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National Philology, Politics and Science
Notes on the birth of Germanistics
out of the spirit of the nineteenth century

ABSTRACT. This article focuses on the nationalistic turn that swept across the political and cultural life of nineteenth century Germany by looking into two events that are seldom brought together: the Germanists' Assembly in Frankfurt, in 1846, and Marx and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, published just two years later. It explores the tension between nationalism and internationalism that runs through both events and that is still vividly present in our contemporary, after all, not so «Postnational Constellation».

1. Provincializing Literature, politicizing Philology

The nationalist turn that the 1846 Germanists' Assembly in Frankfurt brought to nineteenth-century and twentieth-century literature is a well-studied case¹, whose influence goes far beyond Germany or Germanistics itself.

Ironically enough, one of the clearest evidence of the Germanists' impact on the Western literary world is provided after the end of World War II by the American-English literature Nobel laureate of 1948, T.S. Eliot, in a passage of his banquet acceptance speech, that is worth recalling:

¹ See e.g. Frank Fürbeth et al., eds.: *Zur Geschichte und Problematik der Nationalphilologien in Europa: 150 Jahre Erste Germanistenversammlung in Frankfurt am Main (1846-1996)*. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 1999; Jörg Jochen Müller, ed.: *Germanistik und deutsche Nation 1806-1848*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2000; Katinka Netzer: *Wissenschaft aus nationaler Sehnsucht: Die Verhandlungen der Germanisten 1846 und 1847*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2006.

Poetry is usually considered the most local of all the arts. Painting, sculpture, architecture, music, can be enjoyed by all who see or hear. But language, especially the language of poetry, is a different matter. Poetry, it might seem, separates peoples instead of uniting them.²

Eliot's words are somehow startling. For one, because they were spoken at the end of half a century of wars caused by inflamed nationalisms that did much more than just «separate peoples», leaving large parts of Europe (and the world) literally in ruins. It is true that Eliot, clearly embodying the spirit of the postwar period, immediately adds «that while language constitutes a barrier, poetry itself gives us a reason for trying to overcome the barrier» (436). But the fact is that beneath these last circumstantial words there still seems to lie the implicit assumption that poetry is first and foremost «local», that is to say, national, and that the «language barrier» weaves an inexorable and almost insurmountable web around peoples and nations leaving them isolated in closed communities. The world according to Eliot appears thus to be a world where communication between national communities is a «poetic» exception rather than the rule³.

On the other hand, when read from a more specific historical-philological perspective, the passage quoted above is no less startling, especially if one has in mind one of the most important and venerated classical texts in this field: Aristotle's *Poetics*. In fact, it cannot be left unnoticed that Eliot's words contrast sharply with the Aristotelian notion of poetry that had been prevalent in the literary world for several centuries: «[...] poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are

² T.S. Eliot: Acceptance [1948]. In «Literature 1901-1967», edited by Horst Frenz. Nobel Lectures. Singapore; New Jersey; London: World Scientific, 1999: 435-36 (436).

³ A similar view, anchored on the same kind of arguments and implicit assumptions, is also found in an appendix to his «Notes Towards the Definition of Culture» (London: Faber and Faber, 1948: 110-24). Eliot's Nobel banquet speech follows closely that appendix, entitled «The Unity of European Culture», consisting of three broadcast talks to Germany given after the war that were first published in German (T.S. Eliot: *Die Einheit der Europäischen Kultur. Drei Rundfunk-Vorträge*. Translated by Leonie Hiller. Berlin: Carl Habel Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1946).

of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars»⁴. Paradoxically, the author of *What is a classic?* (1945) inverts the classical Aristotelian views on poetry and history, *universal* poetry envisioned by Aristotle becomes for Eliot «the most *local* of all the arts», and that was an unmistakable sign that history occupied a much more prominent place in Eliot's world than in the world of Aristotle.

The “localisation” of poetry suggested by the American-English poet, together with its implicit and concomitant “universalisation” of history, are admittedly the products of a well-studied historical turn that had been sweeping the Western (literary) world since the late-eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century the Germanists' Assembly brought a renewed vigor and, above all, a new nationalist clan to a long-term process that was, in the end, completely successful in provincializing Literature and politicizing (or historicizing) Philology.

Eliot's words and thoughts – the political, as well as the literary – are the typical result of this process and of the tension between nationalism and internationalism that ran through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and that made itself apparent in innumerable books, pamphlets and essays of the period, mainly in those published from the outbreak of the Great War to the end of World War II. This tension left no area of knowledge untouched, from Anthropology⁵ to Literature⁶, not forgetting Psychology⁷ or Science⁸. But it was above all in the field of Political History that the

⁴ Aristotle: *Poetics* 1451*b*. In «The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation». Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995 (*Poetics* 1451*b*).

⁵ Franz Boas: *Nationalism in Europe*. Chicago: Germanistic Society of Chicago, 1915; Arthur Keith: *Nationality and Race from an Anthropologist's Point of View*. London; New York: H. Milford; Oxford University Press, 1919.

⁶ Albert Guérard: *Nationality and Literature*. In «Books Abroad» 7, no. 2 (1933): 135-37; Joseph Remenyi: *Nationalism, Internationalism, and Universality in Literature*. In «The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 5, no. 1 (1946): 4449.

⁷ Walter Bowers Pillsbury: *The Psychology of Nationality and Internationalism*. New York: Appleton, 1919.

⁸ See among many others T.D.A. Cockerell: *Internationalism and Science*. In «Nature»

main impact of this nationalist turn was felt with an enormous increase of works devoted to nationalism and internationalism⁹; among these, the book by the British Liberal politician Ramsay Muir definitely stands out because of its illuminating title – *Nationalism and Internationalism: The Culmination of Modern History* – and unequivocal purpose of outlining «the development of two of the most powerful factors in modern history, both of which appear to have reached a culminating point in the Great War [...], the nationalist and the internationalist movements» (7).

To be sure, this nationalist turn in Literature, Philology and in other areas of the Humanities and Sciences can be traced back to Germany and to the writings of late eighteenth-century German authors like Herder, Fichte or Arndt, to name only a few. However, it is important to stress that the 1846 Germanists' Assembly in Frankfurt gave this “nationalist turn” a public dimension, a more institutional, and hence visible, presence in a local – and paradoxically also in an international – social and political environment that had been otherwise evolving, slowly but steadily, towards globalisation¹⁰.

129, no. 3266 (1932): 831-831; A.C. Seward, ed.: *Science and the Nation*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1917; Karl Kerkhof: *Die internationalen naturwissenschaftlichen Organisationen vor und nach dem Weltkriege und die deutsche Wissenschaft*. In «Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik» 15, no. 3 (1921): 225-42; Philipp Lenard: *Deutsche Wissenschaft*. In «Die Mittelschule» 51, no. 20 (1937): 248-49; A. Zullo: *Nationalism and Science*. In «The Lancet» 232, no. 6011 (1938): 1125-26.

⁹ See e.g. Edward Hallett Carr: *Nationalism and After*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1968 [1945]; Hasn Dahmen: *Die nationale Idee von Herder bis Hitler*. Köln: Schaffstein, 1934; Günther Franz: *Bismarcks Nationalgefühl*. Wiesbaden: Vieweg+Teubner Verlag, 1926; Herbert Adams Gibbons: *Nationalism and Internationalism*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1930; G.P. Gooch: *Nationalism*. London; New York: Swarthmore Press, 1920; Friedrich Otto Hertz: *Nationality in History and Politics: A Study of the Psychology and Sociology of National Sentiment and Character*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1944; Ramsay Muir: *Nationalism and Internationalism: The Culmination of Modern History*. London: Constable, 1916.

¹⁰ See e.g. Harold James: *The End of Globalization. Lessons from the Great Depression*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001; Jürgen Osterhammel: *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. München: Beck, 2011.

Not surprisingly, many of the works that deal with this founding moment of Germanistics cannot but interpret it as a major political event determined by specific local settings¹¹, and that despite of the fact that the assembly itself had no explicit intentions to make politics. As Grimm puts it in his opening address: «Was die eigentliche Politik betrifft, so bleibe sie unsern Zusammenkünften, die nichts darüber zu beschließen haben, fremd»¹². The truth, however, is that the first session begins with a conference by Professor Beseler of the Greifswald University on the «Schleswig-Holsteinische Question», by that time a burning political issue between Germany and Denmark that was also to become a recurrent topic in the *Verhandlungen*. Actually, almost all the talks and discussions held on the first day of the assembly dealt, one way or another, with that question, so that on the 27th of September 1846 the anonymous correspondent of the «Allgemeine Zeitung» significantly announces the meeting as the «Verhandlungen der Germanisten über Schleswig-Holstein»¹³. Political readings of the event are therefore plainly justified. But apart from this public “political drift” of a scholarly meeting caused by the tension between local politics, the specific circumstances of mid-nineteenth century Germany, and the complex European (inter)national situation, there is a second latent tension in the proceedings of the assembly that is worth examining.

2. «Most appealing to the masses»

When one reads the invitation to the *Verhandlungen* (5-6) along with the first sentences of a report about the event published by Jacob Grimm in the

¹¹ Pier Carlo Bontempelli: *Knowledge, Power and Discipline: German Studies and National Identity*. Translated by Gabriele Poole. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003; Jürgen Habermas: *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. Translated by Max Pensky. Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2001; Norbert Oellers: *Germanistik als politische Wissenschaft*. In «Perspektiven der Germanistik», edited by Anne Bentfeld and Walter Delabar. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997: 92-105.

¹² *Verhandlungen der Germanisten zu Frankfurt am Main am 24., 25. und 26. September 1846*. Frankfurt am Main: In Commission bei J. D. Sauerlaender, 1847: 17.

¹³ Anonymous: *Verhandlungen der Germanisten über Schleswig-Holstein*. In «Allgemeine Zeitung» Nr. 270 (1846): 2153; 2156-2157.

«Pädagogische Review»¹⁴, it becomes perfectly obvious that the meeting is patently inspired by similar events previously organized by the Natural Sciences (137):

Die Naturforscher waren es zuerst, welche ihrer allgemeineren, keinem Lande ausschließlich angehörigen Wirksamkeit sich bewußt, in regelmäßig wiederholten Versammlungen sich gegen einander auszutauschen begannen; nicht zu mißkennen stand der Vortheil. Jahre verstrichen, ehe das gegebene Beispiel Nachahmer fand. [...] Endlich sollte eben wohl die deutsche Philologie in dem ihr noch zusagenderen Geleite des deutschen Rechts und der deutschen Geschichte auf den Platz treten.

The Natural Sciences play a relevant role in this delicate birth of Germanistics. Its relevance does not only lie in the fact that the meeting in Frankfurt was modeled after events of the same kind, successfully set up by the «Naturforscher», but much more in the (almost) mimic pursuit of the features responsible for the, by then, already growing public recognition and prestige of the Natural Sciences: scientific internationalism, effectiveness and practical utility to society. After all, these also seemed to be the main goals and aims of the Germanists.

Several passages of the *Verhandlungen* and of the above mentioned report on the Assembly are careful enough to explicitly (and very often also implicitly) point out to these goals. The fact that the meeting had an international dimension is, for instance, mindfully brought up by Grimm right before the end of his report: «Noch bevor die Versammlung aus einander gieng, hatte sie aus Belgien und Italien unmittelbare Theilnahme an ihren Arbeiten bezeugt erhalten. Von Neapel traf eine ihr zugeeignete Schrift des Terenzio Sacchi ein» (144).

Relevant as it is, the role played by the Natural Sciences is however also complex. This concern for internationalisation is a case in point, since it induces further potential contradictions and paradoxes to a context that was already on the edge of contradiction. One needs only to recall Grimm's

¹⁴ Jacob Grimm: Bericht über die Zusammenkunft der Germanisten in Frankfurt am 24., 25. und 26. September 1846. In «Pädagogische Revue» 14, no. 11 (1846): 137-45.

inaugural lecture at the University of Göttingen in 1830 (*De desiderio patriae*), a passionate speech in defense of the German language... given in Latin¹⁵; or to read §2 of the «Geschäftsordnung» of the *Verhandlungen* that declares that «Die thätige Theilnahme an der Versammlung steht allen In- und Ausländern zu», while at the same time determines that «Die Vorträge werden nur in deutscher Sprache gehalten» (143). But scientific internationalism was not the only issue to bring out the latent tension between Germanistics and the Natural Sciences.

On the second day of the Assembly, Grimm starts by regretting, in part, the “political drift” of the first session and begins his opening address with a topic, this time, far more adequate to a scholarly meeting: the Sciences. The initial tone is globally optimistic and apologetic of the Natural Sciences (59):

Alle Hebel und Erfindungen, die das Menschengeschlecht erstaunen und erschrecken, sind von ihnen allein [i.e. den Naturwissenschaften] ausgegangen, und weil ihre Anwendungen schnell Gemeingut werden, so haben sie für den großen Haufen den größten Reiz.

But it suddenly evolves into quite different directions and tones (60):

Doch genug [...], ich will auch laut werden lassen, worin sich unsere Wissenschaft erhebt und allem Zeitgeist zum Trotz einer tieferen Wirkung zu erfreuen hat. Wir stehn viel fester auf dem Boden des Vaterlandes und schließen uns inniger an alle heimischen Gefühle. Alle Erfindungen, die das Menschengeschlecht entzücken und beseligen, sind von der schöpferischen Kraft darstellender Rede ausgegangen.

Grimm’s statements in his second public address to the Assembly leave no doubt about the primacy of his new founded Germanistics, nor about

¹⁵ Jacob Grimm: *Kleinere Schriften. Recensionen und vermischte Aufsätze*. Vol. 6. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1882: 411-18. On Grimm’s lecture see also Joep Leerssen: *Latinitas Goes Native: The Philological Turn and Jacob Grimm’s De Desiderio Patriae* (1830). In «Bilingual Europe: Latin and Vernacular Cultures, Examples of Bilingualism and Multilingualism c. 1300-1800», edited by Jan Bloemendal, Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015: 187-99.

the central role ascribed to language in Science. Furthermore, any Science that speaks German could of course only be «German Science». Needless to say that this nationalistic view of Science clearly collided with the, by then, already growing internationalism of the Natural Sciences.

Germanistics – so it seems – was thus founded out of a misunderstanding and a contradiction: on one hand, the Assembly that was supposed to be a scholarly meeting quickly evolved into a political nationalist congress; on the other hand, it was modeled *after* the Natural Sciences but it was also founded *against* the Natural Sciences.

3. To «*Frau Neuphilologia*»

Nevertheless it must be pointed out that these philological areas were aware both of their paradoxical condition and of the significance of scientific internationalism.

Forty years later, in October 1886, an association of teachers of «New Philologies» was founded in Hannover at the first German «Neuphilologentag». Its purpose was «die Pflege der neueren Philologie, der germanischen wie der romanischen, und insbesondere die Förderung einer lebhaften Wechselwirkung zwischen Universität und Schule, zwischen Wissenschaft und Praxis»¹⁶. The three day event mimetically restaged the Germanists' Assembly: the «League of German teachers in London» sent a greeting telegram – a more modest international echo than the Frankfurt Assembly had, but still an international echo – and it all ended up in a festive atmosphere. As one participant recalls, «bei dem Festbankett wurden die Gläser erhoben

¹⁶ Verhandlungen des ersten Allgemeinen Deutschen Neuphilologentages am 4., 5. und 6. Oktober 1886 zu Hannover. Nebst einem Verzeichnis der Neuphilologen Deutschlands. Hannover: Carl Meyer, 1886: 11. On the interactions between university and school, and on the historical development of classical and modern philologies in Germany during the first half of the nineteenth century see among others the brief but comprehensive overview by Hans Helmut Christmann: Klassische, germanische, englische und romanische Philologie der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts im Spannungsfeld von Universität, Schule und Ministerium. In «STUF – Language Typology and Universals» 38, no. 1-4 (1985): 551-58.

zu Ehren der “Frau Neuphilogia”»¹⁷ after a «hochpoetische Trinkspruch des Oberlehrers Ey auf die deutschen Frauen»¹⁸.

Gustav Körting, one of the founders of the «Verband der deutschen neuphilologischen Lehrerschaft», could hardly be more explicit as far as the status and place ascribed to this new philological science were concerned:

Die Wissenschaft der Gegenwart ist im vollsten Sinne des Wortes international; sie kennt keine nationalen Grenzen; sie hat ihre Heimstätte überall da, wo höhere Bildung besteht, also in der gesammten Culturwelt. *Aber* die internationale Wissenschaft besitzt keine internationale Sprache; sie redet vielmehr die Sprachen aller Culturvölker.¹⁹

The passage is interesting enough to deserve some attention. It confirms the relevance of scientific internationalism as a consensual cornerstone idea that is at the very foundational base of the new philologies, and at the same time it allows a better and finer understanding of the meaning of the word «international» in the philological context of the period. Indeed, «international» does not seem to imply in this case universalism, one lingua franca or one common perspective but some sort of a cosmopolitan (?), babelian (?) mingling of languages and perspectives. Naturally, national philologies could not relinquish national languages or national literatures, two of the most iconic symbols of «civilized» nations.

The condition that the «aber» introduces in the sentence and the paradoxes that it anticipates are not so much the paradoxes of Germanistics itself (or of the new philologies that came to light after 1846) but rather a product of the unsolved tensions between nationalism and internationalism that swept the whole nineteenth century and that are still vividly present in our contemporary, after all, *not so* «Postnational Constellation»²⁰.

¹⁷ Gustav Körting: *Neuphilologische essays*. Heilbronn: gebr. Henninger, 1887:1.

¹⁸ *Verhandlungen des ersten Allgemeinen Deutschen Neuphilologentages*: 59.

¹⁹ Körting, *Neuphilologische essays*: 133 (emphasis added).

²⁰ Jürgen Habermas: *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. Translated by Max Pensky. Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2001. See also Craig Calhoun: *Is it time to be Postnational?*. In «*Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Minority Rights*», edited by Stephen

4. «*Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa*»

To further understand these tensions and the overwhelming parasitic power of nationalist thought during the period in question it does make sense, finally, to recall a well-known manifesto written by Marx and Engels and published in London only two years after the meeting in Frankfurt took place.

The *Verhandlungen* of the Germanists' Assembly and the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* are seldom – if at all – considered together within political, historical or philological research. They seem worlds apart, their projects and goals are in many ways antagonistic; in short, to a contemporary reader Marx and Engels' *Manifesto* appears indeed to be at the antipodes of everything that Grimm, the Germanists and the new philologists could conceive. Take for instance the following excerpt where literature (as an art form) is used – among many other «products» of society – to illustrate the development and «cosmopolitan character» of bourgeois economics:

Die Bourgeoisie hat durch die Exploitation des Weltmarkts die Produktion und Konsumtion aller Länder kosmopolitisch gestaltet. [...] An die Stelle der alten, durch Landeserzeugnisse befriedigten Bedürfnisse treten neue, welche die Produkte der entferntesten Länder und Klimate zu ihrer Befriedigung erheischen. An die Stelle der alten lokalen und nationalen Selbstgenügsamkeit und Abgeschlossenheit tritt ein allseitiger Verkehr, eine allseitige Abhängigkeit der Nationen von einander. Und wie in der materiellen, so auch in der geistigen Produktion. Die geistigen Erzeugnisse der einzelnen Nationen werden Gemeingut. Die nationale Einseitigkeit und Beschränktheit wird mehr und mehr unmöglich, und aus den vielen nationalen und lokalen Literaturen bildet sich eine Weltliteratur.²¹

It may well be that from a marxist point of view there is «a perfect

May, Tariq Modood, and Judith Squires. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004: 231-56; for an updated critique of this «postnational illusion» see Ghia Nodia: The End of the Postnational Illusion. In «Journal of Democracy» 28, no. 2 (2017): 5-19.

²¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei. London: Hirschfeld, 1848: 5-6.

correspondence between a world market and a “world literature”²², but in this specific context I am much more interested in «Karl Marx the German» than in any «globalized Marx of twentieth- and twenty-first-century revolutionary dreams, totalitarian nightmares and worldwide economic interconnections»²³, for «Karl Marx the German» is no less a product of his time than the Germanists’ Assembly.

How is one supposed to read the above passage from the *Manifesto*? Should world literature be seen as the corollary of a capitalist world market or does it stand for «Marx’s hope» of an «antidote against “national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness”»?²⁴ Was Goethe – or August Ludwig Schlözer²⁵ – a marxist avant la lettre when he foresaw the coming of world literature²⁶, or was he the very coryphaeus of a cosmopolitan bourgeois literature? And how is one to understand Marx’s ambiguous observations on nationalism in this and other passages of his work? How to articulate for instance the «nationalen Selbstgenügsamkeit und Abgeschlossenheit» with another excerpt of the same *Manifesto* where the «national character» of «the proletarian» is clearly portrayed as a victim of industrial capitalism: «die moderne industrielle Arbeit, die moderne Unterjochung unter das Kapital, dieselbe in England wie in Frankreich, in Amerika wie in Deutschland, hat ihm allen nationalen Charakter abgestreift» (10)?

The uneasy marxists’ answers to these questions reflect indeed, to say the least, a truly «tumultuous» relationship between Marxism and nationalism²⁷,

²² Aijaz Ahmad: The Communist Manifesto and “World Literature”. In «Social Scientist» 28, no. 7/8 (2000): 3-30 (7).

²³ Jonathan Sperber: Karl Marx the German. In «German History» 31, no. 3 (2013): 383-402 (402); see also Michael Levin: Deutschmarx: Marx, Engels, and the German Question. In «Political Studies» 29, no. 4 (1981): 537-54.

²⁴ Aijaz Ahmad: The Communist Manifesto and “World Literature”. In «Social Scientist» 28, no. 7/8 (2000): 3-30 (17).

²⁵ Wolfgang Schamoni: «Weltliteratur» – Zuerst 1773 bei August Ludwig Schlözer. In «Arcadia. International Journal for Literary Studies» 43, no. 2 (2008): 288-98.

²⁶ S. S. Praver: Karl Marx and World Literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978: 143-44.

²⁷ Michał Kasprzak: To Reject or Not to Reject Nationalism: Debating Marx and

and are without any doubt the result of Marx's own ambiguity towards these subjects. Joseph A. Petrus had already noted in 1971 that «the state of scholarship on the question of nationalism, nation, and nationality in Marx and Engels is not at all satisfactory»²⁸. The situation has not changed much since then²⁹. Unbiased contextual work is obviously needed to understand (more than to explain) these ambiguities and to untangle the intricate knots that nationalism had managed to wrap around nineteenth-century political and cultural life.

In fact, when one reads the *Manifesto* with the national question in mind one cannot help noticing that nationalism (or patriotism) constitutes some sort of dominant political background idea against which much of the new ideology has to be built³⁰, emerging only here and there in the text at key moments like this: «Die Arbeiter haben kein Vaterland. Man kann ihnen

Engels' Struggles with Nationalism, 1840s–1880s. In «Nationalities Papers» 40, no. 4 (2012): 585-606 (585).

²⁸ Joseph A. Petrus: Marx and Engels on the National Question. In «The Journal of Politics» 33, no. 3 (1971): 797-824 (798).

²⁹ Along with the essays mentioned above see Kevin Anderson: Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010; Erica Benner: Really Existing Nationalisms: A Post-Communist View from Marx and Engels. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1995; Horace B. Davis: Toward a Marxist Theory of Nationalism. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978; Charles C. Herod: The Nation in the History of Marxian Thought: The Concept of Nations with History and Nations Without History. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1976; Ephraim Nimni: «Marx, Engels and the National Question». Science & Society 53, no. 3 (1989): 297-326; Ephraim Nimni: Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis. London; Concord, MA: Pluto Press, 1991; Robert Stuart: Marxism and National Identity: Socialism, Nationalism, and National Socialism during the French Fin de Siècle. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006. On the *Manifesto* and world literature, and on the evolution of this concept during the nineteenth century see also the comprehensive and stimulating study by Peter Goßens: Weltliteratur: Modelle transnationaler Literaturwahrnehmung im 19. Jahrhundert. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011.

³⁰ Cf. Joan Cocks: Passion and Paradox: Intellectuals Confront the National Question. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.: 18-44.

nicht nehmen, was sie nicht haben»³¹. This much-quoted sentence has become a celebrated banner for marxists and above all for international communist movements. Now what is interesting about this sentence is that it comes up in a specific context as a direct answer and reaction to the reproach that the communists «wollten das Vaterland, die Nationalität abschaffen»³². And what that means is that nationalism is not only shaping the whole social and political life, but also still molding alternative views of society, as if it were some sort of a consensual *degré zéro* of nineteenth-century politics and political ideologies, a global touchstone of values that one could not simply avoid or ignore. Furthermore, it cannot be omitted that the disruptive force of nationalism was clearly felt at the eve of the Franco-Prussian war by the delegates to the first international, and by Marx himself, who was accused of being «pangermaniste»³³.

The *Proceedings* of the Germanists' Assembly, the *Communist Manifesto* and Eliot's Nobel banquet speech are admittedly documents that depict different versions of the world. These versions are often antagonistic and sometimes simply different. But what is worth emphasizing is that they are never incommensurable for the image they all and together project, from Grimm to Eliot, not forgetting Marx and Engels, is that of Europe in its labyrinth. And from this point of view, as we now know too well, the «spectre haunting Europe» was – and still is – nationalism, «diese *névrose nationale*, an der Europa krank ist»³⁴.

³¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei. London: Hirschfeld, 1848: 15.

³² In his draft of the *Manifesto*, Engels had already addressed the nationalities question under communism: «Frage 21. *Werden im Kommunismus die Nationalitäten fortbestehen?* Antwort. – Die Nationalitäten der nach dem Prinzip der Gemeinschaft sich verbindenden Völker werden durch diese Vereinigung eben so sehr genötigt sein, sich zu vermischen und dadurch sich aufzuheben, wie die verschiedenen Stände- und Klassenunterschiede durch die Aufhebung ihrer Grundlage, des Privateigentums, wegfallen» (Friedrich Engels: Entwurf des "Kommunistischen Glaubensbekenntnisses" [1847]. In *Z. Zeitschrift Marxistische Erneuerung*, no. 93 (2013): 21-27 (26-27).

³³ James Guillaume: Karl Marx Pangermaniste et l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs de 1864 à 1870. Paris: Armand Colin 1915.

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche: *Ecce homo*. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1908: 111.

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