

# Fragen des Stils/Questions of style

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### Abstract

This paper undertakes a creative exploration of problems of academic understanding and exchange across language-specific segments of humangeographic discourse by utilizing and elaborating Ludwik Fleck's concept of 'styles of thought'. To illustrate what distinguishes styles of thought, and to develop ideas about how to improve inter-cultural exchange within human geography, the authors perform paired readings of papers on the concept of 'landscape' or '*Landschaft*' from each other's language traditions. Hannah reads and reflects upon a paper by Ulrich Eisel, and Schlottmann reads a piece by John Wylie. These readings are oriented toward uncovering the ways in which expectations, assumptions and hitherto un-thematized viewpoints of the two readers are unearthed, activated, provoked or rendered intelligible by the respective texts, their subtexts and

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contexts. One of the results of these paired readings is a more detailed sense of the specific ways in which a broadly 'German-language' 'thought collective' can be distinguished from a broadly 'Anglophone' one despite all the complicated overlaps and interdigitations between the two.

#### Introduction

It is well understood that geographical knowledge is essentially contested and contestable. It is also now firmly established that the globalising discourses of academic human geography are structured by a range of power relations that align with or attempt to transcend the tendential dominance of English-language publications, highly uneven distributions of available research funding, different dominant 'schools', varying communicative cultures, and other more or less local factors (Simonsen, 2004; Berg, 2004; van Hoven, 2011). Policing of various sorts happens through journals, the structures of educational institutions and other means. Also, the situation within human geography is obviously different from the dynamics of cross-language exchange in physical geography and other natural sciences. Within this broad context, the present paper is intended to pinpoint some of the specific issues surrounding the practices of translation through which members of different linguistic communities carry on academic conversations about themes of mutual interest.

We group these issues under the heading of 'style', because our own experiences of inter-lingual academic conversation have convinced us that many of the real difficulties arising in such exchanges are only imperfectly captured through more explicitly political, hermeneutical or 'technical' vocabularies (for example, 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1984), 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer. 1999 [1960]), or 'speech act performance' (Searle, 1985)). In contrast to an implicitly agonistic political reading, we would like to orient our discussion more according to a mood or attitude characterized by hospitality to the other (Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000). And in contrast to some universalistic assumptions underlying speech-act theory, we hope to do justice to the specifics of linguistic positioning.

The claim is not, of course, that the categories of these other approaches have no foothold on what we propose to do. Quite obviously, for example, our professional, linguistically mediated lifeworlds are differently constituted by a number of additional factors beyond the rather blunt criterion of language-specific styles. Different institutional environments, our respective experiences as published authors, referees and editors, our more idiosyncratic tics of reading and writing *within* language-specific geographic discourses, and much else besides, compose our individual approaches. For example, Hannah is significantly older than Schlottmann, and thus inhabits a particular style of writing in English that is more closely shaped by scholarly approaches preceding the "cultural turn" in Anglophone human geography. Schlottmann, however, was academically socialized in the heyday of the cultural turn in German human geography. In addition to such generational questions, a range of rhetorical styles are at play

within any linguistic tradition at a given time. Jonathan Smith identifies a range of different rhetorical strategies through which Anglophone geographers have constructed audiences within their linguistic community (Smith 1996). As Gunhild Setten (2008) argues, there are other bases for the establishment of "circles of between linguistically-based academic communities. affinity" within or Nevertheless, we both find that our language-specific positionalities and corresponding 'background abilities' of interpretation (Searle, 1995) as such already strongly orient our responses to texts. One of us (Schlottmann), like many of her compatriot scholars, is quite versed in both the German-language and the English-language critical human geography literatures (and their respective styles); the other (Hannah), again like most of his Anglophone colleagues, is only really familiar with the English-language debates. However, this constellation has changed significantly even during the process of writing and revising the article: Hannah has moved from a position at a British university to a position at a German university, where the pace of his familiarization with the German-language tradition has accelerated. Schlottmann, on the other hand, negotiated and reconsidered her style of reading English texts essentially after having discussed this paper on two workshops with participants of various European scholarly backgrounds. One sense in which this paper is not politically innocent is in our desire to 'provincialize English' (cf. Chakrabarty, 2007), that is, to show how the luxury of not having to look to literatures of other linguistic traditions lends a certain narrowness to a discourse that is in so many other respects genuinely open and fluid. Less politically, the fact that this configuration of competency between the two of us is increasingly common in international collaborations adds, we hope, to the relevance of the paper.

All of these issues and more flow into and shape our discussion, which proceeds in a dialogical fashion. First, we set out in a bit more detail what we mean by 'styles of thought', a term borrowed from the remarkably prescient early 20<sup>th</sup>century work of Ludwik Fleck (Fleck, 1980 [1935]). Our intent, however, is not to stick closely to Fleck's analytical categories but rather to adapt and flesh out some of his basic insights for deployment in the context of current human geographical discourses. Having outlined a provisional frame, in the next section of the paper, we present two short readings: a reading by Hannah of a German-language article on 'Landschaft', paired with a reading by Schlottmann of a paper from the current English-language literature on 'landscape'. The overall project is to suggest, through this practical exercise, how it is possible to recognize the role of 'styles of thought', and, on the basis of this recognition, to develop forms of inter-linguistic exchange that emphasize respect, curiosity, openness, sensitivity and the construction through dialogue of new, hybrid approaches to geographical concepts. We are trying to both extract and illustrate performatively what is involved in reflective engagements between scholars coming from different positions and employing different styles of thought. Moreover, we are suggesting an understanding of texts as synergetic products of both writing and reading, with connected styles of thought being decisive for what the text can be about. This

becomes all the more pressing as ever more members of an ever larger number of linguistic communities are drawn into direct participation in an increasingly international critical geographic conversation.

#### Styles of thought

When we began to delve into the subject of the (im)possibilities of translation in scholarly knowledge production (Schlottmann and Hannah, 2009), we found ourselves in search of theoretical frames that could help us not only to analyse existing styles but also to allow hidden stylistic frictions to emerge. We thus re-discovered the work of Ludwik Fleck with his idea of knowledge as an ensemble of contingent moments, always preliminary in character. Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961) is an extremely interesting figure in biographical terms (Schäfer and While working from the 1920s onward as a Schnelle, 1980: X-XIII). microbiologist specializing in serology, Fleck was deeply interested in what we would today call the sociology (or social studies) of science. His only book-length work on this topic, Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache: Einführung in die Lehre vom Denkstil und Denkkollektiv [translated into English as The Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact], was published in 1935 in German (Fleck, 1980 [1935]; 2011). It includes some insights that anticipate key ideas normally credited to Thomas Kuhn, later to the Edinburgh School of social studies of science, and even to Actor-Network Theory.

On the basis of his long and intimate familiarity with micro-biological argument that challenges research. Fleck unfolds an anv simplistic, 'correspondence'-based understanding of how something like a scientific 'fact' emerges from practice. Fleck's two core concepts are *Denkstil* ('style of thought') and Denkkollektiv ('thought collective'). His basic claims are: (a) that science and other forms of knowledge are historically structured by shifting 'styles of thought', which, like Kuhnian 'paradigms' shape scholarly discourse in specific contexts; (b) that these 'styles of thought' are fundamentally collective constructs (a point emphasized more strongly than in Kuhn), 'carried' by 'thought-collectives'; and (c) that while a particular 'style of thought' and its corresponding collective is ascendant in a given field, it imposes very specific forms of selectivity upon what can be argued, concluded and even observed in the world. As Fleck (1980, [1935], 130) puts it:

We can define *style of thought as directed perception, with accompanying intellectual and material processing of the perceived.* It is characterized by common features of [the] problems that interest a thought-collective; of judgments that it views as self-evident; of methods it uses as means of knowing.

These are interesting suggestions, and in a general sense, our intent is to follow them up with more specific determinations of the elements of a 'style of thought'. Clearly critical human geographic debates take place in a weave of partially overlapping thought-collectives defined in linguistic as well as other terms, and the specific modes in which their overlap remains 'partial' is an important locus of power relations (Berg, 2004; Simonsen, 2004; van Hoven, 2011).

Yet our interest is directed more toward a line of investigation Fleck declined to pursue very far in his book, namely, what exactly is to be understood by "nuances of style, varieties of style and different styles" (Fleck, 1980 [1935], 142). We believe there is still a good deal of work to be done in reflecting upon the specific stylistic selectivities even of the seemingly wide-open English-language discourse of the past twenty years, the motto of which seems to be "no more policing" (Amin and Thrift, 2005, 237). A good way to do this is to get at some of the nuances that lurk behind the more obvious barriers posed by inter-linguistic translation (Schlottmann and Hannah, 2009). Though we don't want to set out too detailed a framework, we can at least indicate the kinds of issues to which we hope to direct our reflections. We put Fleck into conversation with our chosen texts in a more exploratory and reflective, rather than 'finished' analytical sense. The exercise is intended first of all to work with our own styles of thought that have been shaped in a certain linguistic community (amongst other influences), instead of reconstructing those of the authors of the chosen texts. In a 'bottom-up' manner, by conducting an inevitably positioned reading performance, we aim instead to gather some general insights about the work of existing, yet shifting, styles of thought that according to Fleck cannot easily be disaggregated into distinct components. Moreover, we expect that additional, unforeseen issues might emerge as well. Our respective readings will be shaped *inter alia* by:

-Associations arising in connection with key concepts;

-Reactions to the ways in which key terms are stabilized in categories or destabilized (issues of distinction and binaries);

-Aesthetic / formal judgments about aspects of the arguments (what constitutes or can upset 'balance' or 'elegance' in an argument);

-Valuations of legitimacy and illegitimacy in regard to novelty and familiarity, as well as underlying conceptions of temporalities of discourse (How important is the 'originality' of an argument *as such*, as distinct from, for example, the thoroughness of its grounding in a literature?)

-Expectations regarding the nature and extent of evidence and other sources of argumentative authority;

-Questions regarding the self-evidence of core terms;

-Readings of verbs used to describe the purposes of published work;

-Reactions to specific constructions of "relevance".

86

This list is neither complete nor strictly prescriptive. But it does suggest the levels at which we approach the texts. Yet although we expect to find patterns specific to our preconceptions and positionalities, we will also attempt at least partially to transcend or transform them in and through the process of reflecting on the texts.

#### Landscape and Landschaft

The texts we have chosen are relatively recent academic articles, published in geographical journals. We choose 'landscape' and 'Landschaft' as a focus because the two concepts seem so closely related that they are often understood as simple translations of each other, and because they have played and continue to play important roles in the development of geographic thinking (see Cosgrove, 2004 for an overview of the way this pair of terms has been positioned in the two traditions). However, we could have taken terms such as 'place' / 'Ort' or any number of others. Each of us, in consultation with the other, settled on an article she/he had not yet read, by a relatively prominent author from the other linguistic tradition. By choosing pieces we had not yet read, we hoped to maximize the freshness we could each bring to the readings. At first we intended to choose texts we considered important or even iconic in the two traditions, knowing that in any case, no proper 'representativity' could be achieved with two texts. However, it proved difficult to identify recent German texts on landscape with levels of influence comparable to that enjoyed by the work of Wylie in the English-language discourse. "Landschaft" as a concept has been strongly associated in Germanlanguage geography with the old-fashioned and unscientific since high-profile critiques of the term in the late 1960s and 1970s (Hard 1970a, b). In retrospect, too, even the idea of what constitutes "recency" is probably different for the two communities we tentatively identify. The German-language academic tendency to commit to the development of a particular theoretical perspective over a longer period of time (discussed below) may mean that nominally "older" texts remain "recent" far longer than in the Anglophone tradition. In any case, the work of the now-retired Ulrich Eisel cannot be considered representative of any common trend in German-language geography. Like his mentor Gerhard Hard, since the 1970s he has had the reputation of a critical mischief-maker who is sharp-witted but whose demanding arguments are often not easily accessible to a broader geographic community and were rarely taken up by other authors or "schools". Unlike Eisel, in contrast, Wylie is not an outsider in relation to Anglophone cultural geography. One of a number of innovative scholars who completed their doctoral training at the University of Bristol in the years around the turn of the millenium, he has been influential in maintaining landscape as a central concern for British cultural geography. Nevertheless, one of Eisel's essayistic texts is probably more similar to the Wylie text than other pieces of his work would have been.

In the face of these complexities, we settled on the two texts with some misgivings. However, as it turned out, their very similarity in styles of writing, for

instance, affords a glimpse into some of the finer differences between the styles of thought framing our readings. Also, the difficulties we encountered in choosing the texts themselves illustrate some of the complexities of cross-cultural translation that emerge from the readings. For all these reasons, though we had not originally planned it this way, the texts work well in the essentially *diagnostic* role we have given them.

1. Matthew Hannah's reading of Ulrich Eisel (2001), "Angst vor der Landschaft. Ein wissenschaftlicher Essay, ["Anxiety about landscape: a scholarly essay"], Erdkunde 55(1): 159-171.

Eisel's essay about landscape argues three broad points: (1) 'landscape' is an inherently modern, specifically aesthetic object. Its status as an idea (i.e., not an unmediated experience of 'the real') is intelligible only against the background of a modern notion of 'art', as demonstrated by the fact that landscape representations are always in danger of being judged 'kitschy'. (2) The aesthetic sensitivity through which we are always potentially vulnerable to the appeal of kitsch "is the modern form of erotic ecstasy in ritual sacral acts" (Eisel, 2001, 159). In other words, the way we can find landscapes aesthetically appealing, whether sheepishly admitted or denied, is a distant echo or late descendant of archaic cultural experiences of erotics transformed and sublimated in various ways over the last two millennia. (3) The suspicion of kitsch people routinely express in discussing landscape images can be seen as a defense mechanism both against the 'shame' moderns have learned to feel at any vulnerability to this erotic pull, and against the risks of crypto-erotic rejection by others. Disagreement by others with our aesthetic judgments is far more uncomfortable than 'merely intellectual' disagreement because aesthetic disagreement is ultimately a culturally transformed version of rejection of erotic advances. Eisel presents this argument in the framework of reflections upon two personal experiences. The first cornerstone experience is his observation that people almost never sit with each other and look at landscape photographs they've taken on their travels without apologizing for the possibility that the photos are kitsch. The second framing experience begins with a student's comment in a course Eisel was teaching. Eisel had contrasted two landscape paintings, one by Poussin and one by Dürer, assuming his students would agree that the former was kitsch while the latter was not. To his surprise, a student asserted that they were both kitsch, prompting him to embark on the reflections recorded in the essay.

Stylistically, this feels familiar to me as someone schooled in Englishlanguage cultural geography. The article begins, in journalistic style, by recounting a specific story, and then moves outward to trace the significance of this episode as a metonym or stand-in for much larger issues. Eisel, however, feels obligated to flag his essayistic form of presentation explicitly: "The text was originally conceived for a lecture in an informal setting and has been left in this diction" (159, note 1). Beyond this initial stylistic familiarity, the essay differs from a 'typical' Anglophone approach to cultural geographic writing in a number of ways. First,

Eisel makes what seems to me to be unashamed use of claims of equivalence or identity, especially in arguing points (2) and (3). When an equivalence or continuity is asserted across millenia between disparate cultural forms, the Foucauldian in me kicks and squirms painfully. A vertiginous example: "The thesis runs as follows: being gripped by landscape [die landschaftliche Ergriffenheit] in a way that brings on shame goes back to the tribal predecessors [stammesgeschichtliche Vorläufer] of Platonic love" (166). Eisel does give an extended historical account of the links he proposes, but movement from one stage to the next in this history of erotic sublimation is always strongly marked by the 'immutable mobility' of what is being passed on. So it goes, for example, in the transition from Platonic contemplation in antiquity to Christian contemplation: "in line with the individual inward turn of contemplation the objective determinations of the absolute subjectivize themselves. The Good, the True and the Beautiful become Hope, Faith and Love, the three virtues of the Christian" (167). What is important for Eisel throughout his sweeping historical account is not so much the particular changes undergone by an originary erotic impulse but its survival as an erotic impulse.

I turn to the list of references to see what vast libraries of scholarship Eisel has digested in order to tell this story. My reflex emerges from a hitherto unexamined assumption on my part that there should be some kind of rough proportionality between the richness or complexity of what is being summarized within a single paper and the number of sources marshaled to authorize the summary. It is as though, for me, the degree of reduction or simplification of primary material must be compensated by a correspondingly elaborate recourse to secondary literature. A less reductive narrative, however, would also require elaborate reference, though for a different reason, namely that the material itself is complex. Thus it seems that I operate with a general expectation of extensive referencing one way or the other, and leave little room, implicitly, for the possibility that a scholar could simply refer to only one or a few of the most persuasive accounts, in his or her judgment, and leave it at that.

Exactly this sort of 'flying without a net' is what Eisel does: the reference list reveals that the entire essay relies on a total of twelve sources, of which seven at most bear upon this part of his argument. In Anglophone cultural geography, despite the generally high level of comfort with irreproducible and idiosyncratic individual reflections, we rarely trust ourselves to anchor narratives in so few authorities. Or perhaps more precisely, when we make claims not so thoroughly triangulated in a wider literature, they tend to concern 'local' matters of personal experience, observation, or perhaps political conviction (as in 'Interventions'), not the kind of broad historical vistas Eisel lays out. And yet there is arguably a sense in which this interpretative confidence can and should be seen as consistent with the conventions of wider academic discourse. There is arguably something odd about the fact that, on the one hand, reference *by others* to the work of a scholar constructs that scholar as an authority (whether through broad reputation or more

narrowly via citation indices), while on the other hand, s/he her- or himself is not permitted to assume or exploit that attribution as a basis for authorizing subsequent claims or arguments. My Anglophone assumptions leave little place for the accumulation of authoritative resources by individual scholars. But it is bracing to think of such a direct and uncluttered expression of who is ultimately responsible for an argument.

Lingering over Eisel's skeletal bibliography, I see that the other five references constitute his engagement with the current geographic literature. In the main text, this engagement does not serve to frame the entire argument but appears after a few pages as an 'excursus', emphasizing that Eisel does not consider his story to stand or fall on whether he wins his argument with geographic interlocutors. There are only two such interlocutors, Jürgen Hasse and Reinhard Falter. Their chief sin, according to Eisel, is to believe mistakenly that approaching landscape through vitalism, anthroposophy and a phenomenology centred on *Leiblichkeit*<sup>2</sup> allows them to escape the *distancing* inherent in the modern idea of landscape and thus regain a firmer basis for geographical science as well as ecological politics (164-165). For Eisel, such a 'return to nature' "is only valid and relevant under the real precondition and emotional perspective of modern civilization – even if one rejects this perspective" (165).

Here we come upon another feature of Eisel's text that brings me up short. In the great historical continuity that allows erotics to survive through a series of epochal changes, one epochal change is nevertheless crucial: the advent of As for other currently influential German-language (Western) modernity. geographers, for example, Benno Werlen, modernity as a broad socio-cultural system provides Eisel with a key frame of reference, in sharp distinction to the relative marginality of the concept in the Anglophone discourse since the ebbing of discussions of 'postmodernism' in the 1990s. In a broad sense, modernity is understood by Eisel in terms of differentiation of social life into increasingly distinct and independent spheres, and an accompanying irreversible disenchantment. The key thinker of this socio-historical process in German is Niklas Luhmann, whose work on different 'social systems' and their 'functions' is widely known and very influential among a small subset of German-speaking human geographers but almost completely unknown among their English-speaking colleagues (Luhmann, 2012). Eisel's comfort in this 'style of human-geographic thought' is evidenced among other things by his occasional mention of the way ideas 'function' in different cultural eras.

Hasse and Falter, the two scholars taken to task by Eisel for believing they can 'return to nature', have produced philosophically informed work on geographies of embodiment that points in similar directions to that produced in the

 $<sup>^{2}</sup>$  Leiblichkeit translates as 'embodiment' but, unlike the more objective, merely physical embodiment denoted by the term '*Körperlichkeit*', embraces the living experience of being-bodily. I am grateful to Jürgen Hasse (informal discussion 2010) for emphasizing the importance of this distinction.

UK, for example by John Wylie, Sarah Whatmore, Hayden Lorimer and others (Lorimer, 2006; Whatmore, 2006; Wylie, 2006). It is intriguing to ask how much purchase Eisel's summary judgment upon Hasse and Falter would have on the work of these thinkers as well:

If a call is issued in all seriousness to open one's heart to the gods whose essence radiates from natural objects (cf. Falter, 1996), then the status of this academic- and culture-political project remains somehow unclear: if it is *not* the programme of a religious sect – and there is no indication that it is – then it is a repetition of the Romantic critique of civilization with old and a few modern ... arguments" (Eisel, 2001,165).

The accusation of Romanticism would be anathema to the most recent, 'more-thanrepresentational' or 'post-phenomenological' work in Anglophone human geography, and would doubtless be countered by a denial that we are in any sense 'trapped' by modern disenchantment (or indeed by any epochal or categorial binaries). As Latour famously puts it, 'we have never been modern' (Latour, 2007). Additionally, not all research in this vein aims at any sort of 're-enchantment'. Thrift's work on the engineering of affect, for example, looks forward to new political engagements with affect (Thrift, 2011; Thrift and French, 2002), rather than backward to any sort of recapture of a lost innocence (though see Barnett, 2008 for a critique).

Eisel's argument, however, suggests that we need to dwell a bit more on the Latourian debunking of 'modernity'. The drawing of the great epochal binary may indeed be a sleight of hand covering up a fundamental continuity. Yet if the sleight of hand inherent in such binaries is itself characteristically modern and thus now impossible to avoid, then its misleading character ceases to matter as much, and we have to face the fact of our residence in a certain form of modernity. It is arguable that a good deal of the skepticism with which more-than-representational work is greeted in some quarters (e.g. Cresswell, 2012) derives precisely from a nagging sense that the thoroughgoing disenchantments undergone by human-geographic discourse (*inter alia*) in fact *cannot* be overcome merely by the will to do so.

It is very tempting, from within the Anglophone discourse, to read Eisel's reliance on the notion of modernity - as an epoch-making process of social differentiation and disenchantment - as itself a sign of inadequate innovation. It is tempting to translate this into an 'anachronism' or an 'earlier stage' of human-geographic thinking, a stage that has been 'moved beyond' by now in the restless search for new insights. It is probably not accidental that we English-speaking human geographers tend to understand the familiarity of an idea or argument, its having been around for a while, as *itself* a tendentially damning feature, especially in cultural geography. Does the fact that there has already been a discussion of something, followed by a collective turning away from it, constitute sufficient grounds to dismiss it as no longer relevant? To assume so is to assume that the

obsolescence of a problem within a given thought-collective is a sign that it has been solved. Yet there are very good reasons to think that the problem of how 'modern' representations involve an irrecuperable distancing is a problem we *have by no means solved*. Anglophone human geographers have merely turned away from it in large numbers, becoming increasingly interested in the 'more-than' and less focused upon the 'representational'. Yet (as many Anglophone geographers will readily admit even in declining to pursue its implications with comparable gusto) the representational still haunts us.

2. Antje Schlottmann's reading of John Wylie (2009), "Landscape, absence and the geographies of love", Trans. Inst. Br. Geogr. (34), 275-289. Translation works in a multidimensional way. At any time, yet largely unnoticed and unreflected, we are performing acts of translation. Visuals into language, thoughts into texts, one language into another, words into meanings, assumed meanings of others into our own structures of meaning, developed against our personal and cultural backgrounds. This is a dynamic and relational performance. At what stage in our lives a text 'finds us' hence seems crucial for its formation and effect. Moreover, and not the least, we translate what we see (or read) against the background of our present emotional or affective conditions.

As regards the article of John Wylie, and as far as I am familiar with Wylie's texts, my reading will also be concerned with the linguistic translation of *his* emotional and affective conditions. And since he has translated what he sees, experiences and feels at Mullion Cove in South West England into English language (his mother tongue) I need to translate it into thoughts which I perform in German. And what I want to say about it, I will translate into non-native English again, because otherwise I cannot expect non-German speakers to read (and retranslate) my thoughts. Non-native English speakers, however, will perform yet another translation when reading it.

When I first started thinking about the task lying ahead, Alfred Schütz' term of 'eidetic reduction' popped up: Removing what is perceived and leaving what is required. I would at least need to attempt getting away from my scholarly interpretative defaults in order to be receptive for the hows and whys of my particular reading shaped by what can be called a typical German reception of a text deeply embedded in Anglophone Human Geography. Having thought this, I settled upon the idea of a performative reading, documented in a performative reflexive diary.

Wylie himself can be understood as a representative of non-representational and performative approaches in cultural geography. These approaches have not yet been extensively adopted in German discourse, a fact that, besides my personal reserved, yet curious stance on it, was one of the reasons for choosing it. Much of Wylie's work deals with the interplay of landscape and selves by taking into account somatic spheres of experiencing and appropriating landscape (Wylie, 2003; 2006). In his article, however, he intends to deepen or even overcome classical phenomenological thinking of being-in-the-world by turning the view to constitutive aspects of absence, dislocation and distancing (Wylie, 2009, 287). In the end, Wylie outlines in more detail what he calls the "geographies of love", repeating his core argument that it is not only co-presence, but rather loss and absence which should be taken into account when delving into self-landscape relations.

The text follows the evolution of the author's intellectual journey. The recurrent visit to a couple of memorial benches standing above a coastal cove in Cornwall leads Wylie to successive reflections, and the reader may follow him to the different places in which he gains and develops his insights. In this sense of a performative writing style it can be said that my idea is about reading Wylie with Wylie: I will note how the text comes into being in the act of reading and record in which particular directions my ideas and reflections on the text evolve. This experimental writing naturally runs counter to my scholarly socialization and the style associated with it. Because I cannot avoid observing myself in a "German way", the meta-cognitive level will be active during the reading, critically monitoring the reception. This 2<sup>nd</sup> order observation is methodically close to what Renggli calls the "breaking of evidences" (Bruch der Evidenzen), that leads to exposing sedimented cultural norms in the very act of reading or viewing (Renggli, 2007, see Miggelbrink and Schlottmann, 2009).

So let us start: The experimental arrangement has been fixed (as outlined above), the material laboratory, though, is mutable. I can take Wylie's text with me, read it in differing contexts, situations and in differing places. According to performative thinking, all these places are likely to have an effect on the text's reality...

I am sitting in the hair salon waiting area. Soon my hair will be shampooed. My week is tight; my little son craves my attention (and energy) when I leave my office. Though I need to have my hair cut once in a while, I do not have the time for enjoying this interlude without working. I pull the article out of my bag. "Landscape, Absence and the Geographies of Love". Whew! This title translated into German is unlikely to appear in a serious German journal. Landschaft, Abwesenheit und die Geographien der Liebe. "Ridiculous!" is my first thought.

But what a beginning: "We were standing high above Mullion Cove in the clear early morning, looking down into the cove, southward along the coastal cliffs and canyons, and far out to sea." (Wylie, 2009, 275) (...) "The overall impression of the scene, though, transcended all particulars. The outlines and shadowed depths of the cliffs seemed archetypal: in all the transience of things, somehow *this* moment revealed the true and original textures of the landscape. It was as if I'd been granted for a minute an untarnished perception of things" (275-276, original emphasis). Hmm, this is nice. It takes me somewhere else. I relax and follow some lovely images that come to my mind. Lost memories of the coastline in Devon where I used to spend some time years ago reappear. I even remember how I felt

when I was standing there on top of a cliff, wind in my hair. The blowing hairdryer at the seat next to me contributes gently to the emerging images and to my sense of comfort.

Suddenly a sharp voice in my head says: Hey, watch it! Don't you think that such a scenic introduction is highly suspicious? This is no serious analytical work; this is feuilleton [the genre of stylized opinion columns in German newspapers]. And didn't you notice it's a first person narrative!

My second thought about this interference is that the voice is right. German scholarly style seeks to avoid first person. Or rather, in scholarly work it is almost a no-go. This is connected, I think, to a certain idea of objectivity. First person does not keep adequate distance. The author may not be involved in his or her subject; at least this involvement should not be expressed explicitly.

This idea of objectivity is the heritage of Wilhelm von Humboldt, among others. And it is surely bound to an essentialist gesture: the overall goal is to observe and describe phenomena and actual situations in their essence, independent of differing views and attitudes. Such an ontological ambition is what makes a description – whether achieved by eidetic reduction or by systematic analysis - truly scientific in character. This inherited idea is at least one explanation for the ongoing reservations in Germanophone Human Geography against relational approaches, which insistently lay open the observer-relativity of things and matters.

This is also why a German scholar can only rarely employ a style such as the scenic introduction in Wylie's text. It is feasible only if an editor explicitly asks for an "essayistic style". It is more exception than rule, and this is exactly the liberty Eisel has taken (been given?) in the essay discussed by Hannah earlier.

My third thought, therefore, is steeped in envy. I really would like to write more often in such an essayistic style (and have it accepted and appreciated). Whether I may do so is of course also a question of status. But most of all it is a question of thought traditions and associated *habitus*.

Anyway, not only do I want to write essays, I love to read them, too, and I would like to go on reading now! It is November, it's grey outside and I actually do not get to spend much time outdoors this time of the year, with the winter term in full swing. I long for views onto landscapes and for outdoor life more generally. I would like to get back to Cornwall... (the voice in my head mounts a half-hearted protest against my affective bias and joy when reading a scholarly text – by the way, this might be related to the puritan ideal of "work" – but soon it falls quiet).

Now back to the benches at the coast: Wylie gives some thought to their connection with the deceased individuals to whom they are dedicated, as indicated by small inscriptions they carry. The benches, as Wylie sees it, become beholders themselves. "Without realizing it we had been looking at – or, better, *looking with* – a host of ghosts and memories" (277, original emphasis).

I really like this thought! I remember similar feelings of the presence of absentees, invisible others. When I was a student I spent quite a lot of time at my great aunt's place in the foothills of the Black Forest. She loved the landscape and together we strolled through vineyards and climbed hills with decayed castle ruins on top. If the weather was good, we could see the Vosges on the other side of the Rhine valley. My great aunt died a couple of years ago, but some of these views, if I can have them, are inseparably tied to her. She is not only with me watching, she is within this landscape. ("These are very personal details and I don't know why you are revealing them here, you never would have done it if not for this experiment. Science mustn't be personal!" Oh, keep quiet observer-I, we write about something fluid and observer- related like landscape and we want to think relationally. To say this is not about personal details is simply a lie!) With the text again: "Thus the benches watched, in some cases they *watched over*. This wasn't metaphorical, not at all; it was an actual incorporation" (277, original emphasis).

When reading this later, though, I do start feeling a bit uncomfortable. In the meantime I have returned to work and now I am sitting in my office. The businesslike atmosphere of books and shelves and plain surfaces has a sobering effect. My inner voice is there again and starts moaning: How can anyone propose seriously: "This is not a metaphor, it really is like this!"? Such an assertive (according to Searle's types of illocutionary speech acts, Searle, 1982) can never be either proven or falsified. You simply have to trust the author. Indeed, this goes against everything I learned (and teach) about good scholarly practice. 'No way', says my inner voice. Wylie, however, contents himself with quoting a well-known and currently trendy French thinker: "We do not simply disappear when we turn into ghosts, Jacques Derrida (1994) notes" (278). The quote remains vague and no page is noted. I look up the citation: It's from "Spectres of Marx", a collection of published lectures on the heritage of the idea and ideals of communism (the "spectre" from Marx famous introduction) and the necessity of continuously critiquing the capitalist global system. What does this spectre have to do with the benches and the constitution of landscape and selves? What might the associated "spectral geographies" (279) reveal? Weird - but also fascinating.

Buzz – buzz - a Face-Time call from a friend who lives in England. I tell him why I haven't got time right now and a little about my reading experiment and Wylie's points of view. Response: a complete lack of understanding. My friend is German and a theoretical physicist (as well as a natural scientist and materialist in the deepest sense). He would not even accept that "landscape" can be a scientific matter, let alone "spectres".

However, my German observer-I makes another observation: "isn't it remarkable that an English native quotes passages from a text by a native French speaker, who translated ideas taken from a German thinker into French, and then saw these ideas translated again into English. Are they all talking about the same 'spectres'''? Such an easygoing way of handling quotes is not typical in the German context. Systematically working over terms and definitions is rather the rule. As a

95

consequence, however, the reader is expected to accept that there is only one true form of narrative fidelity. The English style leaves the author's train of thoughts and the function of citations more open to the reader's interpretation. Yet German readers are less used to this and thus might feel abandoned by the author in a vast range of possible interpretations.

I am sitting at home on my sofa and proceed with my reading about the benches. I felt I virtually had to sit on something like a bench for my reading (the park benches drenched in November rain were not an option): "The loss they [the benches] articulated has a particular quality, a particular sense of something slipping away and being carried beyond" (281). In order to illustrate this quality, Wylie continues with a metaphor introduced earlier, the image of a piece of paper that has been swept up in the wind. "And so you run and grope to catch it, but you *can't* catch it (…) and if you eventually *do* catch it, it still remains, even in your hands, something essentially lost and out of reach" (281, original emphasis). Oh yes, this is really figurative, evocative of a mood, and thought provoking. I look out of the window where the wind swirls around the last autumn leaves. If you catch them, it feels a bit like robbery, because intrinsically they are already the wind's property and you take them *away* from the wind …

However, I could hardly publish such metaphoric in a German text. German scholars write *about* metaphors, they analyze and deconstruct them, but they do not tend to write metaphorically. Metaphors are rather the contrary to scholarly writing style, its constitutive "other". This is despite the fact that metaphors can be very efficient for explication and, as Lakoff and Johnson have shown, are omnipresent in everyday language use anyway (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). Their book *Metaphors we live by* and its German translation certainly appealed to German scholars. Yet, one of the authors' core propositions as regards the significance of metaphors has not been picked up and taken to heart by German-language scholars:

We observed that metaphor is one of the most basic mechanisms we have for understanding our experience. This did not jibe with the objectivist view that metaphor is of only peripheral interest in an account of meaning and truth and that it plays at best a marginal role in understanding (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, 212).

While I am sitting there my thoughts turn to my students to whom I teach exactly this scholarly writing style: that a text must be concise, that it must be conceptually sound and clear without ambiguity, that the author's personal subjective view is of no interest, and that all thoughts and arguments must be traced meticulously to their origins. The consequence is that German scientific literature is scarcely "enjoyable", it is not particularly diverting nor witty or aesthetic. These are not categories for German scholarship and this is probably why 'popular science' in Germany is not very popular.

Once again back to the benches and to the core geographical subject: landscape. The benches "displace self into landscape, landscape into self. They can

only ever present, here and now, an absence" (...) "If we accept that the term landscape names a 'way of seeing' the world (see Wylie, 2005) – then here we are seeing-with them and taking leave of them all at once. Looking at landscape is always looking-with-landscape" (282)

Reading this, the German landscape geographer Joseph Schmithüsen comes to mind:

The problem is located above all in theory. Just one example: obviously there is a lower limit to the scale of what can be understood as landscape. No one has succeeded in defining this limit yet, though there is scarcely ever disagreement when talking about an object in practice. In the same way that a couple of quartz grains or a feldspar crystal are not yet granite though they are parts of it, a pond, a field or a hamlet are not yet a landscape. But a village embedded in orchards on the edge of a spring valley composed of cow pastures, parcels of cropland and a couple of paths on the adjacent plateau, shrubbery on the rubble cliffs of steep small valleys, with bands of meadow at the base and a tavern for tourists in a former dye mill on a stream lined with alders, all of this taken together may comprise the essential points of a landscape (Schmithüsen, 1964, 13).

This is beautiful to read, especially in the German original. Yet it was precisely this descriptive approach to the matter of landscape and the (seeming) vagueness of definition together with the methods of observing landscape in the field and inductively ascertaining its boundaries and its unity, which were criticized fundamentally in the run-up to the great turn in German Geography at the end of the 1960s. Moreover, this approach was also criticized as nationalist. Schmithüsen himself was closely associated with the Nazi ideology of Volkstum and his work was criticized as having served the glorification of German Heimat immensely (Fahlbusch, 1999). This legacy, as well as the turn away from a landscape geography marked as "unscientific" announced at the Annual Meeting in Kiel in 1969, makes it difficult even today to re-approach landscape again (or anew) in a non-representational way as suggested by Wylie. Landscape geography is kind of a closed chapter the history of the discipline and in the scholarly collective memory. Much has happened since then, and a couple of histories of Human and Social Geography have been published (Werlen, 2000), which make any return to such a landscape geography appear as an intellectual backlash.

I, too, passed through German geographical institutions, and now I am reading about the "geographies of love" with mixed feelings: "Without losing *anything* of their power and sincerity the benches withdrew the entire scene into absences, distances. For it's love that will tear us apart – love *is* a tearing apart" (286). And in the end, I, too, am torn apart, lost between a personal affective sympathy for Wylie's overall approach, his terminology, his most evocative

writing style, on the one hand, and my observer-I acting (up) as a guardian of true science on the other. She is still not willing to accept this approach that tends to pass off personal viewpoints as 'objectively valid' and to present them as universal truth. They are, after all, presented in the functional realm of science (see Luhmann, 2012).

In his conclusion, Wylie takes up this point. Since he addresses primarily an Anglophone readership, this might show, after all, that my discomfort does not derive exclusively from my socialization in the context of the German scholarly system. With his paper, Wylie concludes, he tried to meet the objections of being subjective or universalistic by "exposing further the inadequacies of any universalist, humanist or naturalist account of self-landscape relations" (Wylie, 2009, 287). However, for me as a reader embedded in Germanophone Geography (like, as I suspect, for many other readers from this background), it remains highly demanding to extract this effort from the text and to accept a (from our perspective) absolutely and deliberately subjective approach to landscape as a scholarly approach.

#### Conclusions

We had originally planned a second exchange of responses to the two readings above, but decided subsequently to attempt to reflect on the problems of styles of thought through the construction of a single hybrid voice. More than that of, say, 'J.-K. Gibson-Graham', the composite pseudonym assumed by Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 1996), our composite voice remains troubled and divided by the perspectives it brings into contact. There are enough shared concerns to begin 'speaking as one' temporarily, but, as will become evident, this uneasy convergence does not represent anything like a dialectical synthesis.

The most obvious concern we share is that we have both, in different ways, continued to rely upon, and even reinforced, a rather blunt definition of styles of thought based simply upon the distinction between the 'German-language' and the 'English-language' traditions (or rather, what we perceived as such). We have also tended to write, despite our explicit intention not to, as though the individual papers can in turn be taken as 'representatives' of these two traditions, flirting in places with a *pars pro toto* argument. At the same time, though, we have obviously been able somehow to make specific connections across the seemingly clear divide, both because the two papers we read turned out to share many features, and because our practices of reading have in fact proven to be dependent on the styles of our linguistic positions have excluded certain elements of openness to the respective 'other' tradition. Thus Schlottmann was able to inhabit (however uneasily) a more affective encounter with Wylie's text than would be acceptable within the tradition in which most of her work is normally located, while Hannah was able to gain

some critical distance from current 'anglophone' (Latourian) critiques of the distinction between 'modernity' and what preceded it. Or so it seems.

Here we come to an impasse. On the one hand, we take for granted that it is good to challenge supposedly clear 'binaries' such as that between the 'Germanophone' and the 'Anglophone' human geography discourses. In this we are completely in line with the 'New cultural geography' impulse now hegemonic in many parts of the English-speaking geographic world and also firmly present in the German-language community in the form of annual 'New cultural geography' meetings that draw hundreds of participants. On the other hand, aside from important individually specific resonances the texts provoked, there are systematic differences at work in the two perspectives we have brought to the readings. These differences clearly go beyond language to encompass institutional traditions and styles, as well, but these can be yoked without much loss of nuance to the fairly clearly identifiable contrast between English and German as markers of the two human-geographic discourses. This contrast is not vitiated by the numerous examples of scholars from each linguistic community publishing in the journals of the other.

Obvious asymmetries inflect this difference, and indeed our two approaches to the present essay. We cannot address most of these, but must pick out just one thread. Reading back over what we've written, we can detect a difference in tone in the two readings offered above, specifically a difference between the more distanced and almost 'non-committal' tone of Hannah's section and the more engaged, at times urgent performative reading Schlottmann records. While Schlottmann is acutely aware of the luxury of writing an essay, Hannah seems able to take for granted a different luxury, namely of 'bemusement' at certain aspects of Eisel's essay, a bemusement seemingly not connected to the possibility of making the effort to draw lessons from Eisel. There is no parallel in Hannah's reading to the struggle Schlottmann carries on with her 'observer-I', a struggle in which important questions of present and future scholarly practice are at stake. Hannah does attempt to take seriously what Eisel's essay might teach, but even this 'taking seriously' is effectively optional. This in itself is an often-unremarked performance of policing through which the Anglophone-dominated international discourse (unintentionally) filters out much more work and thought from other linguistic traditions than from British, North American and Antipodean discourses (thanks to Gunhild Setten for making this point). Insofar as there is an 'observer-I' at work behind Hannah's encounter with Eisel, it is a composition of stylistic impulses (suspicion of binaries, emphasis on contingency, etc.) already familiar to Schlottmann because she is already well-versed in the 'Anglophone' criteria Hannah brings to his encounter.

Given this asymmetry, we propose to return to the notion of hospitality with which we opened the essay, and to interpret it in a specific direction (Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000). What we have said up to this point can be summarized in part in the insight that German-language scholars will not learn much that they

didn't already know in reading our paper, whereas exclusively English-language scholars would probably come across more questions they had not considered beforehand. This is in part due to fact that the paper and its readings would have been quite different if addressed to and verbalized for the Germanophone community. However, or rather, just because of the fact that we needed to write in English in order potentially to reach a broad, international audience, we would like to recommend an 'openness to the Other', in particular on the part of colleagues deeply ensconced in the Anglophone community, and further, to suggest that such an openness is becoming less optional and more necessary for responsible scholarship in 21st century human geography.

Some of the points we suggest deserve the work of real and sincerely practiced hospitality are as follows:

- There may be a price to pay for the loss (or perhaps dimming influence) of a 'scientific' 'observer-I' urging some continued orientation toward trans-subjectively 'valid' geographic knowledge. Not that this 'observer-I' need be understood as the timeless representative of 'truth'. Instead the tension it creates between the more creative and idiosyncratic aspects of 'new cultural geography' and the more objectivist and systematic style of thought Schlottmann reports as characteristic of a 'German' tradition can be seen as productive and interesting in its own right. An example of how this tension informs specific developments that perhaps go beyond what English-language human geographers have done is the advanced state of critical research by Germanophone scholars in different forms of discourse analysis (Glasze and Mattisek, 2009). These scholars are fully aware of, and interact creatively with, the 'objectifying' dangers of lexicometric analysis software for instance, but at the same time have produced a robust exploration of methods potentially useful to all language-focused segments of the discipline.

- Another sense in which some German-language (and many other) human-geographic research needs to be recognized as *more advanced* than Anglophone human geography is in those areas where a theoretical approach or perspective has not been so quickly abandoned in the restless search for novelty. Staying with a particular set of insights and exploring them in more depth yields insights not available to scholarly communities with lighter-footed grazing habits. Thus the work done in developing geographical aspects of structuration theories (Werlen, 1993; 2007), for instance, presents a robust and analytically useful body of research that could inform and enhance 'performativity'-based understandings of the production of space, not least when considering the affective effects of (material) structures on motivations for taking structurating

action. Structuration theory is decades past its heyday in the English-language journals, but this is not at all a reliable indication that there was nothing more to say about it.

- The problem of 'subjective' writing has not necessarily been resolved convincingly in poststructuralist 'dissolutions' of subjectivity or 'post-phenomenological' dissipations of experience into inter-corporeal, material matrices. Despite all of the theoretical water that has flowed under the bridge since the 1980s, we still *all* rely on presuppositions of stable subjectivity, even in order to dwell upon their inadequacy. Instead of simply re-asserting this point (as has been done before), we would like to shift the focus to styles of writing here. We take a cue from Eisel's essay and suggest that his unapologetically *subjective* narrative be revived as a model in the Anglophone tradition *and accepted more broadly in the Germanlanguage discourse*.

We are aware of the fact that we appeal for nothing less than contesting and breaking up taken for granted categories of styles of thought, a task that is epistemologically limited by nature. From Schlottmann's experimental reading in particular we derive the suggestion that both empathy and more systematic analytical reflection (and their dialogue) are needed for this task. We encourage participants in the German language discourse to take the liberty of the former and scholars involved in Anglophone discourse to continue resisting the temptation to abandon the latter. Finally, though we offered some conclusions regarding the styles of the linguistic communities we are part of, our general aim was rather to open up for further reflection and to stimulate scholars to perform their own 'reFLECKtive' reading, be it of new texts, or of texts once laid aside.

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