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Guest Editor’s Introduction

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We put together this special issue as an attempt to showcase the critical momentum that scholarship in German studies enjoys today. The work presented in these essays exhibits a blissful ignorance of the baleful predictions of the state of our fields of study that are often present in the publications of our professional organizations. That is not to say that the uncertainties facing study in the humanities are not real. I would only assert that the reversal of the trend toward the diminishing influence of the humanities both inside and outside of the academy must begin with the production of vital scholarship.

German studies in America has encountered challenges of its own in the past ten years. The end of the Cold War also marked the end of Germany as Europe’s most contested space. While that was cause for celebration, it has had some unforeseen side-effects. With Germany out of the daily headlines and with a drastic reduction of the number of Americans serving in Germany in the Armed Forces, our institutions approach German studies with considerably less urgency. Furthermore, international commercial forces homogenize aesthetic production to such an extent that cultural and sometimes even linguistic specificity become much more difficult to ascertain. At the same time, as the frequent debates about the legacy of Nazism indicate, inquiry into the Germany of the dark years of the Third Reich and its aftermath shows no signs of abatement. One of our greater challenges as scholars and teachers remains to balance our own attention to that history with a vigorous inquiry into how the multiplicity of German cultures engages and is engaged by the rest of the world. This issue has tried to strike that balance.

The articles are not organized around any specific question or problem, although, in most cases, they present more than mere phenomenological close readings. The investigation of the place of the Jewish figure in postwar German literature and the critique of German intellectual history from Goethe to Heidegger present frameworks for our understanding of their respective categories. Eliot Neaman traces the legacy of Ernst Jünger through the author
and the country’s political development. Nina Berman’s description of an experiment at the Universität Göttingen gives us an alternative map for negotiating the multicultural landscape of contemporary Germany. The two articles on film take up aspects of German cinematic history that have long gone ignored, especially by American scholars. And, finally, Hella Hennessee’s contribution exhibits the refreshing energies required by all of us to reawaken interest in German studies in our classrooms.

German studies have frequently looked elsewhere for theoretical and historical inspiration. When I began my own graduate studies, the field spoke of itself as being fixated on a nationalist canonical understanding. This perspective ignored the field’s unique feminist organization, “Women in German.” It also ignored Germany’s long history of exploration, colonization, emigration, and immigration, the understanding of which demanded the critical skills of postcolonial scholarship. This limited and limiting self-perception prevented Germanistik both in America and Europe from fully integrating the important contribution of the German film industry both to Hollywood’s ways of seeing as well as to alternative constructions of the cinematic gaze. Much of the work in this issue as well as much current scholarship not only proves that German studies have broken out of their conservative restraints, but it also suggests that these impediments may well have been an excuse for our own creative failure. The institutional prestige our discipline may have lost is in all likelihood based on canonical conceptions of the field of study. I hope that this collection of essays opens new, more inclusive channels of communication in the academy.

Contested Jews: The Image of Jewishness in Contemporary German Literature

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In 1985, three years after the death of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Günter Rühle, the intendant of the Frankfurt Kammerspiele decided to produce Fassbinder’s provocative play, Der Mülle, die Stadt und der Tod [Garbage, the City, and Death], but instead he created a national scandal. The real play was never performed. Instead, another kind of dramatic spectacle occurred with German Jews in the audience taking the stage while simultaneously, a thousand people gathered outside the theater and protested against the production of the alleged anti-Semitic play. Charges and counter-charges followed with Rühle, who was also the play’s director, supposedly asserting that “Schönzeit für Juden in Deutschland vorbei war.” Or, in other words, Germans should feel free to make Jews targets of criticism because they were no longer to be considered an endangered species.

Despite the nastiness and trauma of this event, the so-called Fassbinder scandal was important for the Jewish community in Germany because it was the first time in postwar history that Jews of different generations and political persuasions united to voice their deep concern of how Jews were to be portrayed on the stage and in literature. Though the political action of the Jews was successful in stopping the production, it did not, however, answer many crucial questions that the demonstration raised. For instance, is there a correct way to represent Jews critically and positively in art? Is the situation in Germany such that Germans must be more careful than, let us say, Americans or French, in the manner in which they depict Jews? Is every negative portrayal of a Jew to be associated with anti-Semitism? If, until recently, as Rafael Seligmann has claimed in his book, Mit beschränkter Hoffnung, Jewish writers in Germany have not risen to the task of depicting the situation of German Jews and Jewishness in Germany with candor, how can one expect Germans to represent Jews in a forthright and free manner? To put the problem more provocatively, were German Jews upset by the Fassbinder play because Rühle was depicting a contemporary Jew in a critical manner in a way that contemporary Jewish artists had not done and
perhaps should have been doing?

Obviously, there are no simple answers to any of these questions, but they do point to a special dilemma for German writers that has not existed in other countries in the West. Due to the Nazi past, Germans are under great pressure to depict Jews in such a positive light that they may unwittingly contribute to philo-Semitism, which is just as insidious as anti-Semitism. It is a German dilemma, created by Germans. Most recently, after he delivered his Peace Prize Speech on October 11, 1998 in Frankfurt am Main, Martin Walser discovered just how difficult it is to try to please a "normal" relationship between Germans and Jews. He criticized the instrumentalization of the Shoah and asserted that there was such a thing as "the banality of good," meaning that Germans have been saturated with depictions of their shame, and that it is time for Germans to feel as though they were a very normal people and should be allowed to declare that enough is enough. Walser was taken to task by many critics for his insensitive remarks that insinuated Germans had been suffering too long from images of the Nazi past and should be able to discard them and turn away. In fact, though there may be indeed a kind of Shoah business and an instrumentalization of German Jewish history, unavoidable in capitalist societies that will commercialize anything, there is also a moral imperative to keep dealing with the sins and truth of the past. Walser may no longer realize or accept this moral imperative as his speech and recent novel, *Ein springender Brunnen* (1998) reveal, but fortunately there are many German and Jewish writers in Germany who have continued to reflect seriously and sensitively about the past to sort out the present state of Germans and Jews in a united Germany.

Given a situation in which German writers are morally obliged to include Jews if they want to deal with the past, a situation in which they know they will be damned because they cannot give an exact rendition of Jewish life, these writers have conceived Jewish figures in their fiction not to capture the essence of Jewishness but to define what it means to be German, just as Walser was endeavoring to do in his Peace Prize Speech. In short, the image of Jews in German literature is self-reflection. Here I am using the term reflection not only in the sense of mimesis but also critical contemplation. Since very little has been written on this particular issue, I want to review some of the key images of Jews in prose fiction as conceived by important German writers who have endeavored to come to terms with the past by treating the "Jewish question" as a "German dilemma," which needs to be resolved if Germany is to move beyond the shadow of its dark past.

**Preliminary Remarks**

In writing about the image of the Jew in German fiction there is the danger that a critic may claim to know implicitly or explicitly what the Jew and Jewish identity are or should be. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid using models or types taken from reality to analyze the representation of Jews in fiction. However, this essay is not an attempt to judge how well German writers have captured the "essence" of Jewishness and Jewish traits in their portrayals. Rather, I want to assess the manner in which postwar German writers have endeavored to break with Nazi stereotypes of Jews to deal with anti-Semitism and their own personal experiences vis-à-vis Jews. For the most part, Jewish figures in German literature are con-figurations; that is, they cannot be isolated as fixed types but are part of a process within the novel's plot movement. Concomitantly, they also figure in a socio-historical mode of reception that changes as relations between Germans and Jews keep shifting up through the present. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that there is no one current or movement in German literature that demonstrates a tendentious German way of portraying Jews in German literature.

In her important study, *Zur Gestaltung jüdischer Figuren in der deutschsprachigen Literatur nach 1945* [The Construction of Jewish Characters in German-Speaking Literature since 1945], Christiane Schmelzloph maintains that there are three discernible historical stages in the German representation of Jews in fiction. The first, approximately 1945 to 1960, is one in which German writers like Albrecht Goes, Walter Jens, and Luise Rinser undermine Nazi propaganda and depict Jews as noble and heroic symbols of humanity in keeping with the Lessing tradition of Nathan der Weise. Here Jews are, according to Schmelzloph, too positive to be credible. The next phase, 1960 to 1972, is marked by the endeavors of German writers like Günter Grass and Alfred Andersch, who sought to overcome the Nazi past in their novels by means of the absurd. Whereas the characterization of the Jewish figures becomes more complex and differentiated in works by Grass and Andersch, Schmelzloph argues that Jewish characters are used in an arbitrary manner more to expose the Nazi past and overcome it than to grasp the Jewish experience. In the third phase, 1973 to 1982, when Schmelzloph completed her work, she sees the rise of old stereotypes like the ugly Jew in the works of Gerhard Zwerenz, Herbert Achtertbusch, and Fassbinder that have been re-created to question the philo-Semitism of Germans and provoke greater reflection about the relationship of Jews and Germans. Summarizing these phases, Schmelzloph comments:

If one looks at these examples of West German literature in which Jews are described, especially those of the ugly type depicted according to the old cliché as Gerhard Zwerenz and Rainer Werner Fassbinder have done, and if one takes into account the explanations that these authors themselves have given—on the one hand the claim of an 'objective' look at the historical situation, on the other, the rebellion against philo-Semitism that is felt to be imposed—then it may seem as if there has been a swing of a consciousness pendulum in the development of the literary thematization of Jewishness from the good-intentioned figures of the early postwar times to the renewal of clichés of the 1970s. This swing indicates that, in spite of all the careful and thorough occupation with the past, we have not seen the development of a historically effective and thoughtful thinking and speaking about Jews and Jewish themes.

On the other hand, Schmelzloph proposes that this is only one possible interpretation of German images of Jews. It is also possible to see an evolution in
the depiction of Jews that has enabled German writers to overcome their inhibitions and deepen their approach to the problems involved in depicting Jews. Moreover, the "negative" portrayal of Jews has its positive side, for it is crucial for German writers to have a certain Unbefangenheit (spontaneity) if they are to render Jews in their writings as complex individuals with different kinds of histories and backgrounds. Schmelzkoft tends herself to believe that, if one includes depictions of Jews by Jewish writers such as Friedrich Torberg, Nelly Sachs, Hilde Domini, Jeanette Lander, and Jurek Becker, the prognosis for the portrayal of Jews in German literature is positive, because the very nature of a one-dimensional Jewish identity is questioned, and these questions compel German and Jewish writers alike to reflect carefully about how they intend to use and characterize Jewish figures in their writings.

Although Schmelzkoft is helpful in describing certain tendencies in the manner in which Germans depict Jews, her approach to the problem of Jewish images is too schematic and literary, for she makes it appear as though there were a causal literary evolution that was somehow separate from social-political events and other cultural phenomena. For instance, the portrayal of the Jew in fiction cannot be separated from the way Jews are depicted in film, drama, poetry, television, and the mass media by non-Jews and Jews from 1945 to the present. The image of the Jew after Auschwitz was a contested figure in its configuration, and its configuration consisted in the manner in which the figure plays out its role in a particular work of art and at the same time is received by a reading/viewing audience that identifies or empathizes with this figure or rejects it. For instance, in the 1949 film Der Ruf, Fritz Kortner played a Jewish professor who returns to Germany and finds that he is a contested Jewish figure. His body or existence literally becomes the battlefield over which Germans and Jews are intent on defining their identities in post-Auschwitz society. In 1949 there were fierce protests by Jews against the showing of the British film Oliver Twist and the portrayal of the Jewish figure Fagin. Street demonstrations led to actual violent fights. Jewish bodies on and off the screen were marked by these occurrences. Throughout the postwar period to the present there have been significant political events and cultural productions forming the socio-historical public parameters and conditioning the way Germans and Jews perceived and portrayed Jews: "Anne Frank Week" in 1950 and the production of the play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett based on The Diary of Anne Frank in 1956; Max Frisch's Andorra (1961); the Eichmann Trial (1961-62) in Israel as depicted in the mass media and in books such as Hannah Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem; Rolf Hochhuth's Der Stellvertreter (The Deputy) (1963); Peter Weiss's Die Ermittlung (The Investigation) (1965); the Seven Days War in 1967; the 1979 telecast of the American television film "Holocaust"; the attacks on the Palestinians in Sabra and Schatilla in 1982; the Biburg Affair (1985); the Historiker Streit (1986); the destruction of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989; the Persian Gulf War and German reactions to Israel (1990); the debate about the Jewish Memorial in Berlin (1995-present); and the Martin Walser affair (1999). The list could continue. All of these major events—and many others—fostered a charged atmosphere in Germany in which prose fiction was only one genre that contributed to the formation of a public image of Jews and Jewishness. However, one thing is clear in the prose fiction, no matter what the image is or who the author is—the figure of the Jew is a contested figure, an embattled individual, over whose body Germans seek to come to terms with the past and to project potentially new and more harmonious relations with Jews. In this regard the contested Jewish figure is also a figure of redemption. German authors are not interested in defining Jewish identity or capturing the essence of Jewishness in their works, and therefore, it would be wrong to analyze their Jewish figures on the basis of whether they appropriately depict Jews in a realistic or recognizable manner. Their Jewish figures are more significant for the manner in which they reveal German values, attitudes, and behavior and the ways that Germans have used Jews to identify themselves. As a Kunstfigur, the Jew in German fiction is a construct employed in the author's narrative strategy to explore the relations between Germans and Jews at a certain time in history and to reflect upon the possibility of altering the relations so that Germans and Jews do not have to operate on each other's bodies to attain a sense of their identities. The possibility for mutual recognition is often projected through the construction of the Jew in German fiction so that the Jew's body no longer has to be a battlefield of identity.

Let us turn now to some of the portrayals of Jewish figures in German fiction to examine how the contested Jew has and continues to shed light on German social life and attitudes. My examples are selected historically from 1948 to the present. This chronological account is not intended to show the evolution of an image or the growth of German consciousness about Jews or Jewish identity. More important, I believe, is to reveal the variations of how the contested Jew is used to explore German cultural and social values within a historical context.

Variations of the Contested Jew

Forgotten by the public but not by Wolfgang Koeppen, Aufzeichnungen aus einem Erdloch [Sketches from a Hole in the Ground], a documentary novel written by Koeppen under the pseudonym Jakob Littner and published in 1948, was reprinted in 1992 as part of the Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag. As Koeppen explains in his new preface, a Berliner by the name of Herbert Kluger founded a publishing company in Munich and needed someone to write an account about the experiences of Jakob Littner, a Munich stamp collector, who had somehow escaped the hell of Nazi persecution.

The Jew told the new publisher that his God had held his hand over and had protected him. The publisher listened. He took down notes about places and dates. The survivor was searching for a writer. The publisher reported all the incredible things to me. I though I had dreamed it. The publisher asked me: 'Do you want to write his story?' The tormented man wanted to get out. He emigrated to America. He promised me an honorarium of two care packages a month. I ate American food from tin cans and wrote the story about the sufferings of a German Jew. Thus it
There is a similar situation in Luise Rinser’s story, _Jan Lobel aus Warschau_ (1948). Here a Polish Jew escapes from a camp in Bavaria and is saved by Frau Olenksi, who is in charge of the Gärtnerei family while her husband is fighting in the war. The intrusion of the Jew as der Fremde [the stranger] in the household causes each of the figures—the stepdaughter Julia, the young son Thomas, the old mother-in-law, the farmhand Franz, and the female narrator, who is a painter—to assume some position of tolerance or hostility toward Jan Lobel. The time is 1945, and at one point, Jan must flee SS troops. However, he returns when the war is over and begins living openly with the Olenksi family, which becomes stigmatized by the villagers because a Jew is living on the farm. When the man of the family returns from the war, he is disturbed by Jan’s presence but does not want to throw him off the farm. Nevertheless, Jan himself realizes that he cannot stay without “destroying” the entire family. So, he departs, and we learn through the narrator that Jan Lobel drowned while trying to gain illegal entry to Palestine two years later. Interestingly, we also learn that the narrator is probably Jewish and had concealed her identity during the Nazi period, for when Julia Olenksi asks whether she is crying for Jan at the end of the story, the narrator responds: “No, no, I said rashly, ‘I’m crying about all the homeless people.’ She looked at me attentively and then deeply horrified, and I realized from her look that it was no longer necessary for me to tell her the truth.”

The ironic twist at the very end of the story compels the reader to reflect whether it is possible to know who a Jew is. But, the Germans in this tale do define themselves via the Jew Jan Lobel, and it is this process of defining “Germanness” that interests Rinser. Written and set in 1947, Rinser’s narrative reveals that order has been restored in Germany. The nursery business is flourishing; the family is intact; the villagers are once again friendly toward the Olenks. However, Jan Lobel has perished, and the narrator, anxious about her identity, remains homeless. It appears that Germany’s resurgence after World War II will be at the cost of Jewish suffering and trauma. The behavior of Germans toward the Jews has already been repressed by 1947, and the Jewish narrator is apparently afraid to make herself known, except for unusual circumstances.

While Rinser shows how the marks of German anti-Semitism were erased or repressed after World War II through German treatment of the figure of the Jew, Albrecht Goese’s story, “Das Brandopfer” (“The Burn Victim”) (1954) reveals that the scars will never go away. Goese’s story takes place during the 1950s in a small southern German city. A young assistant librarian has rented a room in the house of the Walkers, who own a butcher shop referred to as the “Judenmetzlig” by people in the town. Through conversations with Frau Walker, who has a scar from Brandmal [a burn] on her face, he learns that, in 1942, the butcher shop had been turned into the only place that Jews could buy their meat once a week on Fridays. Since Herr Walker had gone to war, Frau Walker was placed in charge of the shop and had such great empathy for the Jews, who are beaten and humiliated before her eyes, that she tried to sacrifice herself during a bomb raid to take on the sins of the Germans. However, she was saved by a Jewish acquaintance, Herr Berendson, formerly a publisher, who risks his life to rescue...
her and then escapes to London the very next day. Frau Walker believes that God was unwilling to accept her sacrifice, and in the postwar years she devotes herself to various causes intended to bring about better understanding between Germans and Jews. At the same time, the assistant librarian learns by chance that the man Jewish exile writes a letter in which he explains what happened to him during the Walker, nor does he express any desire to return to Germany. The librarian concludes, after piecing together Frau Walker’s story, that the scar on her face reveals that no one can take the sins of the world on his or her shoulders. Indeed, he states, “that they have all been preserved for some other service—he, too, the complicitor, also Sabine, who was miraculously involved, and Sabine’s father, the saved savior. Of course, it should remain erected in the scar on the face of the woman, the sign, and it should not be read other than as a sign of love, that love which holds the world together.”

Once again, Goes is not concerned with portraying noble and suffering Jews, but through different types of Jewish figures he wants to convey a religious message of redemption. The Jews are configured into the plot to illuminate the German crimes and sins of the past through the Brandmal, and the young narrator is Goes’s hope for the future because he acts and reacts to the Nazi past and the Jewish figures in a manner that may help him build a different type of Germany. As symbol, the Brandmal is now burned into his conscience, and through the through the configuration, he has an opportunity, as do German readers, to redefine “Germanness” in the postwar years.

All three authors, Koeppen, Rinser, and Goes, have written other works that incorporate Jewish figures to reflect upon German attitudes and behavior during and after the Nazi period. Koeppen has a character named Henriette in Tauben im Gras [Pigeons in the Grass] (1951) refuse to return to Munich, portrayed almost like the inferno, because of what happened to her and her family during the Nazi regime. Indeed, she will not have her Jewish body and soul tormented again, and as we witness the strange and sordid chain of events in Munich, we realize that Miriam is correct in keeping her distance from Germany. Rinser, too, has also confronted the Nazi past in other novels such as Der schwarze Esel [The Black Ass] (1974) and Mirjam (1983), in which Jewish figures play a pivotal role in determining the integrity or perversion of Germans. Goes has written several poems such as “Davids Traum” (1960), “Die Langverstossene” [“The Castaway”] (1961), and “Gespräch mit dem Rabbi” [“Conversation with the Rabbi”] (1961) in which Jewish characters are employed symbolically to suggest a reconciliation between Germans and Jews.

In other German fiction of the 1950s, Jewish figures are provocatively employed to keep the past alive so that German memory will not be allowed to relapse into amnesia. If suffering occurred during World War II and many Germans were victimized, the Jewish figures are depicted intentionally to point out that it was first and foremost over Jewish bodies that Germans brought about their own suffering. This is the case in Heinrich Böll’s Wo warst du, Adam? [Where were you Adam?] (1951). Walter Jens’s Der Blinde [The Blindman] (1951), Hans Werner Richter’s Sie fielen aus Gottes Hand [They Fell from God’s Hand] (1951), and Alfred Andersch’s Sansibar oder der letzte Grund [Sansibar or the Last Reason] (1957). Of course, the Jewish figures are developed in different ways to point to the senselessness of the Nazi brutality, as in the case of Böll’s work, or toward reconciliation of Germans and Jews in the present as in the case of Jens’s story. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, that is, during the height of the economic miracle, many other authors such as Martin Walser, Siegfried Lenz, Woldfried Schnurr, and Alexander Kluge used Jewish figures to critique the prosperity of the West Germans and to draw parallels to show that the German welfare state was based on the destruction of European Jewry.

Among the authors of the “new generation,” intensely critical of the continuities between Nazi Germany and the Bundestag, Günter Grass became the author who continually incorporated Jewish figures into his novels to demonstrate how Germans perverted history to make it seem that they suffered more than the Jews. In Die Blechtrommel [The Tin Drum] (1959), Sigismund Markus, the owner of the toyshop, is a key figure throughout the novel, even though he commits suicide in 1938. It is Markus who provides Oskar with all his drums that will enable him to play the music that exposes the hypocrisy and deceit in Nazi Germany and in West Germany. Symbolically, Markus incorporates the German-Jewish symbiosis: he is in love with Oskar’s mother and the city of Danzig, but this love is unrequited, and due to the rejection he eventually takes his own life. This loss, according to Grass, must be made good somehow by Germans, instigating German amnesia and complacency. In Die Hundedeichte [Dog Years] (1963), Grass creates another strange but significant German-Jewish symbiosis between Edi Amsel, a Jew, and Walter Matern, the son of a miller. It is Matern who, during the early 1930s, protects Amsel and then turns against him. Beaten and deceived, Amsel transforms himself and conceals his identity during the Nazi period as a ballet director named Haseloff, and after the war he undergoes another metamorphosis as a businessman named BrauXel. Compelled to abandon his “Jewish” identity in the 1930s, Amsel rises during the postwar period to question the degradation of German identity. It would seem that his function, like that of Oskar’s drums given to him by Markus, is a critical artistic one that will use all kinds of subterfuge and artifice to depict how Germans have not overcome the past. In Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke [From the Diary of a Snail] (1972), Grass raises questions again about the Nazi past. He argues that the German-Jewish symbiosis that must be reformed and become a living part of the German future, if Germans are to recreate their society along democratic and humanistic lines. Based on his diary notes that he took as he campaigned for the Social Democratic Party during the 1969 elections, Grass sets up a narrative structure that enables him to describe contemporary political battles and those of the Nazi period. Since he returned home to Berlin on weekends during the election campaign to be with his children, he gives them reports about his experiences and
also answers his children’s questions about his youth in Danzig and how the Jews were driven out and persecuted. The major character in his story is the teacher Hermann Ott, whose nickname is Dr. Zweifel. Since he helps and befriends Jews and eventually teaches at the Jewish high school in Danzig, Ott must flee the city in the early 1940s. He takes refuge in the cellar of a Polish bicycle shop, where the owner Stomma mistakes him for a Jew and mistreats him in a sadistic way. Since Ott collects snails and is as patient as a snail, he eventually triumphs over Stomma, cures his own daughter of illness, survives his underground existence, and goes to the Bundespolybik to begin a new, but skeptical existence. While Grass’s Ott, which is somewhat based on the Jewish literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki’s life, he also documents his narrative with facts and statistics from Erwin Grun’s book, *Die Auswendung der Danziger Juden* (1968). However, Grass is not so much concerned with portraying authentic history and authentic Jews as he is with showing how reform in Germany must be slow and steady. Though not Jewish, Ott is often mistaken for a Jew, and it is through the non-Jew as Jew, through his humane acts and the vicissitudes of his existence, that Grass outlines a program for transforming Germans and German society.

In Grass’s works there is a panorama of Jewish types who cast doubt on the nature of democratic changes in West Germany while at the same time, they are figures of hope. In contrast, Gerhard Zwenez’s novel, *Die Erde ist unbewohbar wie der Mond* [The Earth is as Uninhabitable as the Moon] (1973), is more pessimistic, for he conceives a ruthless character named Abraham Mauerstamm, (based on the real life of Ignatz Bubis, the present head of the Jewish Central Council in Germany) who operates as a real estate speculator in Frankfurt without a moral or political conscience. Unwittingly, he therefore contributes to the worst aspects of West German capitalist society.

Abraham was obsessed by the chore of dominating other people so that he would not be dominated. He was the first real estate owner to raise rents and thought up new charges and expenses. His mind functioned superbly. His thinking was directed toward security in the present and the future. His feeling was finely tuned to the slightest change in the climate that suggested a threat. In the city there was a rumor spread about what his mother, the teacher was supposed to have said one time as she shook her head: what an attitude—a cutthroat, who instead of stabbing with knives, he stabs with apartments.

Though this image of Abraham may serve anti-Semitic sentiments, Zwerez did not intend to write an anti-Semitic book. His major purpose was to demonstrate how a Jew, whose sufferings under the Nazis transformed him into a brutal individual, had to become as ruthless as his German contemporaries to survive in the Bundespolybik. In this respect, Abraham is one result of the Nazi experiments and figures into the postwar configuration in which Jews are often exploited by Germans either to show how philo-Semitic the Germans are or how the capitalist/communist Jews have not changed.

As we know, the experiments on Jewish bodies were vast during the Nazi period; one of the most powerful portrayals of how Jewish figures were devastated in excruciating ways is Alexander Kluge’s short story “Liebesversuch” in his book *Lebenslaufe* [Case Histories] (1962). Told in Nazi jargon in the form of an objective interview between a reporter and doctor, Kluge depicts how the German scientists sterilized two persons of the opposite sex and then brought them together with champagne and soft music to see if they would have sexual intercourse and if their sterilization works. If it does not and the woman becomes pregnant, it is clear that the Nazis will exterminate her. However, in this case, the two “guinea pigs,” a Jewish man and German woman, who had been lovers before their incarceration, refuse to cooperate, and the doctor is worried more about the experiment than the human beings whom he is destroying.

Kluge raises the question of the banality of evil during the Nazi period and in postwar Germany. To what extent have Germans become so detached from their feelings that they have lost sight of their humanity? To what extent do Jews in West Germany figure into the German configuration still as figures of an experiment? Other writers such as Uwe Johnson and Peter Härtling have also posed these questions in their works. Johnson’s *Jahrestage* [Anniversaries] (1970–83) includes many different Jews in America and Europe who all bear witness through Johnson’s multi-faceted perspective to the way Jews became contested figures because of the great Nazi experiment. Thus Oskar Tannenbaum’s eight-year-old daughter is killed on *Kristallnacht* in Jerichow, and he and his wife flee in terror. Arthur Semig, the Jewish veterinarian, is compelled to take refuge in France. And, in New York, Gesine Crespalph meets victims of concentration camps whose stories are still part of their everyday lives. In Härtling’s *Felix Guettman* (1985), there is another survivor of the Nazi period, a lawyer, who had defended anti-fascists and fled to Palestine in 1939. Härtling describes how Guettman returned to Frankfurt in 1948, resumed his practice as a lawyer, and did good works until he died in an accident in 1977. Härtling’s point is that there are many Jews, everyday German citizens, who figure in German society without Germans realizing it. Consequently, he forces readers to ask why Germans want to distinguish themselves from Jews. That is, aren’t Jews just as good Germans as the Germans themselves if not better?

The Unresolved German Question in the Contested Jewish Figure

To answer Härtling’s implied question in his novel, one must first define what it means to be German in the period from 1945 to the present. Since this is next to impossible but nevertheless crucial for conceiving a notion of national identity, many German writers have used Jewish figures in their works to project images of what Germans should or should not be. In some respects, Härtling’s Guettman or “guter Mann” is an exemplary symbolic model of the redeeming Jew as German. But, as we have seen, not all German writers are in agreement with Härtling or are as optimistic. The Jewish figures also reflect to what extent Jews are used and abused for philo-Semitic and anti-Semitic purposes in postwar Germany. Jewish figures can be found in numerous works of prose from 1945 to 1999, and as I have
tried to show in my short selection, most of the authors do not intend to reflect Jewish identity or Jewishness. Rather they are concerned with Germans and with their own German position vis à vis Jews. The authors conceive Jewish Kunstfiguren to work through their own personal views regarding the Nazi past and the position of Germans toward Jews in contemporary society. Certainly, in the process they draw Jewish stereotypes and fail to capture “authentic experiences” of Jews. Yet, in many instances, their works are highly significant because they point to the impossibility of categorizing Jews according to stereotypes and they insist that the Jewish question is really a German question. That is, to return to the present and Walser’s quandary when faced with continual reminders of the Holocaust, Germans have problems with their own identity, and their struggles over what constitutes a good and pure German have been fought on the bodies and images of Jews.

Recent events in Germany indicate that Germans are still trying to discover who they are and what constitutes German national identity. Unfortunately, many Germans are still endeavoring to define themselves by extinguishing Jews, foreigners, and ethnic minorities. The consequences, as depicted in great novels such as Siegfried Lenz’s Heimatmuseum [Heritage] (1978)19 and Uwe Johnson’s Jahrstags [Anniversaries] (1970–83), are ironic and grotesque: normality in Germany is marred by ruined and warped German existences and identities. The path to a new German national identity, as German writers have tried to depict in various ways, cannot be over and through Jewish figures in reality, and yet, it is crucial that Jews are depicted by German writers as contested figures, for as Gerhard Zwerenz has stated: “When we talk about Jews after Auschwitz, we are talking about ourselves. We must all come clean with ourselves, each one of us, entirely alone.”20

NOTES
1. Rainer Warner Faabinder, Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1981.
2. He writes “The longer Germany’s Jewish writers do not dare to declare their ‘ugly’ hate for the murderers and their people, the more their souls will be destroyed, while the fear of expressing their own feelings will leave their hearts cold. The terrible silence of Germany’s Jews signals their spiritual and social extinction.” See Seligmann, Mit beschränkter Hoffnung. Juden, Deutsche, Israelis (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1991), 137.
7. See Frank Stern, The Whitewashing of the Yellow Badge: Antisemitism and Philo-Semitism in
Multiculturalism, Reintegration, and Beyond: The Afrikanisch-Asiatische Studentenförderung in Göttingen†

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In 1994, Sabine von Dirke offered an analysis of the German debate over multiculturalism in which she demonstrated how this discussion, beginning in the early 1980s, created a forum for Germans from across the political spectrum to negotiate different and conflicting notions of German identity. Since then, the climate has not been favorable in Germany for a rewriting of citizenship laws and the development of a concept of Germanness allowing for ethnic diversity. Recent debates confirm that—even under the new German government—these topics remain highly controversial. In the following essay I will first discuss the current status of multiculturalism as an alternate concept to the idea of an ethnically homogeneous German nation-state. As I shall demonstrate, factors such as the German history of emigration and immigration, the influence of unification, and the debate over citizenship are central to the conflicting perceptions of multiculturalism prevalent in the Federal Republic today.

To illustrate this disagreement more concretely, I will focus on two title stories covering the current state of multiculturalism that were published in the highly popular magazines Der Spiegel and Brigitte in the spring of 1997. Following the analysis of these articles as reflecting the polarity of multicultural arguments, I will turn to the situation of students and academics from Africa and Asia, whose particular concerns are rarely recognized in debates and research on immigration, citizenship, and multiculturalism. More specifically, I will discuss the Afrikanisch-Asiatische Studentenförderung in Göttingen, which since the late 1950s has emerged as a model institution addressing the distinct needs of these students and academics. My analysis will show that the association offers a paradigm for implementing multicultural solutions, one which deserves attention for its exemplary character and effective, practice-oriented approach to representing multicultural students and academics in Germany. My discussion will highlight in particular how the association developed a unique discourse of multiculturalism, using concepts such as “Interkultureller dialog,” “Reintegration” and “Selbsthilfe” to formulate original positions and to pursue distinct initiatives.

In juxtaposing these sources, my aim is to open up the debate over the coexistence of people from different cultural backgrounds within Germany to include an indigenous Germanophone discourse on multiculturalism that has existed for forty years. This indigenous discourse offers a viable alternative to the polarized debate of the mainstream seen currently.

In the following essay, I shall use the terms “cultural” and “ethnic” identity synonymously. In my discussion, I draw on the work of Max Weber, who understands ethnic groups as imagined communities and thus formulates a position that offers an alternate, non-essentialist view of ethnicity.2

II

In the last two centuries, millions of Germans have emigrated to other countries in order to find prosperity and a better life. In fact, what is known in Germany today under the derogatory term Wirtschaftsflüchtling [economic refugee], has been, as Irene Dische argues, the norm in German-speaking countries for the last two hundred years.3 Approximately eight million Germans emigrated in the early nineteenth century to the United States alone,4 and Germans accounted for about fifteen percent of all legal immigrants in New York between 1820 and 1970.5 The German case is consistent with larger trends that occurred in Europe over the last three centuries. Jürgen Habermas has pointed out that “between 1800 and 1960 Europeans were disproportionately represented in intercontinental migratory movements, making up 80 percent of those involved.”6

Since the Second World War, however, these trends have been reversed. While 38 million people migrated to the United States between 1810 and 1980, 31 million immigrated into Europe between 1945 and 1993.7 Germany in particular absorbed a significant number of immigrants; it became, as Thomas Faist puts it, “a de facto country of immigration.”8 Between 1945 and 1989, over 18 million people emigrated to the old Federal Republic. In comparison to immigration into the United States, which absorbed 16 million immigrants during the same period, immigration into the Federal Republic was proportionally higher.9 Since unification, the trend toward immigration into Germany persists: Aussiedler, asylum-seekers, and illegal immigrants continue for a variety of reasons to enter the Federal Republic in high numbers.10

Curiously, however, neither an awareness of this long-standing emigrant tradition nor of the dynamics of continuous immigration since the end of the Second World War seems prevalent in contemporary Germany. This ignorance of the German public toward its own history as a country marked by periods of emigration and immigration impedes the current discussion over citizenship, the situation of asylum, and immigration policies. It hinders this debate because the lack of historical memory allows Germans to hold on to the notion of an integral, homogeneous nation based on lineage rather than a political state consisting of diverse traditions and histories. Instead of serving to promote the discussion of

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new parameters and policies which would supply Germany with the tools necessary to regulate the realities of global migration and the global economy, and to consider the needs of multicultural individuals, the “imagined community” of today’s Germans, to use Benedict Anderson’s formula, emerges as an artifact ill-equipped to deal with contemporary challenges. While many intellectuals and social scientists call for the implementation of quotas and the revision of citizenship laws, German legislators continue to shy away from taking specific actions.

This ignorance toward the German history of emigration and immigration has, one could argue, increased or even been strategically exploited since unification. Denying these historical realities has allowed Germans once again to mythologize German nationality in the aftermath of unification. Unification threw Germans into a national identity crisis; the fears—not the reality—of economic crisis and concerns about the nature of the new German state (see, for example, the Standordiskussionen) were often acted out through attacks on people who were perceived as not German, as the increase in acts of Ausländerfeindlichkeit [anti-foreigner violence] in the months after unification showed. Unification, however, was a catalyst and not a cause for this new nationalism; von Dirke has argued that this surge of nationalism dates back to the early 1980s. In addition, the German trends clearly are not unique, since they run parallel to developments in other European countries. Therefore it seems more appropriate to place the current German debates over citizenship and immigration into a larger context of global migration and the globalization of the economy, even though unification might have contributed to the rise of nationalist and exclusionist ideologies. In addition, attitudes toward immigration also link directly with party politics. In his exploration of how a country with such a high immigration rate (and, I would add, emigration rate) as Germany was able to develop an ideology that denied the history of immigration (and emigration) as a defining factor of the national reality, Thomas Faist investigated positions on the issue taken by various German political parties. While conservative and right-wing parties (such as the CDU, CSU, and Republikaner) generally embraced the return of ethnic Germans, the SPD or Greens have (even if carefully) argued for the extension of voting rights to immigrants whose electoral support they were seeking. In both cases, the parties were promoting the rights of potential voters and adjusted to political trends because they feared the loss of voters.

It is widely acknowledged that multiculturalism is a term with different meanings in different cultural contexts, even diverse meanings within one country. As Yunus Samad says, “multiculturalism can be conservative or radical, and social policy based upon it can have different implications and outcomes depending on the context in which cultural difference is negotiated.” In Germany, the definition of multiculturalism has remained largely dependent on the distinct understanding of various political groups regarding the term Kultur. While a number of definitions of Kultur coexist simultaneously, two notions emerge as the dominant ones, both of which conflict with a notion of citizenship that allows for ethnic diversity. According to one definition, Kultur refers primarily to cultural production, often even primarily to highbrow culture, such as literature, music, art, food, and dance, and does not extend to social forms of life, such as the organization of the relationship between the sexes or the influence of religion on people’s lives. The other definition of Kultur uses it as a synonym for “race,” inscribing cultural difference onto people as something inherent and unchangeable.

These competing definitions of Kultur have consequences for the current debate about the coexistence of different cultures in Germany. The latter definition is used most often by conservatives, who employ it to make a point about the possibility of coexistence, but ultimately promoting a fictitious incommensurability of non-German cultures with German traditions. This view can be traced back not only to the typical representatives of racialist thought, such as Christoph Meiners, but even to the writings of Johann Gottfried Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Conservatives use this definition of culture to argue against extension of citizenship to groups that are not ethnically German on the grounds that one should hold on to a definition of German culture as ethnically pure and protect it against becoming a hybrid. The racialization of the concept of culture results in the transfer of a notion of a pure race onto the notion of a pure culture. Ethnopluralism, ethno-culturalism, and cultural fundamentalism, all promoting the coexistence yet incommensurability of different cultures, are contemporary continuations of racialist theories.

Liberals, however, generally subscribe to a narrow definition of Kultur as cultural production and entertain a universalist outlook regarding the political and social organization of life. Such a stance risks producing a position just as intolerant toward social forms that differ from German conventions as a conservative argument for assimilation based on a rejection of the multicultural idea altogether. In a reaction which can be explained as a radical attempt to shed the National Socialist legacy, today’s liberals attempt to divorce the political realm from the cultural one by excluding controversial cultural, social, and political forms of interaction from politics. Faist, for example, argues that the multicultural debate stands in the way of the development of a progressive immigration politics through its emphasis on essentialist notions of cultural difference. He argues for the formation of a new understanding of German citizenship based in “political participation and not in cultural assimilation.” Likewise, Habermas’s Verfassungspatriotismus defines citizenship as the acceptance of a political culture. Thus, a liberal politics that can be understood as a welcome attempt to overcome the conservative push for German cultural homogeneity and against diversity actually turns out to be an example of historical blindness toward the reality of cultural forms which extend to the social and the political. Paul Michael Lützeler, acknowledging this dilemma, goes one step further: he argues that it is impossible to separate the political from the cultural realm and thus criticizes Habermas’s demand for political assimilation. Drawing on Jean-François Lyotard’s theory of the differend, he asserts the importance of dialogue and the acceptance of process and change as a reality of cultural symbiosis.

Critics outside of Germany have also pointed to potentially problematic aspects
of the multicultural paradigm. Anthony K. Appiah, for example, has expressed the concern that with the privileging of a diffuse notion of cultural identity, individuals are reduced to essences that do not reflect their complex biographies. He insists on personal autonomy and points to the potentially repressive nature of specific labels. Yet the concept of a hyphenated identity currently prevalent in traditional immigrant societies seems to be an important (transitional?) step toward acknowledging multifaceted biographies. Ethnic identities need to be understood in their function as providing orientation and identification for individuals living in modern societies that are characterized by constant change, mobility, and transition. Hyphenated identities in particular offer a way to cope with modernization processes that shatter traditional structures and often involve displacement. Even if ethnic identities are constructed, they fulfill a function and are reflective of historical and social realities.

Yet concepts that address the reality of individuals attempting to reconcile disparate traditions and experiences are slow to emerge in Germany: that someone can be German and Turkish, or German and Romanian, is only beginning to be acceptable or even thinkable in a society that defines itself according to an imaginary construct of pure ethnic lineage. The present form of the German debate over multiculturalism only hesitantly addresses those questions of Kultur that extend beyond food and literature: physical difference, different dress codes, or other social behaviors and political practices are perceived as fundamental signs of difference that either have to be disregarded (the liberal response) or rejected as being unacceptable within the parameters of a German society (the conservative stance). A new definition of German citizenship cannot emerge as long as the definition of Germanness is monocultural and denies any questioning of political and social forms regarded as the pillars of European or German history.

Germany’s debate over immigration continues to teem with paradoxes. Third-generation Turks in Germany might be culturally, politically, and socially more German than ethnic German immigrants from Russia, yet they are often denied the political acknowledgment that would reflect the reality of their lives in Germany. The lack of knowledge regarding Germany’s history of emigration and immigration, in combination with the surge of nationalism, continued challenges of globalization and modernization processes, and a notion of citizenship that excludes the possibility of ethnic diversity will continue to obstruct the rewriting of citizenship laws and immigration policies, as well as the development of new models of hybrid national identities.

III

Two articles on multiculturalism that were published in Germany in popular magazines during the first half of 1997 exemplify how the polarity of the debate emerges in public arenas. Der Spiegel, a weekly news magazine modeled after Time, was founded in 1946 and has developed into one of the most influential news magazines in the Federal Republic. Currently, 1,292,128 copies of the magazine are printed each week. Der Spiegel announced the lead story in its April 14 issue with a cover displaying a brown-skinned woman holding a flag against the background of two additional images: veiled girls sitting on benches, probably absorbed in reading the Koran, and a group of four young men, two of them holding what seem to be knives on a chain or some other weapon. The title reads: “Ausländer und Deutsche: Gefährlich fremd. Das Scheitern der multikulturellen Gesellschaft” (“Foreigners and Germans: Dangerously Foreign. The Failure of the Multicultural Society”). The words “Gefährlich fremd” are printed in large letters. This verdict sets the tone for the article, which presents an utterly pessimistic outlook on the relationships among different ethnic groups in Germany. Not only is the article pessimistic, it is irresponsibly polemical in its distorted representation of presumed facts and developments, employing every existing cliché about cultural difference and relying on and enforcing the kind of historical memory loss described above.

The verdict from the cover is repeated in the article itself, which is entitled “Zeitbomben in den Vorstädten” (“Timebombs in the Suburbs”) and which begins with the sentence, “Die Ausländerintegration ist gescheitert” (“The integration of foreigners has failed”). The article focuses on high rates of unemployment, Islamization, and especially on violence between Germans and Turks, between Turks and Aussiedlern, and among various Turkish factions, describing patterns of violence which are, as is indeed the case, proportionally higher among certain groups of immigrants in comparison to Germans. Yet the article does not discuss its data in any detail, and as a result the reader is presented with figures which, as Wesley D. Chapin argues, give an inaccurate image. For example, the statistics of the Bundeskriminalamt on violence committed by foreigners include all offenses against foreigner and asylum laws as well as acts committed by tourists, foreign business people, occupational troops, and foreign students who, however, are not counted among the foreign population.

To emphasize the dichotomy between “us” and “them,” “Bürger” are set off against “Ausländer,” juxtaposed throughout the article as two incommensurable blocs: “Immer mehr Bürger fühlen sich im eigenen Land bedroht, mißbraucht und in die Defensive gedrängt” (“Increasing numbers of citizens feel threatened in their own country, taken advantage of, and put on the defensive.”) This homogenizing of the groups erases the fact that many people of Turkish or other origin have a German passport, that differences exist between and within the various ethnic groups, and that many “Germans” are responsible for and profit from exploitative practices toward immigrant workers that may exacerbate crime. The article acknowledges that rates of violence are not higher than the national average among legal migrant workers who have lived in Germany for an extended period, that illegal immigrants represent the most violent group, that differences exist between the Aussiedler and second- and third-generation Turkish people, and that the difficult economic situation is a decisive factor in the increase in violence. The final picture painted in the article, however, amounts to a gross simplification: “Gemeinsam ist diesen 1,1 Millionen Fremden, die 21 Jahre und jünger sind, nur eines: Sie sind nicht mehr als Arbeitskräfte willkommen, sie
Neither Germany's historical reliance on immigrant workers, nor its continued reliance in response to its own declining birthrate, nor some of the positive benefits of immigration for the economy are discussed.\(^{40}\) The conclusion of the article even questions the benefits of rewriting citizenship laws: "Heitmeyer, der ebenfalls eine erleichterte Einbürgerung befürwortet, warnt allerdings vor der 'gefährlichen Illusion, daß sich damit die Gefahren ethnisch-kultureller Konflikte vermindern'"\(^{47}\) While it is clear that a new citizenship law would not solve every conflict, this verdict is likely to feed opposition to all citizenship law reform.

An entirely different approach from that shown in Der Spiegel is evident in an article published in the June 11, 1997 issue of the women's magazine Brigitte. With currently 1,199,429 printed copies, the bi-weekly edition of Brigitte is only slightly lower than the weekly edition of the Spiegel.\(^{46}\) The audiences of both magazines overlap to some extent, with more women reading Brigitte and more men reading Der Spiegel. The topics of articles in Brigitte range from those typical for a women's magazine, such as fashion, beauty, cooking, and health, to more general topics, such as culture, travel, politics, and work related issues. Brigitte is a mainstream women's magazine and, even though informed by feminist thought, not committed to the militant feminism of, for example, the magazine Emma.

Although Brigitte's recapitulation of the current situation, much like Der Spiegel's text, admits the tense relations between different groups in Germany, the goal of this article is to write against negative tendencies, attempting to mediate between different groups and to educate the explicitly German (and predominantly female) readership. The article's title, "Zu Hause und doch fremd: Die Multikulti-Generation über ihr Leben zwischen den Kulturen" ["At Home and Still Foreign: The Multicultural Generation on Its Life Between Cultures"], adequately describes the text's take on the dilemma of multicultural individuals in Germany. It relegates the issue of multiculturalism to a question of "generation."

The focus on the realities of multicultural individuals discusses precisely what is absent in the polarizing polemic of Der Spiegel, where multiculturalism means ethnoplagruralism, and hybridity is erased altogether. In contrast, the Brigitte article talks about the lives of young people, aged mostly between 14 and 25 years old, who have multiple cultural backgrounds and have lived in Germany for most of their lives, some of whom carry German passports.

The main section of the article consists of biographies of these individuals, interspersed with everyday scenes that the author, Monika Held, observed in Frankfurt, on the commuter train (S-Bahn) or in the subway. Another section included in this kaleidoscope of biographies and scenes presents the commentary of the psychologist Oskar Holzberg, who elaborates on the relationship between self and other. Quoting Julia Kristeva, he discusses the importance of understanding the self and the "strange" aspect of individuals' various social
identities in order to be able to relate to the other. The commentary ends with an appeal to abandon the dream of acceptance and tolerance: “Multikulti kann gelingen. Multikulti muß gelingen. Darin liegen ungeheure Chancen, Neues zu erleben und uns selbst zu verstehen” (“Multiculturalism can succeed. Multiculturalism must succeed. Therein lie incredible opportunities to experience new things and to understand ourselves”). Following the main article, and apparently meant to reinforce this positive message, is another excursion into the topic describing the search of an Afro-German woman for her Ghanaian father.

While the views put forth in *Brigitte* seem to be entirely opposed to those expressed in *Der Spiegel*, the articles are in fact complementary in some ways. None of the individuals presented in *Brigitte* fits the stereotypes of the *Spiegel* article: they are all middle class, well groomed, properly dressed. Their friendly faces contrast with the angry expressions of the images in *Der Spiegel*. The only section in *Der Spiegel* that gives a voice to a Turkish-German middle-class woman, the actress and author Demirkan, reflects the overall grim outlook of the article. *Brigitte* takes a consciously upbeat stand: while the text acknowledges some of the conflicts multicultural individuals experience, the visual images are clearly meant to work against stereotypes of the ugly foreigner. Unfortunately, the erasure of class issues and the slickness of the images generate the impression of a “United Colors of Benetton” advertisement. Thus the article presents a partial picture, evading controversial issues that need to be addressed if a fundamental change in attitudes is to be achieved.

**IV**

Both these articles attest to the widespread perception that the multicultural experiment in Germany is endangered. Against this current air of disillusionment I would like now to present an example of a different approach to Germany’s multietnic situation, one which is, even if exceptional, living proof of a successful multicultural experiment. The example comes from an area that is rarely discussed in the context of multiculturalism, namely the specific situation of international students and academics, particularly those from Africa and Asia, who represent a visible group within German universities: 7.87 percent or 96,147 of all university students are non-German (two thirds of whom come from developing countries), while the percentage of non-German academics is much smaller. Three areas can be identified as of pivotal importance for those students and academics. First, they have to come to terms with the reality of living as non-Germans in Germany while their training lasts. Second, they often are either not able to return home because the political situation in their home country has changed, or they choose not to return home for personal reasons, such as marriage, job opportunities, or cultural alienation. Third, students and academics who do intend to return to their home countries need to develop strategies of how to manage the transition back into their culture, to “reintegrate,” and how to apply the knowledge they gained during their years in Germany to the local context.

The Afrikanisch-Asiatische Studentenförderung e.V. (AASF), based in Göttingen, has addressed these issues for more than forty years. The association’s work and the discourse it has developed need to be acknowledged as an integral part of German culture today, since it represents a multicultural reality that offers guidance useful to those concerned with the coexistence of different cultures. A multilevel organization that includes the Arbeitskreis Afrikanisch-Asiatischer Akademikerinnen und Akademiker, the Interkultureller Freundeskreis, and a newly founded Afrikanisch-Asiatischer Wirtschaftskreis, it currently organizes between ten and twelve seminars a year, publishes a yearbook, a monthly newsletter, and a Rückkehrerrundbrief, is connected to a student dormitory housing 120 German, African, and Asian students, maintains an office in the dormitory with at present three employees, and is in the process of expanding a worldwide network of returnees offices. The AASF finances its activities through grants from the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ; ca. DM 250,000 annually, restricted to seminars), the European ministries and the Social Ministries of the state of Lower Saxony (between DM 50,000 and DM 10,000 annually), and from the profits of a bar and a discotheque connected to the dormitory (about 20,000 annually). A review of the history of this association and its affiliated organizations demonstrates that, over the years, these students and academics have formulated a discourse of their own, one which represents a distinct voice within Germany. The association has created a forum for members of different cultures within the German context, and it deserves to be more widely known because of its exemplary way of addressing questions of intercultural exchange and global cooperation.

The association traces its roots back to the African-Asian movement that emerged in the 1940s in the context of worldwide independence movements. In the winter semester of 1956–57, William King, a Jamaican student at the medical school in Göttingen, in conjunction with the Indian physicist Sayed ur Rahman, founded the Afro-Asiatische Studentenunion (AASU). Initially, the primary function of the AASU was to create a space enabling African and Asian students to come into closer contact with one another, but it also sought to further relationships between these students and their German peers. The goals of the AASU were formulated as follows:

1. **Bessere Kontakte zwischen den afrikanischen und asiatischen Studenten.** Dadurch besseres Verständnis für die politische und kulturelle Situation der einzelnen afrikanisch-asiatischen Völker [Better contact between the African and Asian students, through that, a better understanding for the political and cultural situation of the individual African and Asian peoples].

2. **Bessere Kontakte mit den deutschen Studenten, den Studenten anderer europäischer Nationen und den Studenten außereuropäischer Völker** [Better contact between German students and students of other European nations and the students of non-European peoples].

3. **Darüber hinaus sollen die afrikanisch-asiatischen Studenten auch mit**
The founding of the AASF, the AASU expanded into a national organization, and at a conference in Göttingen in 1963, with participants of twelve AASU chapters from different German universities, an umbrella organization was founded, the Föderation der Afrikanisch-Asiatischen Studenverbindungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, which itself ceased to exist after a few years. Another AASF was founded in Kassel in 1977 and is active to this day, although it has never attained the political momentum of the Göttingen project. The German Geschäftsführer (executive director) of the Göttingen AASF, Dr. Karl Fritz Heise, the only German member of the AASU, has served in this function since the organization's founding days and has played a central role in establishing contacts between African and Asian students and academics and German institutions, especially regarding the financing of projects.

The activities of the AASF thus reflect the needs of African and Asian students and academics living in Germany. The organization's goals are expressed in a number of central concepts: the necessity of dialogue; the idea of the intercultural encounter, which is related to the notion of dialogue and which emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the uniqueness of different cultures; the preservation of cultural identity; and the construct of an Afro-Asian identity that is grounded in the shared historical and political experiences of African and Asian people.

In 1974, the Arbeitskreis Afrikanisch-Asiatischer Akademiker und Akademikerinnen was established, reflecting the beginning of a new phase in the organization's work. While the AASF consists of Germans, Africans, and Asians, members of the Arbeitskreis are exclusively African and Asian. This situation illustrates the project's spirit of independence from German institutions and dominant German discourses: the goal was to develop an arena that considered the concerns of Africans and Asians, not those of Germans, as its starting point. At the core of this new institution was the realization that—as the members of the AASF graduated and were faced with new questions, such as those concerning return to home countries—a new forum was needed to address these issues. Discussing those realities was and continues to be the main focus of the Arbeitskreis in its seminars and its numerous publications. Concerns of the AASF such as the intercultural encounter, cultural identity, and Afro-Asian identity are central to the discussions of the Arbeitskreis as well. In addition, the Arbeitskreis introduced a new set of terms defining the goals of the organization. Typical discussions revolve around concepts such as "Reintegration," "Existenzgründung," [foundation of existence] and "Selbsthilfe" [self-help].

While members of the association were aware that their seminars were seemingly in line with existing German government reintegration programs, they nonetheless set themselves off against those government programs and considered their project a challenge to existing models. Therefore, even though the seminars are financed...
by the government, the association determines the content of the discussions, and they are held without the intervention or participation of government officials. Over the years, the Arbeitskreis has cooperated with a number of organizations involved in programs for returning international students and academics, such as BMZ (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung), ZAV (Zentralstelle für Arbeitsvermittlung), WUS (World University Service), Deutsche Ausgleichsbank, CIM (Centrum für Internationale Migration und Entwicklung), and GTZ (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit).

With time, the Arbeitskreis has developed a distinct discourse and established an institutional forum, in the form of seminars, publications, and other initiatives, for its discussions of how to negotiate different political, social, ethical, and economic systems. The Arbeitskreis has created a space for Africans and Asians to formulate their own rhetoric vis-à-vis official, academic, and mainstream German views. Obviously, this rhetoric itself is informed by a blend of German and other theories and belief systems. After all, the African and Asian academics have been trained in Germany, mostly live in Germany, and write in German. But the discussion’s emphasis is on the position of enunciation and on perspective: a conscious foregrounding of the concerns of Africans and Asians allows the Arbeitskreis to develop a unique dialogue within the German context. In many ways, the Arbeitskreis, as well as the association in general, displays an understanding of ethnicity that seems inspired by Max Weber: there is no Afro-Asian ethnicity per se; the diversity within Africa and Asia on all levels is beyond doubt. But there might be an Afro-Asian consciousness about the history of colonialism, global economy, and the North-South conflict that results in the creation of a group identity as Afro-Asians, especially vis-à-vis Germans.

In a very typical expression of the Arbeitskreis point of view, Kyaw Tha Tun emphasizes that the question of reintegration is complex, and return is not a matter that can be decided easily. According to Tun, reintegration concerns a whole set of issues such as:

Wie kann der zurückgekehrte Akademiker seine Kenntnisse im Kontext der sozial-kulturellen Gegebenheiten seiner Heimat sinnvoll anwenden? Welches ist sein Verständnis von der eigenen Rolle als Arzt, Lehrer, Wissenschaftler, Agronom usw im Rahmen der Entwicklung seines Landes? Was muß er von alledem, was er sich in Europa angeeignet hat, verlernen? [How can the returning academic apply his expertise in the context of socio-cultural factors of his homeland? What is his own understanding of his role as doctor, teacher, scientist, agronomist, etc. in the framework of the development of his own country? What, among all of that which he has learned in Europe, does he have to unlearn?]

In addition to addressing questions of return, the Arbeitskreis aims to facilitate contacts, professional exchanges, and publications for academics in Germany and with academics teaching and working in other countries. Through these activities, a rhetoric is being crafted to form links between German and non-German frameworks of human values and social organization. In other words, these discussions develop pluralist visions of how to negotiate between German (Western) and non-German (African and Asian) contexts, aiming at new historical solutions for concrete situations of life in a multicultural world. At the same time, this rhetoric refuses to stigmatize the German context; it is far from being anti-German. Instead, essentializing is avoided, and the discussion’s primary concern is shown to be the recognition of complexity.

The generation of new positions for individuals who claim partial affiliation with the German context (in a way, hyphenated German identities) has been ongoing in the work of the Arbeitskreis. The Arbeitskreis has held over 150 seminars with more than 3,500 participants from fifty countries since the mid-1970s. Seminars have dealt with issues of specific countries or regions ("Afrika und die Afrikaner: Geist und Lebensrhythmus eines Kontinents" ["Africa and the Africans: The Spirit and Life Rhythm of a Continent"]), topics that are specific to professional fields ("Praxis der Stellensuche in Afrika und Asien/Bewerbungstechniken" ["The Practice of Job Searching in Africa and Asia/Strategies for Job Applications"]), issues that concern reestablishment in the home country ("Selbständige Existenzgründung im landwirtschaftlichen Sektor" ["The Foundation of Independent Existence in the Agricultural Sector"]), and socio-cultural issues ("Rolle und Verantwortung der Bildungselite aus den Ländern der dritten Welt im Prozeß der sozio-ökonomischen Entwicklung" ["The Role and Responsibility of the Educated Elite of Third World Countries in the Process of Socio-Economic Development"]). One seminar per year is devoted to women’s issues ("Frauen als Unternehmensgründerinnen" ["Women as Entrepreneurs"]). As is evident from these representative titles, the topics are related to German disciplines or other cultural trends; at the same time, they are discussed from within the realities of African and Asian countries.

While the region- and country-specific seminars, as well as the socio-cultural seminars, were highly popular during the first decade of the Arbeitskreis, the more practically oriented programs make up the bulk of the seminars today. The seminars continue to be informed by the theoretical framework of the AASF and the Arbeitskreis. The speakers come from both within Germany as well as from African and Asian countries; often speakers are invited who have moved back to an African or Asian country to give them the opportunity to relate their experiences to the seminar participants. Participants in the seminars come from many different cities in Germany; since the 1980s, some of the seminars have been held in cities other than Göttingen. Altogether, these events create an island of political and social discourse different from that used by today’s politicians and journalists.

That this unique institution addressing multicultural and intercultural concerns has acquired an established form is also confirmed by its appearance in print. The publications of the Arbeitskreis increasingly gain recognition. A newsletter, for example, entitled Afrikanisch-Asiatische Aspekte was published from 1978 to 1984; it was replaced in 1986 by the monthly Afrika Asien Rundbrief. The Rundbrief has a recognizable format and point of view and

The authors of the articles—approximately twelve per volume—are exclusively African and Asian academics, writers who took the initiative and developed a voice in German, a germanophone discourse, creating a space in the public sphere to discuss issues central to their own intercultural experiences. This position of independence enables these African and Asian academics to initiate dialogues on their own terms with colleagues from frameworks representing different points of view.

The work of the society is not only academic; it also has a clear grasp of the realities of everyday multicultural life. In this context, the idea of reintegration is also central to the founding of Rückkehrbüros [returnees offices], bureaux that serve as connecting nodes for returning academics. Bureaux currently exist in Ghana and in India, with others scheduled for Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Iran, Jordan, Cameroon, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Syria. The purpose of the bureaux is to ease adjustment back to the home country, maintain connections between Germany and the respective country, and assist in obtaining loans for specific projects that connect "German" knowledge and perspectives with local concerns outside Germany.

Since 1981, an independent Arbeitsgruppe Frauen of African and Asian women academics has existed alongside the association to discuss the special concerns of women in the process of reintegration. Swapna Bhattacharya, for example, emphasizes that neither Western feminists nor Western sociologists who deal with questions of development and modernization address the issues of women in Third World countries in adequate ways, due to a lack of understanding of the differences in cultural and religious situations, traditions of emancipation, and values. Seminars and publications of the association have been devoted to discussing these questions. Since 1991, a Frauenbeauftragte is elected each year to promote the special concerns of women within the association.

In 1993 the Interkultureller Freundschaftskreis was founded, reflecting a new phase in the organization’s work that emphasizes intercultural dialogue and thus partakes in wider trends in German society. While the members of the Arbeitskreis remain exclusively Africans and Asians, the Freundschaftskreis consists, like the AASF, of Germans, Africans, and Asians. The understanding is that the Freundschaftskreis is organized around the idea of Africans and Asians taking the initiative to reach out to Germans rather than the reverse, which has been the common practice in many of the German associations designed to further dialogue. The recently founded Afrikanisch-Asiatischer Wirtschaftskreis will also most likely function as a subdivision of the Arbeitskreis.

The AASF in Göttingen, with its various institutional branches, is a unique model of implemented multiculturalism. It has lived through changing political climates and outlived different phases of attitudes toward “foreigners” in Germany. The AASF is based on Africans and Asians taking the initiative and creating an institution and a germanophone discourse of their own to discuss their specific needs. These students and academics have developed a distinct voice within Germany, making relevant contributions to discussions of the global economy, and to social, political, and cultural concerns. At the core of the association is an understanding of ethnic identity as an historical and imagined reality of life that comes close to Weber’s definition and that enables a non-essentialist perception of cultural difference to emerge as a precondition for cooperation and dialogue between different ethnic groups.

Official recognition of the organization’s work was demonstrated in January 1996 with the bestowal of the Bundesverdienstkreuz, one of the highest awards of the German government, to Dr. Karl Fritz Heise for his work since 1959 in the AASF. Within the currently negative climate in Germany regarding the coexistence of different cultures, the AASF has new perspectives to offer that could open up the presently narrow debate and widen the horizons by seeing the German situation in larger contexts and acknowledging the existing heterogeneity of German culture. The AASF is a model for multicultural dialogue on German soil, one that offers a true alternative to the insular and essentialist discussions prevalent in Germany today.

2. "We shall call 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. Ethnic membership (Gemeinsamkeit) differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity, not a group with concrete social action, like the latter. In our sense, ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere." Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Karl Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 389. The text was first published in 1922 but written before 1914. Weber is not the only theorist but one of the first who points to the constructedness of ethnic identity. For an overview, see *Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1996). See also *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).


5. Dische, 41–42.


10. The number of ethnic Germans entering the Federal Republic of Germany peaked in 1990 (397,075; 1994: 222,600); the number of asylum seekers has diminished since restrictive legislation was passed in 1993 (1992: 438,191; 1994: 127,210). See Thomas Faith and Hartmut Häußermann, "Immigration, Social Citizenship and Housing in Germany," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 20.1 (March 1996): 84. It is noteworthy, however, that only a small portion of asylum claims are approved annually.


15. Here I disagree with von Dirke (cf. 526). Heiner Güller’s promotion of multiculturalism is exceptional, and is not representative of mainstream CDU/CSU or Republikaner positions. Even if the positions of the parties change for strategic reasons, larger trends can be observed that are consistent with party platforms.

16. See Faith, "How to Define a Foreigner?"

17. See, for example, *Controversial Issues in Multiculturalism*, ed. Diane de Andrade (Boston: Ally and Bacon, 1997).


24. Faith, "How to Define a Foreigner?," 69.

25. Habermas, 134.


31. For two months, the first issues appeared as *Diese Woche*.


34. Ibid., 81.

35. Wesley D. Chapin, "Ausländer raus? The Empirical Relationship between Immigration and
57. See also George McT. Kahin, The Asian-African Conference (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), which includes an appendix with speeches by Sukarno, Chou En-lai, and Nehru, as well as the final communique of the conference.


61. Regarding a discussion of the key concepts of the Arbeitskreis, see 20 Jahre Arbeitskreis Afrikanisch-Asiatischer Akademikerinnen und Akademiker, ed. Vorstand des Arbeitskreises (Göttingen: Arbeitskreis Afrikanisch-Asiatischer Akademikerinnen und Akademiker, 1994), 19–33.


65. 20 Jahre Arbeitskreis, 64.

66. A list of speakers can be found in 20 Jahre Arbeitskreis, 67–75.


68. The organization has a home page that gives an overview of the history and the activities of the organization and explains its philosophy. It also contains useful links to related organizations in Germany: http://www.gwdg.de/aasf. The e-mail address is aasf@gwdg.de.