

Faust the Colonizer. Herbert Deinert, Cornell University. (Original ms of a version that appeared as a "Forum" piece in **PMLA**, October '95).

"Musst du nicht längst kolonisieren?" ("Hasn't colonizing been your business?") is Mephisto's loaded comment on Faust's dilemma, namely his inability to persuade **Philemon and Baucis** to vacate their little estate voluntarily in exchange for pleasant retirement quarters in his newly gained territory, wrested from the sea (Faust, Part II, V, line 11274). Baucis in particular sees no reason why they should be displaced and resents Faust's expansiveness. "Wie er sich als Nachbar brüstet, soll man untertänig sein" ("He struts into the neighborhood expecting us to act like serfs," lines 11133/4). "Kolonisieren" as Mephisto uses the word clearly favors strong-arm tactics over restraint. Faust finally gives the go-ahead: "So geht und schafft sie mir zur Seite" ("Go and get them out of there," line 11275) for an attempt at forced resettlement that leaves three more corpses on his path to salvation and is followed by a seamless flow of events culminating in his own death.

We have here, I believe, a depiction of and comment on the practices of the great colonial powers, not just in the Americas but the world over, that treat the indigenous population as inferior at best and expendable at worst. By contrast, Goethe makes sure that Faust's reward for successfully aiding the Emperor does NOT involve eviction or expropriation but is an empty and unclaimed coastline. Likewise, the original Swiss settlers in Schiller's **Tell**, part of the Great Migration, found the land empty save for wild beasts and a ferryman and decided to stay. The conspirators recite that history in order to reassure themselves that the land is rightfully theirs before they agree to resist the House of **Habsburg's** expansionist policies (II,2).

Pylades, in Goethe's **Iphigenie**, justifies his plans for deceit and theft by insisting that they are dealing with unworthy barbarians undeserving of civilized treatment (IV,4). **Thoas** comments with considerable bitterness on the Greek habit of committing piracy, robbery and abduction in the name of cultural superiority. The very history of the House of **Tantalus** suffices, he believes, to put such claims to rest (V,6). (*1).

[Christoph Willbald **Gluck** (1714-1787) composed two operas based on the story of Iphigenia: **Iphigénie en Aulide** (Paris, 1774) and **Iphigénie en Tauride** (Paris, 1779). **Glimmerglass Opera** near Cooperstown, NY, in association with the **New York City Opera**, had a splendid production of the latter in the summer of '97. The Greeks kill Thoas in Gluck's version which is based on **Euripides**.

Johann Christian **Bach's** (1735-82)"Dramma per musica" **Alessandro nell'Indie** (1762), composed while Bach lived in Italy -- it got him an invitation to London -- is an interesting version of a persistent anti-colonialism through the ages. **Alexander the Great** (356-323 bc) conquers India in a murderous campaign (327/326). Instead of barbarians the Greeks find a highly developed and sophisticated civilization, like their own. Music and text do not distinguish between the two. In the end, Alexander returns India to the Indians. An eloquent comment, twenty years before **Edmund Burke** (see below), on contemporary British colonial policy. A production of the opera was a highlight of the **Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sanssouci** during the summer of 2000.]

There is a human rights consciousness at work here, very much in the spirit of the famous debates in the House of Commons a few years earlier during which **Edmund Burke** attacked with great vigor and rhetorical skill the British colonialist policies and attitudes in Ireland and India. His was not a blanket condemnation of colonialism though, but rather an astute appreciation of alien cultures and a denial of European cultural hegemony. Speaking about the roughly thirty million inhabitants of what was then called **British India**: "This multitude of men does not consist of an abject and barbarous populace; much less of gangs of savages...; but a people for ages civilized and cultivated; cultivated by

all the arts of polished life, whilst we were yet in the woods." (**Speech on Mr. Fox's East India Bill**, December 1, 1783, in *The Works of Edmund Burke*. Vol.II, Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1839, p.300). (*2).

Philemon and Baucis represent the indigenous population and adhere to cultural practices that get on Faust's nerves. In addition, the cranky old man wants the couple's estate because of its elevation and the tall trees in which he intends to build a platform, from there to survey all he has created. He is justly proud of what he has accomplished. Still, for the centenarian to want a tree house would be laughable if he weren't aping **Genesis' Jehovah** who ended each of the six days of creation surveying what he had made and finding it good. Faust's hybris here reminds us of the very beginning of the play. We appear to have come full circle; the man has not changed.

But there is a hint that he might if he lives long enough. And that's an added meaning of his celebrated final vision, where he sees himself no longer as the lone Lord/Creator overlooking his creation and the people in it, but as one among many in voluntary mutual dependency. (*3).

Faust's manner of creating new land for settlement is a triumph of engineering which leaves no displaced populations. It creates assets without creating victims. It is futuristic, even utopian, the ultimate agenda. "A new province acquired without force of arms," was Prussia's King **Frederick II** comment on a similar endeavor of his own, the dehydration of the **Oder wetlands** (1747-1753). (*4). The Duke of Ferrara, in Goethe's **Tasso**, has cause to celebrate two bloodless conquests; Antonio's diplomacy enlarged his territory while Tasso's newly completed epic "conquered Jerusalem for us" (I,4).

Faust's eviction of the "indigenous" old couple from their property is a throwback to old and barbarous methods of acquisition. It is based on his haughty assessment of their "need," not on their entitlement. Goethe's treatment of the episode is an indictment of policy, not merely focusing on the Americas, North and South, but of imperialist/colonialist instincts anywhere anytime. Goethe's and Schiller's views are shaped by contemporary events and debates and offer a critique of contemporary colonialist practices of repression, expulsion and extermination.

*1) Listed below are a few comments on the subject by **Burke's** German contemporary **Kant**, the hermit of Koenigsberg as he was called, but an astute observer of the contemporary scene, with an opinion on everything, and the courage to state it. He was an ardent foe of colonialism, and his few comments go right to the heart of the matter. Keep his analysis in mind when reading the selections from **Kleist** and **Grillparzer** as well. Note his approval of **Friedrich II.** immigration and settlement policy, without actually mentioning names.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

Metaphysik der Sitten (1798). **Rechtslehre**. Werkausgabe Suhrkamp. Bd. VIII.

"Zuletzt kann noch gefragt werden: ob, wenn uns weder die Natur noch der Zufall, sondern bloss unser eigener Wille in Nachbarschaft mit einem Volk bringt, welches keine Aussicht zu einer buergerlichen Verbindung mit ihm verspricht, wir nicht, in der Absicht, diese zu stiften und diese Menschen (Wilde) in einen rechtlichen Zustand zu versetzen (wie etwa die amerikanischen Wilden, die Hottentotten, die Neuhollaender), befugt sein sollten, allenfalls mit Gewalt, oder (welches nicht viel besser ist) durch betruergerischen Kauf, Kolonien zu errichten und so Eigentuemern ihres Bodens zu werden, und, ohne Ruecksicht auf ihren ersten Besitz, Gebrauch von unserer Ueberlegenheit zu machen; zumal es die Natur selbst (als die das Leere verabscheuet) so zu fordern scheint und grosse

Landstriche in anderen Weltteilen an gesitteten Einwohnern sonst menschenleer geblieben waeren, die jetzt herrlich bevoelkert sind, oder gar auf immer bleiben muessten, und so der Zweck der Schoepfung vereitelt wuerde? Allein man sieht durch diesen Schleier der Ungerechtigkeit (Jesuitism), alle Mittel zu guten Zwecken zu billigen, leicht durch; diese Art der Erwerbung des Bodens ist also verwerflich." (#15. p. 377).

"Der Landesherr hat das Recht der Beguenstigung der Einwanderung und Ansiedelung Fremder (Kolonisten) obgleich seine Landeskinder dazu scheel sehen moechten; wenn ihnen nur nucht das Privateigentum derselben am Boden gekuerzt wird" (#50, 1. p. 461).

Kant, Zum Ewigen Frieden (1795) II, 3. Werkausgabe Suhrkamp, Bd XI.

Speaking of the Hospitalitaetsrecht and Besuchsrecht, i.e. the right to attempt contact among global neighbors of which he has just established "civilized" guidelines:

"Vergleicht man hiemit das inhospitale Betragen der gesitteten, vornehmlich handeltreibenden Staaten unseres Weltteils, so geht die Ungerechtigkeit, die sie mit dem Besuche fremder Laender und Voelker (welches ihnen mit dem Erobern derselben fuer einerlei gilt) beweisen, bis zum Erschrecken weit. Amerika, die Negerlaender, die Gewuerzinseln, das Kap etc waren, bei ihrer Entdeckung, fuer sie Laender, die keinem angehoerten; denn die Einwohner rechneten sie fuer nichts. In Ostindien (Hindustan) brachten sie, unter dem Vorwande bloss beabsichtigter Handelsniederlagen, fremde Kriegsvaelker hinein, mit ihnen aber Unterdrueckung der Eingeborenen, Aufwiegelung der verschiedenen Staaten desselben zu weit ausgebreiteten Kriegen, Hungersnot, Aufruhr, Treulosigkeit, und wie die Litanei aller Uebel, die das menschliche Geschlecht druecken, weiter lauten mag" (p. 214 f.).

Kant's recommendation is a global citizenship (Weltbuergerrecht, p. 216)

War as an instrument to spread populations across the globe (p. 221): "Indem die Natur nun defuer gesorgt hat, dass die Menschen allerwaerts auf Erden leben koennten, so hat sie zugleich auch despotisch gewollt, dass sie allerwaerts leben sollten, wengleich wider ihre Neigung ... sie hat, zu diesem ihren Zweck zu gelangen, den Krieg gewaehlt.-"

What he thinks about it reveals his comment (p. 222): "So viel von dem, was die Natur fuer ihren eigenen Zweck, in Ansehung der Menschengattung als einer Tierklasse, tut." After quoting an ancient Greek to the effect that war makes more bad people than it destroys.

*2)

Two prominent dramas of the time deal specifically with the treatment of indigenous populations by "superior" races, **Kleist's Hermannsschlacht** of 1808 and **Grillparzer's Argonaut cycle, The Golden Fleece** (1818-21).

Kleist's drama is a thinly veiled and nearly hysterical call for a war of national liberation against **Napoleon**, but the setting is the first decade of the first century AD.

The invading Romans must be driven out at all costs, and **Hermann** does his best to depict them as ruthless conquerors who will turn German land into a Roman province without regard for the natives who, to the Romans, are on a level with the beasts of the forest: "Fuer wen erschaffen ward die Welt als Rom? / Nimmt August nicht dem Elefanten / Das Elfenbein, das Oel der Bisamkatze, / Dem Panthertier das Fell, dem Wurm die Seide? / Was soll der Deutsche hier zum Voraus haben?"

Thusnelda ist aghast at her husband's argument:

"Das sind ja Tiere, Querkopf, der du bist, / Und keine Menschen! " --

"Menschen, ja mein Thuschen, / Was ist der Deutsche in der Roemer Augen?"

"Nun, doch kein Tier, hoff ich -?"

"Was? - Eine Bestie, / Die auf vier Fuessen in den Waeldern laeuft! / Ein Tier, das, wo der Jaeger es erschaut, / Just einen Pfeilschuss wert, mehr nicht, /Und ausgeweidet und gepelzt dann wird!"

(Hanser I, p. 570).

And he provides proof. Not only does he confirm the story that three Roman soldiers overpowered a German woman "und ihr nicht bloss, vom Haupt hinweg, / Das Haar, das goldene, die Zaehne auch, / Die elfenbeinernen, mit einem Werkzeug, / Auf offner Strasse, aus dem Mund genommen." (p. 569). Exportartikel, cosmetic raw material for the Romans: "Die schmutzgen Haare schneiden sie sich ab, / und haengen unsre trocken um die Platte! / Die Zaehne reissen sie, die schwarzen, aus, / und stecken unsere weissen in die Luecken!" (p. 569/70).

In fact he shows her a package containing a sample of her own hair and a letter written by the Roman legate Ventidius (who snatched the lock from her head in an unguarded moment) a letter to the Roman Empress Livia promising her the whole harvest as soon as Hermann has fallen. (p. 597). Thusnelda takes a terrible revenge, but she faints when it is done (p. 620). "Vor Reu und Schmerz wirst du zusammenfallen," her maid Gertrud had warned her (p. 616). She will not be the same person again, any more than **Alkmene** or **Penthesilea** who wills her own death because she cannot live with the memory of what has just happened.

Neither, incidentally, can **Gustav** von der Ried in Kleist's novella **The Betrothal on Santo Domingo** when he realizes what he has done. True, the model, **Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet**, demands a violent end for both star-cross'd lovers. But Kleist's addiction to hyperbole and amplification gives it a gruesome twist.

Hermann is able to justify without scruples and torment any means whatsoever to expel the foreigners. He advocates a scorched earth policy and total war. He borrows **Odysseus'** recipe for success, cunning. Too late does **Varus** realize that "blond and blue-eyed" -- **Tacitus'** famous description of first century Germans -- does not mean trusting and naive. "So kann man blondes Haar und blaue Augen haben und doch so falsch sein wie ein Punier" (p. 608).

The cause is just, the argument basic stuff: "Du weisst, was Recht ist, du verfluchter Bube," he tells Septimius, who insists on being treated like a prisoner of war, "Und kamst nach Deutschland, unbeleidigt, / Um uns zu unterdruecken? / Nehmt eine Keule doppelten Gewichts, / Und schlagt ihn tot" (612).

And yet he too deplores the fact ("Weh mir" p. 627) that he must order an execution on his first day as regent and supreme commander. His victim calls him a tyrant and it is difficult not to agree with him. Hermann is no longer human, he is now the embodiment of an agenda, a zealot, a fanatic. And there lies perhaps the real meaning of the play. Is anything, anything at all, worth achieving at at such a price? What if he gained the entire world and lost his soul?

[I am inserting here some of my comments in a letter to a colleague who was writing a dissertation that had a chapter on Kleist's Herrmennsschlacht:]

Richard Samuel's paper "Kleists 'Hermannsschlacht' und der Freiherr vom Stein" first appeared in Jahrbuch der Schillergesellschaft V, 1961, and is reprinted in HvK, ed. Mueller-Seidel, Wege der Forschung CXLVII, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1967.

It is as convincing a case based on circumstantial evidence as can be expected from a serious and meticulous scholar like Samuel and links Kleist's drama and Hermann's politics and strategy to the contemporary plans of **Stein**, **Scharnhorst** and **Gneisenau** to get rid of **Napoleon**.

Even if you disagree that the constellations in the drama mirror that of Prussia and other German states in 1808, it is undeniable that the piece advocates a war of national liberation. This is not chauvinism or Hurra-Patriotismus on the part of Kleist but an insistence on the right to national self-determination. **Kant** and Edmund **Burke** are his staunchest allies here. So are **Goethe's Iphigenie** and **Egmont**, **Schiller's Jungfrau** and **Tell**.

And Kleist's hysterical hatred of **Napoleon** was in large measure caused by Napoleon's betrayal of the French Revolution culminating in his coronation as Emperor "by the grace of God" rather than by the "grace of butchers and tailors" (in **Friedrich Wilhelm IV** 1848 phrase). That deep disappointment was shared by many, with **Beethoven's** reaction the most famous. See your own **Christa Wolf** quotation from *Kein Ort, Nirgends*.

National self-determination, however, leaves no room for colonialism or imperialism (this was **Ho Chi Minh's** most eloquent political argument, remember?). And this is why you can stress both in your essay, nationalism/patriotism and what you call cosmopolitanism (what I would call anti-colonialism). You need not choose between them, in fact your argument will be stronger if you see the link between them.

Having liberated Germany in his war of national liberation against a colonial power, Hermann will now declare war on colonialism and imperialism. The destruction of "Raubnest Rom" is Hermann's metaphor for an anti-colonial assault on the colonial superpower Rome and it echoes **Scipio's** phrase, repeated ad nauseam: *ceterum censeo carthaginem esse delendam*.

Carthage and **Rome** are not just towns, they are symbols of hostile or competing cultures. To destroy a culture you must destroy their symbols and shrines. Holy Oaks and other sacred monuments, the Buddha statue in Afganistan, Sodom and Gomorrha in the Old Testament, Babylon and Jericho, Troy, Carthage and Rome, Stalingrad and Berlin, Vucovar and Sarajewo, the Pentagon and the World Trade Center ...

The Anglo-Saxon monk **Wynfrith**, later known as **St. Boniface** (673-745) is said to have destroyed, in his christian missionary zeal, a sacred oak in East-Westphalia near Geismar/Fritzlar (cf. the OT, Kings and Chronicles in particular, for accounts of a campaign against the monuments and priests of **Baal**). Unfortunately for him his reputation preceded him; when he tried to work his magic in Northern Germany a bunch of enraged Frisians clubbed him to death and created a martyr.

Incidentally, in **Tolstoy's War and Peace** the roles of national liberator and farsighted statesman are given to two vastly different people, the general Kutuzof and the Tsar Alexander.

"The war of 1812, besides accomplishing the national object[ive] so dear to every Russian heart, was destined to have another significance still -- a European one. The movements of the nations from west to east were to be followed by a movement from east to west, and for this new war a new actor was needed, who had other qualities and views from those of Kutuzof, and was moved by other impulses. Alexander the First was as necessary to ... establish the boundaries of the [European] nations as Kutuzof had been for the salvation and glory of Russia.

Kutuzof had no notion of the meaning of Europe, the balance of power, Napoleon. He could not understand this. For the representative of the Russian people, after the enemy had been annihilated, Russia saved and established on the highest pinnacle of glory -- for him, a Russian, as a Russian, there was nothing left to do. For the representative of the national war there was nothing left except death." (Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, The John C Winston Co, 1949, p. 686).

Paradoxically (?), **Kleist** is not at all on the side of the former slaves of **Haiti**, freed by the **French Revolution** in 1793 and made French citizens, who get rid of their French masters in 1803. See his

Verlobung in Santo Domingo. He is, as always, on the side of the victims, the whites in this case. An attempted reconciliation between the races based on love, gratitude, respect, and a whole complex array of other emotions, fails. Please keep this in mind when reading the excerpts from **James Fenimore Cooper**.

Kleist, incidentally, does not even mention the original population of Hispaniola, there are no Indians in this story or his **Earthquake in Chili**.

Grillparzer is more subtle but less powerful than **Kleist**. To begin with, **Jason** doesn't steal the **Golden Fleece** like a woman's hair or Peruvian gold; he retrieves it in order to return it to Greece whence it came. In a "barbaric" refusal to obey the most rudimentary customs of hospitality the men of Kolchis and their king **Aietes** murder the Greek Phryxus and his companions for their gold (cf. **Kant** on Hospital- and Besuchsrecht). They had come for protection and shelter and brought with them a fleece of mysterious origin. That too remains in Kolchis until Jason and his Arnonauts take it from its secret place and escape with **Medea's** help whose own brother dies in the encounter. Throughout the engagement the natives are referred to as "die Wilden", some of the men include even Medea, Aietes' daughter, in the classification. "Entwoehne dich vom Umgang dieser Wilden. Wir sind jetzt eins, wir muessen einig denken" (Hanser I, 303) pleads Jason, and Medea follows him to Greece.

It is here that he discovers that the Platonic myth he refers to (cf. **Aristophanes'** speech in **The Symposium**) doesn't apply to people of such diverse cultural or racial origin. In any case, it doesn't end happily. Here, in Greece, Jason's phrase becomes, in Medea's adaptation: "Ein Haus, ein Leib, und ein Verderben" (342). Medea remains die fremde Frau, people feel uncomfortable in her presence, she cannot learn the easy and graceful manner of "civilized" women. "Eine scheue Wilde bin ich ihnen, / Die unterste, die letzte aller Menschen, / Die ich die erste war in meiner Heimat" (324). Jason falls into the familiar speech pattern when he pleads with King **Kreon** to give Medea a chance: "Ob sies vermag zu weilen unter Menschen," adding most diplomatically and for good measure: "Und bei dem Gastrecht fordr ichs, das die Vaeter / in laengst entschwundener Zeit uns aufgerichtet / in Jolkos und Korinthos, solcher Schickungen / Mit klugem Sinn im vorhinein gedenkend" (328/9).

Medea presents an increasingly distorted picture of Jason (we too have witnessed his actions!) but while she might do injustice to him personally, she captures she supreme arrogance of "civilized" Greece and the selfimposed mission to go forth into the world and vanquish all the peoples and put pants on the natives:

Nur er ist da, er in der weiten Welt,
Und alles andere nichts als Stoff zu Taten.
Voll Selbstheit, nicht des Nutzens, doch des Sinns,
Spielt er mit seinem und der anderen Glueck:
Lockts ihn nach Ruhm, so schlaegt er einen tot,
Will er ein Weib, so holt er eine sich,
Was auch darueber bricht, was kuemmersts ihn!
Er tut nur recht, doch recht ist, was er will.

There is an echo here of **Alba's** boast in Schiller's **Don Carlos**: "Dies Schwert schrieb fremden Voelkern spanische Gesetze, / Es blitzte dem Gekreuzigten voran / Und zeichnete dem Samenkorn des Glaubens auf diesem Weltteil blut'ge Furchen vor" (II,5).

In the end Medea's Gastrecht is revoked. A barbaric act committed by the "civilized" to which the "Wilde" responds with all the barbarism at her command.

James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) belongs in this context because he was the first major North American writer to deal with the displacement of the native population and to depict profound friendships between whites and Indians. He was almost immediately translated into German and other continental languages, his works having their greatest impact, like those of **Melville** and **Mark Twain**, in children's books format. It has become fashionable among American Germanists to "credit" the 19th century German author **Karl May** with Germans' view of "America". But in my case and that of my friends, we read the **Leatherstocking** sagas as children, and formed our image of the New World accordingly, long before we were allowed to take Karl May's books out of the municipal library. In fact, while we appreciated the high drama in Karl May, our image of America, her virgin forests and her prairie, remained that of Cooper.

Leatherstocking, Hawkeye in **The Deerslayer** (1841), having just killed his first Indian who had tried to ambush him, addresses the dead man:

"I didn't wish your life, redskin, but you left me no choice between killing and being killed. Each party acted according to his gifts, I suppose, and blame can light on neither. You were treacherous, according to your natur' in war, and I was a little oversightful, as I'm apt to be in trusting others. Well, this is my first battle with a human mortal, though it's not likely to be the last. I have fou't most of the creatures of the forest such as bears, wolves, painters, and catamounts, but this is the beginning with the redskins. If I was Injun born, now, I might tell of this ... but I don't well see how I'm to let even Chingachgook into this secret so long as it can be done only by boasting with a white tongue. And why should I wish to boast of it after all? It's slaying a human, although he was a savage ... When it's onsartin whether good or evil has been done, the wisest way is not to be boastful ..."
(Signet Classic, p. 116).

In **The Last of the Mohicans** (1826) there's a hint of racial reconciliation, even harmony, in the growing love between Cora (white) and Uncas (red). But both are killed. It's two of the older generation whose bond has already been established who reaffirm their friendship over Uncas' fresh grave.

"As for me, ... the father of Uncas, I am a blazed pine, in a clearing of the palefaces. My race has gone from the shores of the salt lake, and the hills of the Delawares. ... I am alone -"

"No, no," cried Hawkeye, who had been gazing with a yearning look at the rigid features of his friend, with something like his own self-command, but whose philosophy could endure no longer. "No, Sagamore, not alone. The gifts of our colors may be different, but God has so placed us as to journey in the same path. I have no kin, and I may also say, like you, no people. He was your son, and a redskin by nature; and it may be that your blood was nearer - but if ever I forget the lad who has so often fought at my side in war, and slept at my side in peace, may He who made us all, whatever may be our color or our gifts, forget me! ..."

Chingachgook grasped the hand that, in the warmth of feeling, the scout had stretched across the fresh earth, and in that attitude of friendship these two sturdy and intrepid woodsmen bowed their heads together ..."

Yet the scene, and the novel, ends with a melancholy restatement of the obvious, as the old Indian speaks once more:

"The palefaces are masters of the earth, and the time of the Red Men has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans."

(Signet Classic, p. 414).

An Introduction written as late as 1850 still conveys the same sense of regret:

"The Mohicans were the possessors of the country first occupied by the Europeans in this portion of the continent. They were, consequently, the first dispossessed; and the seemingly inevitable fate of all these people, who disappear before the advances, or it might be termed the inroads of civilization, as the verdure of their native forests falls before the nipping frost, is represented as having already befallen them. There is sufficient historical truth in the picture to justify the use that has been made of it" (p. vii).

In a strange contrast to the preceding, see the matter-of-fact account:

From an Introduction to **The Prairie** (1827) also written many years (1850?) after its first publication:

"The Great Prairies appear to be the final gathering place of the red men. The remnants of the Mohicans and the Delawares, of the Creeks, Choctaws, and Cherokees, are destined to fulfill their time on these vast plains. The entire number of the Indians within the Union is differently computed as between one and five hundred thousand souls. Most of them inhabit the country west of the Mississippi. At the period of the tale [the hero dies in 1806, at age 83] they dwelt in open hostility, national feuds passing from generation to generation. The power of the republic has done much to restore peace to these wild scenes, and it is now possible to travel in security where civilized man did not dare to pass unprotected five and twenty years ago."

(Signet Classic, p. vii.).

*3)

Faust's final agenda is the drainage and subsequent cultivation of a swamp, considered useless, even poisonous, land. The contemporary "real-life" parallel is the dehydration of the **Oder wetlands** and subsequent settlement, mainly by Germans and Poles, under the Prussian king **Friedrich II**.

Das Oderbruch.

The most readable and popular account remains **Fontane's** "Das Oderbruch" in his **Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg**, vol II. Like everyone writing about the dehydration of the Oder wetlands and the straightening of the river-bed itself, he quotes **Friedrich II** remark "Hier hab ich im Frieden eine Provinz erobert" (Saemtliche Werke X, p. 31).

Friedrich Wilhelm I had entertained the idea as early as 1736 but left the task to his son. (In the film **Der Alte und der Junge Koenig** of 1935 the estranged father and son meet on the site but the reconciliation attempt fails).

The most detailed treatment to date is **Albert Detto's** "Die Besiedlung des Oderbruchs durch Friedrich den Grossen" in **Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preussischen Geschichte**, vol. 16 pt 1 (1903) 163-205. It supplies the statistical data, as it were, to the essays of Fontane and others.

"Die Urbarmachung ist unter den Werken landesvaeterlicher Fuersorge Friedrichs des Grossen wohl das am haeufigsten genannte und am meisten geruehmte. Denn wenn es auch nur einen maessigen Teil der grossartigen kolonisorischen Arbeit des grossen Koenigs ausmacht und an Umfang und Zahl der Ansiedlungen von den schlesischen und westpreussischen wie auch von der Gesamtzahl der uebrigen kurmaerkischen Kolonisationen erheblich uebertroffen wird, so ist es doch allen anderen ueberlegen durch die Geschlossenheit des besiedelten Gebiets, durch die Lage im Herzen des Staates und durch den erfolgreichen Kampf gegen die Naturgewalten, die ausser den sonstigen Schwierigkeiten zu

ueberwinden waren" (163).

"Im Jahre 1746 nahm Friedrich den Gedanken wieder auf und forderte von seinen Raeten ein Gutachten ein ueber folgende Fragen:

- 1) 'Ob von denen an der Oder belegenen Bruechen, so bei Anwachs des Strohms der alljaehrlichen Ueberschwemmung unterworfen, einige durch anzulegende Daemme davor in Sicherheit zu setzen moeglich falle,
- 2) wo eigentlich dergleichen Oderbruecher belegen und welche davon am fueglichsten und mit dem groessesten Vorteil durch Daemme zu bedecken,
- 3) wass solche Daemme kosten werden, und wass
- 4) durch die vorzunehmende Verwallung vor Vortheil zu stiften, auch ob und wie dadurch von die darauf zu verwendende Capitalia das Interesse sicher zu erhalten.'

Councillor **v. Haerlem** was to head the commission in charge (later joined by the mathematician **Euler**) and came to the conclusion (1747) "dass abgesehen vom kuenftigen Mehrertrag der Aemter Zellin, Kienitz und Wollup, ausser den 5% Zinsen noch jaehrlich 6000 Thlr. zur koeniglichen Kasse fliessen koennten durch Abgaben von dem neuen Acker, da 44200 Morgen nutzbar gemacht werden wuerden und 'auf solchen Fleck, wo jetzt einige Fische ihre Nahrung haben, kuenftig eine Kuh erhalten werden kann.'" (165).

Of course it wasn't just the fish who were having their livelihood there now, so were the fishermen who caught them. They protested and pleaded with the king "als ein hoechst erschrockenes und den letzten Streich befuerchtendes Heer, hiermit in groesster De- und Wemuth alleruntertaenigst fussfaellig ..., unseren daraus ohnfelbar entspringenden Untergang landesvaeterlich zu Herzen zu nehmen." The king replied, "sie moechten die Vollfuehrung der Arbeiten und deren Effekt zuvor abwarten, alsdann sie sich melden koennten, wenn sie wirklich Schaden erlitten" (168). But he insists, anticipating Kant, "Was die alten Unterthanen bisher eigentuemlich besitzen, muss ihnen billig verbleiben, das neue urbare Land davon separiert werden; eine koenigl. Commission soll die Sache regulieren" (195).

*4).

1776.

Faust has created his new domain by taking it from the Sea, a magnificent feat in more ways than one. A peaceful alternative to forced expropriation. One form of crime, sanctioned by tradition, quietly abandoned. The new territory is vast and densely populated. But who lives there? Apparently not yet the ideal community of free and voluntarily interdependent people that he depicts in his final vision.

It has been suggested that this new world of the future, after the swamp has been drained and many more settlers invited or conscripted to live in the expanded realm, is inspired by a contemporary reality, namely the young **American republic**. And Goethe certainly was at times fascinated with it. But he is putting the final act together in the late 1820ies and early 30ies, the opening scene "Offene Gegend" in 1831. What does that young **Republic** now look like, and what has happened to the **Spirit of 1776**?

It's now 50 years later. The **War for Independence** was won. Another one was declared on Britain in **1812** and nearly lost, but finally also won. One of the most tragic casualties of that war was the death of the **Shawnee** statesman **Tecumseh** in the **Battle of the Thames** in 1813 and the subsequent collapse of the **Indian Federation** he had built as a bulwark and defense of the native population. General **Harrison**, after nearly losing the earlier **Battle of Tippecanoe**, had finally eliminated one his

most accomplished adversaries, while the Indians had lost an irreplaceable leader. (The latest biography of Tecumseh is by John Sugden, Henry Holt & Co., reviewed by Barry Gewen in The NY Times Book Review of 4-19-98).

The dispute with **Spain** over **Florida** spilled over into a war against the **Seminoles** that lasted until the 1840ies and was won only when the US troops under **Andrew Jackson** systematically destroyed the Indians' crops and villages, a strategy reminiscent of General **John Sullivan's** campaign, in 1779, against the **Senecas** and **Cayugas**. (Cf. J.F. Cooper, **The Pioneers**, p. vi).

The Monroe Doctrine had been adopted in 1823, containing the provision that the United States would not interfere with existing colonies or dependencies of European powers (# 4).

The relentless **push westward** unsettled and swept along (or aside) the Indian tribes who stood in the way.

"In my book a pioneer is a man who turned all the grass upside down, strung bob-wire over the dust that was left, poisoned the water, cut down the trees, killed the Indian who owned the land and called it progress." The cowboy artist Charles Russell, quoted by Timothy Egan in his **Lasso The Wind**. From a review by Timothy Foote in The NY Times Book Review of 9-6-98.

Worst of all, **slavery** continued. Unlike the French during their revolution, the Americans had not abolished it.

Speaking of 19th century historians, the 20th century historian **Page Smith** writes that they believed that history could be understood and explained, and that "the history of the United States was the prototype of that explanation. It demonstrated as did no other episode in history the benignness of the Creator. The origin of the United States had been glorious, indeed little short of miraculous ... its subsequent history had given every indication that its progress was to be 'onward and upward,' dragging along other peoples of the world willy-nilly. ..."

But he clearly does not share the sentiment and quotes **Arnold Toynbee's** statement in 1961 "that we had lost the leadership in our own revolution - that we had become, in the common phrase, 'counterrevolutionary,' more concerned with wealth and security than with justice and equality."

To **Page Smith**, as he sets out to continue his history of the American revolution after 1783, the year when the **Treaty of Paris** officially ended the **War for Independence**, the story of the United States is one of decline. He feels closer to the Roman historian **Tacitus**, writing about the "decline of private and public morals, about the growth of wealth and ostentation ..." than to the "amiable and optimistic" historians of our own past, **Bancroft, McMaster, Rhodes**. (Vol. III, **The Shaping of America**, ix ff).

Rephrasing the argument from a different perspective: the young nation had not, or not yet, lived up to its promise.

Returning to the question, who lives in **Faust's land** now, and what kind of an enterprise is it? We only meet **Mephisto** and his bandits and pirates. This is their home base. Faust lives by their power and shares their greed and their booty. It is a thoroughly lawless entity, thriving, in Mephisto's words, on "Krieg, Handel und Piraterie." The challenge posed by the elements has been met, but nothing remains of the exhilaration in which the battle was joined (Act IV, lines 10218 ff.). Faust's own "Spirit of 1776" is dead when we meet him again.

The **New Age** is yet to come, but it won't come in Faust's lifetime, in anybody's lifetime, for it is

utopian, a mere vision of human potential, of a tomorrow which will never arrive. An egalitarian, error-proof society of interdependent and altruistic, mutually supportive citizens will never be. Trying to build it is what human striving at its best is all about. But the ant hill or bee hive model won't work. Faust picks himself up one more time to launch a gigantic undertaking. Yet his command: "Wie es auch moeglich sei, / Arbeiter schaffe Meng' auf Menge ... Bezahle, locke, presse bei" (lines 11552 ff.) is a clear indication that ALL means will be tolerated ad majorem Fausti gloriam. And the people who would settle there would be like him, more or less.

As the Lord Himself put it a long time ago: "Es irrt der Mensch solange er strebt." We've watched Faust demonstrate it. Strive he must, or his faculties will atrophy. And when he does, he will commit errors, lose his way, even founder. **Catch 22.** Wie du dich auch drehst, der Arsch bleibt immer hinten. No matter how you turn, your butt will always be in back. We've come full circle.

Endnote. All of the preceding is an outline of a talk I was scheduled to give at the **German Studies Association** meeting in **Salt Lake City** on Saturday, October 10, 1998. Unfortunately, I had to cancel the trip. I am posting it here instead, dedicating it to **my son Mark** whose birthday is today, October 8.