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**The American Impact on Western Europe:
Americanization and Westernization in Transatlantic Perspective**

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in Germany (1945-1965)

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There is a storm raging over the German universities and education systems these days. After ongoing public and political complaints concerning the crisis of education and the academic institutions,¹ there are now waves of reform programs all over Germany, welcomed enthusiastically or rejected sceptically.² One of the main issues, especially within humanities departments, is the establishment of new curricula and new academic degrees: Bachelor and Master.³ Some say this reflects the end of the Humboldt era. Others claim that German universities, traditionally stable and inflexible, are now on the verge of modernizing. In discussions on bachelor and master degrees, there is, almost immediately, an upsurge of talk about the americanization of the German university: a topic that provokes radically divergent reactions of support or critique.

Nobody knows quite clearly what "americanization" in this context means: Is it just an institutional reform, or will it produce American-like students, short-term-studies ("Kurzstudiengänge") that will tear down the old "Bildungsideal", reading lists instead of research? What it does mean is, in the first place, that there has been little americanization so far. It further means that the humanities in Germany - as many experts these days assert - have their own deep-rooted traditions that should not be uprooted purposely.

It almost seems ironic that, at the same time, while americanization is the new keyword of the German debate, the departments of German languages and literature in the United States have already been in the process of americanizing for several years now. Peter Uwe Hohendahl, professor of German and Comparative Literature at Cornell University, has argued recently that after 1945 there has never been more estrangement between German Studies in Germany and in the US than today, that the "americanization of German studies" is nearly complete: Younger American scholars of German have disengaged themselves from the so-called Germanic traditions and have started to adopt methods and issues of English and Comparative Literature departments: postcolonial studies, minority literature. Most of all, American scholars of German write and publish in English, thus producing German Studies for an American public, almost neglecting - within footnotes for example - research done in Germany and in German publishing houses.⁴

¹ Michael Daxner, Ist die Uni noch zu retten? Zehn Vorschläge und eine Vision (Reinbek 1996). Peter Glotz, Im Kern verrottet? Fünf vor zwölf an Deutschlands Universitäten (Stuttgart 1996).

² Ulrich Welbers, ed., Das Integrierte Handlungskonzept Studienreform. Aktionsformen für die Verbesserung der Lehre an Hochschulen (Neuwied 1997).

³ See, for example, the discussion on the "Bakkalaureus", Lehre und Forschung 11, 1996, 570-579.

⁴ Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Nationale Ausdifferenzierungen der Germanistik: Das Beispiel USA", Hohendahl, in Jörg Schönert, ed., Literaturwissenschaft und Wissenschaftsforschung (Stuttgart 1999, forthcoming). Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "The Fate of German Studies after the End of the Cold War", Profession 1998: 81-88.

Almost analogous to this, one of the grand old men of German Studies in the US, Theodore Ziolkowski, recently warned that the latest theory developed in the Comparative Literature departments should, by no means, be exported to the German Departments anywhere because it will destroy literary canons and literary texts in favor of popular culture ("Rambo instead of Rimbaud"), minority eclecticism, group interests, and ideologies of race and gender. Ziolkowski does not hesitate to name the issues of race and gender with the German word "völkisch", and the quotation marks make it even worse, for these trends are therefore explicitly labeled as perpetuating the nationalist and even nationalsocialist German humanities.⁵

Thus (and that is what Ziolkowski wants the German scholars to know), the humanities in Germany might be in danger of americanization. What conservative newspapers in Germany attacked as "political correctness" in recent years, has obviously trickled down to literature departments. Its new label - americanization - does not make things clearer at all.

These stories are quite different and quite arbitrary, but they call for a historical reflection of what americanization in this specific context means: in the humanities as part of the university system after 1945, but also as part of the German post-war-society where academic education in the humanities played a vital role. The humanities in Germany seem to have lost this role these days. In fact, current reform programs try to regain that importance for the "Geisteswissenschaften": as expert knowledge within a rapidly transforming society now called the "Informationsgesellschaft" or "Wissensgesellschaft."

My subject here, the American influence on the humanities in Germany, is much too broad. It would call for an institutional history of the German "Geisteswissenschaften" that would have to be treated differently for different disciplines and different universities. I can only highlight a few developments and histories concerning the impact of America on German universities. Rather than focussing on a short period of time (say, 1945-1950), I would like to give a survey on the first decades until approximately 1970. Moreover, instead of focussing on one part of this story (the institutions, or the theories, or the university culture), I will try to outline some of the research areas that could evolve out of this prospect. This means that, on the one hand, I will have to generalize and on the other hand, I will have to cut short many aspects of americanization that are involved. For obvious reasons, however, most of my examples are drawn from the field I know best: literary studies and literary theory.

There are virtually no signs of "americanization" in the history of the German universities and humanities after 1945. The vast research completed quite recently on German universities of the post-war-era has established and confirmed the so-called "Kontinuitätsthese", the thesis of continuity which maintains that German universities and German academic disciplines after

⁵Theodore Ziolkowski, "Das Neueste aus USA: der Text als Feind", *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 30 (1995): 454-459, 458.

1945 did regenerate in a short period of time: institutionally, personally and theoretically.⁶ Consequently, americanization did not take place - despite its effects on German society in general.

In the beginning, however, the American military government was strongly interested in reconstructing German universities and thus concentrated, naturally, on the humanities which were held responsible for the strong involvement of German intellectuals in the Nazi ideology. All the military occupation forces in Germany, but especially the Americans, were eager to clean and purge the university staff. As elsewhere in the entire society, the Americans tried to obtain National Socialists with questionnaires and lists of former party members among German professors - with the result that almost immediately there were complaints that the universities were not be able to maintain their function as teaching institutions because there would no longer be enough professors.⁷ A few years later, most of the incriminated professors returned to their universities teaching side by side with those who were returning from exile or discharge (of which there were few). There was even a kind of "discretion agreement" between the colleagues who during the Nazi regime were on politically different or even opposite sides: a "non-symmetrical discretion" that functioned to normalize the universities and the West-German society in the late 1940s and 1950s, i.e., to keep them going and to help them regenerate.⁸ From this time on there was no need for the universities to americanize - neither institutionally nor theoretically, not even in the humanities where the curricula continued as before.

However, my subject here, the americanization of the humanities after 1945, is not complete with this brief history. Indeed, a different aspect must now be highlighted which concerns itself with not only an unsuccessful americanization but also the relations and negotiations between German and American academic cultures; the ways of exchanging views and standards between the two scientific communities; and, more importantly, the ways of keeping their distance. I will focus on three areas that might be important in this regard: first, the theories of the "Geisteswissenschaften" in post-war-Germany; second, the German professors travelling through the United States and the American Universities - an area that might help to discover secret and overt German-American attitudes, discrepancies and animosities; third, a comparison of literary studies and literary theories in the United States and in Germany. Here, I would like to concentrate on a specific and revealing example in the field of literary theory

⁶ Peter Lundgreen, ed., Wissenschaft im Dritten Reich (Frankfurt am Main 1985). Walter H. Pehle, Peter Sillem eds., Wissenschaft im geteilten Deutschland. Restauration oder Neubeginn nach 1945? (Frankfurt am Main 1992). Examples: Winfried Schulze, Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945 (München 1989). Marcus Gärtner, Kontinuität und Wandel in der neueren deutschen Literaturwissenschaft nach 1945 (Bielefeld 1997).

⁷ A short survey on this: Axel Schildt, "Im Kern gesund? Die deutschen Hochschulen 1945", in Helmut König, Wolfgang Kuhlmann, Klaus Schwabe, Vertuschte Vergangenheit. Der Fall Schwerte und die NS-Vergangenheit der deutschen Hochschulen (München 1997), 223-240.

⁸ Hermann Lübke, "Der Nationalsozialismus im deutschen Nachkriegsbewußtsein", Historische Zeitschrift 236 (1983): 579-599.

and literary studies - the reception and recognition of the American new criticism in Germany. Further, I will address German responses to America and I will title my three chapters in the following way: "sharp distinction", "ironic distance", and condescending recognition".

Parallel to the return of the old staff to German universities around 1950 there was a revival of the old theories and old traditions concerning the theory of the "Geisteswissenschaften". Ernst Rothacker, philosopher and (since 1923) editor of the influential journal "Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte", had published his book "Logik und Systematik der Geisteswissenschaften" in 1926, became a member of the NSDAP, spoke in favour of the party even before 1933 and was one of the leading figures in propagating a new NS-Kulturpolitik. He was dismissed from the university in 1947, the same year his book on the "Geisteswissenschaft" was reedited. In the 1950s Rothacker became, once again, one of the leading German philosophers. His book on the "Geisteswissenschaften" reformulated Dilthey's project of the humanities as historical self-reflective disciplines; it also offered, 1926 and 1947, a national perspective that was supposed to be entangled with the origin of the "Geisteswissenschaften" in Germany. Quite at the beginning Rothacker states that in Germany the term "Volksgeist" played an important role in defining, spreading and even clarifying the notion of "Geisteswissenschaften",⁹ and a few pages further he cites a passage of Heinrich von Treitschke because of the "extraordinary objective definition" that the term is given there: "Jakob Grimm" - Treitschke writes - "stated quite clearly that the Geisteswissenschaften are universal and national at the same time", whereas only the natural sciences are strictly universal." ("Um der "ungewöhnlichen sachlichen Bedeutung dieser Bestimmung des Begriffs sei ein Passus [...] ungekürzt wiedergegeben: [...] Jakob Grimm [...] erwies kurz und schlagend, dass die Geisteswissenschaften [...] darum die Grundlage der allgemeinen Bildung bleiben müssen [...]; er zeigte, dass sie weltbürgerlich und national zugleich sind, die Naturwissenschaften weltbürgerlich schlechthin; und nur wo volkstümliche und allgemein menschliche Bildung einander durchdringen, entfaltet sich der ganze Reichtum der Weltgeschichte."¹⁰

While, on the one hand, thus keeping their national traditions, the German "Geisteswissenschaften", on the other hand, even enforced their own point of view by looking across the Atlantic. Since the early nineteenth century the United States of America were imagined as the future and the realization of modernity at its peak,¹¹ and exactly this fulfillment of modernity makes it possible to contrast the national essence of the "Geisteswissenschaften" with the irritating effects of the modern world: loss of tradition, the rise of mass culture. The overall importance of Martin Heidegger throughout the German

⁹ Erich Rothacker, Logik und Systematik der Geisteswissenschaften (Bonn 1947), 7.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹ Thomas P. Hughes, Die Erfindung Amerikas. Der technische Aufstieg der USA seit 1870 (München 1991).

humanities during the 1950s and 1960s is also due to Heidegger's notion of the German Geisteswissenschaften as a way of thinking essentially that differs sharply with modernity and its disastrous consequence: the banality of the everyday world.¹² This banality could be interpreted as a consequence of occidental thinking, of - in Heidegger's terms - the "Seinsvergessenheit", and as a concomitant of mass culture. It could also (and quite perversely) be held responsible for the political catastrophes of the 20th century interpreted then as the collapse of traditional values and as the seductive power of secular mass ideologies. In his introductory lecture in metaphysics ("Einführung in die Metaphysik"), given at the university at Freiburg in 1935, published 1953 and widely read in the following years, Heidegger speaks of the "Geist" in all its philosophical grandeur, but also of the deprivation of the spirit ("Entmachtung des Geistes") that can be observed in the contemporary world - a quite political and academic statement because it explicitly addresses the German "Geisteswissenschaften" to arm themselves against a threat that would take their identity away: the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, depersonalization, the preference of mediocrity ("die Flucht der Götter, die Zerstörung der Erde, die Vermassung des Menschen, der Vorrang des Mittelmäßigen").¹³ Although these destructive forces originated in the heart of European thought ("das geistige Schicksal des Abendlandes"), its bitter results, Heidegger claims, can already be seen quite clearly in Russia and in America. In his view, both countries suffer from the domination of quantity over quality, the equality and indifference, the loss of hierarchy, the reign of universal lies ("das maßlose Und-so-Weiter des Immergleichen und Gleichgültigen so weit, bis dieses Quantitative in eine eigene Qualität umschlug. [...] die Vorherrschaft eines Durchschnitts des Gleichgültigen, [...] das Andrängen von Solchem, was angreifend jeden Rang und jedes welthafte Geistige zerstört und als Lüge ausgibt. Das ist der Andrang von Jenem, was wir das Dämonische (im Sinne des zerstörerisch Böartigen) nennen").¹⁴

Heidegger's banishment of the "demonic" forces that threaten the Geist and, therefore, the Geisteswissenschaften, includes an open critique of the universities where the sciences fall into pieces and degenerate into a technical and practical construction of science, a mere mediation of knowledge where the deep-rooted fundamental essence of science has died ("Die Verwirrung der Geistlosigkeit kann sogar so weit gehen, dass die technisch-praktische Auslegung der Wissenschaft sich gleichzeitig zur Wissenschaft als einem Kulturwert bekennt [...]. Die Gebiete der Wissenschaft liegen weit auseinander. [...] Diese zerfallende Vielfältigkeit von Disziplinen wird heute nur noch durch die technische Organisation von Universitäten und Fakultäten zusammen- und durch die praktische Abzweckung der Fächer in einer Bedeutung

¹² Michael Zimmermann, Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art (Bloomington 1990).

¹³ Martin Heidegger, Einführung in die Metaphysik (Tübingen 1953), S. 34.

¹⁴ Ibid., 35.

erhalten. Dagegen ist die Verwurzelung der Wissenschaften in ihrem Wesensgrunde abgestorben [...]. Wissenschaft ist heute in all ihren Bezirken eine technische, praktische Sache der Kenntnisgewinnung und -vermittlung").¹⁵

This apocalyptic scenario also aims at the decline of the German universities: the end of Humboldt long before and after 1945. For the German humanities Heidegger's critique of modernity could almost take the role of a master narrative because it sets up a sharp distinction between the heart of the matter, the "Geist", and the disintegrating, modern powers that are associated with mass culture and modern society. Here, a well-known anti-modern impulse of the German 'Mandarins' at the beginning of the century lingers on¹⁶ and can be easily transformed to a defense against America and American thought in general, but also and quite overt to the American universities where the technical and practical side of education has reached its undoubted dominance.¹⁷

It is exactly this sharp distinction which infatuates the German universities when it comes to weighing German education, German "Geist" and "Bildung", against the American mind. The effects of this distinction can be seen in most of the other areas of German academic culture during the 1950s and 1960s. In language and philology departments, for instance, the canon of modern literature was extended to long neglected and banned authors, the now classical writers of the modern era: Kafka for example, or the German expressionists.¹⁸ But this modern literature was judged overall by its negativity - which still might be legitimate and justified today. What is remarkable, however, is the insistence that these negative reflections of modern culture are parallel to those destructive forces that Heidegger calls "demonic" - even a word that in readings and interpretations at this time is repeated over and over again.¹⁹ Thus, German interpretations of modern literature almost incorporate a hidden critique of the American way of life.

There is one science, though, that not only draws on American traditions but is supported if not completely established by the American military government: namely, sociology or social sciences. In this field, institutional efforts were made to practice and to install empirical methods within the social sciences - a technique, by the way, that the Americans themselves

¹⁵ Ibid., 37.

¹⁶ Fritz K. Ringer, The Decline of the German Mandarins. The German Academic Community, 1890-1933 (Cambridge 1969).

¹⁷ Another crucial example is the diary of Carl Schmitt (1947-1951), where "Amerikanismus" marks one of the main evils of modern German history: Carl Schmitt, Glossarium. Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947-1951 (Berlin 1991), 148.

¹⁸ Walter Erhart, "Kanonisierungsbedarf und Kanonisierung in der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft 1945-1995", in Renate von Heydebrandt, ed., Kanon Macht Kultur. Theoretische, historische und soziale Aspekte ästhetischer Kanonbildungen (Stuttgart, Weimar 1998), 97-121.

¹⁹ Gärtner, Kontinuität und Wandel, 134-187.

used in their reeducation programs.²⁰ However, those American-German encounters also came under attack. The twelfth congress of German sociology at Heidelberg in 1954 was opened by Leopold von Wiese who took a look at all the empirical sociology that "today is called Industriesoziologie, Arbeitswissenschaft, Betriebswissenschaft" - while scorning those of the "present workers in these fields" who "seriously believe these branches of empirical research are an American or French invention of the last twenty years."²¹ This is not the case, as Leopold von Wiese tries to make clear and asks rhetorically and polemically if he should really recall all the German work done under the label of "Sozialpolitik" since 1872. Thus, even an American impact on German sociology that is quite visible and acknowledged, thereby is transformed, reintegrated and now labeled "German Origin" - a strategy that makes it easy for other departments to confirm and to up-hold a line of sharp distinction between their tradition and what they perceived simply to be 'American'.

But what if those German professors could actually step beyond the imaginary demarcation line and perceive 'real' American universities while they were on leave themselves, travelling and teaching in the United States? In the 1950s and 1960s more than 20 professors of German literature were appointed as visiting professors by American universities.²² That, of course, does not mean just lectures but teaching, visiting several German departments, even staying for a long period of time, up to one year at a time. All of these scholars wrote letters, diaries or memoirs about their American experience, much of it still unpublished today, material that might be assembled to a history of academic German-American negotiations that has yet to be written.²³

I take as one single example the autobiography of Benno von Wiese, probably the most important and influential professor of German after 1945, the son of the famous sociology professor Leopold von Wiese.²⁴ Von Wiese, born 1909, visited the United States three times, 1954 (Bloomington), 1955/56 (Princeton) and 1967/68 (Minnesota). Right at the beginning of a chapter simply called "Visiting professor in the US", von Wiese remembers the presupposition of his trip: "My wife and I had not the slightest idea of the United States"

²⁰ Johannes Weyer, Westdeutsche Soziologie 1945-1950. Deutsche Kontinuitäten und nordamerikanischer Einfluß (Berlin 1984). Karl-Siebert Rehberg, "Auch keine Stunde Null. Westdeutsche Soziologie nach 1945", in: Pehle, Sillem, eds., Wissenschaft im geteilten Deutschland, 26-44.

²¹ Cit. in: Heinz Bude, "Die Soziologen der Bundesrepublik", Merkur 520, 1992: 569-580, 573.

²² Datas based on information provided by the "Arbeitsstelle für die Erforschung der Geschichte der Germanistik" of the "Deutsches Literaturarchiv" in Marbach am Neckar. I would like to thank Dr. Birgit Wägenbaur for her cooperation.

²³ It belongs to a history of the "Germanistik" after 1945 that has just begun to take memoirs, autobiographies and letters into account: Wilfried Barner, Christoph König, Zeitenwechsel. Germanistische Literaturwissenschaft nach 1945 (Frankfurt am Main: 1996). Petra Boden, Holger Dainat, eds., Atta Troll tanzt noch. Selbstbesichtigungen der literaturwissenschaftlichen Germanistik im 20. Jahrhundert (Berlin 1997). Petra Boden, Rainer Rosenberg, eds., Deutsche Literaturwissenschaft 1945-1965. Fallstudien zu Institutionen, Diskursen, Personen (Berlin 1997).

²⁴ Benno von Wiese, Ich erzähle mein Leben. Erinnerungen (Frankfurt am Main 1982).

(Meine Frau und ich hatten von den USA damals nicht die geringste Ahnung").²⁵ Benno von Wiese's trip to America was obviously not designed to change his ignorance. In fact, von Wiese did not see much of the United States because – and here he might be echoing many experiences of other visiting professors of German – "actually, on this continent I only got to know the German departments" ("ich habe später zahlreiche Vortragsreisen in Amerika gemacht. Trotzdem lernte ich von dem Kontinent eigentlich nur die German Departments kennen [...]").²⁶

In light of these two statements together it is quite surprising, then, that von Wiese was not reluctant to describe the American people and the American way of life in a generalizing, even simplifying way. In fact, he is reiterating German stereotypes about Americans from the early nineteenth century on.²⁷ The Americans, over all, are "naiv" – a word that is repeated several times, also a keyword that mediates between the spheres of academic and every day life.²⁸ Nevertheless and in fact because of that, von Wiese finds a lot to praise: the "optimism" that is, of course, "naiv"²⁹, the self-confidence of the Americans and the American students, their carelessness and cheerfulness.³⁰

While this American life style seems to function as a kind of recreation spot for the German professor (who is almost on holiday because teaching, too, is not "strenuous"), there is also a flip-side to the "cheerfulness" and the "naiveté" that clearly points to the American shortcomings when it comes to 'serious' matters. Why are Americans, despite their friendly optimism, disliked by many people in the world, von Wiese asks, probably echoing his German professional peers rather than the people in the world.³¹ Because there is "a lack of empathy and psychology", notable even in "talented intellectuals" who also seem to be "one-sided", with little sense of "ambiguity" and "irony". And there is a high degree of socialization ("Vergesellschaftung") in the US, a coercion to common behavior called "standardization" and "normalization". All this, at first glance, makes life in America much easier, yet only for the "average man."³²

Again, von Wiese's over-all judgments refer to the academic world as well (in fact the only prospect with which he really became familiar). Describing the academic institutions von

²⁵ Ibid., 268.

²⁶ Ibid., 272.

²⁷ Peter J. Brenner, Reisen in die Neue Welt. Die Erfahrung Nordamerikas in deutschen Reise- und Auswandererberichten des 19. Jahrhunderts (Tübingen 1991).

²⁸ Wiese, Erinnerungen, 270, 273, 274, 279.

²⁹ Ibid., 273.

³⁰ "Sicher wirkt in dieser herzhaften Unbekümmertheit noch immer der Pionierstil von einst nach mit dem Willen zur wechselseitigen Hilfe. Der fröhliche Optimismus führt allerdings zur Verdrängung des Todes." Ibid., 274f.

³¹ On Wiese's autobiography as exemplary for his generation of German professors see Hans Peter Herrmann, "Das Bild der Germanistik zwischen 1945 und 1965 in autobiographischen Selbstreflexionen von Literaturwissenschaftlern", in Barner, König, Zeitenwechsel, 345-360. Jürgen Fohrmann, "Die autobiographische Tätigkeit und die Autobiographie von Germanisten", in Boden, Dainat, Atta Troll, 1-12.

³² Wiese, Erinnerungen, 274f.

Wiese not only states the "lack of freedom",³³ but – later at Princeton – also criticizes the preference of social well-conduct ("soziales Wohlverhalten") over academic achievements ("Leistung"), and that means quite clearly and literal: the American constraint to "social adjustment" ("Wer sich am besten an dieses Klima anpassen konnte, hatte auch die besten Chancen"³⁴). When asked directly for his opinion about whether German and American universities are better, von Wiese answered "cautiously" that he prefers the American university for "younger semester", while the German university might be better suited for older and advanced students. What that, on a still "cautious" level, means is quite clear: The young American students are nurtured like "little children", the older students in Germany have more "freedom" concerning their studies.³⁵ Here, again, the German impression of the American mind is transferred to academic institutions where childlike education, normalization and socialization prevail.

What is remarkable here is that Benno von Wiese quite explicitly refers to the same critique that Heidegger launches against the "Geistlosigkeit" as the heyday of modernity. In portraying the American every day life, but also in trying to analyze the American universities and American education, von Wiese mirrors precisely Heidegger's account of the "demonic" power of modern America, insofar as he maintains almost all details but places them all in an ironic distance. Thus, he reformulates Heidegger's view on the new world first as a tourist's casual impression – an attitude that might have been quite common at the time. Further, while keeping the ironic traveler's view, he also marks the German-American academic distinctions. American universities, for example, are suddenly seen as preschools, down to earth practical, almost naive, colleges for social behavior, where most of the serious and German aspects of academic life are missing. In fact, the features missing are exactly the ingredients of the German university from Humboldt on: freedom, empathy, individualism, or in one word: "Bildung". The ironic distance creates a different form but is wrapped around the same content, and it might signify a traveler's perspective set free from the seriousness and sharpness of any cultural critique which for only a moment becomes visible when von Wiese relates an incident at Princeton when one of his former students is dismissed from assistant professorship. Time for Wiese's autobiography to comment on American "hypocrisy" and the "mendacious puritan morals" of "this society."³⁶

³³ Ibid., 276.

³⁴ Ibid., 282. The same observation is, for example, made by Hildegard Emmel (teaching at Connecticut 1967-1981) in her autobiography *Die Freiheit hat noch nicht begonnen. Zeitgeschichtliche Erfahrungen seit 1933* (Rostock 1991), 243-302.

³⁵ "Besonders die in ihrer Zahl begrenzten Germanisten wurden geradezu wie kleine Kinder gehegt und gepflegt. Für die älteren Semester zöge ich jedoch die deutsche Universität vor, weil die Studenten dort weit mehr Freiheit für ihr Studium hätten und nicht so gegängelt würden." Wiese, *Erinnerungen*, 275.

³⁶ "Ein größerer Grad von konventioneller Heuchelei war kaum vorstellbar." - "Diese verlogene puritanische Moral gehörte zum Gesamtbild dieser Gesellschaft." Ibid., 284.

The academic institutions, therefore, form an integral part of the over-all image of America that – seen in Heidegger's critique of modernity and von Wiese's ironic distance - seems rather uniform but differs in the spectator's tone. There is one other and very decisive element of American modernity that threatens Professor von Wiese – and here, again, the tone changes. Von Wiese is invited to a Chicago conference of the American association of Teachers of German, a meeting which, for the German professor, looks like a "slave market" where "teachers of German" are "sold" and "jobbed away"³⁷. Von Wiese is even frightened by the whole experience because some of its aspects such as the "masses" and the "mass consumption"³⁸ seem to mirror the American society (or maybe Chicago) as a whole. All these terms – "market", salesmanship, mass society, consumption – mark the economic and social darkside of modernity – an American specialty that von Wiese, again, discovers in the heart of the American university business. In Chicago, he is, while on a much more smaller and professional scale, indeed faced with Heidegger's "demonic" and "destructive" forces. When it comes too close irony seems to fail.

The philosopher's tragic and the traveler's ironic view show two wide-spread attitudes suited to distance German and American humanities from each other and to ward off any American influence altogether. These examples of a rather firm but not uncommon German resistance in regard of the American humanities might be completed by a closer look at important and, in fact, international issues that were negotiated within the humanities. Literary theory, for example, was a shared American and European enterprise, well represented by a scholar like René Wellek who was born in Vienna in 1903 as a son of Czech parents, studied at Prague university, moved to the United States in 1927 and published, together with Warren Austin, the now famous Theory of Literature in 1942 with a second edition in 1949. In the 1940s, however, German literary studies had no reputation at all. On the contrary, after 1945 they were accused of having had the same nationalsocialist history as all other segments in German society. Therefore, instead of measuring or even comparing German and American achievements in literary studies, Wellek and Warren, in a 1949 chapter called "The study of Literature in the Graduate school" proclaimed the ruin of "German literary scholarship" which had been "pervaded" by its "racial theory, its pathological sense of superiority to the rest of the world, and its centrally political outlook".³⁹ Be that as it may (and the diagnosis is certainly distorted and overstated, ignoring the growing resistance within "Germanistik" against racial and political history in favor of "textimmanente Interpretation" from the early

³⁷ "Im Grunde war es nur ein großer Eitelkeits- und Sklavenmarkt, auf dem Deutschlehrer jeweils neu eingekauft und verschoben wurden." Ibid., 286.

³⁸ "Die große Tagung [...] erschreckte mich durch ihre Massen und den Massenkonsum." Von Wiese 1982, S. 286.

³⁹ René Wellek, Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York 1949), 286f.

1940s on⁴⁰), it almost seemed natural that German literary studies after 1945 had to be involved in the wide-spread reeducation programs within the universities, "necessitating" (as Wellek and Warren say) "its present reconstruction almost from the bottom."⁴¹ It also seemed appropriate that the American literature departments were well-suited for this enterprise because their latest approach to literature, the so called "new criticism", offered an alternative to the European agony of literary studies whose future no one could anticipate. "But it seems probable that, in any case, leadership has passed to the United States"⁴² - a thought that was widely acknowledged in American literature departments during the forties.⁴³

And yet, it did not take long for this view to be challenged by German literary scholars - both in Germany and in the United States. In 1952, a professor of German at New York, Ernst Rose, reported on the achievements of the American "Germanistik" during the last decade and turns the argument around, criticizing American Studies because of their "mere gathering of material" ("öde Stoffhuberei"), the dominance of pragmatism ("Vorherrschen des Pragmatismus") and the rationalistic mind of America ("der rationalistische Geist Amerikas").⁴⁴ Stating this, Rose could actually take side with the American New Criticism itself: Wellek, Warren and their colleagues (among them John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Allan Tate or William K. Wimsat) did indeed reject the positivistic account of assembling historical literary facts and argued for a so-called intrinsic method, for the aesthetic evaluation of the unique, coherent and isolated work of art.⁴⁵

Whether Rose understood the New Criticism particularly well might be doubted. But he was well aware of a certain companionship, and he even is more explicit about the future directions of literary criticism in a second article that deals with the methodological problems of American literary studies.⁴⁶ There, while blaming American pragmatism for the anarchy and lack of discipline with which they infiltrated higher education, he explicitly mentions the virtues of New Criticism. Not without reservation, however: Warren and Wellek's approach must be judged as much too "eclectic", and a "synthesis" of literary studies is still desperately needed. Specialists for synthesis (and Rose does leave no doubt about it) are the German humanities. The very much needed coherent and homogeneous theory of values ("eine neue einheitliche Wertlehre") could even come from a common German-American ground, because

⁴⁰ Holger Dainat, "Anpassungsprobleme einer nationalen Wissenschaft. Die neuere deutsche Literaturwissenschaft in der NS-Zeit", in Boden, Dainat, Atta Troll, 103-126.

⁴¹ Wellek, Austin, Theory, 287.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 288.

⁴³ Norman Foerster, "The Study of Letters". In: Literary Scholarship: its Aims and Methods (Chapel Hill 1941), 3-32.

⁴⁴ Ernst Rose, "Die Leistungen der amerikanischen neueren Germanistik während des letzten Jahrzehnts (1939-1951)", Wirkendes Wort 3 (1952/53): 34-46, 35, 37.

⁴⁵ For a documentation and reevaluation of the New Criticism see William J. Spurlin, Michael Fischer, The New Criticism and Contemporary Literary Theory. Connections and Continuities (New York, London: 1995).

⁴⁶ Ernst Rose, "Methodische Probleme der amerikanischen Literaturwissenschaft", Wirkendes Wort 3 (1952/53), 346-355.

the American appeal to French existentialism might be adopted by a more serious and deeper philosopher who is right at hand in Germany, Martin Heidegger. Rose mentions an article on "Heidegger's Existential Philosophy and Modern German Literature" (by Hans Jaeger) in the Publications of the Modern Language Association, and from there he is already promising an answer to the unresolved question of the American future.⁴⁷

Whether Rose misunderstood not only the New Criticism but Heidegger as well (whom he probably knew second hand) shall be postponed for now. What is crucial here, however, is the fact that the American and the German impact on the humanities have exactly changed their side: The "reconstruction" of the German humanities by the Americans has turned into the reconstruction of American thought by German philosophers and German-based theories. In the following years the New Criticism was indeed acknowledged and made widely known in Germany, mostly because it ran parallel to the methodological direction of German literary studies, the so-called "werkimmanente Interpretation" that could be announced and is still regarded today as the German counterpart of the American New Criticism.⁴⁸ But clearly would be misleading to assert a kind of cooperation or even a common enterprise within international literary studies during the 1950s and the 1960s. Quite the contrary, Rose's claim for the leading role of Germany within the humanities was increasing in the next decades, even turning into another sharp distinction between the two academic cultures. In the German edition of Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature in 1959, the translators, Edgar and Marlene Lohner, a couple teaching in an American German department, see their enterprise as an on-going reconstruction of literary studies in Germany where methods and studies in literary criticism "reveal a striking uncertainty and a rigid subjectivity" – a statement which is not clarified ("die deutsche literarische Situation, insbesondere [...] die literaturwissenschaftliche Kritik, deren Methoden gegenwärtig noch eine auffallende Unsicherheit oder starre Subjektivität verraten").⁴⁹

While the translators maintain an American point of view, in Germany, there was no need to be taught by American scholars. In one of the first reviews of the German edition of *Theory of Literature* the author Hanns Haeckel tries hard to be neutral but is quite explicit with familiar undertones: Wellek's statements on "literature and ideas" tend to be "trivial" ("neben ganz

⁴⁷"Will man den methodischen Standpunkt Welleks and Warrens mit einem kurzen Wort kennzeichnen, so muß man ihn freilich 'eklektisch' nennen. Eine wirkliche Synthese steht auch jetzt noch immer aus, und sie kann erst erfolgen, wenn an die Stelle des Pragmatismus oder der humanistischen Toleranz eine neue einheitliche Wertlehre getreten ist. [...] Aber schon hat Hans Jaeger [...] eine Lanze für Heidegger gebrochen, dessen christliche Form der Existenzphilosophie den Weg zu einer Skala wirklicher Werte und damit zur einheitlichen Orientierung auch der Literaturwissenschaft offen läßt. In welchem Maße eine solche oder ähnlich begründete Wertskala sich durchsetzen wird, ist die ungelöste Frage der amerikanischen Zukunft. Ihre Beantwortung hängt genau so wie die Frage nach der europäischen Zukunft von dem Grade ab, in dem unsere gemeinsame christliche Tradition heute noch lebendig ist." Ibid., 355.

⁴⁸ For a critical evaluation see Lutz Danneberg, "Zur Theorie der werkimmanenten Interpretation", in Barner, König, Zeitenwechsel, 313-342.

⁴⁹ Edgar and Marlene Lohner, "Vorwort der Übersetzer", in René Wellek, Austin Warren, Theorie der Literatur (Berlin 1963).

selbstverständlichen, um nicht zu sagen trivialen Feststellungen"); many parts of the book, especially those written by Wellek, are in danger of an extreme, almost overdone rationalistic literary criticism ("die Gefahr einer übersteigert rationalen Literaturbetrachtung");⁵⁰ the "normative aspects" of literature are completely missing, the question of values is not seriously discussed ("Ich vermisse die Erörterung des Normativen. Die Frage nach den Werten wird nicht ernsthaft diskutiert").⁵¹ What the reviewer then misses from Warren's part turns into a rather harsh critique because it refers to the true essentials of literary analysis: Warren lacks order and principles.⁵²

This German critique of an already classic American book on literary theory⁵³ continues and confirms, in 1960, the shift from a time when American "leadership" was demanded to a time when German scholars of literary studies were busy blaming American theory for its positivism and rationalism. Haeckel's review even reveals those slightly disguised criteria and notions that served as stereotypes on behalf of the traveler Benno von Wiese: namely, the "naiv" and "trivial", the "rational" and "superficial", the lack of profoundness. That might have detained German scholars to actually study the new critics and to be influenced by them - a decisive failure that Karl Otto Conrady, a younger scholar, remarks in a popular introduction to German literary studies in the year 1966.⁵⁴

While American New Criticism is noticed by German scholars - not even in an unfriendly way,⁵⁵ the perception is almost always combined with an argument that cuts through the possible co-operations and learning processes that might emerge out of the parallels between national literary studies, i.e., with the New Criticism the Americans are just performing something that Germany is already doing - and even better.⁵⁶ Consequently, at the end of his review, Hanns Haeckel simply points to Wolfgang Kayser's Das sprachliche Kunstwerk, one of the major works in German literary criticism, published in 1948: It matches Wellek and Warren's work while avoiding their mistakes. This strategy was taken over in the years that followed throughout Germany's literary studies: an acknowledgment of the new criticism that welcomes American literary theory on a board that has been established, grounded and made safe by German theorists long ago and since, a kind of condescending recognition that marks

⁵⁰ Hanns Haeckel, "Rez. René Wellek, Austin Warren, Theorie der Literatur", Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie 1960, 442-446, 443.

⁵¹ Ibid., 445.

⁵² "Bei ihm vermissen wir häufig die Herausarbeitung überschaubarer Linien, bei ihm fehlt uns Grundsätzliches. Gewiß ist er fern allem Doktrinarismus, aber auch oft fern allen Prinzipien." Ibid., 446.

⁵³ Sarah Lawall, "René Wellek and Modern Literary Criticism", Comparative Literature 80 (1988), 3-24.

⁵⁴ Karl Otto Conrady, Einführung in die Neuere deutsche Literaturwissenschaft (Reinbek 1966), 60.

⁵⁵ See the review in the journal "Germanistik", for example: Germanistik 1 (1960): 468f.

⁵⁶ Already in 1953, Horst Oppel, a German professor of English, almost praises Wellek and Warren's book but also refers to their comments on the state of German literary studies as not just unjustified but totally absurd: In fact, almost no other country, not even America, has changed literary studies to an 'unpolitical' and 'pure' criticism like Germany - an absurd statement by itself (especially regarding Oppel's activities before 1945) but quite explicit in turning things around. Horst Oppel, "Zur Situation der Allgemeinen Literaturwissenschaft", Die Neueren Sprachen. Neue Folge 5 (1953): 4-17, S. 10.

the Americans as imitators - a 'technical', 'naiv' and 'one-sided' business they actually perform best.

To summarize, it might be noted that in the humanities after 1945 americanization - with a possible exception in social and political sciences - did not occur. It even was prevented, probably in part by the westernization and modernization in German society at that time.⁵⁷ My observations should not be generalized too quickly, but they indicate various levels and strategies of how German academics in the post-war-era to overcome their uneasiness about the political and cultural power of America. The German professors not only established and carried on specific notions of the traditional "Geisteswissenschaften" but could also fuse them with a hidden

critique of modern America. Some of them confirmed or reconstructed their cultural perception of Americans and American academics while traveling through the United States. At the same time, they could easily devalue American academic institutions and might have transferred their critique to particular disciplines and to American theories already circulating between Europe and the United States - which certainly is the case with regard to literary theory and new criticism. As we have seen, these perceptions, images and narratives were shaped in different ways, thus making them even more effective: as with distinction, ironic distance and condescension, the academic discourse on America took on different forms within different narratives, but is composed of certain keynotes that, slightly disguised, exert their power over a long period of time. The effects might still be felt today when it comes down to a critique of American universities in favor of saving the Humboldtian ideal of "Bildung" for German universities.

In his book on the German "Bildungskatastrophe", published in 1965, Georg Picht exemplifies the crisis of German universities by the fact that a lot of talented German scholars went to the United States in the early 1960s - among them many professors of German, nearly all of them literary theorists.⁵⁸ The academic turf on which German "Bildung" shielded itself against American impacts was in danger of getting depopulated whereas up and coming German theorists not only experienced an American influence by themselves but were actually trying to be part of a new American impact on behalf of literary theory and academic education. However, right at the time when the distance between American and German humanities and academic institutions seems to break down there were new anti-American sentiments rising in the wake of the German student revolution - a revolution that was actually based at

⁵⁷ Americanization in Germany in the 1950s – as recent studies have argued – rather came from down under, from popular and youth culture: Kaspar Meese, "Amerikanisierung von unten. Demonstrative Vulgarität und kulturelle Hegemonie in der Bundesrepublik der 50er Jahre", in Alf Lüdtke, Inge Marssolek, Adelheid von Saldern, eds., Amerikanisierung. Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts (Stuttgart 1996), 291-313.

⁵⁸ Georg Picht, Die deutsche Bildungskatastrophe (München: 1965), 16.

humanities departments throughout Germany.⁵⁹ Again: American popular culture was pervading German society, and many academics in the US and in Germany entered another period of mutual distance. But this is another story.

⁵⁹ Günther C. Behrmann: "Antiamerikanismus in der Bundesrepublik: 1966-1984", Amerika-Studien American Studies 31 (1986): 341-353. It is almost symptomatic that an important Marxist critique of the new criticism in a book by Robert Weimann (first published in 1962 in the GDR) is reedited in West-Germany in 1974: "New Criticism" und die Entwicklung bürgerlicher Literaturwissenschaft. Geschichte und Kritik neuer Interpretationsmethoden (München 1974).
