

## The Inner Boundaries of German Literature and the Poetical Exterritorialization of “Others”\*

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### Abstract

As with any other literature, German literature is spread over a territory, in which the language of this literature (German) is not the only language to be spoken and written. In the 18th century, Sorbs, Lithuanians, Danes, Polish, and French lived there. In the 19th century, the growing migration added new groups. Peoples were mingled; the migration through German territories was accompanied by a wandering of signs through German cultural spheres. German authors targeting the national book market had to deal with this as a part of daily life. Many writers tried to mark cross-cultural influences as foreign and not belonging to what they understood as “German”; they developed techniques to extraterritorialize “others” in their narrative worlds. These “others” were integrated as foreigners, whose strangeness thus formed the inner core of German identity.

### Keywords

German literature; culture; identity; foreigner.

### Resumo

A literatura alemã, como qualquer outra, está distribuída em um território onde a língua dessa literatura (a alemã) não é a única falada e escrita. No século XVIII, sorábios, lituanos, dinamarqueses, poloneses e franceses viveram naquele território. No século XIX, a migração crescente incorporou novos grupos. Povos foram misturados; a migração através dos territórios alemães foi acompanhada de uma deambulação de signos pelas esferas culturais alemãs. Autores alemães que visavam o mercado editorial precisaram lidar com isso como parte do cotidiano. Muitos escritores buscaram assinalar influências interculturais como estrangeiras e não pertencentes ao que compreendiam como “alemão”; eles desenvolveram técnicas para extraterritorializar os “outros” em seus universos narrativos. Esses “outros” foram integrados como estrangeiros, cuja diferença então formou o núcleo central da identidade alemã.

### Palavras-chave

Literatura alemã; cultura; identidade; estrangeiro.

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AS WITH ANY OTHER NATIONAL LITERATURE, German literature is spread over a territory in which not only the “own” language – in this case German – is spoken and written. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the different countries with a German majority lived Sorbs, Lithuanians, Danes, the Polish (because of the partitions of Poland), French-descent Huguenots and many others. In the Baltic regions of Estonia, Livonia and Kurland (in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century parts of the Russian crown with many privileges), which for some decades had a great influence on the development of German culture and literature<sup>1</sup>, the leading aristocracy was German and lived within the greater network of the philosophical, political and literary communications of the German-speaking world. The serfs, speaking Estonian and Livonian, were called “undeutsch” (non-German). Johann Georg Hamann, the intellectual inspirer of “Sturm und Drang” (“Storm and Stress”) and his adept protégé Johann Gottfried Herder, the mastermind of this epoch, received some of their most important ideas from the multicultural situation in these Baltic regions (where they both had lived for some years). The German concept of “Volk” (“people”, “folk”) resulted from their critical apperception of the life and the culture of the Baltic serfs and their oral traditions. The German thinking (and damnation) of slavery was partially a reaction to the circumstances in Germany<sup>2</sup>. Herder began to collect “folk-songs”.<sup>3</sup> This was the first systematic attempt to do so, so the initial “German” collection of folk poetry contained songs not only in German but also in many other languages, especially in Lithuanian, Livonian, Estonian and Polish. Later, the Brothers Grimm tried to blur all the signs of the often non-German. The non-German in their case was the Huguenot and French origin<sup>4</sup> of many of the fairy tales they had collected.

The growing migration since the 19<sup>th</sup> century then added new groups (Yiddish-speaking East European Jews, Ukrainians, Italians, Serbs and many others) to the

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<sup>1</sup> N.E.: Em razão da especificidade do sistema de referência alemão, optamos por manter as referências conforme o original.

Cf. *Baltische Literaturen in der Goethezeit*, ed. by Heinrich Bosse, Otto-Heinrich Elias, and Thomas Taterka. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Johann v. Jannau, *Geschichte der Sklaverey, und Charakter der Bauern in Lief- und Esthland. Ein Beytrag zur Verbesserung der Leibeigenschaft* (Riga, 1786; Gottlieb Garlieb Merkel, *Die Letten vorzüglich in Lief- und Esthland am Ende des philosophischen Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur Völker- und Menschenkunde. Nach der Ausgabe 1896*, ed. by Thomas Taterka, Beiträge zur baltischen Geschichte 17 (Wedemark: Hirschheydt, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Volkslieder Übertragungen Dichtungen*, ed. by Hg. v. Ulrich Gaier, Werke in zehn Bänden, vol. 3 (Frankfurt/M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990), S. 839-1527

<sup>4</sup> Heinrich Hudde, ‘Hugenottennachfahren erzählen den Brüdern Grimm: Die Kinder und Hausmärchen und Frankreich’, in *Hugenottenkultur in Deutschland*, ed. by Jürgen Eschmann, Erlanger romanistische Dokumente und Arbeiten 2 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1989), S. 53-68.

population of the German states. After the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine there were many French, too – often unwillingly – within the boundaries of the newly founded so-called “German Empire” of 1871. Especially Prussia was a state with many minorities. In the official Wilhelminian propaganda in Prussia – not on the national German level – the government announced it was proud to be a country of many ethnic groups – not because the cultural diversity would have been particularly appreciated, but in order to convince the minorities to integrate and assimilate. Karl Kaisig, one of the most important functionaries of the politics of Germanization in Prussian Upper Silesia, addressed such pronouncements directly against the Polish national movement and to the Polish-speaking population (the majority in this region):

You say that there are many who call themselves Polish and are proud about it. You're right, there are people like that. They say that they were therefore Polish because they speak Polish. Such people cannot think clearly. There are many among us who speak French, English and Russian. Are they therefore French, English or Russian? Our Prussian family includes not only people who speak German or Polish, but also those who speak Moravian, Sorbian, Danish or French. They are all Prussia.<sup>5</sup>

The population should be unified as culturally one Prussian society, which meant being German, culturally. The literature in the languages of the “non-German” population was therefore undesirable (but it existed<sup>6</sup> and was strictly censored<sup>7</sup>). The Prussian politicians tried not so much to weed out the “others” in this time, but to weed out their otherness – the members of the minorities should become German, especially in the regions that were formerly part of the partitioned Poland, where most of the inhabitants were Polish. The Prussians tried to lure German settlers into these areas in order to Germanize them; despite the vociferous propaganda, this undertaking failed. So they tried to Germanize the people themselves – and to discriminate the Polish who wanted to remain Polish. The underlying idea of the nation as a homogeneous entity was enforced with all the available techniques of “internal colonization”<sup>8</sup> (regardless of

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<sup>5</sup> F. Preuß [=Karl Kaisig], ‘Gebet dem Kaiser, was des Kaisers ist, und Gott, was Gottes ist’, in *Ostmarkenbuch. Eine Sammlung aufklärender Abhandlungen, Erzählungen und Schilderungen aus dem gesamten Gebiete des deutschen Ostens*, ed. by K.F. Preuß, Vol. 2 (Breslau: Priebatsch, 1911), S. 5-10 (S. 7).

<sup>6</sup> Petr Malink, *Die sorbische Literatur*, 2 vol., (Bautzen: Domowina, 1958/59); Arno Lubos, *Geschichte der Literatur Schlesiens*, 3 vol. (München: Bergstadtverlag Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn, 1960-1974), vol. 3, S. 471-659; Ferdinand Neureiter, *Geschichte der kaschubischen Literatur. Versuch einer zusammenfassenden Darstellung*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (München: Sagner, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Marek Rajch, ‘Preußische Zensurpolitik und Zensurpraxis in der Provinz Posen 1848/49 bis 1918’, *Archiv für Geschichte des deutschen Buchwesens* 56 (2002), S. 1-77.

<sup>8</sup> Max Sering, *Die innere Kolonisation im östlichen Deutschland* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1893).

the language, these policies enabled a strengthening of the rule, also of the Germans). As a result, this kind of “integration” increased national conflicts. Hence, the population of this Empire was not only inconsistent in denominational, social and partisan ways, but also in cultural and ethnic respects.

But in reality, outside the national dreams of the national politicians, people(s) often mingled; the movement of men and women through German territories was accompanied by a wandering of signs through German cultural spheres. Already in an early text of the very successful comedy writer August von Kotzebue – he lived many years in Estonia<sup>9</sup> – fragments in Estonian interfere with the German of the main text<sup>10</sup>. A hybrid language called “Wasserpölnisch” was emerging in Upper Silesia, a mix of German and Polish. The slang of the West German industrial area of the Ruhr since the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to this day contain many words of Polish origin.<sup>11</sup> Tazio in Thomas Mann’s “Tod in Venedig” (“Death in Venice”) shows the confusion Polish elements can trigger in the inner life of a figure which tries to incorporate the ideas of German identity. Thomas Mann gives this author Silesian origin – the German-Polish border – and suggests he has culturally blended family relationships – but as a national author, he has to repress such origins. In the novel, he encounters them again in the form of the confusing erotic fascination that a Polish adult has on him in Venice, in the German tradition always a place of cultural diversity. Ironically, the figure of the national poet is framed by the moments of national ambiguity, which he rejects, but which contribute to its decay in the end.

In fact, the cross-cultural ties to German culture are quite visible in German literature, although mostly limited to some brief information about the origin of literary figures – “Gaelic, Germanic, Slavic elements met here”<sup>12</sup> – so that the cultural and ethnic alterity often appears to point to a sometimes remembered, sometimes repressed

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<sup>9</sup> Otto Heinrich Elias, ‘August von Kotzebue als politischer Dichter’, in *Baltische Literaturen*, S. 255-289.

<sup>10</sup> [August von Kotzebue:] *Die väterliche Erwartung. Eine ländliche Familien Scene in Esthland, mit untermischten Gesängen* [Reval: Iversen und Fehmer, 1789]. This play was performed in 1788 in Reval (Tallinn), in Estonia. It is seen as the beginning of national Estonian theatre, but the text was never printed (Elias, *ibid.*, S. 274).

<sup>11</sup> Uwe-K. Ketelsen, “Der harte östliche Akzent” – Polen in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des Ruhrgebiets’, in *Tausend Jahre polnisch-deutsche Beziehungen. Sprache – Literatur – Kultur – Politik. Materialien des Millennium-Kongresses 5.-8.April 2000, Warszawa*, ed. by Franciszek Gruzca (Warszawa: Graf-Punkt, 2001), S. 720-726.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Ferdinand Gutzkow, *Die Ritter vom Geiste. Roman in neun Büchern*, ed. by Thomas Neumann, 3 vol. [plus a volume with materials] (Frankfurt/M.: Zweitausendeins, 1998), S. 1697f.

“before”. Especially Fontane, descending from a Huguenot family, tried to anchor the Prussian-German characters of his novels in intercultural families. The mother of his female protagonist Cécile for example is “the widowed wife of Zacha, real Voronezh from Zacha, in whose name you will find a whole Slavic world harmony”<sup>13</sup>; in his last novel “The Stechlin”, the German musician Niels Wrschowitz speaks with a Polish accent and declares “I am Czech”<sup>14</sup> – the family of the Stechlins think about the possibility “that the Stechlins are of Sorbian origin”.<sup>15</sup> Fontane also emphasized that the Sorbs “gave the country [Brandenburg] its character, the things and places their Wendish names.”<sup>16</sup> They were

not eradicated totally, they were not simply driven back to other areas where they found their tribe, they were in fact all or very predominantly part of the country and have in all the provinces beyond the Elbe undoubtedly made those mixed races, which now Prussian provinces inhabited.<sup>17</sup>

In a poem, Fontane glorifies the delightful strangeness of German place names of foreign origin (a kind of literary representation that would be imitated by later writers such as Horst Bienek<sup>18</sup> or Heinz Piontek<sup>19</sup>):

All the smiling villages, I count hardly:  
Linow, Lindow,  
Rhinow, Glindow,  
Beetz, and Gatow,  
Dreetz, and Flatow,  
Bamme, Damme, Kriele, Krielow,  
Petzow, Retzow, Ferch at the Schwielow,  
Zachow, Wachow, and Groß-Behnitz,  
Marquardt-Ütz on Wublitz-Schlänitz,  
Senzke, Lenzke, and Marzahne,  
Lietzow, Tietzow, and Rekahne,  
And finally in the shining crown:  
Ketzin, Ketzür, and Vehlefan.<sup>20</sup>

Parts of the scenery and characters of Fontane’s “Effie Briest” are backed with “Wendish” roots; even the name Briest refers to “Wendish” ancestors. Jenny Treibel in the novel named after her believes that the superstitious people at the Wendish Spree in

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<sup>13</sup> Theodor Fontane, ‘Cécile’, in Theodor Fontane, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Walter Keitel, 3 sections (München: Hanser 1962-69), section 1, vol. 2, S. 141-317 (S. 279).

<sup>14</sup> Theodor Fontane, ‘Der Stechlin’, *Sämtliche Werke*, section 1, vol. 5, S. 7-388 (S. 303).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, S. 259.

<sup>16</sup> Theodor Fontane, ‘Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg’, 3 vols, *Sämtliche Werke*, section 2, vol. 2, S. 15.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, S. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Horst Bienek, *Gleiwitz. Eine oberschlesische Chronik in vier Bänden* (München: dtv, 2000), S. 229f.

<sup>19</sup> Heinz Piontek, *Früh im Sommer: Die Gedichte / Gedichte aus fremden Sprachen*, Werke in sechs Bänden 1 (München: Schneekluth, 1982), S. 150.

<sup>20</sup> Fontane, *Wanderungen*, vol. 2, S. 253-255 (S. 254).

Prussia's central province Brandenburg believe in "all sorts of Wendish gods".<sup>21</sup> Obviously Fontane felt joy about ethnic diversity and loved to merge people with different origins to the "mixed race"<sup>22</sup> he called the Prussians. About his childhood town of Swinemünde (today Swinoujście), he wrote:

That the residents were quite strange to all philistinism, certainly had many reasons, but mostly it resulted from the circumstance that the entire population was of distinctly international flavor. In the surrounding large and wealthy villages there perhaps lived yet Wendish-Pomeranian autochthonous from the days of Julin and Vineta, in Swinemünde itself, however, especially in the upper class all was so jumbled that in it met representatives of all the northern European peoples, Swedish, Danish, Dutch, Scots, who were stuck here sooner or later, most probably at the beginning of the century, at which time the hitherto very insignificant town had taken an upswing.<sup>23</sup>

Fontane is not alone with such observations. Already Herder had great interest in the "un-German" peoples of the Baltic region (Himmler reviled him because of his tolerant nationality understanding<sup>24</sup>). Thomas Mann explicitly preferred to "blood mixture" as a property of his characters (and his own children).<sup>25</sup> Even more conservative authors and some authors of the right wing of the political spectrum participated in such ideas, which at times could be very dangerous. The botanist Friedrich Merckenschlager published in 1930 a theory of mixed races, "which clashed with the Nazi racial theory, insofar as it emphasized the racial mix of the Germans".<sup>26</sup> After Hitler's seizing of power, Merckenschlager lost his post as director of the botanical laboratory at the Imperial Biological Institute for Agriculture and Forestry in Berlin-Dahlem. He was defended by Ernst Jünger, who declared: "The special value of his view on breeding is that it emphasizes the diversity of the rest of our body politic". Gottfried Benn, who in 1933/34 unavailingly tried to establish himself as the leading author in Hitler's new state, described himself accordingly with Merckenschlager:

In my parents' marriage so the Germanic and the Romanic was united [...]. There was therefore a mixture, but there were no hybrids; a cross, but no hybrids, it definitely was an Aryan mixture, one often legitimized in Germany. It is the mixture

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<sup>21</sup> Theodor Fontane, 'Frau Jenny Treibel', *Sämtliche Werke*, section 1, vol. 4, S. 297-478 (S. 318).

<sup>22</sup> Fontane, *Wanderungen*, Vol. 2, S. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Theodor Fontane, 'Meine Kinderjahre', *Sämtliche Werke*, section 3, vol. 4, S. 7-177 (S. 56).

<sup>24</sup> Karol Sauerland 'Herders Auffassung von Volk und Nation', in *Interkulturalität und Nationalkultur in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, ed. by Maja Razbojnikova-Frateva and Hans-Gerd Winter, Germanica N.F. 2003/04 (Dresden: Thelem, 2006), S. 21-34 (S. 21).

<sup>25</sup> See Jürgen Joachimsthaler, 'Thomas Mann. Abgrund und Haltung', in "Die höchste Ehrung, die einem Schriftsteller zuteil werden kann": *Deutschsprachige Nobelpreisträger für Literatur*, ed. by Krzysztof Ruchniewicz and Marek Zybura (Dresden: Neisse, 2007), S. 144-172.

<sup>26</sup> Helmuth Kiesel, *Ernst Jünger: Die Biographie* (München: Siedler, 2007), S. 429.

of the refugees: Fontane, Chamisso, Du Bois-Reymond [. . .]; there was a time when the population of Berlin was one-fifth families of refugees.<sup>27</sup>

It would be almost impossible to list all the German writers, artists, scholars and so on with a cross-cultural background. And what is this “German”? The Upper Silesian politician Wojciech (Adalbert) Korfanty and the Lithuanian writer Vydūnas (Wilhelm Storost) were both educated German, to some extent Germanized, and saw themselves thus incorporated into a “German” world that required them to look down on their cultural origins as something antiquated. The education at schools in regions with minorities followed this scheme: the minority languages were forbidden in school (the only exception was French, which traditionally belonged to the social repertoire of the upper class), and the pupils were taught about the superiority of the German language and culture. The logically inevitable result of this education was that the minority populations tried to mobilize against this politics. Korfanty became a deputy of the Polish minority in the Reichstag (and later one of the most determined opponents of Germany in the Upper Silesian voting campaign). Vydūnas on the other hand became one of the most important Lithuanian writers, who not only wrote in Lithuanian but also in German<sup>28</sup>; after the independence of Lithuania in 1918, he remained on the German side of the new borderline in the culturally mixed city of Tilsit and fled after 1945 before the Red Army occupied Germany, where he died. There is no German history of literature mentioning his name. But is someone like him not to be considered as a part of German literature and history too? Where do the nations begin, where do they end?

The exclusion of the otherness of the “others” led to the exclusion of every word they wrote in the “other” languages; in the German historical consciousness, there is little place for them – and for the knowledge that Germany was even in the times of nationalism not a region of a “pure” German culture. On the contrary, this German culture has always been a result of the presence of “others”; the exclusion and mental exterritorialization of them was a part of that kind of German culture and literature, which tried to construct itself as the only and “pure” German. This “German” had to be purified of all that could be connected with the “others”, beginning with the idea of a

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<sup>27</sup> Gottfried Benn, ‘Lebensweg eines Intellektuellen’, in Gottfried Benn, *Prosa und Autobiographie in der Fassung der Erstdrucke*, ed. by Bruno Hillebrand, *Gesammelte Werke in der Fassung der Erstdrucke 2* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 1984), S. 305-345 (S. 310).

<sup>28</sup> Important as a mixture of different literary, documentary and fictional genres is Vydūnas, *Sieben Hundert Jahre deutsch-litauischer Beziehungen: Kulturhistorische Darlegungen* (Tilsit: Rūta, 1932).

language which should be free of words of non-German origins<sup>29</sup> through a conception of a “right” German way of feeling, thinking, and writing.

German authors with national ambitions who tried to construct images of a unique nation had to deal with the existing, but rejected, cross-cultural moments as an obstructive part of daily life. Many writers tried to mark cross-cultural influences as strange and not belonging to what they understood as “German”. Hence, these authors developed techniques to exterritorialize the “others” in their narrative worlds. Unlike the protagonist encounters with the Polish elements in “Death in Venice”, German characters should be saved from cultural confusion (which was often imagined as a cross-cultural erotic confusion). A large number of novels<sup>30</sup> follow the same plot pattern: the protagonist, mostly living on a border between nations, descendant of a nationally blended family, has to decide whether he will live as a German or as a member of the other nation. The conflict between the nations (a conflict-free state among nations is not conceivable in these novels) becomes a conflict inside the figure, in which some features were called “German” and had to fight against the other, the “non-German” features, which such figures had inherited from the non-German part of their parents. The non-German part in the figure is supported by erotic or political tempters and seducers outside of themselves, who try to lure them into a non-German world and want to win them for the fight against Germany and all that is called German: the people, the state, the culture, the values. Only those figures who defeat the non-German in themselves pull through. The toughest fights such figures have to win are not against the seducers, but against themselves, against their seduction, against that “confusion” within them, which is accessible for the seducers. The reservoir of their options for action is split into a German and a non-German half.

It creates a narrative grammar of the non-German to be suppressed and enforceable German properties, and a “modular calculus”<sup>31</sup> for the narrative worlds with

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<sup>29</sup> Very influential was Eduard Engel, *Deutsche Stilkunst*, 37-46<sup>th</sup> edition, (Wien, Leipzig: Tempsky / Freytag, 1919).

<sup>30</sup> For example Annie Bock, *Der Zug nach dem Osten* (Berlin: Vita, 1898); Albert Liepe, *Die Spinne: Roman aus den gegenwärtigen Kämpfen des Polentums wider das Deutschtum in der deutschen Ostmark* (Berlin: Zillesen, 1902); Carl Busse, *Im polnischen Wind: Ostmärkische Geschichten* (Stuttgart, Berlin: Cotta, 1906); Valeska Gräfin Bethusy-Huc, *Hans der Pole*, 2nd edition (Berlin: Alfred Schall, 1907); Fritz Skowronnek, *Pan Kaminsky* (Dresden, Leipzig: Wodni, Lindecke & Knödel / Eulen-Verlag, 1928) and so on.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel R. Delany, ‘Appendix: Closures and Openings’, in Samuel R. Delany, *Return to Nevryon* (Hanover, London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), S. 269-291.

clear rules along cultural distinctions between characters that may have properties and others who may not. As a result, the literary images of “others” referred less to any reality than to collective fantasies of all that was not “German”; “German” was an idea and an ideal, with Germans not allowed to be “non-German”. The “strangers” in German poetic textures of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries often were not realistic descriptions of real men and women speaking another language, but the symbol for repressed and exterritorialized (and often demonized) desires, dreams and needs of their German authors.

The best and most imitated example of this kind of literature is Gustav Freytag’s bestseller “Soll und Haben”<sup>32</sup> (“Debit and Credit”), sometimes called the “bible of the [German] bourgeoisie”.<sup>33</sup> The novel is dominated by binary codes and stereotypical conceptions. The novel’s protagonist is the paradigmatic German citizen Anton Wohlfart, who makes a merchant’s career and has to serve as a role model for male middle-class German readers. The novel begins with his departure from his hometown in Silesia, near the Polish border, possibly (although it is not stated) in ethnically mixed terrain; the story leads him to the job at a trading house and at the end of the novel he marries the sister of his employer and becomes a partner of the business. Anton Wohlfart’s way “up” in the novel is systematically contrasted with contrasting characters, who take other paths and embody different social realities, like the worker or the aristocrat. Wohlfart’s career is accompanied and mirrored by the synchronous career of a Jewish figure, who has to embody all the dark sides of modern business like greed, speculation, intrigue and deception. The society Wohlfart stands for is split into two contrasting halves – all positive is attributed to the German part, all negative to the Jewish. This narrative world has its own outside, an imagined Polish world. Wohlfart has to travel there because a Polish uprising endangers German trade goods and he has to save them; later, he is for some times an employee of a German noble family who could no longer withstand the bourgeois competition and therefore retreated to a newly acquired, former Polish estate in the German-Polish border area which at the time was under German political rule and described as a region outside of German culture. The

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<sup>32</sup> Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben: Roman in sechs Büchern. Vollständiger Text nach der Erstausgabe Leipzig 1855*, ed. by Hans Mayer (München: dtv, 1978).

<sup>33</sup> Sabina Becker, ‘Die “Bibel” des Bürgertums: Gustav Freytags “Soll und Haben”, in *150 Jahre “Soll und Haben”’: Studien zu Gustav Freytags kontroversen Roman*, ed. by Florian Krobb (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), S. 29-46.

“Polish economy”<sup>34</sup> there is described as a cultural “desert”<sup>35</sup>; the duty of the aristocrats will be to widen the territory of German culture, to Germanize the “desert”. More than all the other contrastive groups (even the Jews), now the Polish function as the contrary group to Wohlfart – this is necessary because the Polish counterpart allows integration with all the different German groups (including the Jews) as “Germans” with the possibility to learn the right German way of life from the German bourgeoisie. Only the Polish are not able to do so: “There is no race that so little has what it takes to thrive, and to acquire by their humanity and capital formation, as the Slavic.”<sup>36</sup> The Poles are determined primarily by negative attributes, but on closer inspection they also have all what Wohlfart in the course of his social advancement has to suppress in his own inner life: erotic freedom (even hinting at gender boundaries), sensuality, pleasure, generosity, improvisation, sovereignty in matters of style and so on. All these “Polish” properties in the novel are called by negative names with a sense of moral damnation by the narrator and by the German figures (the Polish figures have no voice): lust (with homosexual connotations), greed, gluttony, extravagance, lack of planning, disorder and tastelessness. With the Polish, Wohlfart meets what he has to overcome in himself.

There are similar patterns in many other novels<sup>37</sup> – up to Thomas Mann’s “Death in Venice”, where it is used ironically for an ambiguous match. Normally, however, the image of Poland includes a self-disciplining duty for the Germans, who have to become “heroes” against a “Poland” inside of themselves by “overcoming” themselves. Germanization and colonization are also addressed, perhaps even primarily, inwardly, against the “own”. This has consequences: within the narrative worlds the borderline between the nations becomes a borderline through the inner life of figures, who now are in a fight with parts of themselves. This fight against themselves must also be fought by the texts that construct it. As a result there are oppressed properties and condemned possibilities to feel and to act – everything a good German may not do, feel or think gets exterritorialized as non-German. The literary figures representing these counterparts of Germans thus were constructed complementary to what “German” should be – French

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<sup>34</sup> Hubert Orłowski, “*Polnische Wirtschaft*”: *Zum deutschen Polendiskurs der Neuzeit*, Studien der Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa an der Universität Dortmund 21 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> Freytag, *Soll und Haben*, S. 494.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, S. 331.

<sup>37</sup> Very important was Robert Kurpiun, *Der Mutter Blut: Roman aus Oberschlesien*, (Kattowitz: Phönix, 1909).

figures are incarnations of erotic and political desires many Germans really felt and stand in such texts for erotic and political unreliability, Italian for a passion that goes beyond the boundaries of bourgeois rationality and Polish for clutter, waste and indiscipline. These “others” had to incarnate all that Germans should not be and what they should free themselves of. So the “others” in German texts were integrated as strangers, whose strangeness formed the inner constitution of German identity.

In each case the “others” incarnated positions contrary to German self-images which were taught in school and spread by many then very successful texts, which today have often been forgotten. So similar mechanisms as for the Polish in Freytag’s “Soll und Haben” can be shown for the German images of neighbours like French and Italians – with one great difference: These “western” neighbours were not dominated by the Germans and so the colonial dimension of the relationship disappears, a dimension which can be translated in the order to self-colonize, to colonize all what could be called “Polish” in German characters. The French were for a long time the “archenemies” of the Germans. The properties (“the hated French spirit which consists merely of wit and gallantry”<sup>38</sup>) and desires (above all the desire for political freedom) called “French” had to be fought like an enemy from outside German territory and could not be colonized and disciplined.

The French of Alsace-Lorraine never functioned like the other minorities in the German self-constitution. Most the other minorities were contrasted with the dangerous Polish, whose national movement questioned and threatened the territorial constitution of Prussia and the German Empire. In contrast to this enemy inside the German world, the other minorities (Lithuanians, “Wasserpölen”, Kaszubes, Sorbs) were imagined as mostly assimilated, so they could be viewed as lovable but retarded people, who in a short time would be “fully civilized” Germans. The “non-German” parts of them seemed to recall a nostalgic world of childhood and pre-modern rurality.

As the result we can see different types of projection: rejected properties were exterritorialized out of the interior of German figures and attributed to the cultural and ethnic “others”, which often were minorities living in Germany. At the same time, any right of these minorities to live within their own culture was denied by powerful “invitations” to assimilate. What was different in them was – parallel to the same

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<sup>38</sup> Hans Peter Woessner, *Lessing und das Epigramm* (Neuhausen a. Rhf.: Diss Zürich, 1978), S. 116

motion in the literature – expropriated in a symbolic way: it was no longer a characteristic of “others”, but it seemed to be a vice, which every man of every origin should remove to become the highest cultivated kind of man: a German (which for the ideologists of Germanization was a cultural, not a biological, term). The members of the minorities who wanted to preserve their culture were then exterritorialized in a symbolic way by disregarding them first in large parts of contemporary literature, and then in the national German history of literary and culture. To this day, texts which are full of these “others” and sympathy for them (written by classic authors like Fontane, the Mann brothers, Gunter Grass and so on) are not read as often as texts about these “others” or “otherness” and cross-cultural experiences. The reason why Tadzio in “Death in Venice” is a Pole is not part of the cultural knowledge surrounding this novel, one of the most read, most analyzed and most interpreted in German literature. Groups from which the Germans are not separated by geographical boundaries are in this way separated from them by the inner boundaries of texts.