

A GERMAN PAPER CHASE

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210

I approach this task with some discomfort, partly because I am not sure how interesting my trajectory, or bloop, may be to others, partly because I am not conspicuously distinguished in my field or on this faculty, and partly because it is difficult to make it intelligible without mentioning some personal matters that are rather disagreeable to recall and relate. I shall try to be as terse about these as possible. I was born in 1936 in Cleveland, where I grew up in quite ordinary petty-bourgeois circumstances – my father was a public school official – without deprivations and without luxuries: good food and clothing, a comfortable apartment; no family vacations, phonograph, or, later, television. One of the peculiarities of my childhood was that, apart from my parents, I had no living relatives, no brothers or sisters, cousins, aunts or uncles or grandparents (my paternal grandfather lived part way into my boyhood, but he was an invalid far away whom I never saw). As nuclear families go, we were helium. This might sound like a formula for a certain coziness, but that was not my luck.

My father, as I was to observe in time, was, in his work environment, a highly competent and respected, even lively person. But at home he was remote and withdrawn, governed in every particular by my mother, who did not seem to like me very much and was implacably determined to break my spirit, by force if necessary, as it often was until I got too big for physical chastisement. My successes and achievements were greeted with annoyance, my faults and failures with gratification and jeering, sometimes for years. As for myself, I was a high-strung, self-aggrandizing, and, I now think, fairly unpleasant child.

Like many lonely and unamiable children before computers, I spent a great deal of my time reading. I read everything, all the time. In the bathroom I read the small print on the toothpaste tubes and the soap boxes. When the local branch library offered an award for reading twelve books on various topics over the summer, I read twenty. When the other kids ran to the table to find the thinnest volume for a book review, I looked for the fattest; that is how I became acquainted with Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*. I may have been the only one in my Boy Scout troop to have read the entire handbook, page for page; I also read the manuals for more merit badges than I ever earned, though I believe I got one for reading.

No doubt it was a vice; for nothing else was I chided so much in my boyhood. Once I was fired from a job in a branch library for reading. But the habit provided me with a certain verbal facility that made school and standardized tests easy for me, along with some disorganized knowledge. I had a sample volume of an encyclopedia, so that I knew quite a lot about things from Aachen to Automobile. But I had some fine books, too. In part this was owing to the fact that one of my father's

tasks was to purchase the textbooks for the school system, and the publishers' representatives would sometimes bring him presents for me. I had Dr. Seuss's debut, *To Think that I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, as well as *Horton Hatches the Egg*, probably the most inspirational book I have ever read; the beautiful Parin D'Aulaire biographies of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln; Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*, from which I learned the Greek myths; Richard Halliburton's *Complete Book of Marvels*; and an anthology from the old *St. Nicholas Magazine*. Some of this reading may seem somewhat old-fashioned—I even had a reprint edition of *McGuffey's Readers*—and it may be that my predilection for the nineteenth century owes something to it.

One effect was to generate in me an awe for those who could create such wonderful things, which has remained with me despite its inappropriateness in the current environment of literary theory. The first author I met was Sophia Fahs, author of *Jesus, the Carpenter's Son*, which was employed in my Unitarian Sunday School. I recall her, perhaps incorrectly, as a plain woman—she would have been in her seventies and her image has melded in my memory with that of Eleanor Roosevelt—but to me she was a goddess because she had written a book. Naturally, when I was not reading, I was writing. I wrote my first (fragmentary) novel when I was around eleven, my last at twenty; along the way there was some “poetry” and at least one drama, imitated from Sartre. I put away such childish things, but I still wanted to write books of some kind in order to obtain the awe I felt for authors, and in order to do so I found my way into a community where people write books all the time, and it turned out that, in the eyes of family and associates, it is not so much of a muchness after all.

Sometimes people, puzzled by my choice of profession, have asked me if I were “German.” The question has always disappointed me, because I thought that education was supposed to lead people out of their accidentally imposed identity. Still, the question in my case is not entirely simple. My father was descended from an originally Dutch family that had been settled in upstate New York since the seventeenth century. Thus it is an old family by American standards, but it never achieved much distinction. Its fifteen minutes of fame came during the Revolutionary War, when a couple of my ancestors—under a German-American commander, incidentally—had an adventure that got into the history books and thence, during my boyhood, into a youth novel. Otherwise my forebears seem to have been small-town craftsmen and workers. My great-grandfather was a wheelwright; my grandfather a railroad brakeman, later promoted to conductor. My father was, to the best of my knowledge, the first in his line to go to college. He never visited a foreign country, except perhaps Canada, as he grew up on the border. He served in the army in the First World War, but, owing to his eyesight, was not sent abroad. He did not speak any foreign languages, though he may have learned some French at one time, and he was knowledgeable enough to tell me, when I was puzzling over my stamp collection, that I would find “Bayern” under “Germany.” I was mightily impressed by this exotic knowledge; imagine one's father

knowing something. Like me he was a constant reader, especially of American history and of detective stories, which the publishers' representatives supplied by the crate. I must have had an impression from watching him read his Shakespeare all the way through every year, though he never said a word about it to me, except once to agree with me when I had had a dispute with my teacher about *Julius Caesar*. Nor did he ever interfere in my education in any way, except to insist that I sit with the girls in typing class. My reward for taking this good advice was a Royal portable, naturally a cherished possession.

My mother was born into a German-speaking community in Newark, New Jersey. The only record of her birth is a Lutheran baptismal certificate, entirely in German. Her parents were immigrants from the Palatinate; my grandfather was a ladies' tailor. I know very little about the other members of this family, all of whom had died before I was born, but my impression is that, as in many immigrant families, the parents spoke their native tongue while the children responded in English. In her mature years my mother did not command as many as four phrases of German, nor did she perceive this as a loss. My choice of German as a course of study aroused no interest, and when I set out on a profession of studying and teaching German literature, she indicated the bewilderment of many normal people that one could draw a salary doing such a thing. I doubt that she ever read a full page of the publications that I dutifully sent her. At any rate they did nothing to improve her opinion of me, to which she held, with admirable constancy, to the end of her life. Any inspiration from that quarter must have been subliminal.

It is more likely to have come out of the environment. Cleveland in my youth was largely populated by European immigrants and their descendants. I have read some things about the principle of the melting pot as a tyrannical imposition stamping a non-hyphenated homogeneity on American children. However that may have been in general, it was not the case in my elementary school, where every effort was made to encourage understanding and some knowledge of the ethnic groups. Some of them nevertheless remained strange. I never understood who the Ruthenians were and could not find them on the map. Only relatively recently have I learned from one of my authors, who came from that part of the world, that, as probably all my colleagues already know, they were the western Ukrainians under Polish domination in the Austrian crown lands. The environment was full of foreign languages: Czech radio programs, German newspapers, Polish weddings, Italian street fairs, Yiddish words and phrases in common use. Quite a few of my schoolmates were bilingual, in Italian, mainly, but also in other languages, including Yiddish. I recall one who spoke only Slovak at home; I envied him this skill; he, of course, thought nothing of it. In the branch library where I lost my job for reading, about a quarter of the books in the main reading room were in Hungarian. I tried to read those, too, but with no success. Anyone who had come around in those days claiming that everyone had to use English only and that public funds could not be expended that way would have

been laughed out of town. It is perhaps owing to this lively polyglossalia that the public school system was a national pioneer in foreign-language instruction (imagine saying such a thing of any urban public school system today). Much of this initiative was owing to the director of foreign languages, Emile de Sauzé, with whom I became acquainted because he was an associate of my father. I still have an autographed copy of his innovative textbook, *Nouveau cours pratique*. He was an aristocratic figure; his image has blended in my memory with that of Adolphe Menjou, though de Sauzé was larger and more imposing. I was very pleased when I learned a few years ago that a professorship in foreign-language pedagogy had been named for him at Case Western Reserve University.

Thus I was able to begin French in the fifth grade, and I continued for over five years until the lunacies of my high-school French teacher got too much on my nerves and I switched to German. There I had the good fortune of a skilled teacher and kind gentleman named Eugene Dawson, who subsequently became de Sauzé's successor. Since Dawson did not have enough pupils for a third-year course, he sent some of us home with the second-year materials and instructions to learn them up over the summer. This almost enabled me to work a scam on Yale. Although I had had the equivalent of three years of high-school German, I had only two on the record, so I was placed in the standard intermediate course. But when I got 100% on the first hour test, I was told that such a grade was impermissible and I was bucked up a level. That worked; I didn't get 100 anymore, but I had more pedagogical good fortune in the person of Cecil Wood, an antic neurotic who was the best foreign-language teacher I have ever seen. In later years I tried to apply some of his methods to my own classes, though with less histrionic verve. Wood eventually lived out his career at the University of Minnesota.

I thought I would inject here an account (for which I did not have time in my oral presentation) of how I got to Yale in the first place, a somewhat curious tale that may shed a point of light on admissions procedures at that time. Hardly anyone I knew had gone to a place like Yale. One schoolmate, a little ahead of me, had gone to Harvard; he was reputed to be the greatest genius who ever attended our school. My recollection is that my high school sent about 14% on to college. This figure may have subsumed that substantial number who left as soon as the law allowed at sixteen. In those days of 90% marginal income taxes, full employment, and hope for the future, some of them had a car and a house and a boat while I was still sitting in classrooms. Of the college-bound, those who needed to stay near or at home tended to Western Reserve; many of the others went into the Ohio State system, which was then obliged by law to accept anyone in the state with a high-school diploma. I had no idea what my options were. With my test-taking abilities I won a National Merit Scholarship – I believe it was \$100 – but otherwise I had no metric. We were advised to make up to ten applications, so I applied to Northwestern, because a friend of mine was determined to go there and did, and to my father's college, Union, because he asked me to.

Beyond this, we were urged to reach beyond what we may have thought plausible, so I added Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. I knew nothing of these places; I guess I thought of them as impossibly elevated temples of intellect and learning. I had to ask my father where Yale was; he explained that it was near the source of the Erector and chemistry sets of my childhood.

For the Ivies there were interviews at the local alumni clubs. The Dartmouth interview did not go well. I have forgotten the details, but I knew it had not been a success, and so was not surprised when I received admission without award, tantamount in my circumstances to a rejection. My mother, always happiest when I failed, had opened the letter before I got home from school and was waving it about jubilantly: now the outside world would teach me a lesson; now I would find out I wasn't as smart as I thought I was. Naturally I believed every word and began to think seriously about Western Reserve and Ohio State. But soon afterward I received scholarship offers from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. They were coordinated, as had just begun to be the practice in those days, with Princeton \$100 less on the grounds that it was cheaper to go there. Since then the government has foolishly banned this rational procedure, not understanding or perhaps not approving of its egalitarian character. I had no basis for judgment; much of what I knew of the institutions I had gained by reading in the newspaper about football, a sport with which I had no connection, and this caused me to lean somewhat toward Princeton. But then I received a message from the local Yale alumni club that it would match the university offer, thus doubling it. This was a jolt; then, on the following day—it must have been a Saturday because I was working at my job in a shoe store—the Harvard gent came in, said he had heard (without benefit of the Internet!) about the Yale club offer, and was prepared to match it. Now I was feeling uncomfortable; it didn't seem right that I should be recruited as though I were a running back, and I didn't want to haggle. I remember thinking that I should go to the dance with the first person who asked me.

I don't know if this was the right way to think about it. I had no advice (I had a faculty advisor in school, but all he would say was: "You can always tell a Yale man but you can't tell him much"). It turned out to be the right decision, but purely fortuitously. It is not a procedure I would recommend to anyone else. I have been helped to understand my experience by Yale's historian Gaddis Smith, who has explained to me that I was a member of the first class selected by a new head of admissions, Art Howe, who began the process of seeking public school students. Thus I may have been something of a risk admittee, and in retrospect I may be entitled to feel relieved that I did not embarrass the program.

I did not come to Yale with the intention of specializing in German. Because I had read a great deal of science fiction, I imagined myself a scientist. I was especially interested in rocketry and space travel, as it was easy to see that we were on the threshold of major developments. On my bedroom wall I put up large tagboard posters with drawings I had made of each of the planets with as much information as I could

gather: distance, mass, revolution, rotation, inclination to the ecliptic, moons, etc. Once I even put myself forward in the category of rocketry for a television quiz show. After a while I withdrew my application, thinking that I didn't know enough. If I had known that the quiz shows were fixed, I might have persevered. As a freshman I had declared myself a prospective chemistry major, that having been my best subject after languages in high school. The chemistry department promptly cured me of this pipe dream with what might be called tough love; that is, the professor threw chalk at me. It must be said that the invisible hand of alma mater guided me to what I should have been able to figure out for myself, that anything I did in life would have to do with reading and writing.

That it turned out to be German owed in the main to two circumstances. One was my junior year abroad as an exchange student in Heidelberg, an intensive educational experience, though not primarily in the lecture hall. It made my German language skills functional to a degree that would not have been possible in an American classroom. Because of the value of this opportunity for me, I have always been a strong supporter of junior-year-abroad programs, even though I am aware that they do not always work out in so salutary a way as it did for me. The other circumstance was the launching by the Soviets of the Sputnik satellite in October 1957. This was a windfall for the foreign-language disciplines; it propelled us into an academic *Schlaraffenland*, to use the German term, a cloud-cuckoo-land of ease and prosperity that we wrongly thought would last forever, as it seemed so just and right. Students are sometimes interested in learning about the past of older people in the field, but I hesitate to tell them in their current miseries of a time when a relative beginner could obtain unsolicited job offers in the mail or in the elevator at the MLA convention. It was elating, perhaps even a little corrupting, to be so desired and welcomed. I therefore sought admission to the graduate program at Yale, which was then ranked, not unjustly, I think, first in the nation. As we used to say, rankings are meaningless but it's best to be first.

Easy as it was at that time to make a career in the foreign-language disciplines, my years as a graduate student were among the most difficult of my life. For one thing, it was soon evident that the gentle hand of alma mater that rests on the head of the Yale undergraduate had been removed. The principle of instruction in the graduate program was less nurturance than intimidation; we were so many that we didn't need to be handled with kid gloves. Many of us recalling Hermann Weigand, plausibly the outstanding literary scholar and critic in our field in America, when we come across something we should know but do not, will hear his voice in our mind's ear lifted to an incredulous, American-accented tenor: "Das wissen Sie *nicht*? Das wissen Sie *wirrrklich nicht*?" It was not uncommon in his seminars for students to run out of the room in tears. The same thing happened in the seminars of my eventual *Doktorvater*, Heinrich Henel; when it did, he would smile sweetly and remark: "Noch ein Opfer auf dem Altar der Wissenschaft" (another sacrifice on the altar of scholarship). However, Henel, on unintelligible principles, chose favorites; I became one of these; my

wife, Christa, was another, and we like to think that our marriage was a high point of Henel's career. In any case, when he heard of it, he appeared at our door with an armload of dahlias from his garden.

The hardest part of it was the unrelenting struggle for sustenance. After the sudden death of my father during my year in Germany I had no family support. Of course I had fellowships, but they were not in those days designed for total maintenance. I had to scrape for funds where I could; I translated, I typed papers, I taught mini-courses at the YMCA and the Veterans' Hospital. Practically every daytime hour that I was not in class I worked in the office of the edition of the correspondence of Horace Walpole; it had been my bursary job as an undergraduate. This was not a waste of time; I learned a great deal about eighteenth-century history and culture, and about research and editing practices. But my task at that time was to learn my field, and as a result I have always felt undereducated, especially in Classical antiquity, philosophy, and literatures other than German. Ever since, I have argued for providing graduate students with the income of working people. What sustained me was the love of the books that had remained intact since childhood. Every new assignment, every previously unknown text opened, was an exhilaration. The most important thing I learned in graduate school was that I did not possess anything like an intellect of the first rank, so that, if I were to find my way, I would have to make up the deficit with industry. Thus began my habits of long hours and little leisure that have been advantageous to my career, less so to social and family life.

I thought I might insert a parenthesis here about how I became socialized in my field, as I experienced a curriculum pattern that was widespread throughout the field but has been in decline in recent years and is the object of active disdain on the part of those setting the agenda for the discipline today. The field in which I was schooled was vertically structured, from the Middle Ages to the day before yesterday. I do not recall a much elaborated theoretical context, but the New Critical attitude was pervasive, even instinctual; behind it was a whiff of Russian formalism and Prague structuralism. Mainly the purpose was to acquire an acquaintance with the widest selection of texts possible, as we used to say, from the *Hildebrandslied* to Handke, just as English departments at that time regarded their field as extending from *Beowulf* to Virginia Woolf. The rationale for this in our case was that in our relatively small field any of us was likely to become a maid of all work, called upon to teach any epoch or genre. We went into the preliminary examinations with lists of hundreds of titles; I must say that the reading lists I have seen in recent years look meager to me. Those of us focused on what the Germans quaintly call "new" literature, that is, since 1500, were expected to learn something about the older languages as well, in my case Gothic, Old Norse (a genuine pleasure), and Middle High German. Along with the customary French and Latin, there was a requirement of a reading examination in a Scandinavian language; I chose Norwegian, a resource that has been useful to me on several occasions. Some departments at the time also required Dutch, which I had to

learn up the hard way when the Dutch government published the critical edition of Anne Frank's diary. Whatever one may think of this program in general, it was well suited to a person like me with a love of the books.

It was probably owing to the influence of Professor Henel that I thought of myself at that time, wrongly, as a Romanticist. However, I never felt any affinity for the idealistic and Christianizing Romanticism of the Schlegel brothers, Novalis, Brentano, and Arnim; rather I was drawn to the dark side of the Romantic imagination: Tieck, Hoffmann, and especially a mysterious, anonymous work that appeared in 1804 as *The Nightwatches* of Bonaventura, which systematically undercuts all idealistic and poetic sentiment and ends in a declaration of nihilism. I discovered it as co-reporter on a paper in Henel's seminar and thought I had perceived in its apparent sequential disorder a principle of narration. Although I was barely conscious of theoretical matters, the literary scholars reading this will recognize the still effective influence of the New Criticism, which, with its values of coherence, complexity, and intensity, had become second nature; we did not deconstruct texts; we searched for coherence where it was not immediately apparent. It was a perfect dissertation topic for someone who had no time to lose, bounded and doable. The secondary literature was easily mastered. There was no plausible author candidate at that time; the lack of an author is a great time-saver. I could have immersed myself more in the literary and intellectual context, but one can't do everything, especially when one is in a hurry. Much of the necessary work was accomplished later by the most learned of my own graduate students, Andreas Mielke.

While the dissertation was progressing, I received an appointment as instructor at Brown. I thought myself extremely fortunate to have obtained this position and still do. Brown at that time was reinventing and upgrading itself. As a consequence many young people were there, a mixed community of advanced students and junior faculty. It had become something like the technical institute of the Ivy League; its biggest departments were engineering, physics, and applied mathematics. I was told that a quarter of its budget was carried by the Navy. This was the first time in my life that I formed close acquaintance with scientists and engineers, and I learned that the disdain for them sometimes expressed in the humanities – one of my undergraduate professors regularly referred to them as “plumbers” – was not only ill-mannered but foolish, for these were people as literate and cultured as any of us. The atmosphere in the German department was cordial and collegial; never since have I experienced so much mutual support. The chairman, the affable philologist W. Freeman Twaddell, was an expert in language pedagogy; it was educational to work for him. The department maintained a practice that I think has just about disappeared in this country, at least in major universities: all the members of the faculty, regardless of rank, taught at all levels; full professors could be assigned language courses as well as upper-division and graduate seminars. Twaddell used to say that anyone could teach an advanced course, even a graduate student, but for elementary and intermediate teaching you

wanted experienced people. I always thought there was something to this, but it is not the practice today, when language instruction in American universities is almost entirely in the hands of graduate assistants and adjuncts. After I was promoted at Yale I offered to teach the course in German reading, which was something I thought I knew how to do, but I was told I would not be permitted to do so, as I would be taking a job away from a graduate student. There may have been traces of an older way even here when I was a freshman: I had Louis Martz in English, John Smith in philosophy, and, *mirabile dictu*, the head of the department, Gustav Hedlund, in the lowest level of bonehead math. I had got into this course by way of a scam that actually worked: I had had some elementary calculus in high school, which I believe was unusual at that time, at least in urban public schools, but I had skipped trigonometry; therefore I was placed in the lowest level course. Anyone, in my opinion, can learn trigonometry, and much of the calculus was familiar to me, so I got the highest grade of my undergraduate career in math, even though still today I have trouble subtracting if I have to borrow.

However, I managed to spoil my advantageous situation at Brown by getting into a quarrel with a new chairman, one Detlev Schumann, who had been brought in from the outside. Schumann was learned, rigid, and reactionary. I was to discover that he was internationally notorious; in far places people would look at me with big eyes and say: "You work for Detlev Schumann?" as though it were a matter of heroism. The issue between us was too farcical to be related here, except to say that I was certainly in the right, and I had not yet learned that in the academic world to be in the right is often to be in the wrong, especially when the one in the right is a very junior faculty member and the one in the wrong a German *Ordinarius*. So when I received an offer to return to Yale, Schumann came nowhere near to meeting it. That in academic custom was the *consilium abeundi*, the advice to go away, and so I was obliged to return to Yale, which I did not very much want to do. This may sound ungrateful if not irrational, but the truth is, although I have spent by far the larger part of my life at and around Yale, I have never felt at home in the institution, though perhaps I would not have anywhere. And the more or less involuntary move turned out to be another case of undeserved good fortune. As some colleagues may remember, when the soft money tap was turned off in Washington, Brown was beset by a financial crisis that for a time threatened the existence of the university. In departments such as mine, all non-tenured faculty members were terminated; I might easily have become unemployed. I did not expect to be able to stay at Yale, for the familiar reasons, but I managed somehow to do so.

By that time I had published my dissertation in the Netherlands, enhanced by a statistical application to make it more scientific; perhaps already in the press was an elementary volume on the seventeenth-century mystical poet Angelus Silesius, who had been the subject of my senior essay as an undergraduate under the patient and learned guidance of Christoph Schweitzer, now retired from North Carolina. In

the graduate program I had had good training in the German Baroque from a world expert, Curt von Faber du Faur, and had retained a fascination with the seventeenth century. If I had remained at Brown, I would have given my first advanced course the following year on the Baroque period, in preparation for which I ordered every seventeenth-century text from the German scholarly book club. These editions continued to arrive for years afterward, long after I had any need for them, for when I came to Yale, I was informed that I would not be permitted to offer such a course because it was one of Henel's fields. He never taught it, so far as I know, but it was one of his fields, and that was that. After we appointed a genuine seventeenth-century scholar, George Schoolfield, my dabbling in the topic came to an end.

In any case I was moving in a different direction. One day at Brown, when I was asked to speak to the Hillel organization, I decided to give a talk on Heinrich Heine's effort to write a novel with medieval Jewish materials. Weigand had given me a sound foundation in Heine, and I recalled my interest in his creation of a fictional self that he inserts between him and us, so that we become occupied with an imagined "Heine," behind which the empirical author remains more obscured than many commentators had seen. My literary colleagues will easily recognize the extent to which this was also implicitly a New Critical inquiry. I had imagined the result as a slender, rather technical monograph, but the device turned out to be so pervasive in Heine's whole literary strategy that my account of it grew into a five-hundred-page book *Heinrich Heine: The Elusive Poet*. Heine was not a very lively topic at that time; in the Adenauer restoration the Nazi efforts to purge him from German culture still affected memory, while the assaults on him by modernist writers and cultural tastemakers as a shallow poet and a precursor of meretricious journalism, which had begun before the First World War, were still prestigious in the intellectual community. The elaborate efforts in East Germany to employ him as a stick with which to beat the Federal Republic for neglecting him did not interest me much at that time. While the Yale University Press was dawdling with my book, the signs of a revival of interest in Heine began to emerge. As my indispensable contribution was inching through the production process, I felt I needed to insert an appendix on current developments so as not to appear totally out to lunch, in which I remarked on the "necessarily deliberate pace of scholarly publication." I meant with this withering irony to inflict a wound on the Yale Press, but I don't suppose that it had any such effect.

I might have left Heine at that if it had not been for another circumstance. Around this time I was invited by an annual called the *Romanticism Movement Bibliography* to contribute critical notes on books and articles about Heine. This was a useful exercise because it got me into the library twice a year to read the journals, an obligation I might otherwise have found reasons to postpone. As Heine became the liveliest and most voluminous topic in German literary scholarship, for reasons that have to do with the agony of historical memory, the bibliographical task became onerous, and I resigned from it twice, but to no effect. As it turned out, I continued with it for thirty-

one year until the series was terminated in 1999. With this accumulation of learning, I thought I might attempt a biography, the first American one to have appeared in over forty years. There have been a couple of additional books and a lot of articles and reviews.

Working with Heine led to me to the next half generation of literary dissidents much influenced by him, known collectively as Young Germany, concerning which, as I took it up, there was a flurry of interest in German scholarship in the 1970s. Preferring, as always, to concern myself with imaginative literature, I wrote a little book on the Young German novel. In the course of this endeavor, and also as something learned in teaching, I made a discovery that I thought not insignificant, namely that the famous claims for the Bildungsroman as the characteristic German form of the novel differentiating it from literary practices in Western and Eastern Europe were a myth, and that the Germans in the nineteenth century, far from being introverted and peculiar, were in lively contact with foreign literatures and wrote novels not so different from those in other countries. I decided therefore to investigate the novels the Germans actually read beyond those canonized by Wilhelminian, nationalistic gatekeepers. Since, owing to the enduring influence of that constrictive canonization, the names of my authors are not likely to be known to most readers, I will not recite them, although I will say that all of them were prominent in their own time.

Not that I have eschewed relevance altogether; in fact at times I pursued it actively, though not always with conspicuous success. In the 1970s I became concerned that developments in the literary field in Germany were not being registered in this country, outside of what seemed to me to be relatively isolated Marxist conventicles. Since *Germanistik* is the largest and the most central discipline in the humanities in Germany, it was prominently involved in the various rebellions of students, marching in the streets to make the blue flower red and to overthrow capitalism with Hölderlin and Heine. It seemed to me that, although the *Times* reported whenever a village idiot in Bavaria painted a swastika on a gravestone, our media largely missed the student revolution. So I wrote a book *Literary Sociology and Practical Criticism: An Inquiry*, since this was the rubric under which the agitation was occurring. I tried to expand the purview of the topic beyond the limitations of the Marxist theory that generally governed it at the time. I undertook this task with misgivings, as I have never had a theoretical vocation. It was a matter of duty rather than inclination, out of a historical sense suggesting that when Germans become agitated about something, it is well to pay attention. But I did not succeed in provoking discussion, for everyone at that time was focused on the French fireworks.

Also in pursuit of relevance I tried to do my part in connection with the Bicentennial of 1976, which generated a lot of German-American activity of various kinds. As is my wont, I turned to novels, not the German-American ones—I am afraid I think that much German-American literature might charitably be allowed to rest in peace—but to nineteenth-century German novels about America and especially about

the emigration, a topic of discourse and contention in Germany for at least sixty years. The course I devised on this topic did not prosper, but as a research project it came to be quite absorbing. It took twenty years of intermittent labor to get a book out of it; the authors I treated still get me invitations to international conferences from time to time. My most recent venture into German-American matters has been a little different. Recently I completed a book on a twenty-volume edition of German literature in English translation, elaborately produced and advertised, and edited by the most prestigious Germanist in America at that time, Kuno Francke of Harvard. The imprint dates are 1913 and 1914, but it was not completed until mid-1915, just in time for the submarine sinking of the *Lusitania*. The originally good reviews turned sour; Francke, beleaguered from all sides, including the government, for his support of the German cause, felt obliged to resign his professorship at Harvard, the publishing house that had been created for the edition went bankrupt, and the edition itself was nearly pulped. Thus the project lies on the cusp between the time when German culture and, often, the German nation, were well known and regarded with great respect in the United States, and the time when sauerkraut became liberty cabbage and the German shepherd an Alsatian hound, the teaching of German was banned in twenty-two states and the number of schoolchildren learning German had fallen by 96% in 1922. The edition is a kind of laboratory of the state of our field at what may have been the highest point of its prestige; some fifty contributors were involved as volume editors and commentators, many of them the prominent names in the field.

I don't know how appropriate it would be to say much here about my experiences on the Yale faculty. On the whole, I have felt pretty fairly treated, though I have always retained a certain resentment at having been made department chairman at the age of thirty-one; I believe I was the youngest chairmensch in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; indeed, of my own *Doktorvater*. I thought it indicated that the administration had no confidence in my scholarly potential at the stage in one's career when one should be pursuing mature productivity. The chairmanship, at least as I experienced it, is a classic case of responsibility without authority. For ten of the eleven years that I was chairman, I was the lowest paid professor in the department. I am not complaining about this; it was purely a matter of seniority, but it is an indication of the value that the institution places upon the office.

I came to believe, especially in my last years, that the administration did not care much about our departmental enterprise. It was like pushing a rock up a hill to achieve resources that were commonplace in comparable departments elsewhere, such as a specialist in foreign-language pedagogy, indispensable in this age of electronic and computerized instruction, or exchange contacts and study-abroad opportunities. I was the point man when the administration, still mindful of George Washington's admonition of 1796 to avoid foreign entanglements, managed to offend and anger the most venerable university in Germany, Heidelberg, which had sought an exchange with us on several levels. Things in this regard have improved, largely owing to the

efforts of my late colleague Cyrus Hamlin, who was more at home in the institution than I. An added advantage has been Connecticut's designation as a sister state of Baden-Württemberg. There can still be disappointments. Some years ago we were able, through an office in the Graduate School, to build a communicative link with our graduate alumni, which we had not had before. I put in a good deal of work on this, especially in identifying who the alumni were, about which the Graduate School had only vague notions. The alumni were delighted to be contacted; the exchange of information was much appreciated and beginning to bear fruit with modest contributions and pledges, when a new dean of the Graduate School abolished the program with a wave of the hand and no explanation, so that was that. Yale's much bruted commitment to internationalization and globalization is all about China, India, and now, Singapore. It has nothing to do with the European languages and literatures, which are declining from the status they once enjoyed, not, of course, only at Yale.

Here I am in clear danger of falling into a tone of fogeyish grumpiness, suggesting that I have reached a stopping place. I am not qualified to formulate a just estimate of the quality of this trajectory. But I have managed to stay employed, and have been enabled to spend a large part of my time doing what I most wanted to do, reading and writing. I therefore have much reason to be grateful for what has been given to me.