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# Improvement through movement: a thematic and linguistic analysis of German minority writing through the works of Anant Kumar

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**IMPROVEMENT THROUGH MOVEMENT:  
A THEMATIC AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF GERMAN MINORITY WRITING  
THROUGH THE WORKS OF ANANT KUMAR**

by

Kirsten E. Kumpf

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in  
German in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

December 2005

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Waltraud Maierhofer

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Kirsten E. Kumpf

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree in German at the December 2005 graduation.

Thesis Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Waltraud Maierhofer, Thesis Supervisor

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Sarah Fagan

To my parents and sister who continue to believe in me  
To my grandfather who made me realize the necessity for communicating with the other

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## INTRODUCTION

In der Vorlesung

In einer Literaturvorlesung stellte der Professor in seiner Übergangspause der ZuhörerIn aus Indien unerwartet die Frage: "Gibt es auch in Indien Schriftsteller der Moderne?"

Für eine Weile blieb die indische Studentin still, und dann antwortete sie lächelnd: "Ja! ---So viele wie Kartoffeln!"

Der Vorlesungssaal brach in Gelächter aus.

Der Professor, ein wenig irritiert, aber vorgeblich lachend, bat sie wieder: "Könnten Sie uns diesen Vergleich ein bisschen erläutern, weil Ihr Vergleich zu banal scheint."

"Ja. --- Aber das stimmt auch! Diese Autoren sind einerseits wie Kartoffeln unzählig. Andererseits bleiben sie für viele noch unter dem Boden verborgen. Vielleicht wird man diese Erdschicht irgendwann beiseite schieben und sich die darunter verborgene Frucht schmecken lassen." Sie lächelte weiter, aber die anderen nicht.

Weiß Gott "Warum?"<sup>1</sup>

For many years these "Kartoffeln," as mentioned by the Indian student, have remained underground; however, as evident in the last number of years, Westerners are finally recognizing that only through a much-needed harvest, can such produce offer the opportunity for a new cultural vision. In Germany one can witness a growing taste for minority literature.<sup>2</sup> Within the last decade, Europe has experienced a shift in demographics. Particularly the founding of the European Union has altered populations within each European country. Germany has undergone a tremendous change.<sup>3</sup> A country impacted by increased multiculturalism finds itself turning away from traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Anant Kumar, Die Inderin (Schweinfurt: Wiesenburg, 1999) 24.

<sup>2</sup> Many more German universities are including minority literature in their curricula. The University of Hamburg, for example, is noted for offering such classes. See Carmine Chiellino, ed., Interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland: Ein Handbuch (Stuttgart; J.B. Metzler, 2000) 388.

<sup>3</sup> Here, I refer to the 7,370,000 foreigners living in Germany; 28% of which stem from Turkey. See Chiellino, Interkulturelle Literatur 36-37. The European Union including Germany also has developed a greater interest in the East (India) in terms of trade and commerce. Note: Naushad Anwar Sulaiman, ed., India, Germany and European Union: Partners in Progress and Prosperity (Delhi: Kalinga Publications, 2002) 189.

approaches as instilled by key Western writers and philosophers. Although scholars such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Tieck, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schlegel dealt with themes of the Orient in many of their works, today's global situation entices artists from the East to welcome Western themes, in this case German ones.<sup>4</sup>

The topic of migrant literature has been problematic since its inception.<sup>5</sup> What label do we attribute to writers who are writing in a part of the world different from their own and more significantly in a language other than their mother tongue? Writing outside of one's homeland, and in some cases in another language, presents a number of different categorical factors worth highlighting. Should these authors' viewpoints be considered foreign or native? At what point, if ever, do others regard the works of non-Germans as representing the opinions and sentiments of a writer with a German background? Can different cultural paths intersect with a similar form of expression? Instead of merely incorporating themes, which enable Germans to escape and gain insight into a foreign culture, the goals of literary pieces dealing with the Orient are radically changing. No longer are quests for mysticism and foreign lifestyles sought after as a means to escape, as was popular during the Romantic period; but instead the focus is

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<sup>4</sup> There is an increasing number of publications indicating the East's intrigue with the West. For a list of such authors see, Chiellino, Interkulturelle Literatur 511-517. Of special import is the collection of poetry entitled *Spuren der Wurzeln* (1996), by Rajvinder Singh, an Indian, who like Kumar, also writes in German. Furthermore, the art exhibition *West by East*, curated by Tunisian writer, Abdelwahab Meddeb, and presented by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, illustrates how today the West is portrayed and understood by the East. See The Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona. 11 Sept. 2005 <<http://www.cccb.org/eng/activ/expos/expos.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> See: Sabine Fischer and Moray McGowan, eds., Denn du tanzt auf einem Seil: Positionen deutschsprachiger MigrantInnenliteratur (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997) 34.

changing from a West-looking-East perspective to one in which the Orient is now finding its place in the West.<sup>6</sup>

The presentation of foreign cultures in the West, and for my purpose that of India in Germany, offers reasons for inclusion, where heterogeneity and homogeneity are found on a common track and ticket with the goal of progressively moving forward. This type of situation has already been discovered in a number of Turkish authors who, living in Germany, have described the situation of the foreigner and whose feelings and intercultural chiasms contribute to their sense of identity and individuality, while at the same time prodding them on the road to integration.<sup>7</sup>

As borders become less defined and German citizenship is better understood in terms of European membership, it is quite understandable that Germany has struggled with questions concerning the role of native versus visitor and the guest transforming quickly into yet another host. Non-native authors blur the lines of such distinctions. Is everyone moving in the same direction, or do we still find individuals wanting to derail the norm, hence not accepting the social reality, which identifies Germany's present situation? It seems as if Turkish literature has paved the way in distinguishing a new set of writers on the literary forefront.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Recent interest in Indian movies in the West underscores this change in focus. Emily Flynn, "From Bollywood to Hollywood," Newsweek on the Web 30 November 2004, 10 September 2005 <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6622282/site/newsweek>>. See also Monsoon Wedding, dir. Mira Nair, perf. Naseerudding Shah, Lillete Dubey, and Shefali Shelfy, DVD, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> A more in-depth study on such a Turkish author is offered by Azade Seyhan as she discusses the writings of Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Azade Seyhan, Geographies of Memory: Protocols of Writing in the Borderlands, ed. Jeffrey Peck, 1997, German Cultures Foreign Cultures: The Politics of Belonging, 2 Sept. 2005 <<http://www.aicgs.org/Publications/PDF/peck.pdf>>

<sup>8</sup> For a long list of and biographical information on such authors see: Chiellino 463-471. See also Irmgard Ackermann and Harald Weinrich, eds., Eine nicht nur deutsche Literatur (München: Serie Piper, 1986) 16-17, 90-93, 59-64, 65-69 and Nasrin Amirsedghi and Thomas Bleicher, eds., Literatur der Migration (Mainz: Donata Kinzelbach, 1997) 116-137, 140-154.



Nevertheless, rather than addressing Turkish authors about whom much scholarly work has already been done, it is my personal conviction that a new group of writers is of equal importance and should be considered an obligatory group to study: immigrant authors from India. In the opening anecdote, Anant Kumar presents a compelling argument for Germany to become acquainted with this group of writers as people from India continue to influence contemporary Germany. Anant Kumar chooses to address his own situation in the words of the Indian student, and in doing so intensifies the polemics of the Indian author as he/she grapples with finding a voice in a writing scene, predominantly Western.

This thesis seeks to unearth one of the “Kartoffeln” through the analysis of the writings of Mr. Anant Kumar. Kumar, born in 1969 and raised in Katihar (Bihar) India in an affluent family in which his father was a teacher, gained an interest in German while still quite young. At eighteen Kumar began his formal studies of German at the Goethe-Institut in New Delhi. His love for German and Germany unfolded throughout his young adult years, and in 1991 he moved to Germany where he studied Germanistik at the University of Kassel from 1991 to 1997. Kumar completed his graduate studies with a thesis on *Manas*, a novel by Alfred Döblin, “den er neben Bertolt Brecht und Erich Fried als einen seiner ‚geistigen Großväter‘ bezeichnet.”<sup>9</sup> Today Kumar lives and writes in Niestetal, Germany and as Marilya Veteto-Conrad has stated, Kumar has “turned on its head the expectations one has of a non-native German poet; in doing so, he has expanded

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<sup>9</sup> “Anant Kumar verblüfft von so viel Zuhörern,” 5 May 2000, copy of article supplied by Anant Kumar.

the horizons of *Ausländerliteratur*.”<sup>10</sup> The contemporary topics, as evident in his works, alongside a keen awareness of language indicate why “any scholars or followers of this genre must now direct their attention to this new star.”<sup>11</sup> His shift from India to Germany has resulted in a rippling effect of changes; ones which surface in many of his literary contributions.

Kumar is the author of eight books: *Kasseler Texte* (1998), *Fremde Frau – Fremder Mann* (1999), *Die Inderin* (1999), *Ein Stück für Dich!* (2000), *Die galoppierende Kuhherde* (2001), *Die uferlosen Geschichten* (2003), and notably his two most recent works, *Drei Kilo Hühner* and *Zeru – Eine siebentägige Geschichte* (both September 2005). His incessant output definitely categorizes him as a prolific writer. He writes mostly prose and poetry but also adds an additional flavor to the literary scene through his children and youth contributions such as the book, *Ein Stück für Dich!* along with additional poems and stories. Further selections include satires, essays; anecdotes, fables, short stories and lastly his unpublished, one-act play, *Ghana*.<sup>12</sup> The variety of his writing style reflects the range of his themes. His works can be described as cautious, ones where the attention to interaction between people of the same nationality or different nationalities calls for discreet contemplation and thorough examination. Kumar is aware that the unfamiliar lurks everywhere; one’s origin does not hinder unfamiliarity and life undoubtedly presents many contradictions and as a result controversies. *TAZ Bremen*, as noted on Kumar’s active website, captures well what distinguishes Kumar as a writer.

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<sup>10</sup> Marilya Veteto-Conrad, “World Literature in Review: German,” *World Literature Today* 72.3 (1998): 614.

<sup>11</sup> Veteto-Conrad, *World Literature* 614.

<sup>12</sup> Reviews of many of his publications are to be found in newspaper articles, in his books (some of which are cited below) as well as on his current website. Kumar, Anant. Home page. 10 September 2005 <<http://www.anant-kumar.de.vu>>

“Es geht um Liebe, um die Mikroebenen menschlicher Beziehungen, kurz: um ganz Alltägliches. Dies, die Möglichkeit, sich zu identifizieren, aber auch sich ‘ertappt’ zu fühlen, macht den Reiz der Arbeiten Kumars aus.“<sup>13</sup> Kumar’s gift lies in his ability to recognize such circumstances, and it is what intrigues readers from every span of life. His artistic involvement has made him the recipient of various awards in contemporary German literature.<sup>14</sup>

While analyzing the works of Kumar, I will limit myself to two thematic approaches. I am particularly interested in the sense of movement with reference to progress and in the establishment of identity through the use of language. Many of Kumar’s works focus on the idea of cultural progression and acceptance or lack thereof in a shifting Germany. Simultaneously, such advancement forces Kumar to question his own sense of “hybrid” identity and how he and others like him fit into the new cultural mosaic of Germany. These topics, both from the individual and group perspective, are developed through Kumar’s images of transportation or general movement. Pieces such as *Eine Schwarze kommt ins Krankenhaus*,<sup>15</sup> *GLEIS EINS*,<sup>16</sup> *Die Zeit ist stehengeblieben*,<sup>17</sup> *Weiterkommen*<sup>18</sup>, *Ausweg*<sup>19</sup>, *Ein Stück für Dich!*<sup>20</sup> and *The German*

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<sup>13</sup> Kumar, Anant. Home page. 10 September 2005 <http://www.anant-kumar.de.vu>

<sup>14</sup> Some of Kumar’s awards include: nominated finalist for the *Würth-Literatur-Preis*, 2002; recipient of the *Tübinger Poetik-Dozentur*; *Förderpreis Inselschreiber Sylt*, 2003; nominated to the *Bayrischen Akademie der Schönen Künste für den Adalbert-von-Chamisso-Förderpreis*, 1999; honored with the *Preis für Gegenwartsliteratur* through the *Friedrich Bödecker-Kreis-Niedersachsen e.V.* and the *BBS Osterholz-Scharmbeck*, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Anant Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder Mann* (Schweinfurt: Wiesenburg, 1999) 27-28.

<sup>16</sup> Anant Kumar, *Kasseler Texte* (Schweinfurt: Wiesenburg, 1998) 14.

<sup>17</sup> Anant Kumar, *Die galoppierende Kuhherde* (Schweinfurt: Wiesenburg, 2001) 77-78.

<sup>18</sup> Kumar, *Kasseler* 30.

*Post*<sup>21</sup> exemplify the idea of motion. Not only does the text vividly describe being on the move, but on a deeper level Kumar's writings also mirror the current state of Germany as it adjusts and adapts to its shifting international surroundings and inhabitants.

Many of Kumar's selections also underscore how identity, shift of identity, or rejection of an altered identity are manifested in the art of communication. For Anant Kumar cross-cultural communication perfectly describes his passion for language, and how language inevitably is linked to one's awareness of self. It is very interesting that Kumar has chosen German as the means for sharing his thoughts. In this sense, one can place him in an entirely different pool of writers. Not only has he crossed physical boundaries by leaving his homeland, but he continues to cover ground on a personal level through the act of writing and by moving from one linguistic register to another. How does his language choice affect the twofold process of mastering German and developing as a writer in a foreign country?

Selections such as *Dichten und Fremdsprache I*,<sup>22</sup> *Ist Deutsch schwer*,<sup>23</sup> *Kommunkation I*,<sup>24</sup> *Sprache und Kultur*,<sup>25</sup> */F/*,<sup>26</sup> *Dichten und Fremdsprache 2*,<sup>27</sup> *Dichten*

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<sup>19</sup> Kumar, Kasseler 33.

<sup>20</sup> Anant Kumar, Und ein Stück für Dich! (Alhorn: Geest-Verlag, 2000)

<sup>21</sup> Kumar, Kasseler 34.

<sup>22</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 10.

<sup>23</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 13.

<sup>24</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 14-15.

<sup>25</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 19-21.

<sup>26</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 25.

<sup>27</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 35.

*und Fremdsprache 3*,<sup>28</sup> *E wie Emigranten*,<sup>29</sup> *Kommunikation 2*,<sup>30</sup> and *Dichten und Fremdsprache 4*<sup>31</sup> illustrate that the road to social integration and acceptance relies on the individual's willingness to make communicative sacrifices even if these result in linguistic limbo, questionable utterances, misinterpretation, or complete lack of understanding. It becomes crucial to analyze these types of conversations and interactions to experience fully the forging of an identity. This individuality in essence may include more than one side. Perhaps immigrants undergo a shift in identity in which either one identity is formed as the byproduct of two, or consequently one type of identity is replaced entirely by a new one. Either way, attention must be given to the steps involved in this process, and Anant Kumar offers his readers the opportunity to observe the life and power of language at play, specifically when two different tongues elicit contradictions as a means to cultural knowledge.

As tensions are magnified regarding Germany's multiculturalism, due in part to the concept of European inclusiveness, my research will shed light on migrant literature in hopes of creating a general understanding and respect for those willing to integrate and share themselves through the gift of literature as Anant Kumar does. Centuries ago German Romanticists created a cross-cultural dialogue by introducing Germans to the exotic world of India. Today Anant Kumar continues this dialogue by expressing what it means to be an Indian and a German living and working in Germany.

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<sup>28</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 43.

<sup>29</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 51.

<sup>30</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 54-55.

<sup>31</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 58-61.

## CHAPTER I. INDO-EUROPEAN RELATIONS AND INTERESTS: BEGINNINGS

If the Portuguese (sic), the Dutch and the English had carried away ships laden with Indian treasures, Germany would do likewise, but hers would be treasures of spiritual knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

The arrow-shaped country of India has been a *point* of interest for many people. Perhaps its mere physicality suggests why numerous nations have been drawn to experience and unfortunately exploit it. Indeed, “the discovery of India by the Western man is one of the most significant events in the history of India and indeed in the history of human civilization.”<sup>33</sup> Thorough exploration of India took place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when European countries, most significantly Holland, Portugal, Denmark and England, sent ships to comb the land for fortune.

In regard to Germany’s involvement with India, the “passageway” took an alternative route. Although Germany witnessed the return of materialistic treasures from the East, Germany’s trunks, when opened, would boast goods with no immediate monetary values. While the rest of Europe was exploring India’s physical side, Germany would soon yearn for its soul. Germany had little political interest in India, unlike other European countries. Although it pursued the country from an intellectual perspective, its European neighbors were crucial in beginning contact, thus also influencing Germany’s involvement. In order to understand the story of Indo-German relations one must begin when westerners first

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<sup>32</sup> Heinrich Heine quoted in: Sadananda Misra, “Indological Studies in Germany: An Overview,” Indo-German Cultural Relations, ed. Dr. Sadasiv Misra (Orissa: Society for German Studies & Relations, 1991) 101-107.

<sup>33</sup> Sisir Kumar Das, Western Sailors Eastern Seas (New Delhi: Thomson Press, 1971) 1.

set foot on Indian soil. These early encounters launched a long cultural exchange between the Occident and the Orient which one still witnesses today.<sup>34</sup>

India's sense of mysticism and unique civilization has captivated numerous minds for years and has not ceased to entice contemporary tourists. Today a flight to India is a rather short, uncomplicated journey; however, the first Western sojourners who attempted to reach its borders faced far greater traveling obstacles. Alexander the Great, for example, immediately recognized the challenging yet intriguing aspects of this country. Although he desired to explore India further, the strength and determination of the Indian people caused him to reconsider his plan of conquest; he and his men succeeded only in one battle. Nonetheless, his short-lived visit resulted in cultural influences affecting both realms.

From that exposure, Indian sculpture became more Greek-like...Alexander was intrigued by the wisdom of the Hindu philosophers, called gurus, and at least one of these holy men accompanied the Greeks on their return home.<sup>35</sup>

Even earlier the great mathematician, Pythagoras, had traveled to India and found his place amid the Hindus "to study under the Brahmans," and he "regarded them as the most enlightened men."<sup>36</sup> Greece had opened the doors to the Indian subcontinent and in time much of the rest of Europe would pass through these doors. Henceforth the ports of India were to be filled with countless Western fleets interested in exporting Indian goods. India

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<sup>34</sup> According to the *Auswertiges Amt*, relations between India and Germany continue to flourish. Institutions such as the six branches of the Goethe Institute in India and the branch office of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in New Delhi foster education and scholarship between these two countries. For additional bi-cultural information see, *Auswärtiges Amt*. 2005. 11. Sept. 2005  
<[http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/laenderinfos/laender/laender\\_ausgabe\\_html?type\\_id=3&land\\_id=60](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/laenderinfos/laender/laender_ausgabe_html?type_id=3&land_id=60)>.

<sup>35</sup> William Goodwin, *India*. Modern Nations of the World. (San Diego: Lucent Books, 2000) 28.

<sup>36</sup> A. Leslie Willson, *A Mythical Image: The ideal of India in German Romanticism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964) 25.

inspired the West to adopt new forms of art, architecture and thought. Indeed, the abundance of ships returning home with cargo from the eastern realm was most common. It is not surprising why the exotic world of India heightened trade and consequently the Western world's curiosity in seeking out what Mark Twain later labeled, "the Land of Wonders."<sup>37</sup> Western rulers persistently sent their best explorers to profit from India's goods, which caused rifts between the Indian people and western aggressors.

Sailors such as Vasco da Gama, one of the forefathers of Portugal's nautical endeavors with India, changed India forever when he banked off the shores of Calicut on his voyage around the Cape of Good Hope.

Vasco's historic arrival in India initiated an era of Western European imperial penetration and conquest that would last four and a half centuries [...] For the ensuing three centuries, in fact, tens of thousands of still larger freighters and men-of-war from Holland, England, and France would follow the Portuguese route, forming a chain of floating power that would bind India to Western Europe, as a giant elephant might be bound by a chain secured to one of its ankles.<sup>38</sup>

Soon thereafter, more Portuguese fleets returned to Calicut and eventually a permanent base was set up in India allowing the Portuguese to barter with Indians for the best prices and send large quantities of goods back to their homeland. This type of "factory" stage of Western European enterprise" caused former positive relationships between India and Portugal to suffer.<sup>39</sup> Political tensions between the two countries rose and initially peaceful contacts transformed to hostility. Both Indians and Portuguese committed horrible atrocities toward one another, and yet Portugal maintained great power as it continued to build fortresses along the vast Indian coastline.

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<sup>37</sup> Twain quoted in: Goodwin, India. 6

<sup>38</sup> Stanley Wolpert, A New History of India (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 135.

<sup>39</sup> Wolpert, A New History 136.



Following the Portuguese lead, emissaries from various other European countries took advantage of the open doors and made their way to the Indian coast, consequently leaving their mark on Indian culture. Many trade centers were set up along the shores to gain control of India's precious resources.

For a few years it seemed there might be enough trade to satisfy all the traders from Portugal, France, Holland, and England, but competition for Indian markets grew rapidly. Furthermore, a long series of wars in Europe had almost depleted the treasuries of many countries, so it was inevitable that competition for Indian riches would turn into violent conflicts.<sup>40</sup>

Scarcity prompted nations to reanalyze their strategies in attaining access to India's wealth. The Greeks' intrigue with India in the third century B.C. eventually ignited a European fist fight. None of the countries were willing to compromise their economic power for a peaceful outcome; war seemed inevitable. "By 1700, the Europeans were fighting sea and land battles to gain control of access to Indian spices, fabrics, pearls, and other valuable commodities."<sup>41</sup> Britain implemented the most radical measures to solidify its presence in India. It sought a northern route and passageway to India and yet failed on more than one occasion; however by attaining the support of the Moguls, great warriors from Asia who had conquered and heavily influenced Indian territory and its culture, the British strengthened their own position and thereby, in contrast to other European nations, gained an Indian dominance.

When recalling India's history, it is impossible to divorce England's cultural imperialism from India's development as a country. By 1857 Britain had tightened its reigns on India and had established the dominant position it desired. The emergence of the *English East India Company* allowed the English to control the economic outflow of

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<sup>40</sup> Goodwin, *India* 37.

<sup>41</sup> Goodwin, *India* 39.

India; more importantly it prohibited other European countries from advancing further in exploration and profit. Soon thereafter, the English became very attracted to the Ganges Basin due to its perfect conditions to grow cotton. British industrialists excelled in textile production and yet at the same time they were in awe of India's clothing production. In fact, Indian styles soon influenced European fashion and resulted in much competition between Indian and English manufacturing companies.

Britain, determined to terminate India's efficiency, placed great restrictions on the production of India's goods.<sup>42</sup> Britain only enabled India to export raw cotton which, in turn, British factories strictly used for their own purposes. Later on, England controlled India entirely through the East India Company; the British directly or indirectly managed nearly all sectors of the Indian government. Under the leadership of Lord Cornwallis, India began its long history of living under the regime of Great Britain.

By 1818, the last armed resistance to British control was put down and the cleaned-up East India Company became the undisputed master of India... This was the first time that a relatively small European country had been able to subjugate an entire nation containing a unique civilization. How this came to be and how Great Britain maintained dominance over the subcontinent for almost two hundred years remains a source of fascination to this day.<sup>43</sup>

Inevitably British colonization manipulated the Indian people, their ideas and ways of life. The British employed English as the language of "government and power."<sup>44</sup> Along with a new dominant language, western principles and philosophies seeped into Indian culture and although India tried to maintain its culture and

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<sup>42</sup> For a more thorough description of England's opposition to India's production and the import of its goods see, Om Prakash, The New Cambridge History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 240.

<sup>43</sup> Goodwin, India 40.

<sup>44</sup> Goodwin, India 41.

individuality, assimilation was bound to occur. One could argue that British rule in India brought forth many advancements and helped India to develop into the nation it is today. Conveniences such as “railways, the post and telegraphs, a national administrative system with a well-planned capital city, libraries, museums, and the English language” certainly helped to modernize India, yet they were implemented primarily to enforce Britain’s control rather than to establish a more desirable land for the natives.<sup>45</sup> Great Britain heavily influenced Indian civilization and would not cease to do so until India’s independence in 1947.

Astonishingly, England and for that matter much of the rest of Europe had succeeded in bringing back Indian commodities, but Germany was convinced that behind the production of such goods were the minds that created them. “Scholarly and literary interest in the world abroad was, in fact, very active in Germany even in these early centuries of European expansion.”<sup>46</sup> For Germany, “India played an important role in this widening panorama,” and at the end of the eighteenth century, the time had come for German intellectuals such as Goethe, Schiller, Schlegel, Herder and others to embark upon a literary journey in which India was a destination. For centuries westerners had come to know a civilization strictly through control,<sup>47</sup> “but there was as yet no specific quest for India which focused on Indian language, thought and literature as a unique contribution to the heritage of mankind and an important source of knowledge which had to be explored in its own right.”<sup>48</sup> Germany was bound to make that quest.

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<sup>45</sup> Shashi Tharoor, India: From Midnight to the Millennium (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1997) 14.

<sup>46</sup> Dietmar Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest for India (New Delhi: Manohar, 1986) vii.

<sup>47</sup> By control I mean European imperialism.

<sup>48</sup> Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest vii.

## CHAPTER II. INDIA IN THE MIND OF GERMANY: LITERARY INFLUENCES

German Romanticism engaged in burning metaphysical and aesthetic quests and in a revival of the unity perceived between the arts and the religion of the Middle Ages. It experimented imaginatively with the untested, unprobed fantasy of the subconscious mind, with studied, ingenuous style, and with conscious, skillful irony. It strived for the reunion of man and nature and was enthralled with the allurements of an infinitely perfect but unattainable goal. One magically precipitated image of that goal and a summary of Romantic aspirations was the Indic ideal.<sup>49</sup>

As Willson clearly points out, Germany's literary canon, particularly those works stemming from the Romantic period, would not possess much meaning if one did not acknowledge and come to understand the integral role of India. "While the traders were busy collecting the treasures of nature the scholars hardly knew anything about the other treasures of wisdom."<sup>50</sup> The West, particularly Germany, was turning to the East for inspiration in philosophy, and language, as well as for valuable cultural information to include in literature. Prior to Romanticism, Indian themes had already briefly made their appearance in a few works dating back to the Middle Ages. Indian topics emerge in such pieces as Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, Rudolf von Ems's *Barlaam und Josaphat* and Heinrich von Meißen's (also known as Frauenlob) poems.<sup>51</sup> Later Neoclassicism governed the minds of the creative. A new wave, Romanticism, strongly reacted to previous notions and centered on the imagination and intense feelings especially those in response to man's environment. This literary period celebrated the individual's journey to find a higher being. No longer did man simply enjoy life in the present, but on the

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<sup>49</sup> Willson, *A Mythical Image* vii.

<sup>50</sup> Das, *Western Sailors* 1.

<sup>51</sup> For more details on early German pieces containing Indian themes see, Vidhagiri Ganeshan, *Das Indienbild deutscher Dichter um 1900* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1975) 27.

contrary he/she sought new opportunities, which went beyond limits.<sup>52</sup> The inclusion of India and everything it had to offer allowed German writers to focus on the exotic and forget the mundane or often traditional literary styles as set by the French.

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century German poets and playwrights had struggled ardently against the supremacy of French style and classical literary precedent in Germany and a new consciousness had emerged from this endeavor which found its expression in the works of Goethe and Schiller and in the moving plea of Herder for a new vision of world literature.<sup>53</sup>

During Romanticism the idea of the “myth” was rediscovered and Western writers aimed at bringing a new meaning to this concept.<sup>54</sup> When discussed etymologically the word, ‘myth’ brings forth the Greek concept of mythos: “it presupposes a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or to explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon.”<sup>55</sup> When discussing the “myth” and its connection to German Romanticism, scholars feel inclined to embrace other images which assign meaning to the romantic experience.

In his book, *The Seductive and Seduced “Other” of German Orientalism*, Kamakshi P. Murti argues that one should not neglect the dark side of a myth; “the perpetuation of fear has been a most effective strategy on the part of those who have used

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<sup>52</sup> For a more comprehensive definition of Romanticism please refer to, Herbert A. and Elisabeth Frenzel, Daten Deutscher Dichtung: Chronologischer Abriß der deutschen Literaturgeschichte, vol. 1 (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004) 1: 295-306.

<sup>53</sup> Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest viii.

<sup>54</sup> In using the term “myth,” I have been influenced by Mark Schorer who said that “myths are the instruments by which we continually struggle to make our experiences intelligible to ourselves. A myth is a large, controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life, that is, which has organizing value for experience” and by Edward Said, quoted in: Murti, Kamakshi P. Murti, India: The Seductive and Seduced “Other” of German Orientalism (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001) 4, 118.

<sup>55</sup> “Myth.” Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. 10<sup>th</sup> ed. 1997.

myth to bolster their own power.”<sup>56</sup> Germans were not in the least unaware about the East and its mysticism but quite the opposite is true: they were well informed about the explorers’ discoveries and voyages to India. Travel accounts provided them with a certain sense of familiarity. But as Murti contends, the myth of India, as first found in these travel accounts, would provide a literary avenue for Germans to “comfortably frame and trivialize the experiences of colonizer and colonized, persecutor and persecuted.”<sup>57</sup> Although Germany, as mentioned previously, was not directly influenced in colonizing India, it enforced its own regulations through its written contributions.

The Romantic mythical image of India had its inception, for from them were culled the opinions and assumptions and beliefs which, when gathered and sorted and combined by theorists who were compelled by an attitude of philosophical humanism and bursting with a longing for primal verities, resulted in the development of that mythical image.<sup>58</sup>

To reach an increasingly curious crowd, countless travel journals were translated into German, offering readers a glimpse into a world to which they had not been introduced visually.

Recognized for his German translation of the narrative of Edward Ives, Christian Dohm emphasized the pristine conditions of India. He wondered “if this fact should not support the very probable hypothesis, founded on other grounds, that India was the true fatherland, the cradle of the human race.”<sup>59</sup> In many ways these translators were responsible for igniting the Indian flame. They paved the road for future authors and scholars to elaborate and further incorporate the realm of India into even more prestigious

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<sup>56</sup> Murti, India: The Seductive and Seduced 2.

<sup>57</sup> Murti, India: The Seductive and Seduced 2

<sup>58</sup> Willson, A Mythical Image 23.

<sup>59</sup> Ives quoted in, Willson, A Mythical Image 26.

works. People's environments heavily influence the way they live their lives and inspire their abilities to think and philosophize. Other travel narratives supported such convictions. According to Dohm, the essence of India possessed qualities, primarily as evident in nature, which held a far greater value than the ideas of the authorities.

The philosophy of India and its religion is an outgrowth of a simple culture in a state of harmony with a beneficent nature, not the result of subjective speculation. The philosophical ideas are symbols with a rich content—perhaps more original than those of any other people – inspired by nature and self-reflection than by political priests or lawgivers.<sup>60</sup>

These conditions underline the significance of an uncomplicated India in the intellectual world.

If civilization discloses a high level of cultural development in which thought and customs hold a certain level of refinement, India's culture, although simple, would harbor an infinite number of ideas and symbols worth incorporating into the West. Although Europeans had corrupted India's distinguished nature, Germany would aim to report the beauty of the Eastern world.

The high code of moral conduct, however, was damaged by the influx of Europeans, who brought greed and spoliation to the gentle, inoffensive Hindu [...] the people were also said to be very honorable and upright, and that on the coast they presumably knew nothing of deceit until they learned it from European traders.<sup>61</sup>

Travel accounts supplied German Romanticists with a starting point from which to propel literarily and carry out those notions which the ancient Greeks had already discovered. If Germany was to find the essence of India, its people and the wisdom which identified them, it would need to examine Indian artistic expression. “No other people on earth seemed so old, and certainly no other people revealed a culture whose sublimity in arts

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<sup>60</sup> Ives quoted in, Willson, A Mythical Image 27.

<sup>61</sup> Willson, A Mythical Image 31.

and the sciences and philosophy was so ancient.”<sup>62</sup> “The Hindus were a poetic people.”<sup>63</sup> Due to the popularity of translated works from Sanskrit into German, “the sources for the Romantic mythical image of India were complete.”<sup>64</sup>

Grounding Indo-German relationships and Indological Studies, the Romantic era brings forth the translation of Kalidasa’s play, *Sakuntala*, by Georg Forster in 1791.<sup>65</sup> This play was paramount in inspiring German authors to reanalyze the world of India. “Sakuntala is the heroin of Kalidasa’s drama – ‘the fairest of females ever to walk the pastures of India’s literary landscape.’”<sup>66</sup> No longer were tidbits of Indian poetry the only means to catching a glimpse into the writings of Indian people; more and more works from the East were entering the European literature scene and “at the same time, Sanskrit research came into being, and linguistic research in Germany similarly took part in this with fundamental works.”<sup>67</sup> On May 17, 1791 Forster’s monumental version of *Sakuntala* was handed over to one of Germany’s quintessential literary figures, Johann Gottfried Herder. This “foster-daughter”<sup>68</sup> play encapsulated the spirit of India;

She appeals by means of her natural, innocent, surrendering and emotional quality. One ought to round out all this by realizing that the tale has been

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<sup>62</sup> Willson, *A Mythical Image* 36.

<sup>63</sup> Willson, *A Mythical Image* 44.

<sup>64</sup> Willson, *A Mythical Image* 47.

<sup>65</sup> More information regarding the beginning of Indological studies through Georg Forster’s translation of *Sakuntala* can be found in Alokeranjan Dasgupta’s second chapter, *Sakuntala, the Adopted Daughter*. See, Alokeranjan Dasgupta, *Goethe and Tagore: A Retrospect of East-West Colloquy* (Heidelberg: South Asia Institute University of Heidelberg, 1973) 14-29 and Sri Gour Mohanty, “Georg Forster and India’s Ambassadors Extraordinary,” *Indo-German Cultural Relations*, ed. Dr. Sadasiv Misra (Orissa: Society for German Studies & Relations, 1999) 97-100.

<sup>66</sup> Mohanty, “Georg Forster and India’s Ambassadors Extraordinary” 98.

<sup>67</sup> Dasgupta, *Goethe and Tagore* 10.

<sup>68</sup> Dasgupta, *Goethe and Tagore* 15.



taken from the early age of innocence of simplicity and of wonders also that the imagination of an Indian poet is altogether conditioned by his climate and the natural scene of India.<sup>69</sup>

Herder was completely enthralled with Foster's translation and with the contribution this piece would render in the field of German literature. The drama consumed him and "he [found] the ideal he [had] sought: innocence and unity with nature, the marvelous treated as ordinary, tangible incidence, a supreme harmony of the arts," all quite relevant to the ideals instilled in German Romanticism.<sup>70</sup> Through his contributions, Romanticists ardently continued to develop their understanding of India. "The chief contributor to the development of this image (mythical), and to its enshrinement as the epitome of Romantic longing," Herder, succeeded in invigorating the German people with a curiosity about India.<sup>71</sup> Descriptions such as the following confirm India's charm and appeal.

India was an ancient land watered by a holy river, the Ganges, the river of Paradise, which came to symbolize for the Romanticist the idyllic existence they saw reflected in Hindu culture. A protean spirit served and guarded by a superior class of holy men, implanted into every denizen of that land a simplicity and peace of soul which made for balanced virtues and ease of living. It was a land where poetry permeated every aspect of human wisdom, creating a sublime harmony of all knowledge. Here philosophy was one with religion, and a Universal Spirit was immanent in every creature and in every creation of nature. A mellow kinship pervaded all things. A marvelous magic was the companion of ordinary reality. Here truly, was aesthetic perfection, and here one could find perfect contentment. This was the kernel of the mythical image of India.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Mohanty, "Georg Forster and India's Ambassador Extraordinary" 98.

<sup>70</sup> Willson, A Mythical Image 70.

<sup>71</sup> Willson, A Mythical Image 71.

<sup>72</sup> Willson, A Mythical Image 71.

India, a land with which very few were familiar, transformed itself into a popular country which captivated the minds of many. The intrigue for India was always present in the German people, “it was always motivated by a deep interest in human destiny in which India was thought to play an important role. India was thus made a part of the German universe of discourse.”<sup>73</sup>

It is only natural that one of Herder’s contemporaries, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, also took note of *Sakuntala* and came to realize the feelings this play could trigger as well as the ultimate power and fame it would instill in Germany. As Walter Leifer states, “in the Weimar of those days the Indian *Shakuntala* remained the literary topic for decades.”<sup>74</sup> Goethe, an advocate of *Weltliteratur* (universal literature)<sup>75</sup> found his desires satisfied when the world of India was brought to Germany’s threshold. In fact, as Goethe intellectually processed Kalidas’ *Sakuntala* for himself, he immediately recognized how attractive its parts were. “Enraptured by this delightfully romantic drama”, he described the piece “to be a masterly presentation of the influences which Nature exercises upon the minds of lovers.”<sup>76</sup> Many scholars have argued that Kalidasa’s work played a significant role in the composition of Goethe’s *Faust*. Parallels between

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<sup>73</sup> Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest 1.

<sup>74</sup> Walter Leifer quoted in: Mohanty, “Georg Forster and India’s Ambassador Extraordinary” 98.

<sup>75</sup> A term readily used by Goethe and his contemporaries is aptly described by Antonella Nicoletti: “Der Aspekt des Verstehens führte wiederum zur Auffassung der Übersetzung als Aneignung fremder oder alter Sprachen und Kulturen sowie als Bildung oder Weiterbildung der eigenen Sprache und Kultur mit dem Ziel einer ‚Progressivität der Bildung‘ und einer ‚Universalität der Poesie‘ (der Sprache, der Kultur), d.h. mit dem Ziel einer ‚progressiven Universalpoesie‘, wobei Universalität sowohl das Klassische als auch das Moderne meint. Antonella Nicoletti, Übersetzung als Auslegung in Goethe’s *West-östlichem Divan*: im Kontext frühromantischer Übersetzungstheorie und Hermeneutik (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2002) 26.

<sup>76</sup> Dr. Sadasiv Misra, ed., Indo-German Cultural Relations, (Orissa: Society for German Studies & Relations) ii.

the Gretchen scene and that of the mother with her child whose lover has left her are quite strong. Benoykumar Sarkar recognizes Goethe's initial Indian interests:

*Sakuntala* left an indelible impression upon the literary activity of this pioneer of romanticism. It is the story of a woman with child deserted by her lover. The Gretchen-episode in the tragedy of *Faust* may thus have been inspired by the dramatist of India. At any rate, German critics have pointed out that the conversation between the poet, the manager and the Merry Andrew in the prelude to *Faust* is modeled upon that in Kalidasa's play, of the performance they are to give.<sup>77</sup>

Not only did Goethe feel moved to include themes from *Sakuntala* in his famous drama, *Faust*, but India's poetry persuaded him to model some of his ballads after them both stylistically and contextually.

“*The Pariah* was based on an Indian legend,”<sup>78</sup> and “his *God and the Bayadere*”<sup>79</sup> as well focused on Indian themes. In addition to the lyrical trilogy, Goethe also displays his appreciation by dedicating a distich to Indian literary works. “Er widmet diesem literarischen Werk des alten Indiens ein Distichon“ and „er schreibt auch eine Gedichttrilogie ‚Paria‘ (Des Paria Gebet, Legende, Dank des Paria).”<sup>80</sup> Most significantly, one discovers Orientalism in Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, which appeared in 1819. Although Goethe certainly was concerned with the ideas of India, this book of poems reacts to the translation of the Persian play by Hafiz around 1320-1389. The poetry emphasizes Goethe's strong belief in “Weltliteratur” by examining the eastern

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<sup>77</sup> Benoykumar Sarkar quoted in: Dasgupta, Goethe and Tagore 22.

<sup>78</sup> Sadananda Misra, “Indological Studies in Germany: An Overview,” Indo-German Cultural Relations, ed. Dr. Sadasiv Misra (Orissa: Society for German Studies & Relations) 106.

<sup>79</sup> Das, Western Sailors 5.

<sup>80</sup> Ganeshan, Das Indienbild deutscher Dichter 27-28.

world through Persian attitudes. In 1817 Goethe expressed the power and beauty of such a worldly piece.

Jedes einzelne Glied ist so durchdrungen von dem Sinn des Ganzen, ist so innig orientalisches, bezieht sich auf Sitten, Gebräuche, Religion und muß von einem vorhergehenden Gedicht erst exponiert sein, wenn es auf Einbildungskraft oder Gefühl wirken soll.<sup>81</sup>

Scholars have described Goethe's overall intrigue with India to be "ambivalent: he loved it and yet criticized it."<sup>82</sup> Without a doubt, Goethe was inspired to examine the world of India. He "was desperately trying to bridge the gap between German literature on the one hand and English and French on the other, in order to broaden the vision of German literature."<sup>83</sup> Yet one also can make the counter argument that his overall support was minimal. Goethe's initial motivation to consider Indian themes in German literature undoubtedly was present; however his long-term goals were merely to "emphasize the universal relatively at the expense of the localized literatures."<sup>84</sup>

It can be said that Goethe was conflicted on the inclusion of Indian literature and to what degree he should support themes of the Orient. He had difficulties judging the significance of India in German literature, and scholars dispute Goethe's intentions. Many argue that Goethe ultimately remained indebted to classicism, and that the writing of the *West-östlicher Divan* impacted and revealed this shift. For him Greek influences maintained primary value.

It was the Hellenic legacy that he was still to cherish with all his fervour...In fact, immediately after this pseudo-Eastern lull of his, he not

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<sup>81</sup> Frenzel, Daten Deutscher Dichtung 291.

<sup>82</sup> Das, Western Sailors 5.

<sup>83</sup> Dasgupta, Goethe and Tagore 58.

<sup>84</sup> Dasgupta, Goethe and Tagore 58.

only attempted to withdraw himself, but also felt a kind of indifference towards the Orient.<sup>85</sup>

Goethe's intrigue for the East reverted to observing the West.<sup>86</sup>

A more elaborate, detailed appearance of *Sakuntala* is suggested in the works and comments of Goethe's colleague and life-long friend, Friedrich Schiller. "Schiller found embodied in the character of Sakuntala his ideal of beautiful femininity."<sup>87</sup> He demonstrated his respect for Forster's translation by writing a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1795 and in it he, "places Sakuntala above the feminine characters of Greek drama."<sup>88</sup> It is interesting that both Goethe and Schiller, two authors celebrating classicism, which centers on the idea of completion, could be sensitized by a never-ending world and its respective philosophies as exhibited by the East.<sup>89</sup> The more developed and monetarily driven Germany and its European counterparts became, the more the simplistic lifestyles also resonated in the German people; the simple does not necessarily lack in meaning. Since German-Romanticists were awakened by the sense of nature and the individual, *Sakuntala* could only wet their appetite to read even more by a people who rejoice in such values

From a linguistic standpoint, the rise of Romanticism also included the world of India. Sanskrit moved Indologists further to examine India; reading between the lines was

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<sup>85</sup> Dasgupta, Goethe and Tagore 81.

<sup>86</sup> According to Dasgupta, many readers are puzzled by how Goethe favored Sophocles over Kalidasa, "despite the common theme in both? Is it because of the unrealistic symbolology of ancient Indians who in contrast to Greeks 'recognized the world of place and time not as truth but as the semblance and the veil of Māyā.'" Dasgupta, Goethe and Tagore 82.

<sup>87</sup> Willson, A Mythical Image 72.

<sup>88</sup> Willson, A Mythical Image 72.

<sup>89</sup> For additional background information on the era of classicism see, Frenzel, Daten Deutscher Dichtung 230-238.

not the only method to obtain Indian wisdom. The language employed was of equal importance and interest. Language scholars such as Friedrich Schlegel “wanted to get access to the sources of language and thought in order to test their theories on the rise of religion, the course of history and the unfolding or the deterioration of the spiritual life of mankind.”<sup>90</sup> Schlegel, a pioneer in Indian language studies, learned Sanskrit during his years in Paris. His education resulted in a publication, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder* which “earned [him] the credit of becoming the founder of Indological studies in Germany.”<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, one cannot discuss the area of Indological studies without mentioning the name, Friedrich Max Müller. Müller was interested in many facets of India: religion and culture as well as language. He concluded that “language was fossil poetry.”<sup>92</sup> Much like stones and artifacts present archaeologists the pieces with which to study an ancient civilization, so does the intricate study of language supply the linguist scholar with an artifact of the tongue. Müller is known for writing two great pieces which benefited the area of Indology. They are *Rig Veda* and *Sacred Books of the East*.<sup>93</sup>

What began with an enthusiasm provoked by literature and language with an Oriental twist seeped into other artistic disciplines. German philosophers were equally

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<sup>90</sup> Rothermund, *The German Intellectual Quest* 32.

<sup>91</sup> Misra, “Indological Studies in Germany” 102. Additional sources centering on Schlegel’s life, contributions and the emergence of Orientalism in his works see, Murti, *India* Nicoletti, *Übersetzung als Auslegung in Goethe’s West-östlichem Divan* 78-85.; Murti, *India: The Seductive and Seduced* 11-21. Das, *Western Sailors* 2, 3, 4, 7.; Willson, *A Mythical Image* 64, 83, 84, 88, 96, 103, 105, 109, 138, 149, 157, 199, 201, 202, 203, 204, 208.

<sup>92</sup> Das, *Western Sailors* 26.

<sup>93</sup> More information on Max Müller can be found in, Willson, *A Mythical Image* 240.; Manmohan Misra, “The Man and his Ideals,” *Indo-German Cultural Relations*, ed. Dr. Sadasiv Misra (Orissa: Society for German Studies & Relations, 1991) 12-18.; Rothermund, *The German Intellectual Quest* 32-46.

keen on studying the works from India. Most notably, Immanuel Kant shared many of his philosophical notions with those found in India's viewpoints.<sup>94</sup> "Kant's 'categorical imperative' has also a counterpart in Indian philosophy and Kant's aesthetics has a great similarity to some of the doctrines of ancient Indian aesthetics."<sup>95</sup>

As presented, the ramifications of German and Indian connections during German Romanticism far outnumbered the small cultural contacts made by those who had voyaged to India for valuable goods. This new approach of including Indian themes into Germany's literary scene intended to bewilder readers and revitalize German bookshelves. Most German Romanticists were overly eager to make use of India's themes. For them the land of India provided numerous occasions for mythical declarations. Authors, philosophers and scholars lived vicariously through this exotic world and sought therapy in Indian life and writing; "18<sup>th</sup> century German Indologists looked for a utopia in India, where they might rehabilitate themselves. The study of Indian literature through translation put new life into the German Romantic movement."<sup>96</sup> However, in the long run, the knowledge obtained seemed too magical and resulted in questioning its authenticity. "*Auf dieser frühen Stufe fehlen konkrete Anschauungen über Indien, es häufen sich phantasiebestimmte, fast märchenhafte Züge.*"<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the general understanding of India, its people and its culture was very limited and often manipulated by the words of the intellectuals.

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<sup>94</sup> For more on Immanuel Kant see, Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest 9-12.; Willson A Mythical Image 50, 124.

<sup>95</sup> Misra, "Indological Studies in Germany" 104.

<sup>96</sup> Dasgupta, Goethe and Tagore 26.

<sup>97</sup> Ganeshan, Das Indienbild deutscher Dichter 27.

This did not always contribute to a proper understanding of Indian ideas and traditions, there were preconceived notions, ingrained prejudices, biased arguments, but because of all this there was not that feeling of indifference about which many British writers complained when characterizing their nation's attitude towards India.<sup>98</sup>

Because German Romanticism was, in many ways, a reaction to previous eras, considerably to rationalism as displayed during the Enlightenment, the projection of the myth may, at times, have become overly "mythical," thus prohibiting the true discovery of India. "Although this Romantic quest undoubtedly provided an important new dimension to German thought, it also completely superseded the interest in contemporary India."<sup>99</sup> It was not until much later that Germany would come to learn of the real India and the real Indian.

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<sup>98</sup> Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest 2.

<sup>99</sup> Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest 4.



### CHAPTER III. PUSH COMES TO SHOVE: “CHAOTIC UNITY” IN ANANT KUMAR

Anant Kumar liebt es, den Leser mit Widersprüchen dieser Art zu locken, zu faszinieren, zu irritieren, zu provozieren...Und bei all den kulturellen Widersprüchen, die Anant Kumar beschreibt, bei all seinen ironischen Sticheleien, zeichnet er sich dadurch aus, dass er keine Klischees bedient, dass er sich entschieden von jenem literarischen Zynismus abhebt, der mit viel Effekthascherei und inszenierter Provokation Menschen, Geschlechter, ganze Kulturkreise gegeneinander aufhetzt.<sup>100</sup>

Uprooting a potato is not an effortless procedure. In doing so, one must be prepared to roll back one’s sleeves and exert some energy. One’s hands may get a bit tired, and the process may bring a slight cut or bruise, but if extracted correctly, one anticipates its taste and enjoys the satisfaction of varying the potato through the art of cooking. For some, the potato may transform into hash browns, for others into scalloped, sweet or mashed potatoes, and for others even into crisscross fries. No matter the delicacy one chooses, the nutritional value remains the same, and the potato continues to hold its definition: a staple for survival in European history especially for the German people.

As previously mentioned, I aim to unearth a potato of another form, the author, Mr. Anant Kumar. It is through his many “eyes” where I and future readers are fortunate to witness a harvest in an ever-changing global situation: the state of non-natives living and learning in a country other than their own. It is through this shift of deracinating the self that a beautiful yet difficult transformation occurs. Nevertheless, although often altered in characteristics and consistency and by moving from one point to another, inside the non-native, much like within the vegetable, continues to be the spirit of the “potato.”

There are many ways to see and understand the works of Anant Kumar, a writer in the German language, who was born in the North Eastern Indian State of Bihar and

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<sup>100</sup> Christian Harkensee, “Literatur, Kunst und Leidenschaft.” Afterword. *Die Inderin*. by Anant Kumar (Schweinfurt: Wiesenburg, 1999) 46-47.

who currently lives in Kassel as he continues to share his perceptions of an Indian living and working in Germany. One of these ways is through the philosophical approach of Friedrich Schlegel. As described previously, Schlegel developed a fervent interest in India and particularly the contributions Indian language and literature could generate on German culture. Most notably, Schlegel, much like my understanding of Kumar, demonstrated a clear progression in his writings and thought. In Schlegel's works, Rothermund recognizes a sense of "evolution not revolution,"<sup>101</sup> Kumar has been said to portray frequently this realistic progression in his writings. The comparison between Schlegel and Kumar is highlighted in Marilya Veteto-Conrad's observations. In *German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free & Pointed*, where in grouping Kumar with Canetti she writes, "Both Kumar and Canetti possess an eye for the minutiae of human existence; paradoxically, this is one way each chooses to point to the globalities they emphasize."<sup>102</sup> Her point is demonstrated very clearly in Kumar's poem, "Ein Sonntagsmorgen" in *Fremde Frau, fremder Mann*<sup>103</sup> in which Kumar shadows the everyday experience of reading a newspaper. Veteto also recognizes Anna Narojek's comment in which she too argues that Kumar thrives on including the minute details in life, ones which often are considered rather trivial. Najorak "praises Kumar for making routine events lyrical, saying that they illustrate the poetry of daily life that otherwise remain concealed to us."

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<sup>101</sup> "Evolution and not revolution was the main feature of his life and thought. There was no conscious break in his work, he never had to discard his earlier work..." See, Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest 34.

<sup>102</sup> Marilya Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free & Pointed Tongues," The International Fiction Review 28 (2001): 80.

<sup>103</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 29.

<sup>104</sup> Her point sums up well my belief; Kumar, like Schlegel, concentrates on change as it occurs.

Accordingly, Anant Kumar's works and philosophies are parallel to Rothermund's descriptions of Schlegel. The idea of "chaotic unity,"<sup>105</sup> as Rothermund detects in Schlegel, also is evident in Kumar. Schlegel sought to include disarray and foreign notions in order to understand his reality. In this respect, he was "systematically unsystematic, and he tried to transcend the limitations of philosophy by associating this discipline with poetry, mythology and psychology in terms of a universal analysis of language and thought."<sup>106</sup> Little did Friedrich Schlegel know that his ability to "combine diverse trends of thought in a masterly synthesis" would reoccur almost two hundred years later through an Indian author residing in Germany.

In his selections, Anant Kumar depicts movement and mirrors Schlegel's chaos; similarly his aim is to present movement while underscoring unity. Kumar believes that every step, as graceless as it may be, offers room for interpretation and indicates forwardness. Even if borders and personal space no longer have distinct definitions, advancement is inevitable. Kumar "demonstrates a sense of the universal. In *Fremde Frau, fremder Mann* (Foreign Woman, Foreign Man, 1998) he says poetry knows no borders."<sup>107</sup> Traversing space both in the sense of crossing from country to country or merely by crossing a street results in change and new spaces are discovered.

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<sup>104</sup> Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority Literature" 80.

<sup>105</sup> Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest 34.

<sup>106</sup> Rothermund, The German Intellectual Quest 34-35. Schlegel's notions of chaos in a text and the reader's ability to reconstruct these into unity are described further in: Nicoletti, Übersetzung als Auslegung in Goethe's West-östlichem Divan 82.

<sup>107</sup> Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free" 80.

In light of the recent subway bombings in London and the change in demographics in an increasingly radically shifting Europe, space and movement need to be analyzed anew. Anant Kumar has a lot to tell us regarding discourse and situations centered on transportation and on a deeper level what Germany's destination is; is Germany accepting and moving forward in its understanding of immigrant inhabitants and of immigrant writers? Any form of transportation includes moments of turbulence or commotion. Anant Kumar recognizes this disturbance but instead of complaining, he finds reason to respect paths which are not always easy. In fact, Kumar himself realizes that he participates in the act of disruption. Appropriately he believes like Roland Barthes that writing (schreiben) means "den Sinn der Welt erschüttern, eine indirekte Frage stellen."<sup>108</sup>

My aim, although introductory, will pay particular attention to a selection of Kumar's works and analyze them in regard to cultural progression. Regardless of one's opinions concerning the nature of foreigners in one's country, Anant Kumar pushes one to analyze critically what it means to be foreign. According to Kumar, Germans too experience a sense of otherness in Germany and, as will be described later, within their own tongue; in fact all people do. Much like the German Romanticist, Kumar delves into the inner being of all people and provokes them; the familiar no longer is familiar and everything must be questioned even for the German.

Darin werden deutsche Empfindungen und Empfindsamkeiten mit spitzer Feder pointiert und ebenso präzise wie poetisch zu Papier gebracht. Der

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<sup>108</sup> Roland Barthes quoted in the epilogue to, Kumar, Kasseler.

erlauchte Leser wird zum „Blick an sich herab“ angeregt und wird – falls er dieser Weisung folgt – viel Urdeutsches an sich entdecken.<sup>109</sup>

Along this note, his poem *Identität*,<sup>110</sup> quite comparable to one of Ernst Jandl’s traditional “Wortspiele,”<sup>111</sup> reveals variations of the same line with different word order and consequently a change of meaning underscores the thought processes involved in any individual who feels out of place; identity is an ever-changing phenomenon which results in experiencing something contrary to what we deem we are.

### IDENTITÄT

SO FINDEN SIE UNS  
 UNS  
 FINDEN  
 SIE  
 SO  
 FINDEN  
 SIE  
 UNS  
 SO  
 SIE FINDEN UNS SO

A sense of alienation in a foreign culture or within one’s own, home culture leads to self-examination, which fulfills Kumar’s intentions. It is this sense of estrangement that causes movement.

Reading Kumar’s pieces does not leave one smiling nonchalantly or uttering a word of indifference. Instead, one is sensitized to one’s surroundings, to the people in one’s neighborhood, to others in a grocery store, at the bus stop, or in the school

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<sup>109</sup> “Ein Hesse aus Indien mit spitzer Feder in Verden,” *Verdener Aller Zeitung* 29 Nov. 2002. Article provided to me by Anant Kumar.

<sup>110</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 65.

<sup>111</sup> Here I mean Ernst Jandl’s unique quality to include, “Experimentelle Verzerrung, Zerlegung, inhaltliche, klangliche, schriftbildliche Neustrukturierung von Wörtern, Lauten, Sätzen zu denunziatorischem, didaktischem oder ironisch-witzigem Effekt bei Lesen und Sprechen.” Frenzel, *Daten Deutscher Dichtung* vol.2, 719.

cafeteria. Kumar highlights what is real and presents his readers with the motivation and yearning to change, to question, to feel irritated and finally to move. It is not surprising that Kumar focuses on force and what types of reactions it emits. After all, movement has impacted Kumar himself from the beginning. Leaving his homeland in 1991 to study German, German as a foreign language and social-geography at the University of Kassel, Kumar has undergone his own state of progress.<sup>112</sup> The following literary analyses will further examine the use of movement in reference to progress and to what degree Kumar recognizes advancement in the minds of Germans, in the minds of others living in Germany and also in himself.

The first selection “*Eine Schwarze kommt ins Krankenhaus*”<sup>113</sup> exposes a “rushing world,” where individuals often intersect negatively. Not only do the vehicle and its passengers have trouble arriving at a desired location, but pedestrians, with whom cars share the road, make traveling a dangerous event. The question of who has the right of way becomes a point of contention. As Kumar points out, responsibility is the key to “defensive driving.”

#### EINE SCHWARZE KOMMT INS KRANKENHAUS

Zum Glück geschah es  
Nahe dem Krankenhaus.  
Sie wollte die Straße überqueren,  
und dabei wurde sie von einem Auto angefahren.

War es noch rot oder grün geworden?  
Darüber wird noch weiter gestritten.  
Der Auto- und sein Beifahrer meinen,

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<sup>112</sup> Interestingly, Kumar also worked as a trainee in the Volkswagen factory in Kassel during 1993. Factory work may have influenced his idea of movement both in the sense of the car as well as the individual parts moving forward on the conveyor belt. His notion of uniformity, the production of a car, in relation to chaos, the assembly of an insurmountable number of parts, may have been fundamental as he dealt with these concepts in his writing.

<sup>113</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 27-28.

für die Schwarze war es rot und für sie grün.  
 Sie begründen ihre Aussage noch weiter,  
 man macht das in diesen Ländern sowieso öfter.

Aber ein alter Penner ist der Ansicht,  
 er habe das Kreischen des Autos gehört.  
 Und als er aufsah,  
 war die Ampel grün für sie.

Bewusstlos mit hohem Blutverlust  
 wird sie ins Krankenhaus eingeliefert.  
 Nach den notwendigsten Behandlungen bringt man sie  
 von Schläuchen umgeben in ein 6-Bett-Zimmer.

Frau Tischbein mit unbeherrschbarer Neugier sagt:  
 „Sie hat aber ein sehr hübsches Gesicht!“  
 Frau Klugkopf ergänzt sie schnell:

Irgendwann öffnen sich langsam ihre Augen.  
 Es wird geklingelt.  
 Ein Pfleger kommt gerannt.  
 Dann die nervöse Stationsärztin außer Atem.

„Können Sie Deutsch?“  
 „Verstehen Sie Deutsch?“  
 fragt sie  
 mit ihrer schrillen Stimme.

Der Körper der Schwarzen zittert heftig,  
 und sie wird wieder bewusstlos.  
 „Sie ist noch sehr schwach!,  
 aber wir müssen diese Aufnahmebescheinigung ausfüllen.“

Der Pfleger wühlt vorsichtig herum,  
 und findet endlich den Personalausweis.  
 Er liest die Daten vor,  
 und Frau Doktor  
 trägt Name, Vorname, Geburtsort:  
 München-Pasing ein.

Upon reading the title of this poem, one recognizes the severity of the situation.

The mere fact that a woman has been hit by a moving vehicle, while crossing the street,  
 confirms that there are contradictions in direction. The woman is crossing the street and

perpendicular to her action, a car hits her, consequently preventing either from reaching their destinations. Both parties' goals are quite different from each other, and this fact results in an accident, one with acute outcomes. Not only does the mishap create a tragic situation, but as Kumar describes, bystanders perceive the action in various ways. No one can come to a definite conclusion in determining the guilty party.

This poem supports my opinion that Kumar artistically includes the concept of motion in his writings. On the surface, the reader is concerned with the woman's well-being, which he/she very well should be. On a deeper level, however, the problem is much more complex. Other elements of movement suggest that although the accident seems to have caused a sudden halt, the situation is perpetuated through the speed of the ambulance which does reach its destination, hence the title, *Eine Schwarze kommt ins Krankenhaus*; the woman is delivered to the hospital successfully. The hospital imitates the rapidity of the ambulance in the hasty movements of the nurse and the attendant interrogating the woman about her origin.

In this sense, it seems as if Kumar presents the often impetuous reactions of outsiders unaware of reality. The hospital scene revealed here could very likely represent anyone's surroundings in a time of uncertainty where cooperation is lacking and irrelevant questions are asked. The scene presents an ironic incident: Although in the end the woman speedily arrives at a destination, it most certainly does not correspond to the one she had been anticipating. On the other hand, those working in the hospital receive information of her origin which also does not match their expectations. From her skin color, the staff had concluded that the woman was not 'German' and consequently would



not know German, while on the contrary she was born in Germany and quite possibly could have been a German citizen and at any rate have grown up with German.

Another poem, which clearly exhibits movement on another level, is Kumar's GLEIS EINS<sup>114</sup>. The German train system is known for its punctuality and dependability. A nation, which prides itself on its superb system of railways connects citizens all over the country. Kumar, who takes pleasure in observing the networking of people, makes some interesting observation in the following poem, where he describes travelers stopping at a pub near the train station to read a newspaper, drink a beer and finally dance; the "R A U S C H" from the passing coaches creates a realistic setting for the reader.

Within the bar, one witnesses the entrance and exit of people throughout the evening and into the early morning. At "20 Uhr", the place is barely populated, yet when the narrator discusses the bar a few hours later, he/she is not even able to distinguish visually the relationship between people and tables. Each person at the scene is pushing and shoving his/her way to the dance floor where the most complex form of movement occurs. It is here where Anant Kumar displays Schlegel's sense of "chaotic unity."<sup>115</sup> Much like Schlegel pushes his readers to search for the unity in a seemingly confusing message, Kumar also presents a scene where clear vision at first glance is not possible amidst disarray and smoke. But as Kumar shows on the dance floor, a unified action is doable even if different dance moves contribute. Although each person is tapping to

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<sup>114</sup> Kumar, Kasseler 14-16.

<sup>115</sup> More specifically, I am comparing Schlegel's approach to hermeneutics in which Schlegel asks readers to be, "„ebenso klug' wie der Autor zu sein, also womöglich die Konfusion im Text gelten zu lassen, und schliesslich ‚ebenso dumm' zu sein und die Prinzipien der Konfusion selbst zu ‚kennen, [zu] charakterisieren und [zu] konstruieren.'" See, Nicoletti, Übersetzung als Auslegung in Goethe's West-östlichem Divan 82.

his/her own beat, the dance floor embraces them all and only together do they emit “dum dum thak dum dum thak.”

In addition to dancing and feeling the power of the loud music, Kumar depicts other forces present in the bar. The dance floor vibrates and people push each other; however through the act of pushing, they are forced to make conversation and encounter the other. Kumar’s array of individuals (*unsere Germanistikdozentin, farbige Asylanten, der indische Yogalehrer*, etc.) projects the image which inhabitants in a multi-cultural Germany probably experience as well. The rhythm and movement experienced in this poem deliver a world of disorder and yet all are unified on the dance floor.

Expanded in length, Kumar’s prose piece *Die Zeit ist stehengeblieben*<sup>116</sup> exemplifies a playful use of language. He accomplishes this through the artistic employment of exaggerations, puns and contradictions. This poem, as its title suggests, pays particular attention to the idea of time. Undoubtedly, the laws of science prohibit one from believing that time can stand still, but in this instance, one is forced to reanalyze the ways in which time is construed. From a mythological standpoint, one recalls the Greek sun god and his chariot, making his trip across the heavens beginning in the morning and ending at night. The legend describes that the sun god has the possibility to pull in the reins on his horses causing the sun chariot to stop, thus stopping time. The sun god’s power to halt the passing of time is brought by Kumar down to earth when those who resist movement toward an intercultural world likewise pull hard to stop the moving hands of their clock.

The Indian narrator, after listening to his acquaintance’s reaction to travels in India and stating that, “DIE ZEIT WAR IM MITTELALTER STEHENGEBLIEBEN”, is

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<sup>116</sup> Kumar, *Die galoppierende* 77-78.

persuaded to think of time in the German realm and comes to the conclusion that the German winter distorts his sense of time as well. Much like the Greek chariot traveling through the heavens, the Indian narrator and the acquaintance arrive at a moment where the observed and experienced do not meet their expectations of how time should pass; surroundings which do not fulfill their desires cause a feeling of standstill.

Vor meinem Fenster sehe ich eine Schneedecke. In einem einheitlichen grauen Licht fallen ununterbrochen die Schneeflocken. DIE UHR IST STEHENGEBLIEBEN. Für mich könnte es zehn Uhr am Vormittag so gut wie drei Uhr am Nachmittag sein.<sup>117</sup>

In this selection the lack of movement indicates that when worlds are completely misunderstood, progress is not possible. Although time, no matter what the situation, continues to move forward, humans only recognize a shift in time when there is advancement of another sort. The two go hand in hand. Without the accomplishment of something, it is hard to understand the passing of time. Motionlessness results in frustration much like the narrator's sentiments in the last sentence of the aforementioned passage.

To contradict this sense of stagnancy, Anant Kumar introduces *Weiterkommen*.<sup>118</sup> The word itself means, "going further," i.e. continuing to move because a destination has not yet been reached. In its context, the word often is associated with a sense of tiredness in which the motivating words would be, "weiterkommen; wir müssen weiterkommen." Most significantly, "weiterkommen" suggests that one is not at the beginning of the journey but that a part of the path towards the goal has been covered. Within the first few lines, the reader experiences moving from point A to point B as Kumar describes the

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<sup>117</sup> Kumar, Die galoppierende 78.

<sup>118</sup> Kumar, Kasseler 30-31.

conversation between two young people sitting in a train. Although moving on the tracks the train has not yet arrived at its final station. “Zum Beispiel lauschte ich heute morgen in der Bahn ein paar Sätzen zweier junger Leute: ‚Na! Wie geht’s?‘ – ‚Ach es geht!! Ich komme nicht weiter!‘”<sup>119</sup> Consequently, I question Kumar’s set of contradictions. In one sense, the two young people are moving forward at an increasingly high velocity and yet their words relate not to their movement, thus the pun. This inconsistency makes clear why things are not always what they appear to be. It is as if Kumar stresses the need to examine events more closely before jumping to conclusions. By mentioning De Saussure, and the psychological proof of the relationship between language and image, Kumar underscores the uncertainty many feel in constructing their own relationship between the observed and the understood. “Aber dieses entwickelte Bild in der Psyche kann meines Erachtens in einzelnen Fällen sehr unterschiedlich sein.“ Although one word supposedly should produce a certain image in one’s brain, the narrator begs to differ. It is astonishing how Kumar can trigger a reaction in his readers to think about the condition of themselves, their neighbors and the world by including these scenes of motion.

A poem, which truly captures the sense of chaos and which further, supports my belief that Kumar shares something with his romantic counterpart, Friedrich Schlegel, is the piece, *Ausweg*.<sup>120</sup>

Ausweg

Eine Maus  
Verirrt sich  
im ausweglosen  
Labyrinth.

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<sup>119</sup> Kumar, *Kasseler* 30.

<sup>120</sup> Kumar, *Kasseler* 33.

Wie viele Menschen  
sucht sie  
vergeblich  
den Weg.

Vielleicht  
bleibt ihr  
doch nichts  
übrig.  
Wenn,  
dann die Hoffnung.

Labyrinths such as the one described above are stressful and are associated with moments of trepidation. The idea of moving without the ability to escape causes restlessness. Most recently, Kumar's *Ausweg* achieves new meaning in events such as Hurricane Katrina, where thousands have been trapped in New Orleans, moving aimlessly without finding a way out. The inability to reach a destination has resulted in heinous acts. Contrary to the poem's end, one wishes that there is an outlet, and that the victims of the natural disaster will not only hope to live but will live to hope.

In this short poem, Kumar is very critical about society's inability to move. Although initially the desire to change, to move on and to impact conditions which are not acceptable may be present in Germany's, in Europe's or in other countries' people, the means to attaining these goals are not yet possible. Restrictions set by governments, religious institutions or by people's principles have resulted in a powerlessness to create a change. It is as if the "unsystematic" quality of the labyrinth causes individuals to give up and "systematically" accept the situation without tearing down a wall and pushing to move forward. Much like the mythological tale of Theseus and the Minotaur in which the Greek hero, Theseus, only finds his way out of the labyrinth by way of the ball of string given to him by the Cretan princess, Ariadene, stressing the need for cultures and genders

to interact and assist one another to overcome problems, Kumar likewise points out the necessity for such mutual collaboration between distinct cultures.

Kumar's ability to captivate the reader into discovering harsh realities concerning progress and lack of progress explains why he is so fascinating to read and why his works should continue to stimulate the minds of his audience. Veteto-Conrad testifies

The reader cannot escape the sensation of participating in his life while reading the two volumes; at times this window on the soul is almost oppressive, but primarily it is addictive. The element of fascination, and the undeniable quality of many of the poems, will ensure Kumar a future readership.<sup>121</sup>

It is not surprising how Kumar causes any reader to reevaluate his/her situation on a variety of levels. The controversy behind his themes initiates discussion, and it is not shocking why the reader is "moved" on more than one level.

Kumar's literary works do not only cause adults to reflect on the reality of Germany, its people and its current state of cultural inclusion and progression. This paper has already pointed out that the shift in demographics leads to a new understanding of the "other" and where lines are being erased in terms of different races, religions, language, upbringings and experiences. Many who have moved to Germany from different countries are facing a new challenge right in their own home; second and third generations are examining what it means to be German when one's ancestry proclaims something different. A brief analysis of Kumar's *...und ein Stück für Dich!*<sup>122</sup> confirms that Kumar is very aware of feelings and questions which arise in a much younger audience. What qualifies this piece as one of Kumar's most unique works in regard to

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<sup>121</sup> Veteto-Conrad, World Literature 614.

<sup>122</sup> Kumar, Und ein Stück für Dich!

the theme of movement, is that it primarily takes place in a street car. The story centers on two young boys (“die ihre Pubertät noch nicht überschritten hatten.”<sup>123</sup>) and their mother (“eine Muttergestalt mit einer Tüte, die große fladenbrotartige nicht typisch deutsche Brote enthielt“<sup>124</sup>), who, together, enter the streetcar #3. The mere fact that the boys are still so young forces the reader to recognize their naivety and innocence. They do not yet hold preconceived notions about the world and its inhabitants.

The entire situation is told by a narrator, who is of a different background than the mother with her children. “Vom Aussehen und Verhalten her ordnete ich sie dem östlichen Teil Europas zu.“<sup>125</sup> His assumptions are confirmed later, when he hears her speak a Slavic language. Throughout the story, the narrator unavoidably comes in contact with the boys and the mother. There is not enough room on the train, so one of the sons must sit directly next to the narrator. Although no word has been exchanged between the narrator and the other three passengers, Kumar’s inclusion of action and observance provide a very thought provoking scene, one in which words are not necessary.

The main action of the story occurs in the breaking and distributing of bread by the mother. She hands both of her sons fairly large pieces of the Fladenbrot and for herself breaks a much smaller one. The narrator watches as the events unfold and notes the differences in the bread size. “Nach ein paar Sekunden brach die Mutter ein viel kleineres Stück Brot ab und knabberte selbst daran.“<sup>126</sup> Although situated on the train and moving forward with the mother and her two children, the narrator exits the scene and

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<sup>123</sup> Kumar, Und ein Stück für Dich! 8.

<sup>124</sup> Kumar, Und ein Stück für Dich! 10.

<sup>125</sup> Kumar, Und ein Stück für Dich! 12.

<sup>126</sup> Kumar, Und ein Stück für Dich! 30.

gets off the train. His responsiveness to the differences in culture is evident in his recognitions. Kumar argues that his ability to detect the fusing of cultures, as evident in the crammed train seats, offers hope for a Germany in which all members must make room for their neighbor. However, by leaving the street car, Kumar also puts forward the idea of individuals not being able to fully accept the reality of Germany's changing situation.

For the purpose of better understanding this short story, the words of the Roman emperor and stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius seem applicable. In the sixth book, line seventeen of his Meditations, he states, "Above, below, all around are the movements of the elements. But the motion of virtue is in none of these: it is something more divine, and advancing by a way hardly observed it goes happily on its road."<sup>127</sup> For many moving forward to solve a certain problem or to overcome disappointment, sorrow or pain, seems like an answer to all questions. But in reality movement, in this sense, means movement away from something that feels uncomfortable. Kumar, like Aurelius, believes that virtuous movement, although often unnoticed, does take place. When discovering the deeper meaning to Kumar's works, his idea of "weiterkommen" conjures the appropriate philosophy needed on this road to improvement.

In closing this section, I would like to offer a brief analysis of Kumar's, *The German Post*.<sup>128</sup> People living in opposite countries of the world rely on the postal service to remain in touch with family and friends. Kumar, separated by thousands of miles from his town of Bihar and a passionate writer, undoubtedly takes pen to hand to

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<sup>127</sup>Georg Long, "The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," 9 Sept. 2005 <<http://mdl.csa.com>>

<sup>128</sup> Kumar, Kasseler 34.



stay in touch with his kin. This text suggests the mobility specifically between the countries of Germany and India. In this instance, Kumar grapples with the question of punctuality for the purpose of understanding. The narrator is aware of the German postal system's delivery rate and the amount of time needed to carry out its tasks. "Und wie ist die deutsche Post? Wir kennen alle die normale Laufzeit in Deutschland: Einen Tag." But as is evident in many other situations both temporally and spatially, rules often are broken and even the assumingly speedy delivery of the post office does not meet one's wishes. "Es kann aber auch etwas anders aussehen, zum Beispiel in meinem Fall." It is in these conditions when one is "moved" to simply believe and hope that one's action will be fulfilled as desired. Sometimes, although all the signs tell one otherwise, one remains steadfast in one's convictions and "pushes the envelope."

Aber so ein Pech! Es war 19.00 Uhr und die letzte Leerung war gegen 18.30 Uhr. Die schnellste nächste Lieferung in der Gegend war am folgenden Tag um 14.00 Uhr. Na Ja! Kalkulierend und wünschend, daß vielleicht auch der Empfänger die Post nicht nachmittags bekommt, habe ich den Brief eingeworfen und warte auf eine baldige Antwort.<sup>129</sup>

Much like the quest in German Romanticism, Kumar calls attention to the connections between East and West. In many ways, the movement from both sides is evident, yet certain restrictions such as the postal timetable prevent cultures from reaching ultimate inclusion.

Even though Kumar presents both cultures in a predicament, he does not let one win and the other lose. Instead he puts forward the obstacle enabling the reader to battle and determine what fits best. "Kumar, whose 'texts move between the Indian and the German world without playing one against the other,' also dismisses questions about his

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<sup>129</sup> Kumar, Kasseler 34.

allegiance as irrelevant.”<sup>130</sup> The polarity between India and Germany and between the outsider and the person of the system, as Kumar reveals, does not result in an easy solution. Again, Kumar distinguishes himself as a writer who does not rest easily and who succeeds in challenging his readers through contractions; the rules do not always comply with the demands of the system.

Kumar’s images of transportation or general movement as displayed in the selections above often signify making headway in terms of cultural understanding and acknowledgement, but he also presents other notions; Germany continues to undergo change, and natives and foreigners alike continue to adjust to their changing surroundings. Movement forward is not the only reaction and as Kumar recognizes and causes others to identify, there is reversal, vacillation or in some instances complete standstill. In its simplest definition, people tend to associate movement with going forward and consequently misunderstand the reality of questions regarding cultural integration, acceptance or merely respect. Anant Kumar does not allow for such false interpretations and forces his audience to wrestle with these definitions and their subsequent ramifications.

Perhaps for this reason, Kumar’s own personal movement is of particular interest. Not only do Kumar’s selections deal with the issue of movement and examine the degree of progress, but the writer, Kumar, also moves himself. His commitment to public performances strengthens his voice and demonstrates exactly what he implies in his literary pieces. By reading to his audience, Kumar proves that he, like the characters in his writings, is linked to humanity. “Kumar möchte durch die Literatur verbinden, und

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<sup>130</sup> René Kegelmann and Anant Kumar quoted in Veteto-Conrad, “German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free” 80.

zwar zwischen allen Generationen.”<sup>131</sup> Numerous German newspapers report Kumar’s direct involvement with children, youth and adults as he shares the gift of his literature.

HALBERSTADT. Eine Auswahl seiner Texte las kürzlich der Autor Anant Kumar im Bibliothekskeller der Stadtbibliothek „Heinrich Heine“ ...Schwelm. (tk) So einen vollen Geschäftsraum erlebt die Buchhandlung Köndgen höchstens in den Stoßzeiten. Sogar Stühle aus der gegenüberliegenden Eiscafeteria mußten für die zahlreichen Literaturinteressierten ausgeliehen werden...**Langensteln**. Im Rahmen der 4. Kinder- und Jugendliteraturtage in der Stadt und im Landkreis Halberstadt erlebten die Schülerinnen der 3. und 4. Klasse der Grundschule „Hans Neupert“ Langenstein eine ganz besondere Stunde.<sup>132</sup>

Kumar exhibits his determination to reach all people no matter their age, race or gender. He feels that to “move” it requires someone to start the action. He excites his audience and by personally reading and offering additional comments on his ideas and questions, he sparks the interests of a growing audience. “Ongoing poetry readings and lectures by Anant Kumar are being organized in various cities in the European Union, in the North America (Department of Germanic Studies) and in India.”<sup>133</sup> In the public scene, Kumar electrifies and moves his readers; he is prepared for any type of listener.

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<sup>131</sup> “Anant Kumar verblüfft von so viel Zuhören,” 5 May 2000. Article supplied by Anant Kumar.

<sup>132</sup> “Sensible Blicke auf Deutschland,” General Anzeiger 28 Oct. 2001.; “Anant Kumar verblüfft von so viel Zuhören,” 5 May 2000.; „Begeisterung bei den Schülern,“ Schaufenster Sachsen-Anhalt 28 Oct. 2001. All articles supplied by Anant Kumar.

<sup>133</sup> Anant Kumar, “Dancing Words,” Multiculturalism and Cultural Production in Contemporary Germany Presentation, York University, U of T, McMaster University, University of Waterloo, Queen’s University, Canada, 22 Mar. – 1 April 2005.

CHAPTER IV. LANGUAGE A CHOICE? : THE TWOFOLD PROCESS OF  
LANGUAGE AND WRITING DEVELOPMENT IN ANANT KUMAR

[d]enn die Sprache ist der persönliche, individuelle Wohnort jedes Menschen<sup>134</sup>

When considering Anant Kumar's literary works, one soon discovers that he is a master of describing some of life's toughest situations or conversely the simple beauty of man and the world. Writing in a language other than his own, one marvels at his preciseness and eloquence in expression, images which Germans themselves cannot put into words.

Man könnte behaupten, Kumars Texte seien einer kulturellen Differenz auf der Spur. Sicherlich aber peilen sie, ohne „Ausländerliteratur“ zu sein, mit der Präzision und dem untrüglichen Instinkt des Nichtmuttersprachlers deutsche Zustände und deutsche Befindlichkeiten an. Sie loten im Medium der Literatur das Verhältnis zwischen Eigenem und Fremden aus.<sup>135</sup>

His ability to detect the rough edges in cultural confrontations and his talent to display possible outcomes without seeming „preachy“ or instilling any particular set of values, is an innate quality setting him apart from other authors. Kumar enjoys experimenting with his “pointed tongue”<sup>136</sup> and contributes a sense of “East-Westness” to Germany.

The mere fact that Kumar has concentrated on cross-cultural dialogue and the ways in which language can sway a person's frame of reference exposes his connection to his consciousness of speech. Anant Kumar poses a special case: he is an individual belonging to more than one community. German is not his native tongue, but his work and experiences in the German language have molded him in a very unique way. If Kumar were present in a comic strip, there would be the need for multiple speak bubbles,

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<sup>134</sup> Franco Biondi quoted in: Ackermann and Weinrich, Eine nicht nur deutsche Literatur 28.

<sup>135</sup> Hartmut Buchholz, Badische Zeitung (as noted on book cover of Anant Kumar's Kasseler Texte)

<sup>136</sup> Veteto-Conrad, “German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free” 81.

for no single bubble would truly encapsulate his ideas and motivations. Kumar no longer represents only the foreign.

As Christian Harkensee points out, Kumar's works do not project the foreign in juxtaposition with the familiar, but on the contrary, "die Inhalte fügen sich plötzlich so bruchlos ein in ein postmodernes Weltbild: Individualisierung und die große Sehnsucht nach der Nähe, der wir uns mit zunehmender Beziehungslosigkeit selbst im Wege stehen."<sup>137</sup> Although being foreign seems to set Kumar apart from most of those living in Germany, his differences are merely thrown into yet another pool of distinctions: the characteristics of German citizens living in Germany. His employment of the German language, although expected to bridge a gap, awakens German readers in recognizing a great difference: Kumar formulates in their language, yet the most radical differences continue to remain. A common language does not guarantee familiarity.

Fremd fühlen sich nicht nur die Fremden im fremden Land – fremd fühlen wir uns auch mit uns selbst, hier, jetzt...an diesem Punkt globalisierter kultureller Gleichmacherei hat sich Anant Kumar eben jene kritische Distanz bewahrt, die ihm den ironischen Blick auf uns und auf sich selbst ermöglicht, gerade an dieser Stelle betont er die kulturellen Gegensätze, anstatt sie zu verwischen.<sup>138</sup>

Had Kumar written in his native language, and had his works been translated into German, his keen observations would not have resulted in as clear a recognition, i.e. he would have been understanding Germany strictly from the margins. Although trite in expression, the phrase, "When in Rome do as the Romans do," aptly describes Kumar's situation. In order to acclimate himself to his audience, a Germany which is becoming more and more heterogeneous, Kumar's reason for selecting German as his means to

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<sup>137</sup> Harkensee, "Literatur, Kunst und" 46.

<sup>138</sup> Harkensee, "Literatur, Kunst und" 46.

express himself is a telling choice. His decision to write in German has influenced his own self on a variety of levels and thus calls for investigation.

This section seeks to examine critically a few of his pieces which disclose language at play and the ramifications which the intricacies of language can impart on a people. As is evident in his writing, Kumar mirrors a number of viewpoints. His sometimes-ambiguous portrayal of discourse is synonymous with uncertainty of the self and others. Such ambiguity often also leads to asking more questions and/or seeking new ways to achieve meaning. At times his writings even suggest that it is not he who feels estranged, but that others assume the foreign which only then results in the foreigner feeling out of place. More than anything Kumar delivers an important message: every person must develop in a language and never take it for granted or assume it at face value. There are always little surprises and new ways to create meaning even for the most skilled linguist. Beate Winkler-Pöhler in *Eine nicht nur deutsche Literatur: Zur Standortbestimmung der Ausländerliteratur* poses a very good point:

Ist denn nicht jede Sprache fremd? Auch die Sprache, in die man hineingeboren ist, sei eine fremde, da man in sie erst hineinwachsen müsse und sie keinem von uns bis ins letzte vertraut sei. Das Fremde wohne in der Sprache selbst, und so müsse jeder um die Sprache kämpfen, auch um seine eigene Muttersprache.<sup>139</sup>

Kumar has found his own path in expression and it is in the German language where he is most sensitized to his surroundings and in which he is able to view them critically. Of course, the question remains whether or not he has left an infantile stage, a stage in which babbling and limited forms of expression are common. It is my opinion that Kumar always will do what it takes to remain fresh in a language. For him language should not be a place in which one finds refuge or seeks comfort. Instead, Kumar is mobile and he is

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<sup>139</sup> Beate Winkler-Pöhler quoted in: Ackermann and Weinrich, *Eine nicht nur deutsche Literatur* 51.

not afraid to test a language to its ultimate limits. In addition it is only through deviation from the linguistic norm that mediation between two different cultures is enhanced.

Street corners in a city such as Berlin or even a small town such as Rothenburg ob der Tauber no longer only house German bakeries but just as frequently contain Turkish “Döner Kebabs,” sushi bars or Indian Cafés. Karma Sutra and Indian cuisine books are just as popular as *Dr. Oetkers's Backbuch*. Art trends such as Henna and Indian woven tapestries fascinate German shoppers and often seem much more striking for a home than the standard cuckoo clock. Although many may not fully recognize it and admit to it, the influence of India on Germany is noticeable. It is not surprising that in addition to the impetus of cultural fashion trends, the significance of India is also witnessed in the world of literature. Reluctance still remains both on the literary and consumer forefronts, but it is inevitable: the East is meeting the West.

The poem *Dichten und Fremdsprache I*<sup>140</sup> illustrates the convergence of India and Germany while also noting the turbulence when a difference between desiring the “exotic” and truly understanding and believing in the “exotic” remains. Kumar begins the poem with a question, the question which many Germans are asking: “Wie ist es möglich, so was zu schaffen.” Ironically Kumar does not insert a question mark; it is as if the willingness to listen does not exist and impatience prevails. Although Kumar’s works have been purchased and read in great numbers, not all Germans recognize their true value. On the surface, they (the others) welcome statements made by writers like Kumar, or so they say. “Eure Äußerungen sind uns auch herzlich willkommen,” but simultaneously, they feel disconcerted and experience a strong sense of unfamiliarity. It is as if they have brought home the Karma Sutra book but feel uncomfortable engaging in

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<sup>140</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 10.

the described sexual positions. They respond by saying, “Sind eigenartige Gedanken, sind unbekante Versrhythmen.” These contradictory statements prompt Kumar to perceive the world in a state of transition and “Wandel.” Although the goods and his goods are readily available, many hold back on fully experiencing and accepting. In this case, time, close reading and patience will cause natives to recognize the importance of his works and apply his themes appropriately.

As mentioned at the end of this piece, the initial shock of Indian food, its different taste, its preparation and appearance led to fervor for Indian cuisine in which “chicken curry” can commonly be found on a German table. Similarly, Kumar hopes migrant writers’ thoughts also will be devoured like “dieses würzige Huhn“ which „stellt Indien heiter dar“, and that his works will one day “einigen *sehr lecker* schmecket.” The willingness to adopt various new cultural pleasures is evident in Germany and Germans are engaging in new ways and lifestyles. Kumar recognizes this.

He suggests that the readers take the plunge, the risk, and devote a few of their precious *Einkaufsminuten* – shopping minutes – to the uniqueness of his thoughts and to the unknown rhythms of his verse. He concedes that they will not only assure his further existence, but also make a further contribution to the integration of the foreign into their community.<sup>141</sup>

If German citizens would come to realize that Kumar’s words like chicken curry will benefit them greatly, they would gladly “sink their teeth” into his “evolutionary” literature and grow with it accordingly.

The number of dialects spoken in Germany quite appropriately coincides with the unique individuals who speak them. The standard, “Hochdeutsch,” is taught in the schools and governs the official sectors of Germany; however conforming to this supposed universality of language does not exist; every resident of Germany speaks in a

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<sup>141</sup> Veteto-Conrad, “German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free” 81.



dialect, which reflects his/her background. A second selection by Kumar, *Ist Deutsch schwer*,<sup>142</sup> focuses attention on the German language by going one step further: it observes the complexities of a dialect, the Bavarian dialect.

#### IST DEUTSCH SCHWER

In einem Gespräch  
Sagt Francisco aufgeregt „Gut!“  
„Woas?“, fragt der danebensitzende Friedl.  
Gut! Gut!“ , wiederholt Francisco.  
„Ach guat!“  
„Bitte?“ fragt jetzt Francisco.  
„Guat! Guat sagt man!“  
Jetzt sind beide ein bissl verärgert.  
Daher witzelt Heide kichernd:  
„Deutsch ist schwer! Gell?“

Interestingly, the place and time of this selection are not important; Kumar strictly goes to the root of the situation. There is a misunderstanding and language, i.e. its proper application, if there is such a thing, is the culprit. Francisco, who appears to be non-native, desperately trying to use “Hochdeutsch,” faces an interesting dilemma. Even though he uses the language, which is regarded as the highest level of German expression, Germans who speak with a Bavarian accent are criticizing him. The “other” who attempts to speak in a language of the group is taught to speak in the other, the dialect. Both Friedl and Francisco feel as if they are being misunderstood. It is here where Kumar underscores differences amongst the so-called natives. Again, one witnesses Kumar’s attention to detail, “an eye for the minutiae of human existence.”<sup>143</sup> Although presenting different languages or forms thereof within one selection, Kumar

<sup>142</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 13.

<sup>143</sup> Veteto-Conrad, “German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free” 80.

does not present any one variety as the dominant one. “Kumar straddles at least three cultures and languages, observing them all, yet embracing none completely.”<sup>144</sup>

Moreover for Kumar one voice and one origin do not construct his own identity. Like many who have immigrated, his personal history and experiences result in a fusion of multiple identities. As quoted in Azade Seyhan’s *Geographies of Memory: Protocols of Writing in the Borderlands*, Iain Chambers once wrote the following:

Our sense of belonging, our language and the myths we carry in us remain, but no longer as ‘origins’ or signs of ‘authenticity’ capable of guaranteeing the sense of our lives. The mythic formulations of our originary communities now manifest themselves “as traces, memories and murmurs that are mixed with other histories, episodes, encounters.”<sup>145</sup>

Contained in Kumar we find these traces of Indian descent juxtaposed with a new and personal German individuality; in a new millennium it is significant to observe how these contribute to his and other migrant authors’ “crossbreed” states.

When one discusses the area of language, it is important to consider the manner in which one projects a language and the aftermath of employing language. The transmission of language is discovered in communication, a process which Kumar addresses in *Kommunikation 1*.<sup>146</sup> The narrator of the poem, Kumar, is frustrated with questions regarding his homeland, India. Due to his shift in homeland, language and culture, he no longer feels inclined to answer and comment on what to him seem as arbitrary questions and statements. „Oh! Indien! Ihr Land hat eine sehr alte reiche Kultur!” [...] “Afrikaner? Die Trommler haben doch keine Kultur!”

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<sup>144</sup> Veteto-Conrad, “German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free” 81.

<sup>145</sup> Seyhan, *Geographies of Memory* 75.

<sup>146</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 14.

Kumar's understanding of India and his self do not correspond to the so called "truths" found in textbooks and encyclopedias. The conflicts as evident in his mind are reflected in his inability to communicate with those who formulate such statements; Kumar cannot present them with a desirable answer because he has changed and continues to change and contradictions between what is understood by the people and what he believes and feels are far too great. For him India no longer is found in the pages of a textbook; this may have been the case during German Romanticism, but as Kumar stipulates today, India is present in Germany, and consequently Indians like Germans are intrigued with the here and now. As a result, and for Kumar this means he is one "der sich mit den anderen Dingen befasst."

Again, one recognizes Kumar's sense for that which is amongst all. *Kommunkation I* proves that Kumar does not want others to focus solely on keeping the different separated from the other different, but instead Kumar depicts difference as present in all; a hierarchy of differences does not exist. Through her comparison with Canetti and Kumar, Veteto-Conrad argues likewise. "Both are intrigued with the universal – that which aligns people, not that which distinguishes one group from another" comparable to that which surfaces in encyclopedias and other one-dimensional sources. "Their focus is all about humanity ("alles über Menschen") rather than all about the other ("alles über die Fremden")."<sup>147</sup> The fact that Kumar ends this piece with a conversation between him and "eine alte Schwarze" "gestern vor dem Rathaus," gives reason for his focus on humanity. Language in its purest form, such as black words on the white page of a history book, does not create meaning unless the addressor and the

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<sup>147</sup> Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free" 83.

addressee engage; communication is necessary for producing real understanding. In conversing with the woman in front of the court house he writes:

Unser Gespräch wurde heiter,  
Und es kam eine Pointe:  
Lachend fasste sie meinen Arm –  
Ich spürte eine menschliche Wärme –  
Diese Wärme machte mich noch sicherer –  
Und ich lachte noch lauter!

Kumar's personal life as well as his writing stress interaction and communication even if tongues and backgrounds are different. The hyphens at the end of lines three, four and five confirm that uttering words results in more than a period; communication always leads to more.

In *Sprache und Kultur*<sup>148</sup> Kumar goes one step further. Through the literary figure, Suresh Chandra, who has learned four languages and who has managed to win a scholarship to attend a university in Paris, Kumar describes the difficulties which language learning impart on the individual acquiring new means to converse. Chandra's diligence and commitment to expand in languages and their respective literature, has yielded comments not to his liking. "Ein gutes Referat! Aber mit dem Akzent des indischen Englischen!"... "Indische Literatur im Französischen!" Kumar who conceivably has undergone frustrations much like Chandra looks to the root of expression. "Literatur ist Literatur!" Kumar is convinced that, "good literature lives up to humanity."<sup>149</sup> Is the accent or the style of writing or communication deterring meaning? Chandra, sitting on the banks of the Seine river like his French counterparts, shares an

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<sup>148</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 19-21.

<sup>149</sup> Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free" 80.

environment and a common language with them, but does his accent or skin color give reason to keep him only on the shore rather than one in the flow?

It is later in the company of his neighbor from Bengal where Chandra can communicate without being told that his Bengali is not quite native. In fact, his Bengali, much weaker than the four other languages which he had studied intensively, was “gebroch(en).” By “breaking” the language barrier and hence the cultural barrier, Chandra’s neighbor reacts, this time not with an undesirable comment; she differs from the others by actively participating instead of merely relying on words to demonstrate how she feels. “Klopfend seine Schulter sagte die alte Bengalin irgendwas.” At this point, it is not important what she says (irgendwas) but how and in what manner she relays her message.

Kumar, much like his counterpart Friedrich Schlegel, finds the analysis of language fascinating and beneficial in exposing the nature of a society. For Schlegel, “every word revealed the history of its people. The root of a word was equivalent to the root of a concept.” Kumar and Schlegel share a common mission, “to assume that such structural parallels could not be merely coincidental – they pointed to a common origin.”<sup>150</sup> Delving deeper into the study of language, Kumar’s */F/*<sup>151</sup> offers insight into the multiple meanings of the word, “foreign”. The title of the poem causes one to suspect that the material will center on the phoneme /F/. In this short poem, Kumar draws parallelisms between the root “foreign”, its various interpretations, and thereby to the relatedness between these and the concept of a phoneme. Comparable to the phoneme,

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<sup>150</sup> Kamakshi P. Murti, India: The Seductive and Seduced “Other” of German Orientalism (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001) 11.

<sup>151</sup> Kumar, Fremde Frau – Fremder 25.

Kumar points out that the foreigner is merely an abstract way of conceptualizing those who are too complex to place into a subset of descriptions. According to Wilbur Benware's definition of a phoneme, as an abstract unit consisting of similar sounds which are perceived by the speakers of a language as being one sound, Kumar argues that foreigners likewise often are categorically described.<sup>152</sup> The poem enhances the phoneme, /F/, by detaching the consonant, F, from the word which it initially forms.

/F/

Ein F-remder aus seiner  
f-remd gewordenen Heimat  
f-licht in die Fremde.  
Dieser F-remde f-leht in der  
F-remde die F-remden  
Um ihre F-ürsorge  
Für die F-remden zu /F/-ergessen.

As is common for Kumar, his innovative ways at looking at language and the images they construct shine through in this particular piece. Just as the F is detached from the word to which it belongs, so does Kumar cause his readers to detach themselves from preconceived notions. This is true for both the native and the non-native. The following newspaper article identifies Kumar's curiosity for language and the complexities, which words, roots and even as illustrated above a phoneme can generate.

Kumar applies this type of language dissection in more than one circumstance.

Dabei gewährte er auch interessante Einblicke in die Wirkung der deutschen Sprache auf Ausländer. Dies zeigte sich etwa, wenn sich eine seiner Figuren Gedanken über die Bedeutung eines Satzes wie „Das Essen ist geil.“ macht.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Wilbur Benware, *Phonetics and Phonology of Modern German: An Introduction* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1986) 39.

<sup>153</sup> "Sensible Blicke auf Deutschland," *General Anzeiger* 2001. Article supplied by Anant Kumar.

Kumar concludes the poem by inserting the phoneme, /F/, once more. What begins as the abstract foreigner in the minds of the natives results in the foreigner himself forgetting and allowing his previous world to become abstract as well. Kumar does not even begin to concentrate on the “variants”, the “allophones of a phoneme”, because as Kumar argues, often the foreigner is realized purely in his/her simplest form, the quality of being foreign; further distinctions are not made.

*Dichten und Fremdsprache 1*, previously discussed, dealt with Kumar’s situation as a writer in Germany. In *Dichten und Fremdsprache 2*<sup>154</sup> Kumar looks at the German poet, Heinrich Heine, from a new perspective; an Indian living in the West and reading the works of a Westerner about the East. From a linguistic standpoint, Kumar mentions that Heine, through his writing and close work with language, gives new meaning to words and images in India which seem commonplace. Heine’s descriptions of India such as the Ganges or its numerous palm trees receive new meaning and means for interpretation. “In deinen Versen brachtest du nach Indien deine Friedrike zu der Palmen Säuseln, zu Ganges Rauschen.” Through Heine’s literary contributions, India attained new characteristics which often bypassed the everyday, familiar observer.

Kumar respects Heine’s works and supports these cross-cultural visions both from the West-East and East-West perspectives. “He aligns himself with poet Heinrich Heine ...in which he presents himself as a foreigner who is presumptuous enough to take the reader’s language for his own.”<sup>155</sup> Dismayed by “dem Redakteur der ‚Literatur-Germania’“, Kumar realizes that times have changed and that many Indians and many

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<sup>154</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 35.

<sup>155</sup> Veteto-Conrad, “German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free” 81.

Germans seem disinterested in reading about another world. Saddened that his worldly ideas often are not appreciated, “wie scheinbar mich seine letzte Absage bemitleidet: ,das Beste möchte ich Ihnen wünschen für Ihr wagemutiges Unternehmen.“<sup>156</sup> If literature is to reveal ideas of permanent or universal interest, a philosophy which a scholarly journal should support, then Kumar’s frustrations with “*Literatur-Germania*” seem quite reasonable.

Another elaboration on an earlier piece is Kumar’s *Dichten und Fremdsprache* 3.<sup>156</sup> The first stanza is almost identical to the stanza in /F/; however Kumar does not present merely the old. He will not allow language or a particular message to cease from developing further. As he has demonstrated in his other contributions, Kumar fails to accept language and communication as an art which ends; new interpretations and ways of looking at the world are present at all times. His texts continue to move not only himself but those who encounter them. Writing and speaking call for reflection and one idea leads to more ideas. Upon looking at this text a second time, one may also notice that Kumar is playing with language rules. Leafing through the pages of the *Duden*, one certainly would not find the word *ferfremdetes* spelled in this fashion. “Kumar often purposely plays with syntax, but it is indicative of the reception of non-German authors that he always states in a footnote that his digression from grammatical norm is based on poetic license and not ignorance.”<sup>157</sup> Only by breaking the rules, in this instance grammar rules, does Kumar call attention to his message.

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<sup>156</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 43.

<sup>157</sup> Veteto-Conrad, “German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free” 83.



One of the clearest examples which exposes Kumar's mastery in grasping the rarities of a language appear in **E WIE EMIGRANTEN**<sup>158</sup> which will be referenced once more in my conclusion. His close attention to detail as recognizable here in the letter, E, confirm that Kumar continues to be interested in those facets which kindergartners or first-graders are beginning to distinguish, the letters of the alphabet. For Kumar so much in life and in his surroundings develops from the simplest forms; it is only through his creativity and sensitivity to the often-overlooked elements that Kumar constructs a world of deep complexities. Leading up to the sixth line, Kumar tells it as it is with the inclusion of the bold-faced letter E. His clincher in the sixth line, however, shocks the reader and proves once again that Kumar, by means of his foreign tongue, stumbles upon reality within a language which natives would never discover.

The last piece addressed in this paper and which simultaneously completes Kumar's series on *Dichten und Fremdsprache* is *Dichten und Fremdsprache 4*. It is here where Kumar presents his readers with a glimpse into his own situation. The piece sums up well what this paper has aimed to formulate. The selection emphasizes Kumar's need for truth; here he allows readers to explore his true side and most importantly to understand the reality of his position as a non-German composing in German. Although his name does not appear in the text, one can easily imagine the speaker of the poem, Haripad Gosvami, to be Anant Kumar. Inserting his actual name would not be Kumar's style for he knows his readers too well. His skill lies in the fact that he can call forth the obvious by introducing the obscure; if his name were included, readers may be tempted to interpret the text differently.

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<sup>158</sup> Kumar, *Fremde Frau – Fremder* 51.

All descriptions suggest that through Gosvami Kumar is voicing his aggravations, his approval and everything that comes in between. Previous selections in this paper have extended topics which concern Kumar and most likely numerous other writers and residents like him in Germany. Through various stories, conversations and images, Kumar has probed readers; sometimes his shocking or controversial messages result in understanding and at other times they end in fright or confusion. However despite the outcome, Kumar most definitely succeeds in stirring the reader to some degree.

In *Dichten und Fremdsprachen 4*, the final segment to the sequence, Kumar presents a type of speech, perhaps very similar to the type of words he would include during one of his numerous readings. He addresses himself immediately without reticence; he is who he is. “Ja! Verehrte Damen und Herren! Machen Sie sich hier bekannt mit einem Fremden, der sich anmaßt, in Ihrer Sprache Verse zu verfassen. Mein Name ist Haripad Gosvami.” After following the traditional German style of introductions, something which has been accepted by him as a formality in the world he now calls his home, Kumar simply describes the present situation and his employment of the German language provides him with the ability to do so. Cultural confrontations interspersed between moments of contentment highlight once more the way Kumar perceives the world; contradictions are present, and they must be observed, so that falsity does not remain buried under the ground. Digging and yes writing are hard work but they are the way to the root of life.

Kumar’s works have been described to be diary-like in which he describes everyday life in the eyes of a non-native living in Germany. He experiences the foreign and yet simultaneously feels a strong connection to his new town. Within his many

entries, both worlds surface and come into contact with one another; neither world is completely forgotten. “In vielen seiner oft tagebuchartigen Texte, nimmt er Bezug auf seinen Alltag in Kassel, einer Stadt, der er sich in besonderem Maße verbunden fühlt.“<sup>159</sup> Kumar consistently wrestles with feeling at home in Germany while simultaneously undergoing moments of despair.

When the “Vereinsvorsitzender” comments „Schön!“, „Gut gemacht!“ with his „künstliches Lächeln,“ Kumar experiences contradictions similar to the ones his characters undergo in his pieces. Although on the surface, the “Vereinsvorsitzender’(s)” language emits congratulative remarks, Kumar, like his readers, finds the truth behind such remarks. His identity, i.e. his feeling of personal well-being and development as a person living in Germany fluctuate. It is only through the act of writing that Kumar is able to pick up again where a previous event caused him grief. His strength and continuous forging of an identity is indicative in his selections as well as in the poem which he includes at the end of this piece. By reading the poem, Kumar seeks a new way to achieve meaning, and he receives great meaning in the response of the woman.

Eine Frau, deren Hautfarbe und Herkunft sich mit mir nicht vergleichen lassen, kommt auf mich zu – ihre Hände strecken sich vor – schweigend und vor Freude zitternd beuge ich meinen Kopf – sie küsst meine Stirn, und ihre Lippen flüstern die Botschaft der Muttergöttin: „Mein Sohn! Schreib weiter!“

Not only does he find his identity through writing, but he finds a sense of family and the ability to participate in the lives of others and have them directly participate with him. In this sense, Kumar embarks on an additional journey with language, the art of body language.

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<sup>159</sup> , Chiellino, Interkulturelle Literatur 264.

Because one cannot pinpoint Kumar's current state of identity, it is a shifting one, the commonly used terms *Ausländerliteratur* (foreigner literature), *Betroffenheitsliteratur* (victim literature) and *Migrantenliteratur* (migrant literature) do not adequately describe his situation.<sup>160</sup>

Within the field of German literature, there has been a long history of debate concerning the correct application of such terms. Most recently, the label *Migrantenliteratur*, is used most readily as a category in which to place writers such as Kumar.

In spite of the high degree of critical sophistication that the works of non-native German writers have attained, their writing is still not stripped of the label *Migrante(en)enliteratur* (migrant literature). Like the term *Gastarbeiter*, this designation diminishes the impact and distorts the parameters of significance of this body of writing. The word *Migrant* houses connotations of impermanence, instability, detachment, and lack of social commitment and eschews empowering notions of adaptability, resilience, and synthesis.<sup>161</sup>

With today's sense of political-correctness, a time where labels bring forth fiery reactions, scholars also must be careful in marking authors whose reasons for writing in a foreign country do not correspond to those from previous years. Kumar is not expressing feelings typical to the *Gastarbeiter* nor to the conceptualized *migrant*. Kumar's reasons for continuing to write in German and to reside in Germany set him apart from other non-native writers. Kumar's writings do not concentrate on the notion of "I am different" and "Listen to me". Instead he evokes the notion of "We all are different" and "Listen to humanity." He is a part of his surroundings and has not sought Germany as a means to an end.

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<sup>160</sup> For more definitions and examples concerning these definitions see, Chiellino, Interkulturelle Literatur; Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free"

<sup>161</sup> Seyhan, Geographies of Memory 76.

Other relatively young minority writers on the German literary scene include several from what is known as the second generation of minority writers. Emine Sevgi, Özdamar, Zafer Senocak, Renan Demirkan, and even Akif Pirinççi can be viewed as precursors to Anant Kumar in that all of them boldly and unapologetically claimed their right to German as a literary language before Kumar's arrival in Germany, but in different ways and with various success: Senocak focused on the sociopolitical and founded a publishing house; Demirkan moved from an acting career to writing semi-autobiographical prose and on to dealing with nonminority themes; and Pirinççi moved to screenwriting when Ufa turned his 1989 best-seller *Felidae* into an animated film.<sup>162</sup>

Kumar is a member of a new wave of non-native writers. His intentions of writing are clearly marked by a personal connection to Germany and not as a reason to make money, to rebel, to complain or in which to encourage others to feel sympathy for him. "Kumar wants nothing other than to live the life of a poet. His entire existence revolves around his art, and he is proud that it is his sole livelihood."<sup>163</sup> Not only does his work consume him, but he has become one with the German language. "Die deutsche Sprache ist Anant Kumar zu seiner Leidenschaft geworden. Kumar himself states, „*Ich bin verliebt in die deutsche Sprache*“<sup>164</sup> Thus placing Kumar into the „Schublade Ausländerliteratur“ does not match his endeavors; Kumar continues to evolve as a writer and as a resident in Germany.

Während er in Deutschland immer wieder erfolgreich aus der Schublade *Ausländerliteratur* hüpfte, dies macht viel vom Charme seines Werkes aus, wird er in Nordamerika, dass ihn sowohl als deutschsprachigen als auch als mittlerweile in Englische übersetzten Autor kennt, weniger denn als immigrierter Literat denn schon selbstverständlich als Teil der kulturellen Diversität begriffen.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free" 79.

<sup>163</sup> Veteto-Conrad, "German Minority Literature: Tongues Set Free" 79.

<sup>164</sup> Harkensee, "Literatur, Kunst und" 46,47.

<sup>165</sup> Harkensee, "Literatur, Kunst und" 47.

He is on the move in more ways than one; sticking Kumar in a category without the means to escape or move forward would not reflect his art form. For Kumar the world and its inhabitants constantly are on the move and they will continue to learn how to adjust to new environments, to new languages, to new people and also to a new self. Indeed, “human reality is defined by oppositions that are, as has been shown, mutually dependent. Human reality is relational and relative, not absolute.”<sup>166</sup> Life’s texture is characterized by “change, flux, a kind of taut, dynamic tension in which nothing comes to rest.”<sup>167</sup> Through his works, Kumar beckons his readers to engage in a similar lifestyle, one in which “improvement” only is possible through “movement.”

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<sup>166</sup> Helga Schier, Going Beyond: The Crisis of Identity and Identity Models in Contemporary American, English and German Fiction (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993) 91.

<sup>167</sup> Schier, Going Beyond 91.

## CONCLUSION

Anant Kumar has addressed and continues to address questions of cultural interaction. Germany in the East and the East in Germany as primarily manifested in German Romanticism remain topics of continued interest. The popularity of Kumar's works indicates that Germans are listening. The question remains, however, whether or not people in India are likewise listening, opening themselves and becoming a part of the cosmopolitan world. Due to the fact that Kumar writes in German, it would be beneficial to study an author from Germany living in India who writes in a language understood by those in India. There are such voices to be heard. One of particular interest to me and for further study is Roswitha Joshi born in Hamburg after World War II who now lives and writes in India. Her first book, *Life is Peculiar*, filled with stories and anecdotes, similar in length to those of Kumar, would serve as a fascinating counterpart to Anant Kumar. It is my personal conviction that the analysis of emigration and immigration through the art of literature contributes to positive integration.

## E WIE EMIGRANTEN

Man brachte uns als Band**E**  
 nach einem Land**E**  
 und liess uns am Rand**E**.  
 Bis jetzt gibt's für uns nicht viel als  
 diese drei **E** und diese drei Ehrenwörter.  
 Oder doch? Durch daraus entstehendes b**E**w**E**g**E**n.

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