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The Phantasm of the German Migrant Or The Invention of Brazil

Als ich in Brasilien ankam, wurde ich, sobald es mir einigermaßen gelang, mich von den Gasöfen zu befreien, von diesem Taumel mitgerissen. Ich tauchte in die Begeisterung für das Errichten einer neuen, menschenwürdigen, vorurteilslosen Heimat unter

Flusser, *Von der Freiheit*

With his arrival in Brazil, Vilém Flusser entered a new and important stage in his life and work. The South American country offered the Czech-Jewish philosopher a safe refuge during the Nazi period; furthermore, his fascination with the lack of (the European atmosphere of) *Heimat* in Brazil, his eventual establishment as a Brazilian philosopher and writer, and his disappointment in the country's history after 1964 initiated a personal reevaluation of his cultural belonging and geographical bonds. As a result of his experiences in Brazil, Flusser reflected on *migration* as a model for overcoming one's *Heimat*, one's cultural preconditioning. An immigrant himself, he developed an identity between languages and cultures and applied the principle of continuous intercultural translation to his life and work.

Flusser's reflections on Brazil and his theory of the migrant are intertwined, and both clearly center on the objection to sedentary convention, cultural essentialism, and nationalism. In this article, I will draw on Flusser's thoughts on these interrelated topics in order to examine nineteenth-century German emigration to Brazil in the context of German nationalism. The horrific consequences of the Nazi-regime for a European-Jewish refugee can certainly not be compared with the fate of German emigrants in the nineteenth century; however, Flusser's elaborations in his autobiography *Bodenlos* (1992) and the essay collection *Von der Freiheit des Migranten* (2000) inspired me to undertake a fresh appraisal of an important but mainly overlooked component of nineteenth-century German history and nationalism. While German emigration to the U.S. and Canada has been studied in detail, there are only a few scholarly works written on the German mass departure to Latin America in the field of literary and cultural studies. However, as scholars in history and anthropology have long pointed out, the emigration wave to Brazil (the main destination for Germans going to Latin

America) was of central importance for nineteenth-century German identity construction. Presumably essential German cultural characteristics were discussed intensely in both countries; in the German states, “[k]ein Land, in das die deutsche Auswanderung ihren Weg nahm, ist in Deutschland so viel umstritten und als Auswanderungsziel bekämpft worden wie Brasilien” (Sudhaus 3). In Brazil, Germans were portrayed either as the bearers of (white) civilization or as a peril for national safety. The discussions in both countries were based on cultural essentialism and influenced one another through travel writing, letters, political propaganda, and human interaction.

This paper will shed light on the politics of identity pertaining to the German immigrant communities in Brazil from two different perspectives: 1) the Brazilian endeavor to improve the economy and to whiten its population; and 2) the debates on emigration in the German states. Positioning German emigration to Brazil in the intersection of two international discourses—the increasing replacement of slaves with European immigrant labor in Brazil and the rise of nationalism as well as colonial interest in Europe—, this paper analyzes nineteenth-century Brazil not only as a “Lebensfrage für viele deutsche Menschen” (Sudhaus 19), a question of survival on the individual level, but also, and more importantly, as a controversial political space of *national imagination*, *colonial fantasy*, and *intercultural translation*.

Nineteenth-century German mass emigration was brought on by the enormous crisis in the German states. Deeply disappointed by the outcome of the French Revolution, the German people had been defeated by Napoleon and were frustrated by the continuing fragmentation of their fatherland. Many had been repressed by political censorship and weakened by the economic depression. Even before the failed revolution of 1848, many Germans decided to swap their homeland for political and intellectual freedom or, more often, they left in order to survive. Although the majority of emigrants settled in North America, many Germans hoped for a better life in South America.

Brazil’s history made for a unique opportunity for German emigrants: German immigration was not a spontaneous movement but an endeavor organized and encouraged by the Brazilian government. After Brazil’s independence in 1822, its Emperor Pedro I (1798-1834) tried to attract European settlers by promising free passage, free land as well as state subsidies for seeds, tools, and other needs.¹ The establishment of European settlements in Southern Brazil was, on the one hand,

¹ In 1817, Pedro I married Leopoldine, the daughter of the last Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation; her presence in Brazil also contributed to the German interest in Brazil. After Pedro I left Brazil in 1831, the situation for the immigrants deteriorated; a contract system was established, immigrants had to sign lease agreements of a section of land for the return of at least 50% of the yearly products. For further information, see Aliaga-Buchenau, Alves, Sudhaus, or Walker.

intended to populate uninhabited areas and to prevent military encroachments by neighboring countries; on the other hand, it was directly connected to a labor shortage in Brazil and the increasing international pressure on Brazil to abolish slavery. The emperor's goal to replace slaves with immigrant labor initiated a discussion on the genotypical and phenotypical characteristics of the worker and citizen that would make a significant contribution to Brazil's development and future. By the mid-nineteenth-century, race turned out to be the central point of discussion: "Even before 1870 there had been some attempts to attract immigrants, especially Germans and Swiss, with the explicit intention of countering the disproportion between blacks and whites" (Balán 117f).² The political and racial dimensions of nineteenth-century immigration to Brazil has long received attention in the field of Brazilian studies; European immigration to Brazil has been placed in the context of racial theory and critically examined in the context of the displacement of the native Indian population who had been expelled from the original settlement areas and pushed back into the interior of the country. A close examination of Brazil's relevance for the rise of German nationalism and colonial ambition, however, has not yet been conducted.

When European colonists entered Brazil in the early nineteenth-century, the Brazilian population consisted of Portuguese colonizers, African slaves, and native Indians. The country's history had been influenced for over 200 years by Portugal's colonial dominance, by the import of African slaves, and by the enslavement and displacement of native Indians. However, in the advertisements for emigration to Brazil that reached Europe through recruitment agents and articles in popular newspapers, Brazil was described as an 'empty' country full of uninhabited regions, beautiful nature, and dense forest. Although German immigration was numerically insignificant in comparison to other immigrant groups (Italians, Spaniards, and Portuguese), the German colonist was often depicted as the ideal settler to fill Brazil's cultural and geographical emptiness.³ Visconde de Abrantes, a Brazilian diplomat in Berlin and an important figure in the debate on the Brazilian (racial) future in the nineteenth century, was among the many intellectuals who strongly supported the recruitment of Germans because "[t]he aptitude of these settlers for agricultural work, for arts and crafts, and their peaceful and conservative spirit are proven by the most authentic testimony...

² See Sales Augusto dos Santos' article on "Historical Roots of the 'Whitening' of Brazil".

³ The abolishment of slavery was mainly the result of international pressure (especially from England) and racist theory apparent in the writings of prominent figures of the abolition movement, such as Joaquim Nabuco. In his speeches, Nabuco distinguished between the superior, white race and the inferior, black and yellow ones. He called for a flow of European immigration bearing human and universal values. Like Nabuco, many so-called social reformers of the nineteenth century expressed the desire of whites' omnipresence and omnipotence in Brazil.

Love of work and of family, temperance, resignation, respect for authority are qualities which generally distinguish Germans settlers from those of other origins” (Abrantes 833). The myth of the diligent German colonist became a hot topic in the vivid discussion on German emigration in Brazil, but also in the German states; thus, it needs to be considered a crucial part of German colonial history.

Although the idea of colonization and colonies in the early nineteenth-century referred to closed communities of Germans abroad without legal ties to the homeland, the emotional and cultural ties between the German settlements in Brazil and their homeland imbued the nation with a strong sense of national and colonial self-assurance that cannot be overestimated. To illuminate Brazil’s importance for nineteenth-century German identity construction, I will in the following focus on the interrelation of cultural pride and agricultural practices in the German settlements in Brazil as it created a unique role model for the duration of German communal identity.

In the nineteenth century, migration was debated as a solution for the improvement of Brazil, but also for the economic and social crisis in the German states: “Nur die Auswanderung kann die unnatürliche Lage, in die die Staaten geraten, ändern. Die überschüssigen Massen müssen fort, um den Zurückgebliebenen die frühere Ruhe und das verlorene Glück wiederzugeben” (Ackermann 16). This statement by the Consul Franz Xavier Ackermann in Rio de Janeiro expressed a popular opinion during the first half of the nineteenth century. The majority of emigrating Germans belonged to the lower social stratum (rural peasantry and village artisans), and the relocation of these waste masses (“überflüssige Masse”) and lazy people (“müßiges Volk”) was considered the best remedy against revolution (“Heilmittel gegen Revolutionen”) (Ackermann 1,5,9,15f). The following entry on “Colonien” in the *Conversationslexikon der neuesten Zeit und Literatur* (1832) indicates not only the reason for nineteenth-century emigration, the overpopulation and lack of resources in Europe, but also gives a justification to occupy foreign territory, that is, argue for the improvement of the land through the establishment of agrarian communities: “die Welt ist im allgemeinen zur Ernährung des Menschengeschlechts bestimmt, und ein Volk hat nicht das Recht, andere Völker von einem Boden auszuschließen, den es selbst nicht braucht, wenigstens dann nicht, wenn es sich nicht selbst zu dem Fortschritte bequem, welcher im Übergang zum Ackerbau liegt” (473).

Supporters of emigration in the German states especially celebrated the establishment of cultural enclaves in Brazil; in contrast to North America, Brazil was envisioned as a natural paradise where German culture would flourish, spread, and be preserved without any influence from other cultural communities. Johann Jakob Sturz, for example, who lived in Brazil as an engineer for an English

mine company and was then appointed Brazilian Consul in Prussia, stated in 1845: “Mehr als irgendein anderes Land bietet Brasilien einen Reichtum von Elementen dar, aus welchem ein glückliches, irdisches Dasein sich entwickeln läßt, mehr als irgendein anderes verheißt es daher seinen Ansiedlern ein erfreuliches Gedeihen. [...] Hier ist die deutsche Nationalität bei weitem weniger als in Nordamerika bedroht, wo das unermesslich überwiegende anglo-amerikanische Element unabwendbar die Alleinherrschaft erzwingen wird.“ (cit. Sudhaus 53) The publicist Julius Fröbel, too, was one of the fervent supporters of emigration; he argued that the migration to colonies would increase the strength and wealth of the fatherland and thus ought to be appreciated as a patriotic act. Fröbel went so far as to compare the German settlements in Brazil to England’s creation of the United States and wished for Germany to turn Brazil into “ein historisches Gebilde ausser sich [...], in welchem der deutsche Geist auf ähnliche Weise sich selbst in der zweiten Potenz wiederfände” (*Die deutsche Auswanderung und ihre kultur-historische Bedeutung* 87ff, cit. Fenske 352).

Sturz’s and Fröbel’s elaborations are but few examples for the arguments that were brought forward in favor of German colonies in Brazil; these arguments centered on a rather conservative vision of a peasant society. Woodruff Smith describes this „migrationist colonialism“ in a different context as an ideological response to social and cultural change in the German states. Once it became apparent that emigration and urbanization were interconnected, nineteenth-century German settlement areas abroad were envisioned as spaces in which traditional small-unit agriculture could be established together with the kind of society that such agriculture supported. The emphasis that many migrationists placed on the maintenance of German culture referred not only to the national and intellectual aspects of culture, but also specifically to the cultural patterns characteristic of peasant societies – patterns threatened in Germany by socioeconomic change (Smith 25).

The settlements were not only a popular topic in political debate, but also in the arts. An early literary example of such idealization of German colonies as closed communities of traditional agrarian social order and patriotic life style is Amalia Schoppe’s *Die Auswanderer nach Brasilien oder die Hütte am Gigtonbonha* (1828), a story of an emigrant family that experiences a dangerous journey, suffers under the harshest living and working conditions, and temporarily loses the son to slavery. Despite all difficulties, the family manages to create a German household, cultivate their land, grow German vegetables, and most importantly, assert their German identity through the daughter’s marriage to a German colonist. Except for the depictions of Portuguese officials as cruel exploiters and of the unbearable suffering of African slaves, there are no descriptions of intercultural interaction in Schoppe’s novel at all.

Historical data seems to support this image of a homogeneous, patriotic community in Brazil. Anthropologist Giralda Seyferth who studied the politics of identity in European communities described the German settlements “as a paradigm of ethnic clustering” (Seyferth 228): “What distinguishes German colonisation from the mid-19th century on, and what invested it with its historical uniqueness, was its organization as an ethnic community and its formalisation of a specific identity which together posited as a frame of reference the notion of *Deutschtum*” (Seyferth 140). The establishment of the settlements in very remote areas as well as the constant lack of resources for services created a strong sense of community among the settlers and “[...] brought about a form of community organisation based on beneficent, mutual-aid, agricultural, educational, cultural and recreational associations which, over time, would take on features of ethnicity” (Seyferth 140). We can find depictions of the German ethnic community in articles that were published in the German newspapers in Brazil (“*Deutsche Zeitung*”, “*Kolonie Zeitung*”, “*Der Urwaldbote*”, “*Kalender für die Deutschen in Brasilien*”); in short stories and reports, German colonists defined and celebrated their community’s close ties to and longing for the German *Heimat*.⁴

However, the observations above hold true for only the successful colonies like Blumenau or Joinville: “These were exceptional success stories and were heralded as such in numerous German articles” (Ritz-Deutch 96). Not all colonies in Brazil were successful, on the contrary, numerous colonies failed, and the experiences of many German emigrants in Brazil were for the most part negative. Soon after the first emigrants had settled in Brazil, reports on the harsh working conditions, the difficult climate, the primitive living conditions, unfair contracts, and exploitation in the plantations reached Germany. As a result, Prussia even prohibited emigration to Brazil in 1859. As far as German identity construction was concerned, however, the reports on the misuse of German emigrants as human fertilizer (“*Völkerdünger*”, Schentke) and slaves had a similar effect as reports on the idealization of the colonies. They confirmed the myth of the German peasant-hero and, thus, intensified the debates on essential German cultural values; they increased German national pride in the German states and abroad; and they resulted in the celebration of a German cultural identity and superiority.⁵

⁴ The articles and reports by German colonists are available only in a few archives in Germany and Brazil. Professor Celeste Ribeiro de Sousa has recently organized the project “*Literatura Brasileira de Expressão Alemã – Projeto de Pesquisa Coletiva*”; her research group will make texts and information about the authors available online (through the website of the Martius Staden Institute in São Paulo, Brazil: <http://www.martiusstaden.org.br/Rellibra/>).

⁵ The news about the poor conditions in German settlements initiated an intense debate in the second half of the nineteenth century in form of “*offenen Briefen an die Tagespresse*”, letters that were published in popular newspapers. In this discussion, the depiction of peasant life as the ideal community model was contested by many intellectuals who opposed the emigration (Sudhaus 88ff, Alves 68ff).

It is apparent that the depiction of an agricultural idyll of colonial pioneers and bearers of white civilization presented an influential cultural, national(istic) model of German collective identity that triggered fierce discussion. The imagination of German emigrants in Brazil was part of the process that Naranch Bradley has called “Inventing the Auslandsdeutsche”⁶. The diligent pioneer in the Brazilian jungle was invented in opposition to other European settlements in Brazil and also to German emigrants in other parts of the world, especially North America. The image of the German peasant hero that successfully preserved and cultivated German culture despite harsh living and working conditions in Brazil was employed by different parties in the German states as well as in Brazil to express and defend racial, colonial, cultural, or national(istic) models of (German and Brazilian) collective identity.

The invention of the German emigrant in Brazil as well as the idealization of peasant life in the nineteenth century returns me to Flusser’s definition of *Heimat* and the freedom of the migrant mentioned in the beginning of this article. In *Von der Freiheit des Migranten*, Vilém Flusser, too, describes nineteenth-century Brazil as an empty space: „Brasilien war existentiell ein *no man’s land*, als die Einwanderungswellen im 19. Jahrhundert begannen. Es war niemandes Heimat. [...]. Nicht eine afrikanische, asiatische oder andinische Kolonie war es, wo Kolonisatoren Einheimische beherrschten, sondern, etwa wie die Staaten, ein leeres Land, aus dem die Einheimischen vertrieben wurden. [...] Außerdem war man in diesem Niemandsland Pionier auf dem Gebiet, das man bearbeiten wollte.“ (“Wohnung beziehen in der Heimatlosigkeit” 23f).

In his description of Brazil’s emptiness, however, Flusser focuses on the aspect of *Heimat* and emphasizes the cultural bonds with which a *Heimat* naturally takes hold of its inhabitants: everyone is “nämlich mit vielen Fasern an seine Heimat gebunden, und die meisten dieser Fasern sind geheim, jenseits seines wachen Bewußtseins” (17). Flusser experiences Brazil’s lack of the atmosphere of *Heimat* as something positive, as a “Freiheitstaumel: Ich war frei, mir meine Nächsten zu wählen” (24), as the freedom to overcome one’s cultural preconditioning, to cut the natural ties with one’s homeland, and to freely *choose* emotional bonds.⁷ Flusser concludes that *Heimat* is a technique for the “Sakralisation von Banalem” (26), moreover, that *Heimat* is merely a technique of agricultural life:

⁶ Bradley Naranch defines the “Auslanddeutsche” as “‘German[s] abroad’, who was part of a cultural diaspora living outside of central Europe yet was connected to the imagined community of Germans ‘at home’ by bonds of language, ethnicity, and ultimately, racial heritage. [...] [T]hey remind us that constructions of German national identity [...] were neither restricted to the geographical area of central Europe nor based exclusively on local customs, regional loyalties, or religious traditions” (23).

⁷ “Freisein bedeutet nicht das Zerschneiden der Bindungen an andere, sondern das Flechten dieser Verbindungen in Zusammenarbeit mit ihnen. Der Migrant wird frei, nicht wenn er die verlorene Heimat verleugnet, sondern wenn er sie aufhebt” (*Von der Freiheit des Migranten* 20).

“Besitz, die Zweitrangigkeit der Frau, die Arbeitsteilung und die Heimat, erweisen sich [...] nämlich nicht als ewige Werte, sondern als Funktionen des Ackerbaus und der Viehzucht” (16). In other words, with the end of the agricultural and sedentary way of life, the presumed essential and eternal values of our culture are disclosed as only temporary (and arbitrary) conventions or constructions.

Flusser’s definition of *Heimat* can help us develop a new understanding of nineteenth-century German emigration to Brazil on two levels: on the one hand, his explanation of *Heimat* reconfirms that the invention of Brazil as a space for German agricultural life and the imagination of the German emigrant as a peasant-hero has to be placed within the context of nineteenth-century German nationalism; the cultivation of Brazilian land became a symbol for the preservation of presumed essential cultural characteristics and values. On a meta-level, Flusser’s thoughts can guide us towards overcoming of our *academic Heimat* and disciplinary limitations and, ultimately, to a more differentiated analysis of German identity construction pertaining to Brazil. This would call for a critical reflection and overcoming of previous scholarly work on German colonies in Brazil that has focused mainly on the positive depiction of homogeneous German communities as either diligent farmers or as exploited hard-working semi-serfs. In that vein, Ute Ritz-Deutch rightly criticises that the “[e]fforts by Oberacker and others to portray German communities in southern Brazil in the most positive light thus have a longstanding tradition, carrying forward the momentum of propagandists, economists, politicians and intellectuals who published at the turn of the twentieth century” (102).

The reevaluation of previous research on the German presence in Brazil will contribute to the growing body of transnational research in the humanities and social sciences in recent years. *Transnationalism* has become a key concept that not only reinforces the constructivist approach to identity but also, and more importantly, calls for an interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue. In German studies, the transcultural turn has been one of the most conspicuous developments over the last decade, too. However, as Sara Lennox emphasized in her presidential address on “Transnational Approaches and Their Challenges” at the 2008 German Studies Association conference, the field faces great difficulty in overcoming old-established paradigms, transcending disciplinary boundaries, and reaching new understandings of multiculturalism, the legacies of colonialism, and the meanings of postcoloniality.

The key to success in transforming the field of German Studies lies in an intra- and intercultural approach that takes into consideration the German-language context, the language contexts other than German, and, as Vilém Flusser has taught us, the dynamics between languages and cultures as

well as disciplines. In the following, I would like to outline further steps and possible approaches in regard to studying Brazil and immigration that are part of a book project on *The German Invention of Brazil: Nineteenth-Century National, Colonial, and Intercultural Identity Constructions* (working title); my project might serve as inspiration for the reader's search for alternative approaches in general and new sources in the context of German emigration to Brazil in particular.

The evaluation of the German emigrant community in Brazil as an *invention* that is, until today, a depiction heavily loaded with ideological and racial bias provides the first step towards a new understanding of nineteenth-century discussions of German emigration to Brazil. The nineteenth-century writer Joseph Hörmeyer's identification of his biggest enemies offers advice on how to proceed: one of the main supporters of emigration to Brazil, Hörmeyer blamed the writers and intellectuals for Brazil's bad reputation:

“Eine weit gefährlichere Art von Gegnern, wir möchten sie die ignorierende nennen, sind die Schriftsteller und Gelehrten Deutschlands. Wir haben uns vergebens bemüht, den Grund der Animosität zu erforschen, welche fast alle die deutsche Auswanderungsfrage behandelnden Schriftsteller Brasiliens gegenüber an den Tag legen. Es scheint wahrhaftig, als ob sie sich das Wort gegeben hätten, Brasiliens gar nicht oder nur mit literarischen Achselzucken zu gedenken, d.h. es, als ob sich dies von selbst verstünde und gar nicht anders sein könne, mit einigen vornehm verdammenden Worten abzutun. Nicht einer unserer bekannten Nationalökonomien oder einer der modernen Reisenden hat das so interessante Land in bezug auf Auswanderung zum Vorwurf seines Studiums gemacht, während sie in der Nähe und Ferne nach allen möglichen und unmöglichen Auswanderungszielen umhertasteten und nur zuviel dazu beitrugen, ihre unwissenden ihnen vertrauenden Landsleute irre zu führen.“(*Südbrasilien* 285). Hörmeyer's complaints about the writers's critical voices point into the right direction: a thorough analysis of the motivation, interrelation, and impact of the (German and Portuguese) “vornehm verdammende[] Worte[]“ by the “ignorierenden” German, German-Brazilian, and Brazilian artists and intellectuals can provide an innovative, transcultural appraisal of German emigration to Brazil and its importance for nineteenth-century identity construction.

In the German-language context, an examination of the invention to Brazil should include a reevaluation of popular fiction published in the German states. A reexamination of Amalia Schoppe's novel *Die Auswanderer nach Brasilien oder die Hütte am Gigtonbonha* (1828), for example, could lead to the analysis of her construction of Brazil as a political act. Her novel's intertextual relations to earlier travel reports on Brazil as well as to political debates in the early nineteenth century allow the

conclusion that Schoppe uses the debate on Brazil as a template for the discussion of personal freedom and of women's role in the creation of a new German *Heimat*. Schoppe's text exemplifies that the imaginary place Brazil could function as a safe space for the articulation of personal opinion and sociopolitical critique regarding the homeland. In addition to literary imaginations, travel reports by observers like Friedrich Gerstäcker, Johann Jakob von Tschudi, Robert Avé-Alléant or Ida Pfeiffer, only to name a few, as well as the depiction of the Brazilian landscape and ethnographic subjects by painters such as Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802-1858) also contributed to the invention of Brazil and thus should be analyzed as political commentary in the context of nineteenth-century German national and colonial fantasies.⁸

In the context of identity formation in the German communities in Brazil, we need to further identify, analyze, and publish texts written by German immigrants or by authors who lived a significant amount of time in Brazil. These texts can offer an alternative perspective on German community life in Brazil; one example is a collection of short stories by Therese Stutzer (1841-1916): rather than predict a glorious future, her texts in *Am Rande des brasilianischen Urwaldes* (1889) depict the difficult living conditions of German women in settlements and especially laments the lack of a civilized atmosphere and interaction among the members of the community, the lack of *Bildung*, intellectual discussion, and an appreciation of high culture. The women in Therese Stutzer's stories die, as does the future of the community. Stutzer's texts do not only shed light on the situation of women in the German settlements in Brazil, but they also point out the irreconcilability of the roles that the German settler was expected to take on: the ideal peasant worker on the one hand and the bearer of civilization and high culture on the other hand. Thus, texts like Stutzer's stories question binary oppositions and call for a dynamic, multifaceted understanding of identity between static extremes.

The mediation of extremes applies to the opposing roles of the German settler, but also to the strict separation of cultural spheres. Future research should, therefore, focus on the "joining [...] of different identities", the multiplicity of hyphenated Germans in Brazil "rather than a single, uniform one" (Lesser 5). Texts by German-Brazilian writers do describe and celebrate what Flusser calls the "geheime Fasern" (*Von der Freiheit des Migranten* 17), the strong ties to the *Heimat*; however, as Ana-Isabel Aliaga-Buchenau's article on the German-Brazilian writer Gertrud Gross-Hering (1879-1968) points out in reference to Jeffrey Lesser's concept of hyphenated identities, the texts are also the

⁸ A small collection of paintings by Rugendas can be found at: http://www.cliohistoria.hpg.ig.com.br/bco_imagens/rugendas/rugendas.htm#

documentation and result of a complex process of identity formation and negotiation between cultures and generations. This complex process of facing, transgressing, and renegotiating of borders between cultures and generations is a cultural experience that, in the words of Vilém Flusser, involves a “doppeltes Vergessen [...] des ursprünglichen Kulturerlebnisses und der Kulturerkenntnis im Augenblick der Ankunft. Tatsächlich ist dieser Vorgang so komplex, daß es dabei doch zu sporadischen Kultursynthesen kommt und daß er mehr als eine Lebensspanne beansprucht. [...] Wichtig ist, daß es dabei nie zu einem Bruch kommen muß, durch den sich die Bodenlosigkeit öffnet.“ (*Bodenlos* 77).

Shifting the research focus from the preservation of cultural traditions to the process of the *Vergessen* will allow us to move beyond the description of stereotypes and examine processes of intercultural collision, negotiation, engagement, and hybridization. For the analysis of the multiplicity of German identity formation in Brazil as well as its intercultural dimensions and intergenerational differences, Celeste Ribeiro de Sousa’s project and website offers valuable information and material on several German-Brazilian writers as well as (excerpts from) their works, among them Karl von Koseritz (1830-1890), Wilhelm Rotermund (1843-1925), Georg Knoll (1861-1940), Alfred Reitz (1886-1951), Elly Herkenhoff (1906-2004), or Hilda Siri (1918-2007).⁹

In the Portuguese-language context, the topic of German immigrant identity was broached by several writers, too. A few examples: In Visconde Alfredo d’Escragno Taunay’s *Inocência* (1872), we find a German scientist, a “rigorismo científico” (92) with a “minuciosidade perfeitamente germânica” (215) but the social and emotional intelligence of a child: “So erscheint das Bild eines grundanständigen Deutschen, offenherzig, aber un gelenk und absolut unfähig, sich der fremdländische Umgebung anzupassen” (Rosenthal 107). The novel *Canaã* (1902) by José Pereira da Graça Aranha displays two German immigrants that discuss and represent opposing world views and attitudes (e.g. Weltbürgertum versus nationalism; racial mixing versus racial purity). Mário de Andrade’s *Amar, verbo intransitivo* (1927) introduces the character of a German governess “whose main charge is to give young Brazilian men their sexual initiation” (Daniel 169). Although the three novels present very different German characters, they all address the question of intercultural and interracial encounter and mixing and depict the German immigrant as a potential problem for Brazil’s future: “Für die Autoren ist der Deutsche nicht an sich schon von Interesse [...] sondern er

⁹ Unfortunately, this wonderful project is still in its beginning phase and its focus is limited; it concentrates on short stories published in journals like *Serra-Post-Kalender*, *Kalender für die Deutschen in Brasilien* (Rotermund-Kalender), *Der Urwaldsbote*, or *Kolonie Zeitung*.

rückt erst insofern in ihr Blickfeld, als sich die genannten klischeeartigen Charakterzüge zu einer Fremdheit verformen, die auf brasilianischem Boden existiert und auf diese Weise das Land selbst unmittelbar betrifft, die Behandlung der Deutschen ist Teil der Auseinandersetzungen um die Selbstdefinition Brasiliens und steht im Zusammenhang mit [...] der Zukunft Brasiliens und der Möglichkeit, im Zusammenleben der vielen Rassen und Kulturen eine eigene Nationalität herauszubilden.“ (Bader 67).

The Brazilian literary texts depict Germanness as *Fremdheit*, thus, they reposition the German communities on the margins of Brazilian culture. From this perspective, Germans' strong ties to and pride in their culture can be reevaluated and disclosed as a lack of intercultural adaptability, tolerance, and open-mindedness. Thus, a thorough analysis of the German presence in Brazil must include a comparative study on German and Brazilian depictions of German settlers to counter deceptive but yet enduring preconceptions of Brazil as a cultural wasteland as well as national(istic) idealizations of the German immigrant community.

Finally, the process of translation played an important role in the identity formation of German immigrant communities in Brazil, too. As Ute Ritz-Deutch has pointed out, there were continuous tension and growing distrust between the German community and other ethnic groups. Reports on German community life and German treatment of Indians were published in German and Brazilian newspapers; furthermore, the Brazilian newspapers frequently translated, published, and criticized reports from German newspapers and vice versa: “At times the anti-Indian rhetoric in *Der Urwaldbote* was extremely derogatory [...]. The newspaper *Novidades* of the port town Itajaí frequently translated excerpts of German articles in *Der Urwaldbote* into Portuguese [...]. Likewise *Der Urwaldbote* translated excerpts from *Novidades* into German” (Ritz-Deutch 88f). The comparison of the original texts and their translations can disclose the cultural stereotypes that constituted the invention of the own and the foreign culture on both sides. Furthermore, the continuous act of translation on the linguistic level stands pars pro toto for the translational dynamics between the two cultures in the nineteenth century and can therefore provide valuable insights into Brazilian and German identity politics as a reciprocal process of intercultural negotiation, transformation, and creation of meaning, knowledge, and power.

The examination of alternative, heretofore silenced German and Brazilian voices will provide us with a more differentiated view on the German presence in Brazil and help reveal the political dimensions and intercultural tensions that were and are behind the European and white invention of Brazil and its immigrant colonies. The collection, publication, and examination of these materials will

not only carry on Susanne Zantop's mission to disclose German colonial fantasies in precolonial Germany, but also, and more importantly follow Vilém Flusser's advice to search for answers between languages and cultures.

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