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THE NEW BEGINNINGS OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN GERMANY 1945-1975: AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW

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ABSTRACT

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The new beginnings of Comparative Literature after the Second World War in Germany were more than an academic phenomenon. Its transnational nature was expected to contribute to the rebirth of a new Germany committed to international understanding. The Allies, especially France, were particularly supportive of building up this discipline, and the German academic tradition itself possessed a great potential, with its strengths in foreign languages, literatures and cultures, philosophy, hermeneutics, history, in other words, the humanities in general. The awakening to foreign literatures, accessible again after the fall of the Nazi dictatorship, prepared the groundwork for comparative literary studies, buttressed by philological rigour and erudition as well as receptivity to theoretical thinking. Post-war German comparatism knew how to learn from the past, to foster dialogues with international colleagues, and to charter its own 'middle path' distinguished by collective work such as scholarly journals, monograph series, reference works, *Festschriften* of various kinds, and conference volumes, rather than those few monumental *opera magna* generated miraculously during the war years. Teaching and research, a unity inherited from Wilhelm von Humboldt, continue to serve as a firm basis for the discipline, now known as 'General *and* Comparative Literature'. The legacy of those 30 formative years has been substantial.

Keywords: Comparative literature; general literature; German academic tradition; philology; literary theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The general history of Comparative Literature in the German-speaking countries figures in most manuals and reference works on the subject and requires no further elaboration here (Solte-Gresser, 2014: 419-434).[1] The present study deals with the 30-year period after the Second World War, which represented new beginnings full of promise, and possessed a distinct contour which accounted for its survival after the sudden death of the most enterprising protagonist of the discipline, Peter Szondi, in 1971. If the characterization of his scholarly virtue, according to a younger Berlin colleague (who requested not to be

[1] This is a most precise and concise masterly treatment of the subject, from its prehistory to the present.

named) was: 'Er suchte' (He was [always] in search [of something]), that virtue fortunately did not die with him. 1975 coincided with the year of retirement of Kurt Wais (1907-1995), the only German scholar then with a Habilitation (professorial entitlement) in the discipline (conjointly with Romance Philology) who was active in its revival and highly recognized internationally, but rather unjustly neglected in Germany (Zymner and Hölter, 2013: 495-496).[2]

My original intention was to write a monograph in German. Research and involvement in the activities of international associations in this field, such as the Fédération Internationale des Langues et Littératures Modernes (FILLM) and the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA), have convinced me that the German experience should be of interest to non-Germans as well. A personal reason has also prompted me to choose the essay form, for with advancing age I should take no chances, although I have collected research materials that can easily fill a monograph. The essay form determines the mode of presentation, whereby significant aspects of German comparatism of the period are identified and analyzed in separate sections. No continuous narrative in a strict chronological order is attempted, for otherwise the force of argument of those issues will be lost in a maze of details. In this process, an impression of disjointedness among the sections might occur, but this could be more apparent than real, for readers familiar with the 'collage' technique in the arts will not fail to appreciate the sum total of the achievements of those pioneering efforts. From a practical point of view, Eberhard Lämmert (1924-2015), my mentor for over 30 years, was of the opinion that a journal article would reach a wider reading public.[3]

As for the term 'outsider', this may also have a personal ring, as I spent only four years studying Comparative Literature in Tübingen, and in spite of frequent revisits which have enabled me to maintain contact with the German academic community, I cannot claim to be an 'insider'. In truth, as an outsider I have enjoyed a fair measure of collegial trust and confidence, and my 'impartiality' was valued by my own teacher (Wais, 1966: 10)[4] and has even acquired a strange existential character of its own according to a German scholar of Thai Studies (Schalbruch, 2022: 263).[5] A view from outside may accord the onlooker a certain distance that allows him to see things that insiders may not see, and the sins of omission, such as those interminable definitional and methodological debates, might be benignly excused. I am not therefore writing a partial history of the discipline (G. *Wissenschaftsgeschichte*), although I can relate with some pride that I had the good fortune of knowing personally some of the main protagonists, and readers will soon find out, especially in the final section called 'General Observations', that I have learned much from, and reflected much on, what went on in the field of Comparative Literature in the German-speaking countries at that particular fateful moment of history, which I have found to be instructive, constructive, humane, edifying and at times uplifting.

The present paper is not the fruit of purely documentary research, although I must admit that I have benefited from a particular kind of 'aesthetics of research' (Nagavajara, 2014a: 313-332), working with archival materials in Marbach, Tübingen, and Berlin. Parts of the primary research findings have been used in my previous publications, but they are still relevant to my present undertaking. Another important research methodology is the interview. I am deeply grateful for collegial assistance manifested in the form of sharing valuable personal experiences as well as honest appraisals. Some of those kind-hearted teachers and colleagues have passed away, especially those names that I mention very often, but I think that what they have imparted to me will live on and continue to enrich scholarship.

2. COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND THE POLITICS OF RECONCILIATION

The Second World War came to an end in Europe on 8 May 1945. It could be expected that the issue of reconstruction and regeneration would come up for deliberation, and it would also be legitimate to ask whether in that process art and culture, and especially literature, should play a constructive role. Among the disciplines of higher education, Comparative Literature was singled out as an effective instrument to reunite previously warring factions. Fernand Baldensperger (1871-1958), former 'doyen' of French comparatism who had emigrated to the United States, called upon the authority of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Léon Bourgeois (1851-1925), first President of the Council of the League of Nations, who 'saw distinctly the relation between comparative literature and world unity'. Baldensperger, on his part, was convinced 'that comparative literature

[2] The *Handbuch* Komparatistik mentions Kurt Wais briefly once on p. 37, only to accuse him of having been a Nazi, a claim that has been refuted (See Wais, 2019).
[3] As the present article is written in English, I have myself translated the quotations in other languages into English.
[4] Wais speaks of the *Seelenruhe* (serenity of the soul) of his South East Asian pupil.
[5] The author concedes that my uninhibited enthusiasm for German art and culture has helped him overcome a guilt-ridden relationship with his own past.

seems sure to be considered among the needed disciplines of better times' (Baldensperger, 1945: 3). His Swiss colleague, Werner Paul Friederich (1905-1993), who had also made America his second home, offered a comprehensive picture of Comparative Literature in America, weighing the pros and cons of the various trends and methodologies. The cessation of hostilities awakened in him hopes for a bright future when 'the student of tomorrow will want to know about […] the great currents and cross-currents that sweep across the Western World […] Comparative Literature … makes us see a brother in our fellow men' (Friederich, 1945: 215-217).

Those uplifting echoes from across the Atlantic seemed to accord well with what was happening on European soil, especially in the South West of Germany under French occupation. The *administrateur* for the South West region, René Cheval (1918-1986), spoke on several occasions of the reconciliatory policy of the French government and the Allies towards Germany. 'It was clear to the Allies right from the beginning that the means to detoxify (G. *entgiften*) Germany was first and foremost to be achieved through education and reeducation (in the noble sense of the word!). Therefore, attention was directed primarily towards the universities' (Cheval, 1948: 14-15). The universities were to be operated by the Germans themselves. As a Germanist, he knew only too well the weakness of German academics, namely that of 'losing touch with reality' (G. *Weltentrücktheit*), (Cheval, 1948: 14) and he was thinking of a remedy. Cheval painted a touching picture of young German returnees from the war: 'Rarely have there been students with such fervour, with such work mania: they filled lecture rooms and seminars, institutes and libraries without letting themselves be distracted by useless digressions… They wanted to have contact with foreign literatures' (Cheval, 1987: 257-258). He was speaking of Tübingen where the regional administration and a garrison were stationed, an idyllic little town not damaged by bombardments. As early as October 1945, both Faculties of Theology were reopened, the very first institutions in Germany, to be followed by the other Faculties in spring 1946.

On the part of the University, Comparative Literature was prioritized, but the only officially qualified scholar in the discipline in Germany at that time was Kurt Wais, who was still detained in a prisoner of war camp in Hannover. The University hastened to send a letter in English to the British military authorities requesting 'his liberation from captivity', assuring them that Wais 'is not tainted in the least as to politics'.[6] The French authorities, represented by Monsieur Cheval, had no objection whatsoever to his reappointment.[7] (That Wais was wrongly accused of having been a Nazi by some German colleagues and that his professorial appointment was long delayed by the Ministry of Education in Stuttgart is a different story, which has also been clarified by the university and the appropriate authorities.)[8] On the part of Tübingen University, at the Faculty level as well as that of the Grosse Senat, the introduction of Comparative Literature reaffirmed 'that Tübingen University is redressing a general German defect in consonance with its tradition …'[9] Tübingen, according to the manual for Comparative Literature by the French scholar Marius-François Guyard (1921-2011) was regarded as the leader in the discipline in the West in the immediate post-war years (Guyard, 1961: 5) and was also recognized as such by eminent colleagues, such as Eberhard Lämmert of the Free University Berlin and Erwin Koppen of Bonn University, among others (Schnell et al., 2014: 14-54).[10] The scholarly development of the subject there will be discussed later in Section 8, 'Tübingen and Berlin: Two Case Studies'.

[6] Letter from the 'Principal' (Rector) of Tübingen University (Hermann Schneider) to 'the Military Government, Hamburg', dated November 24, 1945. (Universitätsarchiv Tübingen, Signatur, 1945). (Original: English)

[7] Letter from Professor Hermann Schneider to the Dean of the Philosophische Fakultät, dated April 14, 1948 (Universitätsarchiv Tübingen, 1948).

[8] I wish to cite the following documentary sources: (a) Testimonial issued by the 'Staatskommissariat für pol. Säuberung, Land Baden-Hohenzollern', with reference to the resolution made at its meeting on November 2, 1950, to the effect that 'Dr. K. Wais ist unbelastet'. (Dr. K. Wais is untainted.), and furthermore that 'Dr. K. Wais war nicht Mitglied der NSDAP oder einer ihrer Gliederungen' (Dr. K. Wais was not a member of the Nazi Party or any one of its divisions.). (b) Tübingen University had repeatedly maintained that he was innocent on this count (Documentation from the University Archive, Signature 205/87; 431/1483 [containing 3 documents]). He was elected Dean of the Philosophische Fakultät for one term (1959-60). Written evidence in the University Archive confirms that the University held him in high esteem, as may be witnessed from the letter from the Vice-Dean to the Minister of Education in Stuttgart, dated October 2, 1959, describing Wais as 'the most prominent German comparatist who has already earned great recognition at home and abroad.' (c) The accusation made by F.-R. Hausmann that Wais was a member of the Nazi Party, subsequently quoted without verification in a number of German scholarly publications, has been refuted by Wolfgang Theile in his essay (Theile, 2004). (I also interviewed Wolfgang Theile on October 4, 2007). Even his friends and supporters would not deny that the treatment of Marcel Proust and André Gide in the volume edited by him, (Wais, 1939). *Die Gegenwarts-Dichtung der europäischen Völker*. Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, [pp. 214-218]) lacks impartiality.

[9] Resolution of the Grosse Senat, Tübingen University, July 29, 1950 (Universitätsarchiv Tübingen, 1950).

[10] Furthermore, Erwin Koppen, according to his pupil, Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte, maintained that 'without Kurt Wais, there would have been no German comparatism' (Ruckteschell-Katte, 2007). This judgement was confirmed by another colleague, Hugo Dyserinck, in an interview with me on September 19, 2007.

In terms of institutionalization, the first German university that officially created a professorial chair for Comparative Literature after the Second World War was Mainz. After a gap of over 100 years, (during which it operated only as a theological seminary), the full-fledged university was reopened in 1946 at the initiative of the French occupying power. Comparative Literature figured prominently, and the Chair was filled by a German returnee from France, Friedrich Hirth (1878-1952). The French Ambassador congratulated the Rector of Mainz University in a letter of February 29, 1952 on 'the success with the students [in initiating] the studies of Comparative Literature, whose importance appears to me to be of utmost priority in the formation of a European consciousness' (Bleicher et al., 1978: 55). What a prophetic statement that has been substantiated by the role of Germany in the EU today! Like in the case of Tübingen, the seriousness of the students was the positive asset of post-war German higher education.

The course offerings in Mainz represented a fairly broad spectrum of the discipline, ranging from an introduction to Comparative Literature via literary relations *à la française* to literary theory (with an Oberseminar devoted exclusively to the study of the seminal work, *Theory of Literature* by Wellek and Warren (1942/1984). After Hirth's death in 1952, Mainz was able to recruit a succession of distinguished scholars to occupy the chair, namely Horst Rüdiger, Victor Hell and Edgar Lohner (returning from Stanford). Mainz has remained active in the field until today (Rüdiger moved to Bonn in 1962 and was instrumental in laying a collective 'infrastructure' for German comparatism.).

If Mainz, a German university, was revived with French assistance, Saarbrücken, known until today as the 'Universität des Saarlandes', was created in 1951 at the time when the Saarland was still a French protectorate. Yet, it was conceived as a bilingual institution and moreover set up curricula that allowed students to qualify for French as well as German degrees. It was amazing that such an arrangement survived the referendum of 1955 and the integration of the Saarland into the Federal Republic of Germany in 1957. This spirit of reconciliation and cooperation did favour the introduction of Comparative Literature, and the first chairholder was the French Germanist, Maurice Bémol (1900-1961), who set the tone for his institution when he wrote in 1958: 'The act of comparison is a pleasure and knowledge of the second order' (Universität des Saarlandes, 2001: 26). The French notion of 'second order' as a higher level of intellectual activity is here coupled with the 'pleasure of the text' and aligns itself with the practice of Kurt Wais and Eberhard Lämmert, to be discussed later. The syllabus too set a manageable parameter for the discipline with the triad of German, Romance, and English philologies as the foundation for comparative literary studies, a model later adopted also by the Free University Berlin at the initial stage under the helm of Peter Szondi.

The creation of another Chair of Comparative Literature at the then Technische Hochschule Darmstadt under American occupation deserves attention. The first chair was created in 1962 for Walter Naumann (1910-1997), a distinguished scholar and translator already recognized thus during his exile in the United States. His works on Mallarmé, Grillparzer, Shakespeare, and especially Dante (translation with exhaustive commentaries) were impressive. Similar to the case of Saarbrücken, Comparative Literature in Darmstadt too drew on the foundation of German, Romance, and English philologies. After Naumann's retirement, Comparative Literature metamorphosed into Linguistics and Literary Studies, which at present engage, among others, in Digital Philology and Linguistics and Literary Computing in keeping with the orientation of a technical university (Institut für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft, 2022).

All in all, the re-emergence of Comparative Literature in Germany after the Second World War is not to be considered as a merely scholarly undertaking, but a profession of faith in the power of education and intellectual enquiry in accelerating moral regeneration and fostering unity among nations.

3. COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND THE GERMAN ACADEMIC TRADITION

I seek leave to bring my own experience to bear on the subject, and parts of the substance discussed in this section have already been presented in my extensive article, 'Kurt Wais: A centenary appraisal' (2006) (Nagavajara, 2014b: 333-402). What first and foremost captured the attention of a foreign student was the freedom that a German student in the humanities enjoyed in charting his own academic pursuit, including constructing his own curriculum (with the advice of his teachers and senior fellow students, when necessary). This freedom was in accord with the ideal of an all-round cultivation of personality known as *Bildung*, as propagated by the father of the modern German university, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). Those studying languages and literatures benefited from a strong tradition of written culture and ingrained reading habit that grew into a *Lesedurst* (thirst for reading) immediately after World War II following an arid period under the Nazi regime when most modern foreign literatures were banned. The preparation at the high school level served well as a good groundwork for literary studies, especially that offered by the *humanistisches Gymnasium* with its strengths in Latin and Greek, plus one or two modern foreign languages. The command of these foreign languages could not have been of recent date, for the German Romantics, like the Schlegel

brothers and Ludwig Tieck, mastered several languages so well as to be able to produce excellent translations that are still being read today. Germany is a land of translation, and the reading public has always had access to 'world literature', a concept introduced by Goethe in the sense of literary exchanges that should foster cross-cultural understanding.

The studies of languages, literatures and cultures at German universities were known as *Philologien*, for traditionally a language department gave its students a thorough training in dealing with the text in full consciousness of its originating conditions. In this way a historical sense was automatically cultivated. Literary history (G. *Literaturgeschichte*) did not degenerate into a positivist science, for the German academia was always preoccupied with hermeneutics, both from the practical and theoretical viewpoints, and consequently the charge of facile factualism (which sparked off the controversy between the American and the French School following the ICLA Congress in Chapel Hill in 1958) could not be levelled at German literary studies and comparatism. For those students who chose the academic tract leading to the *Staatsexamen* (qualification required for teaching at high schools), an intermediate examination known as the *Philosophikum* was a prerequisite. A training in philosophy could serve as a good basis for dealing with literary theory (which at its worst is merely second-hand or second-rate philosophy).

People engaged in Comparative Literature sometimes pay excessive attention to definitions or name naming. A no-nonsense approach was mooted to me by Rita Schober (1918-2012), 'doyenne' of East German literary studies, who remained active until her death at the age of 94. According to her, one cannot study certain periods of Western literature at all without cutting across national boundaries and without thinking comparatively, such as the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Romanticism. Anchoring oneself in one or more 'philologies' while pursuing Comparative Literature could provide an immunity against overgeneralization that could degenerate into simplistic theorizing.[11] In Germany, medievalism has remained a fertile ground for literary studies, and many universities organized their Germanistik into the 'modern' and the 'old' sections, permitting graduation in two different subjects. To study the Middle Ages in depth, one needs to know Old and Middle German, Gothic, Romance languages, medieval Latin, to be strengthened by Nordic Studies, as well as Gallic or Celtic Studies. In some cases, a medievalist might have to seek help from ancient Oriental Studies. 'Medieval Comparatism' (G. *Mediävistische Komparatistik*) was practised by very few scholars (Schneider, 1950: 131-139),[12] but it was Comparative Literature par excellence. What is outlined above would normally be subsumed under the activity of 'research', but German higher education, following the reform introduced by Wilhelm von Humboldt (Nagavajara, 2021: 1-15),[13] stresses the unity of '*Lehre und Forschung*' (teaching and research). All university teachers have this ideal unity in mind; in other words, they could never forget their 'implicit students', and it is not a rare phenomenon that a pathbreaking research work could turn into an excellent textbook, for example, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946/1977) and Eberhard Lämmert's *Bauformen des Erzählens* (1955/1980). Furthermore, theorizing would, at some stage, have to transform itself into a methodological discourse, often with pedagogical practicability. It goes without saying that scholars with no formal attachment to a university unit specifically called 'Comparative Literature' have delivered significant works in the area, and it can be noticed that many of them would feel happier to be associated with 'General Literature' or the combination 'General and Comparative Literature', for their works may not be strictly 'comparative'.

The German conception of an ideal comparatist is that of an avid and critical reader of literatures, at home in several languages, equipped with philological thoroughness and hermeneutical acuity and endowed with historical consciousness and sensitivity to theoretical thinking. The traditional German university could put him or her on a firm footing.

4. THE PREEMINENCE OF ROMANCE PHILOLOGY

Despite claims made by some German scholars that their institutions represent 'schools' of Comparative Literature, these may not be readily visible to outsiders. On the other hand, outsiders will not hesitate to identify certain names as experts of international stature, and those distinguished individuals happened to be mostly Romance philologists (G. *Romanisten*). The most common explanation as to why comparatists in Germany have grown out of the field of Romance Philology (G. *Romanistik*) has probably to do

[11] I had met Rita Schober once at an ICLA Congress and visited her at her home in Berlin on November 11, 2008, when we had a long conversation lasting two full hours.

[12] Hermann Schneider (1886-1961), Rector of Tübingen University during the critical postwar years, did pioneering work in medieval studies and enthused his pupil Kurt Wais in this direction.

[13] I have written on Wilhelm von Humboldt as reformer of higher education both in Thai and English for non-German readership.

with their command of several languages, literatures and cultures. Another reason offered has to do with the commonalities of Romance literatures that favour comparative studies (Hatzfeld, 1945: 46-52), a point contested by some Romance philologists in the sense that what applies to Romance languages does readily not apply to Romance literatures. Werner Krauss was one of them (Krauss, 1968: 106). While there can be no definitive answer to this question, the polyglotism of Romance philologists can serve as a breeding ground for further explorations beyond the original discipline, and Romance philologists who practise comparative studies usually distinguish themselves in both breadth and depth. For the period after the Second World War, two towering figures are recognized worldwide, namely Ernst Robert Curtius (1886-1956), the author of *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages) (ELLM) (1948) and Erich Auerbach (1892-1957) whose *Mimesis* (1946/1977) is still widely read today and whose 'Indian summer' in the United States very much enriched Comparative Literature.

Both monumental works of literary scholarship were marked by astounding erudition (which in principle should be a prerequisite for all comparatists). Curtius' work made use of sources, primary and secondary, in 14 languages, while Auerbach wrote his masterpiece in his exile in Istanbul and could not rely much on secondary literature, but *Mimesis* too testifies in its own way to solid erudition. Broadly speaking, their methods share certain common characteristics, namely working from small units that collectively constitute a broader image of the evolution of European literature. Curtius, who relied on analyses of 'topoi', was motivated by more than a scholarly ambition: 'My book did not grow out of purely scholarly goals, but out of the concern for the preservation of western culture' (Curtius, 1961: 9). It must not be forgotten that he wrote this *opus magnum* during the war years. Yet, some colleagues thought that there was a serious omission, namely medieval literatures in the vernaculars (Wehrli, 1951: 157). As for Erich Auerbach, his *Mimesis* spans three millennia of European literature, with representative works or even passages interpretated in the manner of an *'explication de texte'* that gradually assumes broad historical dimensions. He always had his readers in mind; some were his friends 'who have survived', together with others, who have implicitly preserved their 'love of our western history'.[14] These are the last words of the book: the author speaks of 'history' and not just literature which can be taken as a manifestation of a historical process. An ambitious project just like Curtius's, but with a different approach!

The European Middle Ages form an integral part of both works. As already discussed in Section 3, Comparative Literature lies at the core of medieval studies. My teacher Kurt Wais, though officially holding a joint appointment in Romance Philology and Comparative Literature, took his doctorate in German and Nordic Studies under the tutelage of Hermann Schneider, and later acquired expertise in Gallic Studies as well. Earlier on he had taken his State Examination in English and French. Only with such a broad-based knowledge could a scholar expect to tackle 'Medieval Comparatism'. Having published his first volume of medieval studies, *Frühe Epik Westeuropas oder die Vorgeschichte des Nibelungenliedes*, Bd. 1, (Early Epics of Western Europe or the Prehistory of the Song of the Nibelungs, Vol. 1) in 1953, he spent the rest of his life (its latter part being plagued by ill health) working on a mammoth project, which, if finished, would have proved the thesis advanced by the German Romantics about the 'organic' growth of vernacular literatures from the European soil that were of comparable quality to Greek and Roman Antiquity, and more than supplemented the pioneering work of Curtius. I have elsewhere dealt with Wais' 'Marbach Legacy' (Nagavajara, 2014b: 392-398). Kurt Wais has also produced ground-breaking works on modern subjects. While working in Paris on his Mallarmé book (which is in essence a 'comparative' study, drawing on several literatures and cutting across frontiers of the arts), he was persuaded to espouse Comparative Literature by none other than Fernand Baldensperger. But he did not embrace the 'French School' uncritically, and knew how to innovate in his 1935 book, *Das antiphilosophische Weltbild des französischen Sturm und Drang* (The Anti-Enlightenment Worldview of the French Storm and Stress). This book predates the coverage of my present study, but is mentioned here as an instance of German comparatism that seeks to charter its own course (Wellek, 1975: 170).[15] Wais' further innovation takes the form of a parallel history of literatures. In the long essay called, 'Die Entfremdung der deutschen und französischen Lyrik im 19. Jahrhundert' (The Estrangement of German and French Lyric Poetry in the Nineteenth Century), published in 1949 in a journal meant for general readers called *Universitas* (which is still alive today!), Wais stages a lively dialogue, intermittently interrupted, between two literary nations within a time frame that goes far beyond the alleged 'positivism' of histories of literature. It is a little gem of comparative literary studies.

There is one phenomenon of German Romance Philology that strikes an outsider as highly meaningful: every Romance philologist of note wishes to offer his own conception of Dante. August Wilhelm Schlegel's translation and Goethe's admiration for Dante and his debt to the Italian poet in his *Faust II* set the tone for

[14] My translation (Auerbach, 1977).
[15] René Wellek recognized Wais' work as innovative.

subsequent ages. Dante has acquired the status of 'our Dante' in the same way that the Germans speak of 'our Shakespeare'. Why does Dante have a special place in Germany? Naturally, the poet who turned a vernacular into the national language should find an ally in the country of Martin Luther. But perhaps a comparatist can look deeper. Dante belongs to the world and continues to inspire poets of many nations. The assimilation by the American poets Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot can be very instructive according to Kurt Wais: 'Over there (in America), they were successful in the difficult task of building a bridge from literary research via amateur edification to new poetic creation' (Wais, 1969: 41). A resourceful Romance philologist always looks around and automatically becomes a comparatist. If this were to come from a comparatist of the twenty-first century, an elaborate theory concerning a three-stage development from scholarly research through public reception to literary creativity would emerge.

Speaking of poets and poetry, one should give due credit to *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik* (The Structure of Modern Lyric Poetry) (1956/1971) by Hugo Friedrich (1904-1978). Though criticized by the German-British poet, critic, and translator Michael Hamburger (1924-2007) in *The Truth of Poetry* (1968/1998) as being one-sided, favouring the lyrical stream that originated with Baudelaire at the expense of another stream that was crowned with the achievements of a poet of everyday life like Bertolt Brecht. Be that as it may, Friedrich, a Romance philologist by conviction and a comparatist by common consent, never hesitated to advance a summative judgement: 'Poetry, especially in the Romance languages, always knew moments when verse elevated itself to the level of autonomous power of sound that created a greater effect than its content' (Friedrich, 1971: 50). To be able to appreciate such a statement, one has to master one or more Romance languages (and become a comparatist of sorts). I remember our discussion in the Upper Seminar (*Oberseminar)* in Tübingen on Friedrich's remarkable power of characterization, for example, his category of 'dictatorial imagination' that we found most apposite. And that applied to poets of several nations. As I have said in Section 3, a scholarly work, whose author succeeds in crystallizing his message so well, often becomes a pedagogical tool. Students still use this work as a textbook today!

5. A BREAKTHROUGH TOWARDS GENERAL LITERATURE

In the first sketch of this chapter written in German, I used the formulation '*Der (Durch)bruch in die Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft*' (The Breakthrough into General Literature), which won the approval of my mentor, Eberhard Lämmert. Observing the German scene from the outside, I could sense that in the naming of the discipline there have been conflicts that had to be overcome. Undeniably, the prestige of the French School, known as littérature comparée, was almost unassailable, especially in view of its achievements during the period between the World Wars, as may be witnessed from the contributions in the *Revue de littérature comparée* (launched in 1921) and the monumental monograph series, *Bibliothèque de la Revue de littérature comparée* (from 1920 onwards). As we have seen in the previous section, Romance philologists may have unconsciously become allies of this French hegemony. From personal contacts, I have also noticed that Germanists seem to have been excluded or have excluded themselves from this privileged club, although they have contributed much to the field by studying German literature in its relations to other literatures or made use of a broad base of literatures of many nations in order to derive general principles that help to strengthen an aesthetic or theoretical approach to literary studies. It cannot be denied that works by Germanists like Emil Staiger, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik* (Basic Concepts of Poetics) (1946) and Käte Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung* (The Logic of Literature) (1957) were significant enough to cut across disciplinary boundaries and would today be subsumed under the rubric of 'General Literature'.

Moving to younger scholars who made their mark in the postwar years, we would not fail to encounter two Wunderkinder of literary studies, whose *Erstlingswerke* (First publications) have become classics of literary studies and have not gone out of print until now. I am speaking of Peter Szondi (1929-1971) and his *Theorie des modernen Dramas* (Theory of Modern Drama) (1956), and Eberhard Lämmert (1924-2015) and his *Bauformen des Erzählens* (Structures of Narrative) (1955/1980). Szondi, a pupil of Emil Staiger in Zürich, formulated a theoretical work based on a select corpus of dramatic works so convincingly that readers have become captivated by his laconic and apodictic presentation that, according to a reviewer, could not stand close scrutiny, nor could it sustain a more comprehensive repertoire (Höyng, 2009: 314-322).[16] Be that as it may, the work was undeniably *a tour de force*. Lämmert's dissertation, the fruit of a 'pleasure of the text' marked by an amateur relish in first encounters with many foreign literary works, was framed by a theoretical apparatus that had been perfected by previous scholars, which he knew how to use with such perspicacity and imaginative prowess. In actual fact, Literary Morphology, developed by his teacher Günther Müller (1890-1957), did have

[16] This is a very fair and succinct appraisal of Szondi's work, naturally from the vantage point of subsequent scholarly research.

a distinct character of its own, as Lämmert later described at great length in the essay 'Struckturale Typologien in der Literaturwissenschaft zwischen 1945 und 1960' (Structural Typologies in Literary Studies between 1945 and 1960) (Lämmert, 2013: 362-404). Lämmert's work exemplified 'General Literature' very well, theorizing not in the abstract, for the author always remained work-oriented, formulating highly differentiated categories that can further be used as an analytical tool. Lämmert's gift of characterization is exemplary, and I have read and reread his description of the ending of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* with the greatest of pleasure (Lämmert, 1980: 155). Unfortunately, this admirable study has not been translated, and probably cannot be translated, because his very fine and nuanced categorizations can only be expressed in the German language. In this case, the genius of a language can become its own undoing. Literary scholars of those days deliberately wrote in their mother tongues, and some wrote so well as to defy translation. Kurt Wais' *Mallarmé* (1939/1952) should have been written in French, for Wais mastered French to perfection. How many scholars of 19th-century French literature know German?

If 'comparative' literary studies can give way to 'General Literature', one further step is to go to whole hog in engaging in just '*Literaturwissenschaft*' (literary studies) without bothering with the notions of 'general' or 'comparative'. The creation of the University of Konstanz as a 'reform university' in 1966 entailed rethinking on all fronts; without conventional institutes, the new organizational units were known as Fachbereiche (scientific/scholarly areas). In literary studies, scholars in Classical, German, Romance, English/American, and Slavic Studies worked closely together, and Linguistics was also co-opted (I visited the university in 1981 and witnessed first-hand how this cooperation functioned at a seminar with a visiting professor from the Soviet Union.). With these joint efforts, a focal point of interest emerged that soon gained international recognition, namely literary reception, a new emphasis, if not a completely new direction. In terms of quality, graduates from this university have proven their worth in academic fields both at home and abroad.[17] Hans Robert Jauß (1921-1997) personally told me that he and his colleagues were not at all concerned as to how their undertaking was to be called. As far as I could observe, Kontanz combined the virtue of the old philology with the new interest in theory and benefited from the strengths of multifarious scholarly trends. Their regular conferences (1963-1994), well-structured and well-prepared, gave rise to the series, *Poetik und Hermeneutik* (Poetics and Hermeneutics), characterized by scholarly seriousness, imaginative thinking and lively dialogue, whereby the format of paper presentation followed by discussion (meticulously recorded and edited) was extremely well organized.

The lesson to be learned from Konstanz, which called itself *'Harvard am Bodensee'* (Harvard on Lake Constance), was that substance and dynamism counted more than institutional appellation. Looking at Germany as a whole, a happy compromise has been reached in the form of 'General and Comparative Literature', making room also for the umbrella term of Komparatistik (comparatism).

6. OUR DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN, BUT THE HOUSE IS OURS

I am not here quoting from a German source, but this is the impression that an outsider gains when observing German comparatism. The rise of Comparative Literature after World War II owed much to the solid base of the traditional German academia as well as to the dedication of individual scholars. I had the good fortune of being able to investigate the *Nachlässe* (estates) of Horst Rüdiger (1908-1984) and Kurt Wais, deposited with the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach/Neckar and was touched by their shared concern for the *Nachwuchs* (new generation of scholars). Rüdiger was a dynamic organizer. The creation of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* (DGAVL) (German Society for General and Comparative Literature) in 1969 was a move initiated by him, which right from start provided a forum for three young scholars each year to give their 'maiden' presentations.[18] He was also instrumental in the launching of the journal *Arcadia* in 1966 (which will be discussed in a subsequent section). Fritz Ernst (1889-1958), a Swiss comparatist, made a special trip from Zürich to seek out his colleague Wais in Tübingen, and a fruitful collaboration ensued. Wolfgang Kayser (1906-1960) enlisted the cooperation of Kurt Wais for a lexicographical project, to which the latter responded favourably. East Germany was not isolated as some might have made out to be. Fruits of research on the European Enlightenment by Werner Krauss (1900-1976) and his group were profitably utilized by graduate students of my generation in Tübingen (Wais and Krauss were fellow Stuttgarter!). Hans Robert Jauß worked closely with Manfred Naumann (1925-2014), Director of the Zentralinstitut für Literaturgeschichte (ZIL) (Central Institute for Literary History) in East Berlin, and a

[17] According to Janos Riesz (2008), 15 graduates from Konstanz have received professorial appointments in literary studies in Germany, France, and Belgium!

[18] Riesz, J. (2008). Personal Interview; Letter dated January 1, 1970, from Horst Rüdiger to Johannes Hösle.

personal friendship developed between the two scholars beyond their common academic interest in the 'reception' side of the literary enterprise. The GDR knew how to further scholarly relations if it wished to do so (Nagavajara, 1994: 97-98).[19]

On the international front, Tübingen was the first institution to open up to the international community. The *Literarhistoriker-Tagung* (Meeting of literary historians) that took place there in September 1950, only five years after the end of the war, is regarded in the annals of international Comparative Literature as an important milestone. Distinguished literary scholars from European countries and the United States assembled there, and it must be heart-warming to comparatists of today to read its proceedings in order to be reassured of the viability and the vitality of the discipline that barely emerged from a devastating war. Most papers presented could be subsumed under the area of Comparative Literature, although the meeting itself did not bear such an appellation. (The papers presented by British scholars there were rightfully 'comparative', although there was no chair of Comparative Literature at that time in that country.) The papers were collected in a volume and helped launch a new monograph series, *Forschungsprobleme der Vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte* (Research Issues in Comparative Literary History) in 1951—Volume 2 followed in 1958, and my *Schlegel in Frankreich* appeared as Volume 3 in 1966; altogether seven volumes appeared between 1951 and 1979. The use of the term *'Literaturgeschichte'* (literary history) instead of *'Literaturwissenschaft'* (literary studies) is suggestive of the traditional German commitment to the 'historical sense' in humanistic studies. Kurt Wais, who organized the meeting and edited the papers, refrained from making big claims for this undertaking and contented himself with pointing to a great potential for 'centripetal and centrifugal Europe' (Wais, 1951: 11). Other scholars were full of enthusiasm, for example, Walter Höllerer (1922-2003), the first chronicler of postwar German comparatism, (Höllerer, 1952: 289-290) and the young Rita Schober (2008), who a few years later recorded her high estimation of that international gathering (Schober, 1956: 97-101).

As far as international forums were concerned, German comparatists took active part in the activities of the *Fédération Internationale des Langues et Littératures Modernes* (initiated by UNESCO) and the *International Comparative Literature Association* (ICLA). East Germany was represented initially by Werner Krauss and later by Rita Schober and Manfred Naumann. The socialist state was resourceful enough to send its highly distinguished scholars, whose liberal thinking was on the whole tolerated by the government, in the same way as Bertolt Brecht and several distinguished musicians who proved to be the pride of the GDR. Kurt Wais was Vice-President of both organizations. German comparatists were regular contributors to international journals and at times functioned as members of editorial boards (Kurt Wais was on the board of the authoritative French journal, *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*). Most manuals of Comparative Literature often refer to the eventful Second Congress of the ICLA in Chapel Hill in 1958, when René Wellek took the French School of Comparative Literature to task for being too positivist and overly concerned with sources and influences. Those who were not present at the Congress and fed themselves on the written version of Wellek's paper, 'The crisis of Comparative Literature' (reprinted in Wellek, 1975) and other accounts of the event (including those by later scholars) took this to be a declaration of war between the American School and the French School, often assuming that the former was more progressive than the latter. Kurt Wais, acting on behalf of the absent ICLA president, delivered the Opening Speech in English. His speech was cheerful and witty, though he could sense the coming of an imminent storm (Friederich, 1959: 17-22). The German delegation had also wanted to prepare a gift for distribution to the participants in the form of a second volume of the series *Forschungsprobleme der Vergleichenden Literaturgeschichte*, with contributions from international scholars that were meant to repeat the initial success of the first meeting of 1950 in Tübingen (The co-editor, Fritz Ernst, had passed away in March 1958 and the publication could not appear in time for the Congress.). Kurt Wais did not seem to get excited about Wellek's attack, for as far back as 1934 at the age of 27, he was already very critical of some French scholars who were trying to establish 'direct influences and relations with an almost total neglect of interpreting these relations', and whose 'solid positivist' approach he unreservedly censured (Wais, 1934: 299). So it was always 'business as usual' after Chapel Hill. We students and doctoral candidates continued to pursue our study on transnational relations and mutual influences, totally unmindful of any humiliation levelled against the French School, for we were taught to use our facts discriminatingly and to interpret them critically. At the same time, we continued to read Wellek and Warren with much profit and to use Wellek's *History of Criticism* to enrich our knowledge in the field. As a product of German comparatism, I do feel that my teachers and my contemporaries knew how to steer 'the middle path'.

[19] The information was given to me by Naumann (2008) himself, whom I had met at three different ICLA congresses and who warmly received me at his home in Wandlitz near Berlin in 2008. (The GDR would naturally give a special slant to 'reception' by emphasizing the education of 'readers' who would conform to state ideology. But it did not appear to be dogmatic at all, as may be witnessed from Brecht's recommendation of a reading list for school syllabus to the Deutsche Pädagogische Zentralinstitut, as demonstrated in my book, *Brecht and France*. (pp. 97-98)

It fell upon the 'doyen' of East German literary studies, Werner Krauss, to break the silence and to restrain the all too superficial zealots of literary theory. He gave credit to the French School and praised the pioneering works of its protagonists like Fernand Baldensperger's, *Le mouvement des idées dans l'émigration française (1789-1815)* (1924) for being revelatory and intellectually enriching, and Paul Hazard's, *La pensée européenne au XVIIIe siècle* (1946) for a remarkable synthesis (Krauss, 1968: 111-115). In the latter case, he and his researchers undertook further research into the Enlightenment movements in various European countries and found that Hazard may have stressed their similarities more than their differences, a defect that his team tried to redress. In this sense we can observe that the French School had done constructive spade work that could be built upon. I have mentioned Kurt Wais' innovation in literary history, and credit should be given also to Hugo Dyserinck (1927-2020) and his colleagues and students from Aachen for having developed further the original French approach to the issue of 'images' and 'mirages' of foreign countries in their sub-discipline of 'Imagologie' (Zymner and Hölter, 2013: 96).

As for the merits of American comparatism, Krauss recognized its efforts to overcome the hegemony of historicism and its innovative drive towards theory. The warning he felt obliged to give had to do with exclusive freedom in *'beliebige Fragestellung'*, that is to say, posing any questions that come to mind, whether these are rationally grounded or not. As regards German academics who had emigrated to the United States, eminent scholars like Leo Spitzer (1887-1960) and Erich Auerbach, won recognition soon enough. Their works in America, just like in the case of René Wellek, had many followers. Auerbach's (1952) long essay, 'Philologie der Weltliteratur' (translated as 'Philology and World Literature') served as a warning against any levelling of standards and as a call for evaluative rigour. Both scholars were well integrated into the American academia, and German colleagues too were ready to welcome their illuminating contributions. But such recognition did not apply to all. When another German émigré, Ulrich Weisstein (1925-2014), began to pontificate about the course of development that should be taken by German comparatism, he was rebuked by Jürgen Link in no uncertain terms (Link, 1970: 315-318). The door is always open, but the house is theirs!

7. COLLECTIVE WORK IN LIEU OF *OPERA MAGNA*: TWO CASE STUDIES

The 'renaissance' of German Comparative Literature could no longer depend on distinguished scholars of the stature of Curtius and Auerbach with their *ELLM* and *Mimesis*, and German comparatists learned to engage in teamwork soon enough. If the French had their *Revue de littérature comparée*, Germany too should launch their own journal of Comparative Literature. They decided that they could do with more than one: *Arcadia*, edited by Horst Rüdiger, was born in 1966, and *Poetica*, edited by Karl Maurer (b. 1926), in 1967. The archives of the early years of both journals have been deposited at Marbach, and my research with these primary materials has enabled me to take a look behind the scenes and to detect certain work ethics. German comparatism owes a debt of gratitude to these two eminent gentlemen, for their editorship was exemplary. Had they not committed themselves to the task of editing these journals, they might have individually produced their own *opus magnum*. But reading through the documents in Marbach convinced me that they enjoyed their work, a collective work, because they had to enlist the cooperation of innumerable colleagues and contributors (both at home and abroad). The journals were also a good training ground for academic *Nachwuchs*, those aspiring talents who could benefit from the experience of their two elder brothers, who might be demanding but well-meaning. For potential authors, even rejections of their manuscripts were not a cause for despair, for the editors took great care to point to the shortcomings and to propose improvements, sometimes with concrete suggestions for submission to other journals. That was collegiality in that best sense of the word.

Arcadia made no secret about its 'old-school' commitment to the 'comparative' methods rather than those adopted in the circle of 'General Literature' (Letter from Rüdiger January 1, 1975). No wonder that *Arcadia* entered into an exchange arrangement with the French *Revue de la littérature comparée*. Rüdiger was fairly honest with his policy: 'Comparative Literature is a young […] discipline: if it is to thrive at all, it cannot function with assumptions, but should bring forth concrete evidence' (Letter to a colleague in Australia, September 9, 1968). He himself read all the manuscripts and sought help from 'readers' in some specific cases. He was meticulous, and even senior colleagues did not mind his suggestions for improvement. For young colleagues, and non-Germans, Rüdiger functioned as a tutor. Having accepted the manuscript of a Romanian author, he offered some corrections with following explanation: 'German is not a rhetorical language and every superlative sounds exaggerated'. (Letter, September 30, 1969) Rüdiger maintained on one occasion that he spent as much as one and a half to two hours on writing letters related to one specific contribution (Letter, March 2, 1978).

Arcadia catered to a broad spectrum of contributors. Naturally it had to rely on contributions from well-established scholars, both Germans and non-Germans. Kurt Wais' essay on Dante (discussed in Section 4) first appeared in Arcadia 3, H. 1, in 1968 (Kurt Wais' pupil, Johannes Hösle [1929-2017] of Regensburg

University, worked closely with Rüdiger for many years.). Considering itself an instrument for the furtherance of Comparative Literature, it had to give ample space to reviews of scholarly publications. It also acted as chronicler of the development of the discipline, and it was fortunate enough to be able to depend on the 'dirty work' done by industrious 'backroom boys', who wrote reports on all meetings – national and international – they had attended. One of them was Erwin Koppen (1929-1990) who was to succeed Rüdiger as Chair of Comparative Literature at Bonn University in 1973 and as Editor of *Arcadia* in 1985. He was to grow into Germany's foremost comparatist with many-sided interests, whose career was cut short by an untimely death. I wish to refer to a very demanding review article called, 'Twenty-five volumes of the YCGL: An evaluation', (Koppen, 1978: 63-71), though not published in *Arcadia*, but was a work commissioned by that American journal itself. Koppen succeeded in giving an impartial account of YCGL in its role in serving international Comparative Literature, the lesson being that American scholarly liberalism could also be emulated, which was what *Arcadia* was doing. Another scholar who emerged from the circle of *Arcadia* is Maria Moog-Grünewald (2007), chair of Romance Philology and Comparative Literature in Tübingen.

To launch another journal of Comparative Literature one year after *Arcadia* naturally needed some justification, *Poetica* set out to fill certain gaps left by *Arcadia*. For example, it welcomed contributions in the direction of General Literature. As for theory, *Poetica* often preferred to hark back to the German term '*Grundsätze'* (basic principles), and amidst the archival materials deposited in Marbach which I was able to examine, this concept cropped up every so often in the correspondence between the editor, Karl Maurer, and contributors and colleagues (who were asked to act as 'readers'), regardless of whether the manuscripts were to be accepted or rejected.[20] Poetica was favourable to submissions that treat of, or lead to, *'grundsätzliche Diskussionen'* (discussions of basic principles), the example given being such topics as 'problems of translation, writing literature in foreign languages' (Letter from Karl Maurer, March 16, 1970). When 'theory' was used, it was, more often than not, in the sense of theoretical thinking, or drawing theoretical conclusions from the experience of literature, and not a priori theories imposed upon acts of literary study. We have since departed very far from the sobriety of humanities scholars of mid-twentieth century.

At the planning stage, Maurer and his colleagues had been thinking of launching a 'transdisciplinary journal for linguistic and literary studies […] with contributions that, in their methods and outcomes, should be of interest beyond the confines of any specialized subject' (Letter from Maurer, July 15, 1966). That such a vehicle for scholarly activities should serve to promote General and Comparative Literature and not single 'philologies' was a matter of course. As I have discussed in Section 3 in connection with the German academic tradition, 'methodology' was of great importance, and in the case of *Poetica*, the protagonists were probably also motivated by a pedagogical mission, as the planned journal was to be hosted by the University of Bochum.

The choice of Karl Maurer (b. 1926) was very wise; though officially a Romance philologist, he is a polyglot, at home in literary studies as well as linguistics, and his interest in Eastern European Studies augured well with the liberal philosophy of the new journal. He would later extend the scope of the journal to cover Japanology and then Sinology. The archive testifies to his many-sidedness, as he sought cooperation with colleagues from German and non-German institutions of many academic provenances. When he decided to present the case of Poetica to the ICLA Congress in Innsbruck in 1979, he was conscious that his was one of the 24 existing international journals of Comparative Literature. The 'collective force' behind him must have warded off any feeling of intimidation.

8. TÜBINGEN AND BERLIN: TWO CASE STUDIES

There are personal reasons for my choice of Tübingen University and the Free University Berlin. I studied at the former institution and was a frequent visiting scholar and research fellow at the latter. The two institutions shared some common characteristics, for example, the one-man-department structure and the anchoring of Comparative Literature in one of the existing *Philologien*. Differences are also noticeable, with Tübingen developing further some features of the traditional 'French School' and Berlin, being a new creation, innovating with theory.

[20] I had met Karl Maurer (2008) at two previous international conferences and visited him at his home in Bochum. He intimated to me extremely useful information on German comparatism and emphasized his preference for the term *Grundsätze* over 'theory' which had become a fad.

I shall begin with Tübingen. Its leadership position in Germany itself may have been contested by some German scholars themselves, sometimes for non-professional reasons,[21] but foreign colleagues seemed to think otherwise.[22] Recruited initially for 'Comparative Literature' only, Kurt Wais later switched to 'Romance Philology *and* Comparative Literature', in the belief that a solid base in one or more *Philologien* would strengthen comparative studies. On the teaching side, Wais' lectures took on broader dimensions, and although he did not deal with literary theory as such, his lectures on European and American criticism *à la Wellek* (whom he greatly admired) were extremely comprehensive, and I vividly remember his dealing with some lesser-known American critics whom he had got to know during his trips to the United States. As for literary theory, an assistant and later lecturer, Dieter Janik, was encouraged to conduct introductory courses, especially on Structuralism and Semiotics. The young colleague always had 'full houses'.[23]

But it was the *Oberseminar* on Monday evenings in the Alte Aula that all his students must have found memorable. Senior students and doctoral candidates would give their research papers which were discussed by fellow students under the guidance of the professor. One could notice that Kurt Wais thought that interactions among researchers could, at whatever level, best engender and encourage comparative thinking. But it was the second part of the session that we found inspiring. We called it the 'one-book-a-week approach' which formed the foundation of a lively discussion which sometimes lasted till 10 p.m. (the official schedule being from 6 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.). The 'pleasure of the text' was marked by an 'amateur' enjoyment, while the professor saw to it that certain *Grundsätze* (as was the case with Karl Maurer) could be drawn from our common reading and critical discussion. We learned more than substance or methodologies: we learned how to learn, an art, once mastered, would last for the rest of your life.

The official 'comparative' training was during my studies there (1961-1965) supplemented by another extramural programme of 'one-book-a-week', initiated by Walter Jens (1923-2013), Professor of Rhetoric, also a writer and critic of distinction. Contemporary works of literature, both German and foreign (in translation), were discussed for the benefit of students from all faculties (who usually filled the largest auditorium known as the *Festsaal*). Among the works we read under the guidance of Professors Wais and Jens were plays that sometimes were put on stage at the municipal theatre, the *'Landestheater'*, and at the extremely progressive studio theatre, the *'Zimmertheater'*. I returned home with a considerable literary and theatrical repertoire.

Being an old university (founded in 1477), Tübingen was strong in a variety of disciplines, also in the humanities. I vividly recall the celebration for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth in 1964: a series of lectures on Shakespeare with speakers from Tübingen itself could be organized, with contributions from the various *Philologien*, the arts and music departments, which were published in the same year under the title, *Shakespeare: Seine Welt – unsere Welt* (Shakespeare: His World - Our World). With such a dynamic intellectual ambience, it was no wonder that distinguished guest speakers loved to come to this small university town and continue to do so today. Several years ago, I heard Herta Müller, the Nobel Prize winner for literature of 2009, declare: 'I always accept the invitation to speak here. Tübingen recognized me when I was still nobody.' The master mind behind this project was Jürgen Wertheimer (Interview, 2007).

The Free University Berlin was created in 1948. From an educational point of view, West Berlin needed to have a university of its own, since the venerated university, now known as Humboldt University, had become part of East Berlin, the capital of the GDR (The FUB's pre-history in the Soviet occupied zone needs no elaboration here.). The epithet 'free' was linked to West Berlin as the bastion of the 'Free World' during the Cold War. The appointment of Peter Szondi (1929-1971) as Chair and Director of the Seminar für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft in 1965 (which now bears his name and is designated as 'Institut') happened to be an act of putting the right man on the right job at the right time. The Faculty made the offer to the young scholar aged 35 with the intention of creating an independent unit with an appropriate budget, (including that for a new library), to be characterized by an innovative scholarly direction that would turn Comparative Literature into an *'allgemeine und systematische Literaturwissenschaft'* (General and systematic literary studies) (Albers, 2016: 453). That was in consonance with Szondi's own approach to comparatism: 'The subject is by its very nature of interdisciplinary (particularly inter-philological) kind: it deals with the interconnectedness primarily between German, English, American, and French literatures as well as problems of literary theory that are common to those philologies' (Albers, 2016: 78). We can notice straightaway that

[21] A comparatist from a neighbouring country who made his professional career in Germany thought that a 'conspiracy' against Kurt Wais was afoot, which very much hampered the progress of German comparatism as a whole. As an outsider, I am in no position to judge.

[22] At an international congress in Strasbourg in 1991, I had dinner with a group of senior French-speaking literary scholars, and one of them, on being informed where I had studied, reacted: 'Vous avez eu une bonne formation.' (You had a good education.) and not, 'Vous auriez du avoir une bonne formation.' (You must have had a good education.).

[23] Letter from Kurt Wais to Weber (first name missing), June 24, 1971. Further information was kindly given to me by Dieter Janik (2022) himself (E-mail).

theory and philology belonged together. The emphasis on specific western literatures was similar to the early university curricula in the French-occupied zone, a little narrower even, with French instead of Romance Philology. The sobriety of Szondi's treatment of theory is summarized by one of his loyal students as follows: 'Literary theory meant for Szondi not the application of a theory to literature, but the development of theory out of the interpretation of literature' (Albers, 2016: 115). Comparatists of today might disagree! Szondi, the professor, was a versatile scholar with pedagogical seriousness. He knew well that the shift towards 'General Literature' was not to be taken at the price of philological thoroughness and resistance to wild revelling in the theoretical craze. He complained in 1971 about his students as follows: 'In our Seminar […] an esoterism à la Derrida is spreading more and more' (I don't like to say it, because I do like Derrida very much.) They just imagine things about the texts […] Philology in the meantime stands in the corner' (Albers, 2016: 474).

Examining the courses offered by Szondi, one is convinced that he himself remained faithful to the study of the literary work. He mentioned a seminar on Molière, in which the students disappointed him. But surely, he did have excellent students who appreciated him so much, and who later painstakingly collected and edited his manuscripts and lecture notes that appeared after his death in book form, such as *Das lyrische Drama des Fin de siècle* (Szondi, 1975) and *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik* (Szondi, 1970). Yet, he was not so dogmatic as to refuse his students access to 'the real thing'. Jacques Derrida came a few times to lecture, and, after Szondi's death, took up a visiting professorship for one semester (1973/74). I must admit that the list of guest speakers in Berlin was more extensive in many ways than that I experienced in Tübingen. The incomparable documentation volume, *Nach Szondi* (Albers, 2016), testifies to the success of what I would call 'The Berlin Enterprise'.

I consider it appropriate to end my essay with the success story of Berlin. Peter Szondi may have been made into a myth, but he left a solid scholarly legacy that his successors could build upon. The *'Dahlemer Idylle'* (the term coined by me) (Albers, 2016: 417-421)[24] contains dramas of dedication, integrity, deep thinking and re-thinking, politics at the institutional and national levels, loyalty and disloyalty, suicide (Szondi's own), and even an attempted collegial parricide (Albers, 2016: 295-297)![25] Berlin Comparatism today, the rightful pride of the German academia, has been the fruit of collective work (as may witnessed from the 'interregnum' of six years without a professor!). The return of Eberhard Lämmert, Szondi's loyal colleague, in 1977 has contributed much to the transformation of a 'one-man-institute' into a collective force of many-sided interests. My teacher Wais called Lämmert 'a great organizer' and aptly so!

9. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

I have called the last section of my study 'General Observations' instead of the usual 'Concluding Remarks' because I have not found 'conclusive' answers to all the issues raised. The new beginnings of German comparatism could be described, to borrow the term used by the Schlegel brothers, as being in the process of 'becoming' (G. *Werden*), and it was all the more interesting and instructive for that. Some of my observations are based on correspondence between scholars,[26] personal experiences and interviews and many of these may even sound anecdotal. But I wish to maintain that they are relevant.

A comparatist by training, who turned 'cultural manager', Katharina von Ruckteschell-Katte, currently Director of the Goethe Institute, London, related to me that her teacher, Erwin Koppen, unequivocally declared: 'My students shall never be unemployed' (Ruckteschell-Katte, 2007). This was a profession of faith in comparatism as an intellectual force that could prepare its graduates – though not for specific professions – for real-world situations. Within less than 30 years, the concern expressed by René Cheval about German academics 'losing touch with reality' was at least challenged, if not dissipated. This did not neutralize the reservations and misgivings expressed by some eminent comparatists, such as Peter Brockmeier (Berlin) and

[24] My contribution to the volume bears the title, 'Die Dahlemer Idylle als Nährboden für eine grenzüberschreitende Wissenschaftskultur'. (Dahlem idyll as a breeding ground for transboundary scholarly culture) (Albers, 2016: 417-421).

[25] Werner Hamacher (1948-2017) vehemently attacked his former teacher, Eberhard Lämmert, on account of the latter's ignorance of Derrida & Co. and his reluctance to help out Derrida in a personal matter.

[26] Please allow me to say a few words about *archival sources*. With its mammoth collections of primary materials, it is not possible for the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach to catalogue all letters individually and to assign reference numbers accordingly. Letters are usually collected under the names of senders. With regard to the *Nachlässe* (literary estates), some forms of grouping and sub-grouping are introduced. For example, letters from Kurt Wais are to found under 'Wais-Nachlass', whereas those from Horst Rüdiger and Karl Maurer are mainly collected in the '*Arcadia*-Nachlass' and '*Poetica*-Vorlass', respectively. The cataloguing system may not satisfy everybody, but advice from the staff was always forthcoming. At present, researchers cannot as yet work *online*, but their presence in the Manuscript Department at Marbach can be an experience of a lifetime, for that is the place where they can make startling discoveries.

Janos Riesz (Bayreuth) (Brockmeier, 2008; Riesz, 2008), about the lack of organizational mechanisms to support comparatism as an independent subject or to make official concrete provisions for employment.

This deficiency, ironically, had its roots in the strengths of the German academic tradition itself, whereby the various *Philologien* were of superior quality, which induced some comparatists themselves to want to preserve the link between comparatism and the traditional philologies. Besides, what kept comparatism alive during those 30 years was an 'amateur' relish in 'the pleasure of the text' from various literatures that automatically encouraged 'comparative' thinking. There was no denial that this 'amateur' (in the etymological sense of the word) literary culture accounted for the very best students opting to study this subject in spite of the absence of concrete prospects for employment. It remained for the academia to come up with 'systems' that would give a certain rigour to the discipline, such as the compulsory mastery of foreign languages, the commitment to philological methods, the hermeneutical skills and the inculcation of theoretical thinking based on critical reading (and not mere recitation of faddish theoretical gospels). As pointed out in the previous section, there was much sobriety in a 'star' comparatist's approach to theory in the case of Peter Szondi, who never lost sight of literature itself. Our present age may have expanded the scope of Comparative Literature to extreme parameters such that it has lost its original identity as literary studies (Marčetić, 2018: 161).[27] Postwar German comparatism should give us pause. Comparatism used to be a domain of erudition and mere political correctness would not suffice.

With the benefit of hindsight, the outsider who had the good fortune of observing first-hand parts of those initial 30 years does not want to withhold his wonderment. It must be emphasized again that the German academic tradition contributed much to the rebirth of Comparative Literature. Good reading means critical reading across national frontiers and preferably in the respective languages. That was what was happening. Methodological competence was but an added strength. I have referred to those distinguished scholars not necessarily as a hagiographical tribute, but as a recognition of their contributions to a solid scholarly foundation that in the end proved to be self-generating and self-renewing. From the aspirations of those home-sick European exiles through the wisdom of reconciliatory politics on the part of the Allies to the survival of the discipline in Berlin-Dahlem in the hands of junior academic staff in the early 1970s, German comparatism did travel a long way. I have used the term 'sobriety' several times and am ready to use it again if need be. The French School and the American School had no cause to quarrel once they were settled on German soil.

I shall conclude on a humane note. There were inspiring teachers during those 30 years period, 1945-1975. I have learned from them as much as learned about them. As René Wellek (Yale) wrote the last volume of his *History of Criticism* while bed-ridden, Erwin Koppen (Bonn), on account of his health, conducted his last doctoral examination at his home, sitting on a sofa with the candidate sitting beside him, a testimony of familial relationship which, alas, was not to last long. What more could one ask for?

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[27] This is a well-documented and sober account of recent developments of the discipline, that deserves to be widely known. It can be freely downloaded.

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