens saß Wilhelm an grauser, bedeutender Stelle, wo sich der steile Gebirgsweg um eine Ecke herum schnell nach der Tiefe wendete.<sup>17</sup>

Overshadowed by a mighty cliff, Wilhelm was sitting at a fearsome, significant spot, where the precipitous mountain path turned a corner and began a swift descent.<sup>18</sup>

In the context of the allegorical – or in Goethe’s parlance symbolical – meaning of geology, this mountainous range suggests the old, fixed, and static landscape, the very opposite of the new world scenes of wide open fields, pastures, and prairies. More precisely, Wilhelm starts this novel seated in the shadow of a huge rock, i.e. separated from direct exposure to sunlight, Goethe’s primary source of inspiration. We could say that he

sits in the shadow of an over-towering past as a tremendous rock formation threatens to crush him. Is Wilhelm's life then from here on only downhill, as this opening line seems to suggest? Maybe, if the over-towering rock is to serve as point of reference. Not so, however, if Wilhelm manages to free himself from the crushing force of this shadow and its symbolism. If Goethe introduces the themes of stasis, anxiety and the imperative of movement at the very outset of the novel, the opening scene highlights the profound ambivalence of the theme with which Wilhelm is confronted as the Janus-faced wanderer.

The joyfully culinary variation of the theme appears six chapters into the novel. The formula for success of a restaurant is well known. It is summarized in the three words: "location, location, location." Now, in the novel, the uncle – the novel is silent about his name – calls dining with a menu "one of the most beautiful inventions of modern times."<sup>19</sup> Given his restlessness, the uncle takes this, however, one step further, having his field kitchen travel with him.<sup>20</sup> This way he frees himself entirely from the fixation on the notion of location. This is not the restaurant at the end of the universe, or not yet, I should say. After all, the uncle remains still one step removed from Makarie, the beautiful soul with stellar connotations. It is no coincidence, however, that the character of the uncle, who advocates nouvelle cuisine on the go, speaks from a position profoundly informed by the new feeling of dislocation. As pointedly post-colonial figure, his role in the novel serves as critical but also liberating reminder that at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europe can no longer ignore the challenges that confront a post-colonial world.

If we turn to the destinations that the novel offers for emigration and re-immigration, we find that the choices seem limited to, surprisingly, two places: North America and some Eastern parts of Europe. With regard to the forms of colonialism the narrative moves thus in a decidedly post-colonial world, although one where political institutions seem weak enough to tolerate, besides state structure, some private forms of colonization. Consider the selling point of one of the advocates of colonization in the United States: there, this advocate of colonization points out, the land is organized into counties, a term he generously translates into the German *Grafschaften* as if to superimpose a feudal and aristocratic screen to make the Tower Society's colonization project the more appealing for its European audience:

Ganze Grafschaften standen noch zu Kauf an der Grenze des bewohnten Landes, auch der Vater unseres Herrn [the uncle] hatte sich dort bedeutend angesiedelt. (91)

Entire so-called counties were still for sale along the boundaries of the inhabited territory, and the father of our gentleman had also established himself there with significant holdings. (150)

No, this is not Kafka's happy American dream enterprise of the Oklahoma Nature Theater, one that even has room for European high school dropouts. But the passage is just as hilarious and revealing. Yet while a good portion of the novel's cast gets lured overseas to settle on the lands owned by the uncle, another part desires to follow Odoard to his Eastern provinces. If going West is problematic, however, so is going East. Odoard, it turns out, has his own faults. His problem seems encapsulated in the title of the short insert story about him: "Nicht zu weit" ("Not Too Far"), a title that highlights his fault as that of having gone too far by staying too close, or rather not having gone far enough at all. For Odoard, distance and its lack, the novel's word for the promise of growth, education, and *Bildung*, has become the stumbling block. But the most ironic twist is yet to come. It is the steward of the castle where Wilhelm meets the representatives of the Tower Society to learn about its overseas emigration venture and where the dubious figure Odoard shows up to announce his plan for the European colonization project, who offers a third and most attractive scheme as he welcomes the best to stay and settle down right in his county. As the text suggests, in other words, *wandern* is at its best neither "aus" nor "ein" wandern. But while the novel aims here at some kind of closure, *wandern* remains the problematic activity it has been all along.

In this novel, the distinction between inside and outside becomes increasingly precarious. And it is not just borders and geographic spaces that become difficult to manage or organize along this distinction. If we read the socio-economic and political concern of the novel, the shift from landownership to labor, as the defining moment in the transition from feudalism to early capitalism and therefore as the call to consider the transformation to modernity as one that literally moves away from land and towards labor as the agent and fundament of social practice and order, we can understand that the anxiety in this novel is not just a metaphysical or theological one but, at the heart, an economic, social and political anxiety about the pressures of imminent changes. But this anxiety gives voice to a continuous reflection about the aporetic distinction between inside and outside. The Tower Society is both the agency and the problem of the solution. But the theme is also translated into its variation of small and big. The inserted novella "Die neue

Melusine” (“The New Melusine”) addresses the issue of proportion as the novella tells about the kingdom of dwarfs that live under the earth. We hear about its crown prince, a dwarf so small he falls out of his diapers, never to be found again. Thus, the meaning of the distinction inside/outside drops just as this minute princeling drops out of sight. But this nation of dwarfs also works the earth, digging for minerals and diamonds and other treasures deep inside it. Thus, to the horizontal now the vertical infinity is added, opening up a three dimensional infinity of inside and outside.<sup>21</sup>

Yet once the *aus/ein* divide of emigration or re-immigration has been discarded – notice that there is no talk in the novel of immigration but only of return, i.e. re-immigration –, and “wandern” tout court is elevated to the Tower Society’s watch word “Gedenke zu wandern” (Intend to wander), the old anxiety is doomed to return. After all, the paradigm change the novel pushes is from landownership to labor, merit, and achievement, from stasis to mobility, or as Lenardo, the emissary of the Tower Society observes:

Wenn das was der Mensch besitzt von großem Wert ist, so muß man demjenigen was er tut und leistet noch einen größeren zuschreiben. Wir mögen daher bei völligem Überschaun den Grundbesitz als einen kleineren Teil der uns verliehenen Güter betrachten. Die meisten und höchsten derselben bestehen aber eigentlich im Beweglichen, und in demjenigen was durchs bewegte Leben gewonnen wird. (413)

[E]ven though a man’s property is of great worth, even greater worth must be ascribed to his deeds and achievements. Hence, in the larger perspective, we may consider landholding as a smaller part of the blessings granted to us. Most of these, and the best of them, are actually to be sought in a life of movement and in that which is gained through an active [moved] life. (364)

With the recognition of the significance of this radical form of movement and mobility, and one, as “Die neue Melusine” (“The New Melusine”) reminds us, that moves both along horizontal but also vertical axes, the anxiety of modernity assumes new urgency. Enter the Wandering Jew. Three pages later Lenardo comes to address the issue directly:

Was soll ich aber nun von dem Volke sagen, das den Segen des ewigen Wanderns vor allen anderen sich zueignet, und durch seine bewegliche Tätigkeit die Ruhenden zu überlisten und die Mitwandernden zu überschreiten versteht? Wir dürfen weder Gutes noch Böses von ihnen sprechen; nichts Gutes, weil sich unser Bund vor ihnen hütet, nichts Böses, weil der Wanderer jeden Begegnenden freundlich zu behandeln, wechselseitigen Vorteils eingedenk, verpflichtet ist. (416)

But what shall I say of the race [nation] which above all others has adopted the role of the eternal wanderer, and, through constant movement and activity, contrives to outsmart settled shopkeepers and outdo its fellow itinerants? We may speak neither good nor evil of it: not good, because the league is on its guard against them, nor evil because the wanderer is obligated to treat everyone he meets in friendly fashion, and be mindful of mutual advantage. (366)

In this context, it is important to remember that it is not until modern times that the legend of the Wandering Jew gains currency. The folk book that spreads the legend appears only in 1602 in print, and it is from here on that we can register interest in the spotting of the Wandering Jew. After initial spotting in 1575 in Spain, 1599 in Vienna, and 1601 and 1603 in Lübeck, reports mushroom with the publication of the legend's print version: 1602 in Prague, 1604 in Bavaria, 1623 in Ypres, 1640 in Bruxelles, 1642 in Leipzig; in 1644 he makes it to Paris, and he is further spotted in 1658, 1672, 1676. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century he is seen in Munich in 1721, in 1766 in Altbach, 1774 in Brussels, and 1790 in Newcastle.<sup>22</sup> In Goethe's imagination the Wandering Jew plays an important role early on. In *Truth and Fiction*, Goethe's artful autobiography, Goethe tells about his plan (he calls it his "wunderlicher Einfall," or wondrous idea), to compose an epic treatment of the story of the Wandering Jew. This project was so alive in Goethe that he even planned to include a discussion of his thoughts on Spinoza in this poem in a description of a visit of the Wandering Jew with Spinoza, a scene that he imagined as a particularly promising section of this poem.<sup>23</sup>

A symptom of modern anxiety, it becomes clear now why the Tower Society has such a problem distinguishing itself over and against Jews. If movement and mobility is the new battle cry, Goethe's novel seems to suggest, wanderlust should only go so far, and certainly not too far. The Tower Society, in other words, is problematic not because it is



conservative, calculating, and power hungry, and, if you wish, culturally and maybe not only culturally imperialistic. It is deeply problematic because it can only constitute itself by exclusion of precisely that counter-image it strives to emulate. The Christian guilt complex even returns, one could say, more insidiously in the advanced setting of secularized forms of modern European culture. The curious use of Jesus as a heavily secularized ideal in the Pedagogic Province and elsewhere in the novel deserves in this context some further attention. But for the purpose of my argument here, it suffices to remind us of the precarious function of the Wandering Jew for the exclusionary notion of the key program of the Tower Society and of Wilhelm's life project. The uneasy resurfacing of the "Jewish Question" as the impersonation of the Tower Society's own conflicted desire plays out the problematic tensions that inform its vision of self-emanipation in a secular world oblivious of the theological-political complex in which it is grounded.

If the Pedagogic Province playfully rehearses national difference and identity and educates its charges to deal with the narcissism of little differences, the way that leads both Wilhelm and Felix out of this educational institution, which looks suspiciously like a nation state, leads precisely through an experience of leaving the national paradigm behind. This happens not by the false hope of abandoning it as does Lenardo, who desires to emigrate to America, or Odoard, who chooses to abandon national décor only to reinforce it with his project of the colonization of the East. Differently, Wilhelm and Felix learn in the novel's final scene that the pulsating arteries of life cannot be contained if it is to endure. Unlike Werther, they are no longer islands in the self-contained sea of nations<sup>24</sup>, but rather become communicating entities just as Makarie and the uncle do in their ways. As Goethe's late novel envisions the post-national constellation – as what both lies ahead of us as a liberating chance and presents the grounds on which the national is mounted in the first place – the most German of German poets signals his critical reservation against appropriation as the national icon he refused to be.

In 1817, four years before the publication of the novel, Goethe wrote a brief article on the German language. There Goethe, the unparalleled master of German prose and poetry, states the following:

Leider bedenkt man nicht, daß man in seiner Muttersprache oft ebenso dichtet, als wenn es eine fremde wäre.<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately one does not consider that one often writes poetry in one's own mother tongue as if it were a foreign one.

To make his point, Goethe offers his remarks on German language in a review of a publication that a Swiss from the Canton of Lucerne has put forward, thoughts that Goethe endorses with the graceful appreciation of being able to express "by way of another's words," or as Goethe's German has it, "durch fremden Mund" ("through the mouth of another"), what expresses more or less his own thoughts.<sup>26</sup> Derrida's description of language suggests profound resonance with Goethe's point: "language is for the other, coming from the other, *the* coming of the other."<sup>27</sup> While others at the time and long after still imagine that language is owned sovereignly, Goethe the alleged prince of the poets and of German letters has quietly abdicated from the paradigm of sovereignty and ownership of a national language. He not only points forward to where three decades later the Green Henry will set out on his journey in search of the sources of German literature and culture, but also further to the post-national constellation from which we may be able to begin to reread German literature as more than just a manifestation of a national spirit in the moment of a crisis of legitimation.

In Fatih Akin's most recent film *The Edge of Heaven* (*Auf der anderen Seite*), Nejat Aksu, a professor of German literature, lectures on Goethe. In a subdued style of delivery, he confronts his students with two statements by Goethe expressing a politically cautious and reserved view on revolution. The first is: "Wer wollte schon eine Rose im tiefsten Winter blühen sehen? Alles hat doch seine Zeit: Blätter, Knospen, Blüten [...]. Nur der Thor verlangt nach diesem unzeitgemäßen Rausch." The second quotation is: "Ich bin gegen Revolutionen, denn es geht genauso viel bewährtes Altes kaputt wie gutes Neues geschaffen wird."<sup>28</sup>

A son of Turkish immigrants, this soft spoken paragon student of the German education system presents his students with a reading of Goethe that remains painfully oblivious to the liberating and emancipatory impetus of an author whose iconic status has become firmly entrenched in the pantheon of classic German literature and culture. No wonder that Ayten Öztürk, the spunky revolutionary activist on the run, who has just arrived in Germany on her escape from the Turkish military regime, falls asleep in his lecture. This professor has nothing to teach his students. And eventually he quits his job to run a German bookstore in Istanbul. The film's irony can be cruel. But what it exposes is the Goethe of a certain kind of German scholarship and *Germanistik*, and the accomplished and therefore ultimately failed

Germanist – a professor of German literature whose best career move will be quitting his job and liberating himself from the straitjacket of nationalist traditions. However, the problem is not the literary and cultural tradition but the naive use the domesticated interpreter makes of it, or so the film suggests. After all, he stops lecturing and begins selling German books. And he does so in Istanbul, where he rediscovers the true mission of his life: to stake out a place of his own in the post-national constellation.

Reading Fatih Akin with and through Goethe just as we can read Goethe through the German Turkish filmmaker's lens promises the kind of creative reflections that a post-national constellation holds in store. Unlike the German scholarship from which the protagonist resigns, the German bookstore in Istanbul represents a place of exchange. There he is no longer the controlling authority of interpretation as Nejat turns into the custodian of the world of books and letters. Neither this side of the border nor the other, the bookstore resides in the space in between where the commerce of books, ideas, and visions knows no borders, as they are themselves the media where borders are crossed, renegotiated, and re-imagined. As Nejat changes from the interpretative business of national philologies and its attendant claims to possession, property, and control to the free trading of books, he rediscovers the freedom that is the promise of literary imagination where his Turkish as well as German identities are no longer silenced, contained, and repressed but set free to affirm and explore cultural difference as the necessary condition for cultural exchange and, as a consequence, of culture as such.

Embracing a post-national perspective does not entail depreciation or forsaking of literary and cultural traditions. On the contrary, enabling us to read better, read again and attend to the urgency of a different, and richer protocol that heeds the exigencies of the day will allow us to re-open the books and the world of letters that are now no longer subject to the dictate of national appropriation. Difference and alterity is often not what texts exclude, deny, repress, or suppress but what they articulate – intentionally or not. They articulate what has been ignored, ruled out or silenced. To attend to this silencing, to undo it and render the traces legible would not just mean to emancipate our literary traditions from the constraints of national perspectives but also to liberate ourselves as readers from past hermeneutic regimes. Today's post-national constellation confronts us not only with the task of critically rethinking national hermeneutic agendas but provides us also at the same time with the opportunity to attend to a whole range of new meanings the post-national constellation has rendered legible in the first place.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Die postnationale Konstellation. Politische Essays* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), and his essay “Die postnationale Konstellation und die Zukunft der Demokratie,” 91-169.
- <sup>2</sup> I understand *Bildung* here to have the open, dynamic and empowering meaning Goethe attributed to the term in the wake of Moses Mendelssohn. For Mendelssohn’s concept of *Bildung* cf. my essay “Einstimmigkeit in Differenz: Der Begriff der Aufklärung bei Kant und Mendelssohn,” forthcoming in *text + kritik* 2009.
- <sup>3</sup> Gottfried Keller, *Der grüne Heinrich*, pt. 1, chapter 3 (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1958 and Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), 31-32.
- <sup>4</sup> The passages quoted here are all from the first edition of *Der grüne Heinrich*. Only the second edition has been translated into English, and I therefore provide here my own attempt at translation. Of course some – and arguably the most critical – aspects of Keller’s German remain untranslatable and would require interpretative attention. The passage is crucial for a critical understanding of the narrative trajectory of Keller’s novel and an urgent reminder that any meaningful form of German Studies requires not just a certain level of study and knowledge of the language, but also the study of the materials that are studied in German. The suspicion that generations of German literature students have relied on quick and expedient familiarization with the title of their institutions’ Reading Lists by reading up on English translations is not one that should put us at ease. Keller is in this regard no exception. It is remarkable what a cavalier attitude translators, editors, and publishers assume when it comes to the challenge of making texts accessible to their audience. On a closer look, many of those translations are incomplete, leave out entire scenes, sections, or passages, or employ misleading vocabulary in critically sensitive moments. This is also the case for translations from Lessing, Heine, and others, and the situation should make us think again about the effects our reliance on translations has on our teaching and research.
- <sup>5</sup> Keller, *Der grüne Heinrich*, 32-33.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 33.
- <sup>7</sup> Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, in Marx, *Die Frühschriften*, ed. Siegfried Landshut (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1971), 213 and Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, ed. Quentin Hoare (New York: Vintage, 1975), 248.

- <sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the logics of distinction see Niklas Luhmann, “The Paradox of Observing Systems” in *Theories of Distinction. Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, ed. William Rasch (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 79-93.
- <sup>9</sup> Ironically, the word order of the opening line of “Loreley” does not follow the Yiddish word order that many wish to recognize, and that would call for the subject to precede the verb “was es soll bedeuten.” See Philipp F. Veit, “Lore-Ley and Apollougott” in A. Arnold, Hans Eichner, E. Heier, and S. Hoefert (ed.), *Analecta Helvetica et Germanica. Eine Festschrift zu Ehren von Hermann Boeschstein* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1979), 228-246, 230.
- <sup>10</sup> Hal Draper, *The Complete Poems by Heinrich Heine* (Cambridge, Mass.: Suhrkamp/Insel, 1982), 76.
- <sup>11</sup> Veit, “Lore-Ley and Apollougott,” 242 n.4.
- <sup>12</sup> Draper, *The Complete Poems*, 77
- <sup>13</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976-1977 and Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980), vol. 5, 144 (#244).
- <sup>14</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zurich: Artemis, 1949 and Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch verlag, 1977), vol. 8, 488, and the English translation in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years or the Renunciants*, trans. Krishna Winston, in *Goethe's Collected Works*, vol. 10 (New York: Suhrkamp. 1989), 414. The translation renders “eines dritten problematischen Mannes” as “a third, ambiguous figure.” To stay closer to Goethe’s text the translation has been modified.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 91, resp. in English translation, 151.
- <sup>16</sup> Gayatri C. Spivak, *Imperatives for Reimagining the Planet - Imperative für eine Neueinschätzung des Planeten*. Mary Levin Goldschmidt-Bollag Memorial Lectures on Refugee and Migration Politics (Vienna: Passagen, 1999).
- <sup>17</sup> Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, 11.
- <sup>18</sup> Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*, 97.
- <sup>19</sup> Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, 76. The English translation has “one of the finest inventions of recent times” (*Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*, 140). My translation stresses the esthetic and holis-

tic connotation of the intervention as well as the idea that “neuere Zeit” does not just mean recent times but accentuates the character of its modernity (*Neuzeit*).

<sup>20</sup> In German *ibid.* 80, in English 143.

<sup>21</sup> Certainly, the notion about the precariousness of the distinction between inside and outside was by no means Goethe’s discovery. If he did not himself read the chapter on the “Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection” in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* he could not have remained ignorant about it, given the private lessons he took on Kant’s philosophy from one of the experts on Kant at the time, Wieland’s son-in-law Karl Leonhard Reinhold. The author of the *Letters on Kantian Philosophy* (1786-87), Reinhold was the authority that introduced the German public and Goethe in private to critical philosophy with considerable success. The thought was in the air. It also runs through Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the signal work of the post-Kantian generation. But with Goethe, this idea assumes a new significance. Goethe details how this insight goes to the heart of traditional thinking about property and territory, challenging the old world arrangements that have not only become so stifling, restrictive, and anachronistic, but have become the chief export article to the colonies.

<sup>22</sup> Alex Bein, *Die Judenfrage* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980) vol. 1, 141 and vol 2, 76f.

<sup>23</sup> Goethe gives a summary of the planned epic poem in *Dichtung und Wahrheit, Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 10, 695-97. For the visit with Spinoza see *ibid.*, 733.

<sup>24</sup> In German a *Werd* is an island in running water.

<sup>25</sup> Goethe, “Deutsche Sprache,” in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 14, 267

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>27</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), 68.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.humboldtgesellschaft.de/inhalt.php?name=goethe>. This is the only source I could find for the quotations. A search via the Chadwyck-Healey on-line Goethe edition of the literary works and letters did not yield any results. Given the wording, which is untypical for Goethe, I assume these are phantom quotations, possibly originating in some third party records of conversations ascribed to Goethe. For Akin’s view of Goethe cf. Christiane Walerich’s interview with Fatih Akin, “Die Linke dient heute nur noch als Karikatur,” in *worxx* 21 (Sept. 2007), 12f.

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