Vol. 42 · No. 1 · 2009

Modern Austrian Literature

A Journal Devoted to the Study of Austrian Literature and Culture

Imperial Mystique and Empiricist Mysticism: Inner Colonialism and Exoticism in Musil's *Törleß*

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In recent years critics and historians on both sides of the Atlantic have called for the application of postcolonial theory to Habsburg studies.[1] This development has provoked controversy, and with good reason. To begin, most critics agree Austria-Hungary cannot qualify as a colonial power in the strict sense of the term (see, for example, Prutsch 41 and Ruthner 111, 114). Indeed, several factors distinguish the situation of the Dual Monarchy from the empires of Britain and France. Firstly, and most importantly, the Habsburg Empire lacked overseas colonies. Moreover, some of its territorial possessions, such as Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, had not been conquered or seized by force, but instead shared a political union with Austria that stretched back to the Medieval Holy Roman Empire (Luft 168). Further, the Habsburg Monarchy formally granted equal rights to all its multi-ethnic citizenry, in stark contrast to the systematic racist oppression inflicted on indigenous populations under overseas colonialism (Komlosy 71; Uhl 49). Finally, it is difficult to reconcile the notion of colonialist economic exploitation with the fact that just before World War I the regions of Bohemia and Moravia enjoyed a higher per capita income than all but one of the provinces of Austria proper (Komlosy 57). No, the argument for the use of postcolonial theory cannot rely on retrospective analogies between the disparate historical and geographical situations of the Dual Monarchy and those European empires with remote colonial possessions. Rather, it draws strength from observing contemporary depictions of the relations between the Germanophone population and its various "subject peoples," which frequently imply assumptions of ethnic and cultural superiority in the manner of a colonial power (see Ruthner 116). Consequently, most critics agree that it is in the realm of cultural expression, in the construction of images of the Self and the Other, and in the subsequent establishment of a hierarchy between different peoples, that postcolonial theories have the most relevance.[2]

Indeed, despite the peculiar proximity between the Austro-Germans and the various Others of the Habsburg Empire, the ruling elite frequently resorted to exotic imagery in its depictions of its "subject peoples." As Moritz Csáky explains, this daily contact with different ethnicities and cultures in the empire's cities led to a compensatory desire to exaggerate the distinction between the Self and Other:

> Um die vermeintliche eigene Identität immer wieder neu zu begründen und zu festigen, versuchte man folglich dieser Fremdheiten zu vergewissern, was nichts anderes bedeutete, als daß man solche Fremdheiten zuweilen

> künstlich hochzuspielen, zu konstruieren oder zu "erfinden" begann, um sich dann ihrer zu entledigen. (41)

As we shall see, Robert Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (1906) invokes such heightened images of alterity in depicting the response of the protagonist, an Austrian schoolboy, to the local Czech women. In so doing, it creates an associative link between the internal imperial relationship with a very proximate Other (i.e., Czech women from what Robert Luft terms the "Kernlandschaften" or "core territories" of Bohemia and Moravia [168]) and global overseas colonialism. Thus the imaginative terms of reference found in the novel demand a reading informed by postcolonial theory.

Critics perceive in these depictions of relationships between native men and foreign women a confluence of mutually reinforcing hierarchies based on gender and ethnicity (Müller-Funk 26; Escher 4). However, such an approach tends to overlook the peculiar ambivalence generated by works of fiction, as opposed to, for example, historical or anthropological texts. Works such as Musil's novel present images of exoticism as part of the imaginative process through which their Austrian or German protagonists attempt to assimilate the alterity represented by their Czech sexual partners to their own self-identity. By depicting this process of identity formation in characters who display a tenuous sense of self, these texts eschew simple declarations of cultural hegemony in favor of a more nuanced, multivalent, and ironic approach that provides opportunities not only for self-reflection but also for self-critique. This paper will provide a detailed analysis of the imaginative connection between the internal colonialism of Austria-Hungary[3] and global imperialism in Musil's *Törleß* before suggesting how these findings might inform readings of similar works by Musil, Max Brod, and Hermann Broch.

Musil's first novel might seem an odd choice for an exploration of the link between Austrian self-identity and global visions of the exotic. After all, the text is not set in some far-flung outpost of the empire, but rather in Moravia, a province adjacent to Lower Austria and Vienna, and most of the action takes place in the cloistered realm of a boys' boarding school for the Germanophone elite. However, visions of the exotic play a vital role in suggesting the broader significance of the eponymous hero's confusions for both the Habsburg Empire and the wider world. To begin, this essay will focus on the relationship between the Austrian schoolboys and the local Czech women, including the prostitute Božena. It will then consider the supposedly Indian philosophy espoused by Törleß's schoolmate Beineberg and its implications for the Western philosophical tradition. In this way, this study will explore the role of exoticist and Orientalist motifs in connecting the ostensibly circumscribed plot—Törless's involvement in the torture of his classmate Basini and his subsequent ethical and epistemological crises—to a broad critique of both contemporary Habsburg society and the Western Enlightenment tradition.

Imperial Mystique: The Austro-German Self and the Czech Other in Musil's *Törleß*

This notion of self-critique is at variance with previous readings that address the inter-ethnic encounters in *Törleß*. J. P. Stern and Ritchie Robertson both conclude that the novel supports the hegemony of the Austro-German elite over the native Czech population. In his essay "The Education of the Master Race," Stern explores the novel's political context, arguing that the work represents one of a series expressing "the theme of German superiority and the Slav-German conflict" (80) and as such heralds the *Drang nach Osten* of the Third Reich and the concentration camps at Treblinka and Auschwitz (79–80). Quoting Stern's views with approval, Robertson situates the text within a broad history of German literary representations of Slavs: a history that shows the persistence of the antinomies "Geist und Natur, Mann und Frau, Deutsche und Slawen" (140). However, my analysis will show how the novel probes, rather than promotes, the notion of Austro-German supremacy. Far from offering proto-Nazi sentiments, the novel in fact undermines pretensions to cultural superiority by delving into the psychosexual mechanisms of fantasy and repression behind Törleß's response to Czech alterity.

These fantasies of alterity are apparent from the beginning of the text. We learn that Frau Hofrat von Törleß's solicitude at having to leave her son in "so ferner, unwirtlicher Fremde" is assuaged somewhat by the knowledge that the boarding school's remote location was intended to protect its charges from the corruptive influences of the city (8). With hindsight, this reasoning appears richly ironic given that any urban center would be hard pressed to match the depravity shown by Törleß's schoolmates Beineberg and Reiting in their persecution of their fellow pupil Basini. There is a further irony in the notion that this Moravian town is utterly remote, inhospitable, and alien. If we accept Mährisch-Weisskirchen (now Hranice in the Czech Republic) as the autobiographical inspiration for the fictional town of W., then even the narrator's claim that the area lies "im Osten des Reiches" seems exaggerated (8) given Moravia's proximity to Lower Austria and Vienna.[4] Thus this passage reveals the paradoxes of Austro-German imperialism. For while the Viennese elite rejects the integral territories of the Bohemian Crown as irredeemably foreign, that very perception enables them to partake vicariously in the colonial experience denied by their lack of overseas possessions. Given that Moravia had been allied with Austria since the Middle Ages, Frau Törleß's view of the region as exotic and peripheral shows the power of cultural stereotypes to overturn historical reality.

To understand this contested area, it is useful to refer to Mary Louise Pratt's notion of a "contact zone" as "the space of colonial encounters" between peoples who "establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (6). This description applies to the

space in which the German-speaking schoolboys encounter the local women, as demonstrated in the following confrontation:

> Waren sie [the women] jung und drall, so flog ihnen manches derbe slawische Scherzwort zu. Sie stießen sich an und kicherten über die "jungen Herren"; manchmal schrie eine auf, wenn im Vorübergehen allzu hart ihre Brüste gerstreift wurden, oder erwiderte mit einem Schimpfwort einen Schlag auf die Schenkel. Manche sah auch bloß mit zornigem Ernste hinter den Eilenden drein; und der Bauer lächelte verlegen,—halb unsicher, halb gutmütig,—wenn er zufällig gekommen war. (17)

This scene depicts a literal "contact zone" in which the schoolboys' sexual harassment of the local women has become a regular ritual. The implication that this is a frequent occurrence that simply must be endured is only one of the strategies used by the narrator to condone their behavior. The passage partially absolves the boys of culpability by claiming that it is the youth and sturdy physique of the women that attract the pupils' coarse comments and by using the passive voice without an agent in the second sentence. Moreover, the formulation "wenn im Vorübergehen *allzu hart* ihre Brüste gestreift wurden" (my italics) intimates that there is an acceptably gentle manner in which such an assault might be committed. The narrator's tone suggests that the right to commit this casual sexual abuse represents one of the privileges granted to a ruling elite at the top of the ethnic, social, and sexual hierarchies.

However, by applying what Edward Said terms a "contrapuntal reading," i.e., one that takes into account the historical processes of both imperialism and the resistance it engenders (*Culture and Imperialism* 66–67), we can restore some agency to Musil's Moravians and uncover suggestions of counter-hegemonic tendencies among this group. Certainly, the local women do not all acquiesce passively to the boys' assault. In fact, their responses run the gamut from good-humored badinage through silent, indignant rage to yelling and swearing. The women's varied reactions and their menfolk's confusion arise from the liminal status of the "jungen Herren." For although the pupils enjoy privilege and power, their immaturity belies their sexual menace. In addition, the linguistic confusion of this scene undercuts any sense of absolute cultural domination. While the boys address the women with crude jokes in Czech, some of the women respond by making giggling references to "die jungen Herren" in German. This exchange of languages is significant in a region that in 1897 saw massive demonstrations by German speakers against minister-president Badeni's decision to grant Czech equal status with German as an official language (see Agnew 149). The language of the boys' and women's speech thus intimates a more liminal, hybrid space between the two cultures than the content of their addresses would at first suggest.

When considering Törleß's personal reaction to the Slavs, the text begins to explore in detail the fantasies that the Self projects onto the Other in the process of identity formation. In contrast to the nonchalant boorishness of his peers, Törleß experiences an intense, erotic reverie when he encounters the local people. Through narrow "Torwege" he spies the following scene:

> Fast nackte Kinder wälzten sich in dem Kot der Höfe, da und dort gab der Rock eines arbeitenden Weibes die Kniekehlen frei oder drückte sich eine schwere Brust straff in die Falten der Leinwand. Und als ob dies sogar unter einer anderen tierischen, drückenden Atmosphäre sich abspielte, floß aus dem Flur der Häuser eine träge, schwere Luft, die Törleß begierig einatmete. (17)

Here Törleß fulfills the role of the colonial voyeur who is captivated by the scantily clad natives and the sultry, savage atmosphere of his surroundings. However, the reference to "Torwege" prior to this passage reminds us that the protagonist is named Tör*less* and will therefore be unable to gain physical access to this scene. Rather, the courtyard acts as the site of projection for his desire. The expression "als ob all dies sogar unter einer ganz anderen tierischen, drückenden Atmosphäre abspielte" suggests through the subjunctive voice and the adverb "sogar" the disparity between reality and Törleß's fantasy. Finally, the adverb "begierig," used to describe the protagonist's heaving breathing, confirms that this fantasy arises from his own desire, rather than from any qualities intrinsic to the oblivious Moravians.

Törleß's reaction to the villagers recalls the "monarch-of-all-I-survey" attitude that Pratt ascribes to the visually acquisitive colonialist. He aestheticizes the scene and endows it with extra meaning in the manner described by Pratt (204), even connecting it with paintings by old masters in museums (*Törleß* 17). For Pratt, such a pictorial attitude towards reality betokens a stable relationship between subject and object in which the "scene is deictically ordered with reference to his [the viewer's] vantage point, and is static" (205), as befits a "relation of *mastery* predicated between the seer and the seen" (204, her italics). However, instead of consuming the scene, Törleß wishes it would consume him:

> Er wartete auf irgend etwas, so wie er vor diesen Bildern immer auf etwas gewartet hatte, das sich nie ereignete. Worauf …? … Auf ewas Überraschendes, noch nie Gesehenes; auf einen ungeheuerlichen Anblick, von dem er sich nicht die geringste Vorstellung machen konnte; auf irgend etwas von fürchterlicher, tierischer Sinnlichkeit; das ihn wie mit Krallen packe und von den Augen aus zerreiße; auf ein Erlebnis, das in irgendeiner noch ganz unklaren Weise mit den schmutzigen Kitteln der Weiber, mit ihren rauhen Händen, mit der Niedrigkeit ihrer Stuben, mit … mit einer Beschmutzung an dem Kot der Höfe … zusammenhängen müsse … (17–18)

While Pratt describes the imperialist taking possession of the landscape through his eyes, Musil's text reverses the schema by having the protagonist wish that the scene would seize him and annihilate him through his gaze. However, even in the realm of Törleß's imagination, the subversion of the hierarchy between subject and object does not reverse the power dynamic between Austro-Germans and Czechs. Indeed, he remains only dimly aware of the connection between his desire to be devoured by art and the sight of the local women ("in irgendeiner unklaren Weise […] zusammenhängen müsse …"). Instead, he fetishizes the signs of the women's impoverishment and squalid living conditions—their dirty smocks, rough hands, low houses, and filthy courtyards—in order to heighten the frisson of his imagined degradation. By eroticizing the differences between the Austro-German subject and Czech object, the schoolboy's fantasy ultimately reinforces the hierarchy between the ethnic groups.

If Törleß's voyeurism implicitly recalls that of the colonist, elsewhere Musil's text is explicit about the colonialist and racist fantasies that fuel his protagonist's imagination. Sitting in a café with Beineberg, Törleß finds that something as banal and literally everyday as nightfall can induce visions of race war: "Es war eine Welt für sich, dieses Dunkel. Wie ein Schwarm schwarzer Feinde war es über die Erde gekommen und hatten die Menschen erschlagen oder vertrieben oder was immer getan, das jede Spur von ihnen auslöschte. Und Törleß schien es, daß er sich darüber freue" (24). His siding with the forces of darkness adds a bathetic note of teenage misanthropy, but does not alter the dichotomy between "Menschen," on the one hand, and inhuman "schwarz[e] Feinde," on the other. Nor does it alter the fact that his vision projects the atrocities committed by white imperialists, such as mass expulsions and genocide, onto a fictitious black foe. Here the context for Törleß's reverie is crucial: Beineberg has just aired his views on Indian philosophy (18) and shortly before that the boys encountered the Czech women (17). This sequence implies a link in the protagonist's mind between the Moravians, India, and his unspecified, imaginary black hordes. Through this chain of associations, the novel connects the internal imperialism of the Dual Monarchy with overseas colonialism in India and Africa. Thus Törleß's train of thought suggests that the Self does not admit gradations in alterity but rather casts even the most proximate Other as irredeemably alien and exotic.

As in the encounter with the local women, the text reveals the sexual insecurity behind Törleß's racist projections. At nightfall, the world resembles an "empty dark house" which he is to explore "bis […] er der Herrin selbst der schwarzen Scharen gegenüberstünde. Und in diesem Augenblicke würden auch die Schlösser aller anderen Türen zufallen, durch die er gekommen, und nur weit vor den Mauern würden die Schatten der Dunkelheit wie schwarze Eunuchen auf Wache stehen und die Nähe der Menschen fernhalten" (24–25). This passage exemplifies a tendency in Musil's text to elaborate Törleß's inner visions to the point where they efface the outer world of the diegesis. A Freudian reading of

this passage would emphasize Törleß's castration complex, most obviously in the eunuch guards, but also in the sexually ambiguous "Herrin" who commands them. However, if we turn our focus outwards to the origin of these images, the latter figure recalls the eroticism and despotism stereotypically associated with the East, while her eunuch guards represent the standard entourage in the Orientalist tableau. Thus this passage shows how racist, colonialist, and Orientalist clichés inform and deform the protagonist's erotic imagination.

Törleß's erotic experiences are not limited to fantasy, since he, like his schoolmates, pays regular visits to the local prostitute Božena. The visit described in the text, however, represents the ironic fulfillment of his masochistic tendencies, since it offers humiliation and degradation without sex. Even before he and Beineberg arrive at the inn where Božena works, they are exposed to potential violence and shame in the form of a drunken and aggressive client who threatens the prostitute and seems about to go after the boys (27–28). Reflecting on this near miss, Törleß concludes that he would have been defenseless:

> Der zierliche Degen kam ihm entgegen diesen groben Fäusten wie ein Spott vor. Außerdem die Schande und die Strafe, die er zu gegenwärtigen hätte! Es bliebe ihm nur übrig zu fliehen oder sich aufs Bitten zu verlegen. Oder sich von Božena schützen zu lassen. Der Gedanke durchrieselte ihn. Aber das war es! Nur das! Nichts anderes! […] Dieses Heraustreten aus seiner bevorzugten Stellung unter die gemeinen Leute; unter sie,—tiefer als sie! (30)

While Stern's description of the Moravian proletariat as "drunken, foul-mouthed, and darkly threatening" (80) certainly applies to Božena's customer, it does not take into account the fact that Törleß imagines seeking protection from the Czech prostitute herself. In this regard, the "zierliche Degen," which the Austrian schoolboy finds so risible when compared to the drunken Slav's fists, functions not only as a phallic symbol but also as the insignia of the Habsburg ruling class. It is indeed difficult to reconcile Stern's claim that the novel bolsters Austro-German superiority with the fact that here a young member of the elite culture envisages being entirely at the mercy of the lowly Moravians and is, moreover, delighted at the prospect.

Yet at first sight the character of Božena seems to fulfill many of the stereotypes associated with Slavic women in the Austrian literature of the period. Wolfgang Müller-Funk defines this "Other woman" thus: "Die andere, fremde Frau […] ist botmäßig, als Hure, aber womöglich auch als Mama, als Geliebte, wie als erdschwere Nährmutter-Amme" (27). Admittedly, Božena is a prostitute by trade, and during his visit, Törleß begins, to his great discomfort, to link her to his own mother (32–33). However, in this case, the list of clichés falls wide of the mark for two reasons. Firstly, in her interaction with Törleß and Beineberg, Božena is far from submissive ("botmäßig"). Indeed, in both her affect and her speech, she

emerges as a figure of resistance to the prevailing cultural order. Secondly, the text specifically presents the association between Božena and Törleß's mother as a mental projection on the part of the protagonist, rather than as a response to any maternal quality in the prostitute. By dissociating Božena's own discourse and behavior from the Viennese elite's perception of her, we can see her as a vehicle for social criticism, rather than a mere cultural stereotype.[5]

The brief account of Božena's life indicates the text's interest in not merely reproducing such clichéd notions but rather in consciously exploring their effects. Her descent into prostitution began while working as a chambermaid in Vienna and resulted, at least in part, from the attitudes of her Austro-German employers: "Die bäurische Art, welche sie so wenig ganz abstreifte wie ihren breiten, festen Gang, sicherte ihr das Vertrauen ihrer Herrinnen, welche an dem Kuhstallduft ihres Wesens seine Einfalt liebten, und die Liebe ihrer Herren, welche daran das Parfum schätzten" (28–29). Ironically, it is her rustic lack of sophistication that precipitates her moral corruption because of the reactions the "aroma of cow stalls" provokes in her male Viennese employers. By combining the stereotype of the earthy, naïve Czech maid with the equally shopworn figure of the cynical, metropolitan prostitute, the text relativizes both clichés.

Božena's contempt for the ruling class is apparent in her behavior towards her schoolboy clients: "Gegen diese kehrte sie absichtlich ihre rohesten und häßlichsten Eigenschaften heraus, weil sie—wie die Frau sich auszudrücken pflegte—ja trotzdem gerade so zu ihr gekrochen kommen würden" (29). As someone who has lived in the capital and worked for the Germanophone elite, her rejection of the "Eleganz und […] Getriebe der vornehmen Welt" earns her some kudos among the local farmers' sons. They "spuckten zwar aus, wenn sie von ihr sprachen, und fühlten sich verpflichtet, mehr noch als gegen andere Mädchen grob gegen sie zu sein," but are nevertheless " im Grunde […] gewaltig stolz auf dieses 'verfluchte Mensch', das aus ihnen hervorgegangen war und der Welt so durch den Lack geguckt hatte" (29). Thus Božena suggests the limited scope for rebellion among the Czechs. Although she plies her trade with the Austro-German schoolboys, she has penetrated the façade of metropolitan Viennese society and, thus, enables her community to reject Habsburg domination vicariously.

In her conversation with Törleß and Beineberg, Božena demonstrates her contempt for the ruling class by airing the dirty laundry of her former employers, who happen to have been the Beinebergs (31–32). She describes her liaison with the uncle who courted Beineberg's mother and how the ladies of the family expressed disgust at the cook's pregnancy shortly before Beineberg's aunt fell pregnant herself (32). Although the narrator condemns her words as "familiär" and her facial expression, "der jedes einzelne beschmutzen zu wollen schien," the veracity of her account remains unchallenged (32). With the incisiveness of Arthur Schnitzler, this vignette of life "below stairs" exposes the sexual hypocrisy of Viennese society.

Törleß's response is instructive: in his imagination he replaces Beineberg's mother with his own. Discomfited by this mental association, he seeks reassurance in the memory of his parents. He recalls their "gepflegten, reinen, unnahbaren Gesichter," which filled him with awe at dinner, and their "vornehmen, kühlen Hände, die sich selbst beim Essen nichts zu vergeben schienen" (32). Here, of course, the pure, unapproachable faces and reticent hands of his parents intimate his inability to imagine their sexuality. These images ironically reinforce Božena's view of the Austro-German upper class as repressed and hypocritical with regard to sex. Indeed, Törleß's attempt to seek refuge in the superiority of his class raises questions about their ethics: "Die Erinnerung an die vollendete Manier dieser nie formvergessenen Gesellschaft wirkte stärker auf ihn als alle moralische Überlegung" (32). By privileging style and form over moral considerations, Törleß inadvertently confirms Božena's assertion that Viennese society is more devoted to the maintenance of appearances than ethical precepts.

In fact, one could argue that the trajectory of the whole novel subtly reinforces Božena's cynical view of the Austro-German elite. Let us consider how Törleß's attitudes towards the prostitute and his parents shift in the course of the narrative. When he visits Božena with Beineberg, he is transfixed by her account of Beineberg's family and feels compelled to associate his own mother with the prostitute (32–33). However, by the end of the novel, as he leaves the school and the town with Frau von Törleß, he finds that his enthrallment with Božena has dissipated: now the wood in which her house stands appears "unbedeutend und harmlos" (140). Further, while he remembers how unimaginable his parents' life, i.e., their sexuality, had seemed back then, Törleß now steals sidelong glances at his mother and samples the scent emanating from her body. The ending suggests that the protagonist has belatedly absorbed the message of the prostitute's narrative, since he now finds himself able to conduct a conversation with his mother while furtively indulging his Oedipal, sensual appetites. If we consider that throughout the text the protagonist is concerned with this disparity between the everyday realm of experience and another one, beyond language, in which unconscionable acts such as consorting with Božena or abusing Basini can occur, then the significance of this conclusion becomes clear. Törleß's newfound acceptance of these contradictory impulses signals his "maturity," i.e., a readiness to enter a society marked by moral duplicity.[6]

This development is confirmed by the proleptic passage in which the adult Törleß appears as an enervated aesthete, uninterested in moral questions (111–12). What makes this outcome all the more disappointing is that, as a teenager, he shows the moral clarity to disavow the torture of Basini, the schoolboy whom he, Beineberg, and Reiting discover stealing. Having first witnessed and then participated in this abuse, Törleß finally musters the *Zivilcourage* to intervene, warning Basini that Reiting and Beineberg plan to hand him over to the class (129). This episode runs counter to Stern's claim that the novel does not "disassociate

itself from the ethos of the death camps" (91). Rather, the fact that the adult Törleß shows no interest in the fate of Basini and even claims that the experience left his soul more discriminating (112) raises disturbing questions about the moral obtuseness of society in general.

The ending of the novel confirms the broader social significance of the boys' persecution of Basini. As he envisages handing the thief to a class whose outrage he has carefully cultivated, Reiting, the Machiavellian manipulator, declares, "Überhaupt habe ich diese Massenbewegungen gern. […] So etwas in Szene zu setzen, ist für mich ein außerordentliches Vergnügen" (115). The reference to "mass movements" prefigures Musil's diary entry, made between 1937 and 1941, on the prescient nature of the characters of Reiting and Beineberg: "die heutigen Diktatoren in nucleo. Auch die Auffassung der 'Masse' als zu zwingendes Wesen" (*Tagebücher* 914). Here we should consider these comments in the light of the statement that "jede Klasse ist in einem solchen Institute ein kleiner Staat für sich" (41). This political analogy draws force from the fact that the pupils will join the ranks of the military and civil elite in Habsburg society (8). Taken in conjunction with the boys' treatment of the Slavic villagers and the Other Basini, the text can be seen to presage, rather than propagate, the fascist mentality.

Empiricist Mysticism: Beineberg and the Western Enlightenment Tradition

However, it is not the shrewd manipulator Reiting but rather the mystic fanatic Beineberg who comes to dominate the text, both as Törleß's main interlocutor and as a motivator of the plot. The novel not only provides Beineberg with the opportunity to expound his "philosophy" at length and to visit it upon the hapless Basini (116–25) but also gives the provenance of these ideas, offering a detailed description of how Beineberg's father developed an interest in Buddhist mysticism while serving with the British Army in India (19–20). Given the pages devoted to Beineberg *père* and *fils* and their respective philosophies, it is surprising that no critics have addressed these figures in any detail.

The description of Beineberg senior's obsession with Indian philosophy undercuts the notion that mysticism is a category of experience that transcends the political and social world. Indeed, the text undermines the senior Beineberg's religious conversion by likening it to the acquisition of exotic knick-knacks produced for tourists: "nicht nur hatte er wie sonstige Europäer Schnitzereien, Gewebe und kleine Industriegötzen mit herübergebracht, sondern auch etwas von dem geheimnisvollen, bizarren Dämmern des esoterischen Buddhismus gefühlt und sich bewahrt" (19). Moreover, the fact that the senior Beineberg develops this interest while serving as an imperial soldier is of great significance. We are reminded of one of Edward Said's central claims in *Orientalism*, i.e., that all knowledge of the Orient "is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact [of European imperialism]" (11). Yet the figure of Beineberg's father suggests an implicit criticism of Western civilization, since

this European colonist turns his back on his own culture to embrace that of the colonized Other.

Although Beineberg *père*'s understanding of Indian Buddhism is highly attenuated, his encounter with the religion has a profound effect. He loses himself in

> wohliger Melancholie. […] wenn er an den geheimen Kult dachte, der sich an die Originale der vor ihm liegenden Schriften knüpfte, an die Wunder, die von ihnen ausgegangen waren und Tausende ergriffen hatten, Tausende von Menschen, die ihm wegen der großen Entfernung, die ihn von ihnen trennte, nun wie Brüder erschienen, während er doch die Menschen seiner Umgebung, die er mit allen Details sah, verachtete.(19)

This passage makes it clear that Officer Beineberg only sees his fellow worshippers as brothers because of the distance separating him from them. Were he closer to them, the misanthropy he shows towards his fellow countrymen would doubtless reassert itself. Nevertheless, Beineberg senior's conversion to Buddhism suggests the tenuousness of the Western tradition. For even a highly mediated and attenuated form of Buddhism has succeeded in alienating him from his own culture and faith, in colonizing the colonist.

The reference to Buddhist scriptures in the above passage offers an insight into the process of Orientalization as applied to Eastern religions. According to Richard King, Western scholars' approach to Buddhism reflects several presuppositions: "the post-Reformation location of religion in the printed word, the literary and philological roots of Orientalist scholarship, and Christian assumptions about the nature of religion and the importance of a canon of authoritative works" (146). For all his rejection of his native society, Beineberg senior's preoccupation with texts reveals the continued influence of the Western tradition. This inconsistency is understandable if we consider that Western scholars strove to erase any trace of their involvement in the formation of this Orientalized "Buddhism." As King explains, "The authorial presence of the Western Orientalists in the construction of this textualized 'Buddhism' was safely hidden from view by a philological positivism, which claimed to be revealing, through the medium of translation, nothing more than the meaning embodied in the original text itself" (150). Beineberg's father goes a step further than the philologists in failing to admit the fact of translation. Although the German verb "übersetzen" has the same literal meaning of "to ferry or carry across" as its Latinate equivalent ("to translate"), Beineberg *père* ignores this primary transference, insisting that his religious tomes are works in which "kein Wort von seinem Platze gerückt werden durfte, ohne den geheimen Sinn zu stören" (19). Indeed, for him, these texts are no longer mere books, but "Offenbarungen, Wirkliches,—Schlüsselwerke wie die alchimistischen und Zauberbücher des Mittelalters" (19). By comparing Herr Beineberg's textual fetishism with the occult practices of the European Dark Ages, Musil avoids imputing such claims to the Buddhist texts themselves, and, thus,

suggests that the "Aberwitz religiöser Ekstase" (20) exhibited by Beineberg's father is an Occidental phenomenon.

Beineberg senior's veneration of Buddhist scriptures recalls the Törleß family's attitude towards the philosopher Kant and his works. The very name "Kant" is intoned in Törleß's home "wie der eines unheimlichen Heiligen" (78). Thus the central proponent of the Enlightenment suffers the indignity of becoming an object of occult superstition. Furthermore, unlike Beineberg's father, Törleß's parents have no desire to read the texts they fetishize, regarding them as the "Heiligtum einer Gottheit, der man nicht gerne naht und die man nur verehrt, weil man froh ist, daß man sich dank ihrer Existenz um gewisse Dinge nicht mehr zu kümmern braucht" (78–79). While the devotee of Indian mysticism pursues Buddhist enlightenment with zeal, Törleß's family is content, thanks ironically to Kant's efforts, to remain in precisely that state of "selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit" (9) that the philosopher exhorts his readers to abandon in the essay "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" (1783).

From the perspective of today's reader, Musil's depiction of attitudes towards philosophy illustrates one of the tenets of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944): the Enlightenment tends to revert to the superstitious and mythological modes of thought that it was intended to supersede (3).[7] As Adorno and Horkheimer explain, this regression does not arise from modern myths (such as nationalism) extinguishing the Enlightenment but rather from the petrification of the movement itself (3). The attitudes displayed by Törleß's parents thus appear representative of the intellectual atrophy afflicting their class a whole. Where once *Bildungsbürger* cultivated an active interest in philosophy and the arts, now Törleß's education seems to have stopped around 1832, leaving him with the distinct impression that after Kant, Goethe, and Schiller there is no point in tackling philosophical problems or writing poetry (78). While Adorno and Horkheimer conduct a forensic enquiry into the dialectical demise of the Enlightenment in 1944, Musil diagnoses the patient's nascent symptoms in 1906.

Törleß's parents' inert admiration for Kant leads their son to develop the radical notion of actually *reading* one of the philosopher's works, which proves a tortuous experience for the protagonist (80). Similarly, Beineberg's "Eastern" philosophy emerges as a radicalized and hypostasized version of his father's:

> Jene Eigenheit seines Vaters, die für diesen im Grunde genommen vielleicht doch nur den letzten Schlupfwinkel der Individualität bedeutete, den sich jeder Mensch—und sei es auch nur durch die Wahl seiner Kleider—schaffen muß, das ihn vor anderen auszeichne, war in ihm [Beineberg *fils*] zu dem festen Glauben geworden, sich mittels ungewöhnlicher seelischer Kräfte eine Herrschaft sichern zu können. (20)

What was an idiosyncrasy in the father has become the son's raison d'être. To borrow Carl Schorske's description of the transvaluation wrought by the aestheticists, Orientalism, rather than art, becomes for Beineberg *fils* "transformed from an ornament to an essence, from an expression of value to a source of value" (10). Here we should not confuse the younger Beineberg's firm belief with a more profound understanding of Buddhism. The fact that he seeks "spiritual" powers to gain mastery over others demonstrates his failure to grasp the basic tenet of renouncing worldly desires. Indeed, Beineberg's philosophical program distorts the Buddhist spirit of renunciation to the point that it comes to resemble the Nietzschean will to power. Thus, when J. P. Stern's describes Beineberg's ideas as "Indian mystical claptrap" (90), he fails to distinguish Oriental from Orientalist thought.

Whereas the passage above portrays Beineberg senior's interest as ornamental, likening it to a quirky taste in clothes, Beineberg junior's beliefs are presented as essential, the defining feature of the schoolboy's corporeal self: "Er sog zwischen dem Sprechen an einem langen Tschibuk, saß mit orientalisch gekreuzten Beinen und sah mit seinen abstehenden Ohren […] wie ein groteskes Götzenbild aus" (48). Thus Musil depicts Beineberg—with a Turkish pipe, Oriental posture, and the head of an idol—as a bricolage of Orientalist tropes. This composite image recalls the Orientalist's tendency to regard the East as "a series of textual fragments, which he thereafter edited and arranged as a restorer of old sketches might put a series of them together for the cumulative picture they represent" (Said, *Orientalism* 176). Further, the diverse Oriental motifs that Beineberg embodies suggest the Western Orientalists' willingness to ignore the distinctions between the various cultures of the Middle East and Asia in their construction of a fictitious "Orient." For example, Beineberg's head, which resembles that of an idol, sits awkwardly with the Turkish pipe given the Islamic tradition's dim view of graven images. In this way, Beineberg embodies the contradictions inherent in the Western notion of "the Orient."

Such inconsistencies also (mis)inform Beineberg's discourse. As he ponders what action to take with the thief Basini, he declares, "Meinetwegen könnt ihr machen, was ihr wollt; mir ist es nicht um das Geld zu tun und um die Gerechtigkeit auch nicht. In Indien würde man ihm einen gespitzten Bambus durch den Darm treiben; das wäre wenigstens ein Vegnügen. […] Allah schenke eurem Urteil seine Gnade!" (48). The obscure reference to Indian torture practices and the exhortation to Allah give the impression of an Orientalist arbitrarily constructing a composite "Eastern" belief system to justify his own sadistic proclivities.

While he cites Indian Buddhism as the inspiration for his "philosophy," the fact that Beineberg conducts experiments to prove his theories betrays the influence of Western scientific empiricism. His empiricist mysticism is doomed to failure since the empirical method cannot comprehend an experience that is often "said to be devoid of the subject-object distinction" (King 20). Indeed,

Beineberg remains perpetually confused over whether he or Basini is the object of experimental enquiry. On the one hand, he intends to rid himself of the "elenden nach außen gerichteten Begierden," such as compassion for one's fellow man, which he believes prevent him from comprehending his own soul and the cosmos (59). On the other, he seeks to destroy Basini's will, reducing him to an automaton that unthinkingly obeys his commands (121–22). This oscillation between subject and object recalls the neo-empiricism of the Austrian physicist Ernst Mach,[8] who was the subject of Musil's dissertation. Mach claimed that once we grasp that the apparent unities of the self and other bodies are merely makeshift measures that provide a means of orientation, the subject/object distinction will no longer pertain: "*Der Gegensatz zwischen Ich und Welt, Empfindung oder Erscheinung und Ding fällt dann weg*" (11, Mach's italics). Through the character of Beineberg, who invokes the dissolution of the self to justify his "experiments," the novel suggests that the destabilization of self-identity described in Mach's theories can lead to a violent desire to re-impose the subject/object hierarchy. In this way, Beineberg's theories and his experiments on the hapless Basini serve to illustrate the lesson that the self-absorbed adult Törleß singularly fails to grasp: the struggle for self-identity can have profound consequences for the Other co-opted into the process.

Beineberg's violent experiments on the difference between Self and Other thus provide a double critique of the Western philosophical tradition. On the one hand, a scion of the European elite has been captivated by a distorted and debased version of Indian mysticism. On the other, the empirical philosophical tradition of the West has become unmoored from morality and devolved into a sickening series of arbitrary experiments conducted on a fellow human being. In this way, the figure of Beineberg expands the context of the novel, rendering the confusions of its schoolboy protagonist emblematic of an entire civilization.

Conclusion: Other Czech Others and their Global Contexts

Thus far we have seen how a postcolonial reading of *Törleß* reveals elements of cultural self-critique in the protagonist's struggle with alterity and his own self-identity, in the Czech Other Božena's resistance to Viennese hegemony, and in Beineberg's hybrid philosophy of Western empiricism and Indian mysticism. The question arises as to whether a postcolonial approach can be usefully applied to similar texts from the period. Max Brod's novel *Ein tschechisches Dienstmädchen* (1909), Musil's novella *Tonka* (1924), and the first part of Hermann Broch's *Schlafwandler* trilogy (1930) offer pertinent points of comparison since all three depict erotic relationships between Austrian/German protagonists and Czech women. Further, as with Musil's Božena, all three texts conflate cultural clichés in their depiction of Czech women as a combination of rustic naïveté and urban dissolution. Nevertheless, while critics such as Robertson and Müller-Funk perceive these texts as unalloyed expressions of Austro-German hegemony,[9] these

works undermine such notions through the critical and ironic depiction of the protagonists' struggles for self-identity and the invocation of a global colonial context.

For example, when Ritchie Robertson describes the relationship between the Austrian narrator/protagonist William Schurhaft and the Bohemian servant Pepi Vlková in Brod's novel as an expression of the oppositions between city and country, culture and nature, German and Czech ("Zum deutschen Slawenbild" 138), he ignores the fact that these cultural clichés are articulated by a thoroughly callow and confused character. Nowhere are these qualities more apparent than in William's claim to understand the Czech people:

> Alles, was ich an diesem großen Nachmittag erlebt habe, zieht vorbei, das tschechische Volk in seinen Dörfern, mit seinen rührenden Liedern. Ich verstehe es nun, ich verstehe seine kindische ängstliche Seele in meiner Geliebten, ich sehe, wie es bedrängt von einer agrarischen Krisis in die Städte flüchtet und ringsum die deutschen Lande stürmt. Man muß kämpfen, der Kinder sind zu viel und das Land is verteilt. Aber ich denke mir in meiner gutmütigen Stimmung, der Kampf könnte etwas lächelnder geführt werden […]. (355)

The context for this extraordinary utterance is crucial. The event of that "great afternoon" to which William refers is the loss of his virginity to Pepi. Mistaking carnal for cultural knowledge, William presumes not only that his beloved is representative of her people but also that he understands her. His error is amply demonstrated by the fact that she then stands him up, commits suicide, and is subsequently revealed to have been married all along. While these revelations undercut William's quasi-colonialist claims to knowledge of the Czech people, his own discourse reveals some dubious inconsistencies. On the one hand, he casts the Czech population as frightened children fleeing an agrarian crisis. On the other, these same economic refugees are represented as an army storming the Germanophone regions. Finally, he makes the bizarre claim that while inter-ethnic conflict over territory is inevitable, it could be conducted in a more jovial fashion. Such contradictions exhibit the ambivalence that Homi Bhabha identifies as intrinsic to the discourse of the stereotype, a chain of signification that he describes as "curiously mixed and split, polymorphous and perverse, an articulation of multiple belief" (82). This split belief is also apparent in William's use of the term "Land," which in the archaic plural "Lande" indicates the ancient Germanophone regions, but in the very next sentence comes to signify the whole Austro-Hungarian Empire. William's opaque terminology thus hints at a wider confusion resulting from the divided allegiances between empire and nation.

Elsewhere Pepi undermines William's claims to knowledge of the Czechs in both her discourse and her actions. For example, when she relates an anecdote about the death of a childhood friend, she mentions how her friend's father later

immigrated to America (353). This twist in the tale stuns William, who admits that Austrians like to think of the Czechs "in einer ewigen Sehnsucht nach der Heimat," while, in fact, this group "wandert […] fröhlich noch mit weißen Haaren nach Amerika aus" (356). Perhaps William finds this emigration unfathomable because the old man has forsaken the realm of ancient binary feuds between peoples for a postcolonial nation of hybrid and multiple identities. Further, when William sees Pepi visit a customs house, his astonishment on finding the woman whom he dubs "eine primitive Seele" negotiating a modern bureaucracy is such that he finds himself looking to the eagle above the door, the symbol of imperial authority, for reassurance: "ich konnte mir diese Tatsachen nicht zusammenstellen, ich konnte keinen logischen Schluß daraus ziehn … Ich sah nur immer das Haus und das Tor und den schwarzgelben Adler darüber" (359). Instead of promoting notions of Czech primitiveness, Brod's text satirizes Wiliam's attachment to such stereotypes.[10]

On the surface, Musil's novella *Tonka* shares the same essential schema as Brod's novel: a Czech woman who is associated with nature enters a relationship with an Austrian male and is revealed to be morally corrupt. In this case, the eponymous heroine falls pregnant at a time when her lover was away, and, to compound the situation, begins to suffer from a disease apparently contracted from the child's father. The unnamed narrator/protagonist seeks the cause of Tonka's infidelity in the questionable influences of a louche neighborhood and a family that not only consorted with the local madam but also tacitly accepted a cousin's prostitution in its own ranks (270–71). He then remarks that although Tonka was christened with the German name Antonie, she now bears the shortened form of the Czech nickname Toninka, and that her confused nomenclature arises from the local dialect, "ein seltsames Gemisch" of both languages (272). Thus the protagonist equates cultural and linguistic hybridity with moral duplicity. Moreover, when trying to recall his first encounter with Tonka, he mentions a soldier comrade's description of how "Hunderte solcher Bauernmädchen auf den Fabriksfeldern arbeiten und sich den Gutsinspektoren und deren Gehilfen in allem so willig unterwerfen sollen wie Negersklaven" (272). Just as Törleß has visions of race war after encountering the local Czechs, so the protagonist in *Tonka* is compelled to heighten the heroine's alterity by citing an unrelated anecdote invoking slavery and racial oppression. The implicit threat of Tonka's cultural hybridity provokes an unconscious need to reimpose a hierarchical relationship.

As in Brod's *Ein tschechisches Dienstmädchen*, Musil's first-person narration in *Tonka* performs the cultural confusion engendered by the encounter with alterity. This is achieved through the protagonist's abortive attempts to recollect and relate his first meeting with Tonka. He initially offers an account that conforms to cultural clichés: she is one of a group of Czech peasant women singing songs as they cross fields, while he, an imperial soldier, watches her from atop his horse (270). However, he rejects this *Märchen* in favor of the reality: their eyes

meet on the *Ringstrasse* in a fleeting, urban encounter that recalls Baudelaire's poem "À une Passante." Far from perpetuating the clichéd opposition of Czech nature versus Austro-German civilization, the fragmentary opening reflects the brittleness of such stereotypical notions.

Elsewhere, however, the novella reinforces the opposition between Austro-German *Geist* and Czech *Natur*, as in the following description of Tonka: "Sie war Natur, die sich zum Geist ordnet; nicht Geist werden will, aber ihn liebt und unergründlich ihm anschloß wie eins der vielen dem Menschen zugelaufenen Wesen" (285). Here the explicit subordination of Tonka's nature to the narrator's intellect is supported by their asymmetrical relationship: she loves him and knows she cannot attain his intellectual level, while he regards her as merely one of many chance encounters. It is no wonder that Ritchie Robertson uses the above description as a valedictory quotation to sum up the condescension shown by Germanophone authors towards their Czech characters throughout history ("Zum deutschen Slawenbild" 139).

Yet such a view does not take into account the changes that Tonka ultimately brings about in the protagonist's perspective. For example, although a chemist by profession, he looks beyond the physical evidence of her infidelity to the sign of her metaphysical innocence:

> […] Tonkas Gesicht. Man geht zwischen Kornfeldern, man fühlt die Luft, die Schwalben fliegen, in der Ferne die Türme der Stadt, Mädchen mit Liedern … man ist in einer Welt, die den Begriff Wahrheit nicht kennt. Tonka war in die Nähe tiefer Märchen gerückt. Das war die Welt des Gesalbten, der Jungfrau und Pontius Pilatus, und die Ärtze sagten, daß Tonka geschont und gepflegt werden müßte, sollte sie ihren Zustand überdauern. (289)

While the reference to the Virgin Birth sanctifies Tonka by association, the figure of Pontius Pilate conveys the protagonist's equivocal response to her pregnancy. His recourse to the realm of *Märchen* (here represented ironically by that rustic fantasy that he previously rejected) and the metaphysical mysteries of the Christian faith suggests the tenuousness and insufficiency of the Western scientific tradition. Moreover, the doctors' exhortation to care for Tonka presages a change in his ethical outlook. After her death, the narrator sees a child crying in a sunlit street (306). He recalls that on witnessing a similar scene, he had tried to convey to Tonka the contrast between the child's vitality and his grandmother's moribundity, while Tonka had simply comforted the youngster (274). Now this recollection strikes him with the force of a revelation: "Alles, was er niemals gewußt hatte, stand in diesem Augenblick vor ihm, die Binde der Blindheit schien von seinen Augen gesunken zu sein […]. Und vieles fiel ihm seither ein, das ihn etwas besser machte als andere, weil auf seinem glänzenden Leben ein kleiner warmer Schatten lag" (306). Through its play with vision and blindness, light and

shade, this passage indicates the limits of rationalistic and "enlightened" thought. The text concludes, albeit in a qualified manner, that the "fallen" Czech woman teaches the Austrian narrator the value of selfless altruism.

In Hermann Broch's *Pasenow oder die Romantik* (1930), Ruzena, the Bohemian lover of the Prussian protagonist, Joachim von Pasenow, offers no such salutary experience. Indeed, Joachim's initial assumption about Ruzena's private life ("daß dort alles wild, geduckt, tartarisch vor sich gehen müsse" [21]) is borne out by her later rejection of life as his mistress and her reversion to prostitution: "Das Zimmer und Ruzena waren in unordentlichem, unaufgeräumtem Zustand, sahen tartarisch und verwahrlost aus" (145). The adjective "tartarisch" suggests an imaginary continuum of alterity that begins with Joachim's near neighbors in Bohemia and stretches to Central Asia. Further, given its connotations of barbarism, the repetition of the term confirms that, despite Joachim's civilizing efforts, Ruzena's savageness remains irredeemable.

However, it is her indelible otherness that attracts Joachim. Indeed, his conflation of the exotic and erotic leaves him in thrall to the Bohemian prostitute, "ein Wesen aus einer fremden Welt" (57), while incapable of loving his fiancée, the virginal German Elisabeth. Although critics correctly attribute Joachim's attitudes to the two women to a sense of cultural and national superiority (see Müller-Funk 27), one must also consider how the protagonist's exogamous desire threatens the nationalist/eugenic aim of propagating native stock. This latent cultural pessimism comes to the fore when Joachim's friend Bertrand greets the news of his marriage to Elisabeth with the Spenglerian verdict: "Wir sind ein verlorenes Geschlecht" (163).

Like Beineberg, the devotee of Indian mysticism and son of a colonial officer, Bertrand provides the novel with a global context through both his personal connections and philosophical discourse. On the one hand, he owns a cotton company with links to America and India, and ultimately embarks on a quasi-colonialist *Orientreise*. On the other, he is fond of describing apocalyptic scenarios in which Africa lays waste to Europe in order to purify and reinvigorate the Christian faith (33). Such notions acquire new significance when we consider how they fire Joachim's imagination and resonate with his own cultural pessimism. For example, when confronted with the indecorous sight of Elisabeth's parents bedroom, Joachim imagines that "schwarze Gottesstreiter über das Gezücht herfallen werden, um wahre Keuschheit und Christlichkeit wiederherzustellen" (39). Further, when Joachim's thoughts stray to Ruzena at his brother's funeral, he blames this impiety on the hypocrisy of his fellow mourners and ponders the question, "Sollte man nicht die Armeen der Neger herbeiwünschen, damit dies alles weggefegt werde und der Heiland zu neuer Gloria aufsteige und die Menschen in sein Reich zurückführe?" (48). Joachim's fantasies of racial war, which recall those of Törleß, reveal not only his masochistic desire but also his belief that Western civilization is irredeemably decadent.

Bertrand's final appearance, if it can be called that, combines the global and the intimate in a moment of wistful yearning. On visiting a *Kaiserpanorama* shortly before their wedding, both Joachim and Elisabeth imagine that they see him on the screen in the guise of a colonial explorer in India. For both characters, Bertrand represents lost amorous possibilities: in Joachim's eyes, he is indelibly associated with Ruzena, while Elisabeth receives a declaration of undying love from Bertrand at the same moment that he expresses a desire to travel the world and never see her again (112). The observation "obwohl sie niemals von ihm sprachen, hatte das Wort Indien einen magischen Klang für sie" (169) suggests not only their enthrallment to the exoticism represented by Bertrand but also their mutual alienation. This moment recalls an earlier conversation when Joachim describes Bertrand's personality thus, "Er ist nie ganz er selbst," and Elisabeth replies, "Sie meinen, dass er alles aus großer Entfernung sieht, gewissermaßen mit den Augen eines Fremden?" (122). The figure of Bertrand, thus, intimates that the imperialist impulse does not reflect the magisterial authority promised in the term *Kaiserpanorama,* but rather signals alienation from both the world and the self.

In conclusion, this brief survey calls into question the common critical assumption that works depicting Austro-German/Czech relationships automatically represent a univocal declaration of cultural hegemony. Certainly, one must concede that these texts perpetuate the stereotype of the sexually licentious and morally duplicitous Czech woman, although in each case the addition of another stereotype, that of the innocent rustic maid, complicates the picture. However, each of these fictions subjects the protagonist's view of the Other to both internal and external critique. Internally, we see how his struggle to assimilate alterity reflects his own precarious sense of self, most especially in the projection of fantasies that oscillate between fear and desire. Externally, the invocation of a global context and of conventional colonial scenarios further relativizes and ironizes his view of the proximate Other through the discrepancy between k. u. k. internal colonialism and the overseas variety. Yet it is only through the lens of postcolonial theory that we can perceive the challenge that the self-critical tendency of these Habsburg texts poses to conventional notions of imperial literature.

NOTES

1. Scholars based in the U.S. who have argued variously for a postcolonial approach to Austrian studies include Russell Berman (35), Scott Spector (278n31, 278–79n32), Valentina Glajar (5–6), and Pieter Judson (48, 57, 61). German-language scholarship has been mostly produced under the aegis of the "Kakanien Revisited" project (http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr) and includes the essay volumes in the series Kultur–Herrschaft–Differenz (Tübingen: Francke): *Das Eigene und das Fremde (in) der österreichischen-ungarischen Monarchie* (2002) and *Zentren, Peripherien und kollektive Identitäten in Österreich-Ungarn* (2006) as well as *Habsburg postcolonial* (Innsbruck: Studien, 2003).

2. See, for example, Clemens Ruthner's claim that while the Dual Monarchy cannot be considered a colonial power in the strictest sense, its cultural imaginary ("kulturelle Bilderwelten") nevertheless reveals similarities with those of overseas colonial powers (111). Similar arguments can be found in Feichtinger (13) and Müller-Funk (18, 19).

3. For a definition of "internal colonialism," see Hechter. Joseph Metz has recently applied this term to relations between Germanic and non-Germanic peoples in Austria-Hungary (1475).

4. Tim Beasley-Murray observes that the town is simultaneously "an alien and inhospitable environment" and "the bearer of the signs of everyday (ethnically German) Habsburg normality: a smartish café on the main square, a shop that sells luxury goods, and so forth" (142n43).

5. As Ruth Amossy explains, while the stereotype is itself "necessarily reductive," this does not mean that it is always involved in "reductive enterprises" (700). The fact that the text explicitly examines the repercussions of this stereotype for Božena's later life removes this figure from the realm of the purely reductive.

6. See Patrizia McBride's recent assessment of the novel: "in *Törless* the gap between an ordinary and an ineffable realm is portrayed not as an anomalous condition that should be reversed, but rather as the state of mind of adulthood, a state of mind one deals with by accepting the incommensurability of the two realms" (52).

7. Todd Kontje also mentions Adorno and Horkeheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in relation to *Törleß* and fascism (52).

8. For a full account of Mach's influence in *Törleß*, see Ryan 208–11.

9. Scott Spector diverges from this general tendency to view Brod's novel as an unalloyed expression of Austro-German supremacy by describing the novel as "an extraordinarily articulate example of the entanglement of discourses of gender and nationality in Prague" (174).

10. Cf. Ritchie Robertson's claim that Brod, along with other German-speaking Prague authors, viewed the Czechs as having "nothing positive to contribute to the modern world" ("National Stereotypes" 117). Pepi's visit to the customs house undermines precisely this clichéd opposition between Czech primitiveness and Austro-German civilization.

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