

## Project 2: Positioning ‘Modern’ Germany: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism, Colonialism, Migration

### Project Leaders

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### Project Rationale

Contemporary scholarship on modern Germany reveals an unprecedented attention to nationalism and cosmopolitanism, migration, and colonialism, as is evident in the number of volumes published in the last decade. This project investigates these lines of inquiry and “positions” Germany—as a geo-political unit and as a cultural-linguistic space—within and beyond the boundaries of Europe. It analyses the modes in which these political and ideational phenomena have shaped and informed ‘modern’ Germany since the late-18<sup>th</sup> century, and the actual processes by which migrant, colonial, and cosmopolitan subjects have challenged, innovated, and revised the very definitions of the German nation and modernity.

The aim of this project is to set up multidisciplinary interfaces for research and teaching in literature, linguistics, philosophy, history, anthropology, political theory, and media-studies. Along with spotlighting key moments that form and inform German self-imagination and German imagination of the non-German/non-European ‘Other,’ the project collates and examines reactions to German nationalism and cosmopolitanism, migration, and colonialism from the outside. The core of the project is an examination of German intellectual, artistic, political, social, and historical engagements with the rest of the world in parallel with non-German engagements with Germany. The project is conceptualized as having three overlapping interfaces: nationalism and cosmopolitanism; migration and migrants; colonialism and modernity.

#### a. Nationalism and cosmopolitanism

(Coordinators: B.Venkat Mani, Hans Adler, Jeremi Suri)

This interface focuses on historical, philosophical, and literary narratives that document the emergence of nationalistic ideas and movements in Germany since the late-18<sup>th</sup> century in tandem with the cosmopolitan consciousness and disposition at these very moments of nationalistic aspirations. While conjectures of German nationalism peaked in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there exists a long tradition of resistance to state-sponsored nationalism, which promotes cosmopolitan ideas without necessarily rejecting the sense of belonging to the nation. Nationalism and cosmopolitanism in Germany have converged and diverged in a significant number of ways: from German romanticism that coincides with the beginning of thinking through modernity in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century—by way of modernist cosmopolitanism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—to political and aesthetic cosmopolitanism (cosmopolitics) in the wake of migration in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Such convergence and divergence has resulted in new and exciting modes of examining historical and contemporary self-imagining of Germany, while also opening up questions of German affiliations with Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and North America. This interdisciplinary interface focuses on theories of the “World” as developed in Germany through terms such as “World Literature,” “World Market,” and “World History.” In addition, our research spotlights expressions of cosmopolitan thinking in the political, philosophical, historical, literary, and artistic works of German and German-Jewish authors and thinkers abroad or in exile; and of German authors of non-German ethnicities in Germany.

Last but not least, this aspect of our project encompasses research on conceptions of “humanity” in relation to cosmopolitan conceptions of the “world.” On the one hand, most recent political, scientific, and ecological developments have made clear that there is by no means a consensus on what “humanity” means as a qualitative term. On the other hand, there have been attempts from the 18th century on to define the term not in terms of 'substance' but functionally in terms of rights and relationships. Since ‘humanity’ in the qualitative sense determines rather important boundaries, this project examines descriptors such as “national” and the “cosmopolitan” in parallel to examinations of the “human” and humanity.

#### b. Migration and Immigrants

(Coordinators: Robert Howell, Joseph Salmons, B. Venkat Mani)

This aspect of the project focuses on the effects of decolonization in the world around and after World War II and impact of changing labor-force and capital movements on the racial and ethnic constitution of Germany and Europe. It considers the social, political, ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition of contemporary Germany in two dimensions. First, we consider the sociological, anthropological, and political examinations of xenophobia, discrimination, and exclusion on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, and religion in order to focus on the cultural and political transformation of Germany and the politics of inclusion through the new German Citizenship Law. Research on migration and language acquisition, migration and language transformation, socio-political linguistics and the role of language-education in the state-sponsored politics of integration and assimilation, and structures of educational institutions is therefore crucial.

Second, we consider the meaning of migration to the migrants themselves and their receiving institutions. Investigation of Islam in Germany in a comparative perspective with the rest of Europe is one important aspect of this transformation, but so too is the reestablishment of a Jewish community of any size within Germany. Exploring the meanings of migration includes looking at the individual expressions of this, not just a sociological story of collective change. Literary and artistic documents of contemporary migration experience form a major part of our research interest, and the range of analyses includes writings of exile and diaspora, cosmopolitan and transnational themes by migrants and minorities in arts and literature, and questions of memory, identity, and imaginations of self in this context.

#### c. Colonialism and Modernity

(Coordinators: B. Venkat Mani, Deborah Jenson, Theresa Kelley)

The emphasis of this aspect of the project is largely historical. German philosophers, literary authors, linguists and anthropologists in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century and filmmakers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have constructed a long tradition of imagining the non-German/non-European world. This 'orientalist' imagination was established also through the foundation of specialized disciplines such as comparative linguistics, Indologie, Afrikanistik, Turkologie and so on. German collective identity developed in parallel to the expansion of theories of race and ethnicity during European colonialism in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and shows interesting similarities and differences with the colonial imagination of the other European powers, as well as with American self-conceptions.

In this work, we expect to focus on sources such as narratives of German missionaries and adventurers, postcolonial scholarship on German colonialism, and German imaginings of Native Americans in literature, history, and ethnography and place these in an interdisciplinary context of multinational scholarship. We wish especially to spotlight Asian, African, and Latin American, and other European reactions to German colonialism and German writings on the 'Other,' considering the modes in which non-European spaces become test cases for theories of modernity, where of course German "Dichter und Denker" in many disciplines have played a leading theoretical role.