

Keyserling's Keywords: The Challenges of Translating *Europe*

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RESÜMEE

Der Beitrag betrachtet die Arbeit mit der Sprache in Hermann Keyserlings psychogeographischer Studie *Das Spektrum Europas* und ihren Übersetzungen ins Französische, Spanische und Englische. Theoretisch als ein Werk des postimperialen Zeitalters gewertet, lässt sich anhand einiger Beispiele nachvollziehen, wie hierarchisch die in diesem Werk zur Schau gestellte Mehrsprachigkeit ist. Daraus ergibt sich eine intellektuelle Einstellung, die man komplementär zur postkolonialen Theorie als eine Art elitärer Subalternität bezeichnen könnte. Keyserling stilisiert sich zu einem deutschsprachigen, über den Nationen stehenden Aristokraten, der den anderen europäischen Stimmen zum Klang verhilft und diese gleichzeitig abwertet. Dank seinen Übersetzern erreichte Keyserlings Werk ein weltweites Publikum. Im zweiten Teil wendet sich der Aufsatz einer biographischen Untersuchung seiner Übersetzer zu, in deren Werk nicht nur die deutsche Kultur, sondern auch die jüdische Identität von Bedeutung ist. Als mögliches Motiv für ihr Interesse an dem Text lassen sich Keyserlings ambivalente Aussagen zum Judentum anführen. In der Übersetzung zeigt sich Keyserlings Umgang mit der deutschen Sprache anders, weil das Deutsche damit von der Meistersprache des Textes zu einer unter vielen ethnographisch zu untersuchenden vernakulären Sprache herabgestuft wird. Die Übersetzer werden damit noch mehr als gewöhnlich zu Mitautoren von Keyserlings Psychogeographie und unterminieren gleichzeitig die oben als elitäre Subalternität bezeichnete Pose des Autors.

When the German philosopher Hermann Keyserling published his book *Das Spektrum Europas* in 1928, he was already a writer of international acclaim, who had established himself as one of 'Germany's New Prophets'.¹ His chief source of fame as an author dated

1 H. de Man, 'Germany's New Prophets', in *Yale Review*, 13: 4 (July 1924), 665-683.

back to a different project, a philosophical diary documenting his Grand Tour around the world, which he had embarked upon in 1911. The *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* turned him into one of the leading German orientalists.² His use of travel writing as a form of cultural criticism suited the mood of the European readership in the aftermath of World War I.³ These two books on the Middle East and India and on Europe eventually formed the beginning of what became a tetralogy of Keyserling's ethnographic writing, subsequently supplemented by the *Southamerican Meditations*, and a book on modern America, *America Set Free*.⁴ Aside from the German-speaking countries, he was therefore widely read in those countries, which the books discussed in detail, particularly in the Francophone, Anglophone and Hispanic worlds.⁵ The translators who worked for

- 2 H. Keyserling, *Das Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen*, Darmstadt, 1919, 8th ed. Stuttgart 1932, 2 vols.; H. Keyserling, *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, London 1925, and New York 1929, transl. J. Holroyd-Reece; H. Keyserling, *Diário de viaje de un filósofo*, transl. Manuel García Morente, Madrid 1928; H. Keyserling, *Le journal de voyage d'un philosophe*, Paris 1930, transl. Alzir Hella and Oliver Bournac. On Keyserling's orientalism, see Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, Cambridge 2010.
- 3 See Ute Gahlings, Hermann Graf Keyserling. Ein Lebensbild, *Darmstädter Schriften* 68, Darmstadt 1997.
- 4 H. Keyserling, *Südamerikanische Mediationen*, Stuttgart 1932; H. Keyserling, *South American Mediations on Hell and Heaven in Man's Soul*, transl. in collaboration with the author by T. Duerr, London 1932; H. Keyserling, *Méditations sudaméricaines*, transl. Albert Béguin, Paris 1932; H. Keyserling, *Meditaciones sudamericanas*, transl. Luis López Ballesteros y de Torres, Madrid 1933; H. Keyserling, *America set free*, New York 1929; H. Keyserling, *Amerika – der Aufgang einer neuen Welt*, transl. from English by T. Duerr, Stuttgart 1930; H. Keyserling, *Psychoanalyse de l'Amérique*, transl. G. d'Hangest, Paris 1930.
- 5 See the following preliminary alphabetical list of Keyserling's contemporaries who left extensive commentaries or even books on Keyserling's work: H. Adolph, *Die Philosophie des Grafen Keyserling*, Stuttgart 1927; G. Benn, 'Figuren, Keyserling etc.' in idem, *Autobiographische Schriften*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, 4 vols., Wiesbaden 1961; F. Bertaux, *Panorama de la littérature allemande*, Paris 1928; H. Blüher, *Die Elemente der deutschen Position. Offener Brief an den Grafen Keyserling in deutscher und christlicher Sache*, Berlin 1927; M. Boucher, *La philosophie de Hermann Keyserling*, Paris 1927; J. Cassou, 'Les Méditations Sud-Américaines de Keyserling': in: *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 10 June (1932); P. Feldkeller, *Graf Keyserlings Erkenntnisweg zum Uebersinnlichen. Die Erkenntnisgrundlagen des Reisetagebuches eines Philosophen*, Darmstadt 1922; L. A. Fouret, 'Europe-Amérique vue par H. Keyserling. Compte-rendu de la conférence a la Sorbonne de 4 Juin', in: *Revue d'Allemagne*, 15 August (1930); S. Freud, 'Ein Brief über Keyserlings Südamerikanische Mediationen', in: idem, *Briefe 1873–1939*, Frankfurt a.M. 1960, 408; M. Gallagher Parks, *An Introduction to Keyserling*, London 1932; F. Heinemann, *Graf Keyserling und die Krise des Buegertums*, in: *Die Neue Rundschau*, May (1931); H. Hesse, 'Hermann Graf Keyserling', in: idem, *Schriften zur Literatur II, Gesammelte Werke*, Frankfurt 1970; C. Hofer, 'Plauderei ueber einen missgelaunten Philosophen', in: *Annalen*, Zurich (1928); C. G. Jung, 'Signification de la ligne Suisse dans l'Analyse Spectrale de l'Europe', in: *Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, 6, June (1928); R. Kassner, *Narciss oder Mythos und Einbildungskraft*, Leipzig 1928; S. Kracauer, *Tagungsberichte, 'Die Weisen von Darmstadt' (1921, 1922, 1927)*, in: *Frankfurter Zeitung*; L. Lavelle, 'La Sagesse sur la place', in: *Temps*, 12 April (1931); F. Lefèvre, 'Une heure avec Keyserling', in: *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 22 May (1926); L. Marcuse, 'Die Schule der Weisheit': *Frankfurter General-Anzeiger*, 7 May (1927); E. Morselli, 'Leggendo Keyserling', in: *Rivista di Filosofia*, 29 (1938); Ortega y Gasset (Ed.) *Revista del Occidente* (UL C900 :S.c.9 1923-36); J. Prieur, 'Un citoyen d'Europe : Keyserling', in: *Réalités Allemandes*, April 1952; Ch. Sénéchal, 'La philosophie de Hermann Keyserling', in: *La Vie des Peuples*, November 1924; E. Baron, *Les Pangermanistes d'après Guerre*, Paris 1924; E. Baron, *La Sagesse de Darmstadt, Le Néoromantisme en Allemagne*, Paris 1929; E. Baron, 'Un Nouveau Livre d'Hermann Keyserling', in: *Journal des Débats*, 6 May 1938; O. Spengler, *Briefe 1913–1936*, Munich 1963; O. M. v. Stackelberg, *Ahnentafel des Philosophen Grafen Hermann v. Keyserling*, Doberan (Leipzig: Zentralstelle für Deutsche Personen- und Familiengeschichte 1939); R. Steiner, 'Hermann Keyserling', in: idem, *Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus*, Number 21 and 22, Stuttgart; K. Tucholsky, *Dienstzeugnisse* (1925), *Der Darmstaedter Armleuchter* (1928) and others in: *Collected writings*. Hamburg 1961, 2000; E. Vermeil, *Doctrinaires de la Révolution Allemande* (Paris 1939); H. Vondran, 'Kritik der Philosophie des Grafen Hermann Keyserling' (PhD Dissertation, Erlangen 1927), perspective of a Lutheran theologian.

him were highly acclaimed and also translated some of the key works of German classical and modern literature, from Goethe and the Romantics to Freud and Thomas Mann. My particular focus will be on the theme of language and translation as it appears in his book on *Europe*. More than his other works, it contained in its stream of consciousness a kind of multilingual dictionary of European culture, a cultural lexicon that could be compared to recent efforts by Barbara Cassin.⁶ A key aspect of Keyserling's approach to studying cultural difference was his philological pursuit of difference, a search for keywords of the other, variously defined by ethnicity, gender, or class. It is this philological work within his broader project of an aristocratically inflected ethnography that I shall be principally concerned with in what follows. When discussing each cultural area, Keyserling focused on those words within a culture, which seemed to him to be least translatable into other languages. An untranslatable word was more than a concept for him: it was also a habit of thinking, and an emotional state or a social practice which does not exist in another culture and hence precludes understanding with reference to a comparable phenomenon. Keyserling's attention was drawn to those concepts, which appeared unchanging through time, thus exposing some essential aspect of the respective cultural 'other' that he was reporting on. What I am interested in is what happened to Keyserling's text when it was translated into other languages, and if there were any common intellectual trajectories that his translators had in common. I also want to know how the effect of Keyserling's authorial voice changed once this voice no longer spoke German.

I. Keyserling's voice

What made Keyserling particularly popular in the 1930s and 1940s was the combination between psychoanalysis, travel writing, and a pathos of social distance, which he had first pioneered in his bestselling *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* (1919). His narrative technique combined his performance of his own self, a multilingual person, a Baltic Baron, and an author of German culture, with an ethnographic description of encountering his various 'others', defined by cultural difference, continental belonging, race, gender, or psychological type. He had defined his journey-cum-narrative as the 'shortest path to myself', thereby launching a new genre of travel writing, which combined elements of introspection with ethnographic observations. Published in 1919, almost simultaneously with Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, the *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, had hit a nerve of the time because its global pretensions and generalisations matched the sense of global cataclysms that his readers associated with the aftermath of World War I. It was, as one student of Keyserling's put it, a 'sensational success', a book 'more widely read

6 Q. Skinner, 'The Idea of a cultural lexicon', in: idem, *Visions of Politics*, Vol. I: Regarding Method, Cambridge 2002, 158-174; B. Cassin (Ed.), *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, Paris 2004, xvi-xiv.

than either travel books or books by philosophers'.⁷ Not only did its anti-occidental stance and its problematisation of Europe's future after the crisis of World War I capture the spirit of the time. Selling some 50,000 copies by 1933 in Germany alone, Keyserling had developed in the twentieth century what Alexis de Tocqueville had done for the nineteenth: a new type of a philosophical travel book.⁸ At the same time, contained elements of an embedded ethnography that Bronislaw Malinowski would only present in the 1960s.⁹

Born in Könno in Russian Livonia, Count Keyserling (1880–1946) enjoyed the status of a 'social celebrity' particularly after the Russian Revolution had left him bereft of his estate and turned public speaking and publishing into one of his sources of income. He considered himself to be someone who was 'historically speaking, dead'.¹⁰ Politically, he has been described in remarkably divergent terms, but his ideas were located in some middle ground between conservatism and liberalism.¹¹ On his father's side, he came from a lineage of Swedish and Baltic nobility, while on his mother's side, his ancestors had been civil servants and scientists at the Russian court.¹² Keyserling grew up in a mixture of Protestant and Russian Orthodox influences, and was equally fluent in Russian, German, and French. It was typical of the Baltic nobility to cultivate a sense of cultural detachment from the dominant culture of the Russian Empire, whose administrative bodies were suspicious of German nobles despite the long history of their involvement in Russian affairs of state in the military or as civil servants, from serving for Russia in the Napoleonic Wars to performing ambassadorial functions. Nonetheless, after the foundation of the Duma in 1905, Keyserling himself was contemplating serving for this first Russian parliament for a short while, but then dismissed this thought. After the first Russian revolution of 1905, Keyserling was threatened with expropriation but in 1908, upon reaching maturity, he formally inherited his father's property, settling in Rayküll, dedicating himself to the management of his estate.

From the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, the nature of Keyserling's public influence in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s could be compared to that of intellectuals such as Alain Finkelkraut, Bernard Henri-Levi, Alain de Botton or Bill Bryson. His

7 Rom Landau, *God is my Adventure*, London 1935, 25.

8 For reviews of Keyserling's work, see E. Troeltsch, 'Das Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen von Graf Hermann Keyserling', in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, 123 (1921), 90–96; 'Keyserling's Europe', in: *Time*, Monday, 3 September 1928; Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse read the Travel Diary with care. Arnold Schönberg also had it in his library (See <http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/schoenberg/asbooks.htm>, accessed June 2008). The American writer Waldo Frank was influenced by Keyserling. So was the modernist photographer Edward Weston. Edward Weston and Nancy Wynne Newhall, *The daybooks of Edward Weston*, New York 1990.

9 B. Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, London 1967.

10 „Eigentlich habe ich, als soziologische Figur, gerade nach dem Verluste meiner Erdwurzeln nichts anderes getan, als eine historisch verstorbene Gestalt zu wahren.“ H. Keyserling, *Reise durch die Zeit*, Vaduz 1948, 53.

11 W. Struve, *Elites Against Democracy. Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890–1933*, Princeton 1973; U. Gahlings, 'Hermann Keyserling', in: Frank-Lothar Kroll (eds), *Deutsche Autoren des Ostens als Gegner und Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, in *Beiträge zur Widerstandsproblematik*, Berlin 2000.

12 But there were also legends regarding some of his ancestors who allegedly practiced piracy around the seventeenth century Hermann Keyserling, 'Autobiographische Skizze vom Herbst 1925', Nr. 0084, 061.15, in Hermann Keyserling Nachlass, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Darmstadt (HKN).

works combined elements of highly personal reflections with passages which take the reader on philosophical or literary journeys, but at such speed and with such degree of superficiality that it only makes sense to those who have already been initiated to the places and books the author is talking about from other sources. Many of Keyserling's contemporaries found his ideas extremely subjectivist, arrogant and patronising, based on crude exaggerations and the common technique of pluralising what is in fact particular and accidental. What appealed to his readers were not the accounts of the Middle East, Asia and India or unfamiliar parts of Europe per se but the way Keyserling introduced his own authorial person in relation to this material. At the centre of all his travel books stood Keyserling's own Protean persona, which is viewed kaleidoscopically through the lens of its encounter with others.¹³ Both the *Travel Diary* and *Europe* used psychological introspection to articulate his own identity as an aristocrat and a European. While the *Travel Diary* used this pathos of distance to focus on his own transformations in the face of the non-European, the sequel, *Europe*, treated the cultures of Europe itself as 'alien'. By writing *Europe*, Keyserling revealed a renewed interest in studying his home continent. Unlike ten years earlier, when he had left Europe driven by a 'desire to self-fulfilment' because Europe had ceased to 'stimulate' him, he was now keen to turn to Europe itself, albeit without embracing any one culture in particular.¹⁴ But like in the travel book, Keyserling continued to perform his role as a Baltic aristocrat of German culture, who wanted to provoke all 'Philistines' and 'bourgeois'. He dedicated a separate chapter to the 'Balts' as a type, thereby locating himself geographically but also indicating that the Balts were notoriously estranged from those other Balts who represented the vernacular cultures of the Baltic littoral: Estonians, Lithuanians and Latvians. Europe, Keyserling argued, would be reinvigorated again through a reinforcement of the tensions between its peoples, and through openness towards racial mixture. Eventually, this may lead to a rejuvenation of humanity. Not wanting to exonerate the superficial tendency Keyserling displays, what I am chiefly interested in what follows is the way Keyserling worked with language to describe social and cultural distance, and how his translators transformed the effect of his writing.

II. Keyserling's keywords

Declaring that his method resembled a procedure in physics, a 'spectral analysis', Keyserling began his investigation with a declaration of scepticism towards all cultures by stating: 'All nations [or peoples] are, of course, despicable.' Following this brusque introduction, the book's gaze turned to a survey of England, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Switzerland, the Low Countries, Portugal, Sweden, the Baltic states, and the Balkans, with a subsequent addition of Portugal. It is said that Keyserling spoke all lan-

13 H. Keyserling, *Das Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen*, Darmstadt 1920, vol. 1, 18-24.

14 *Ibid.*, 5-8.

guages with a slight Russian accent, but he would still have enunciated every word with its own vernacular pronunciation.

Keyserling's ethnography of Europe can also be situated within the longer tradition of structural linguistics, notably, as it appears in the contemporaneous linguistic work of Bronislaw Malinowski and Marcel Mauss.¹⁵ Synchronically, Keyserling's work also coincided with a general turn towards comparative and multilingual studies of literatures, which happened in the scholarly realms of literary history.¹⁶ At one level, Keyserling could be seen as being engaged in a scholarly or semi-scholarly endeavour, a kind of comparative cultural ethnography. He was building a 'cultural lexicon' of multiple European cultures from the supranational vantage point, which could be compared to such recent scholarly project as Reinhart Koselleck's or Raymond Williams' studies of concepts and keywords.¹⁷ In this sense, Keyserling's insistence on the radical untranslatability of these concepts and their pairs was highly reminiscent of a better known argument in this direction, Theodor W. Adorno's 'Words from Abroad'.¹⁸ In this text, Adorno justified to German radio audiences why using Latinised and French words in German was needed, suggesting that it contributed to an augmentation of meaning rather than being a mere display of arrogance.

At another level, however, contextualising this work with scholarly endeavours belies the genre in which it was written, and the purpose, which his linguistic exercises serve. *Europe* compares cultural differences but does so in a way that gives a radically uneven hearing to different cultures, particularly in terms of the nature of words and length of discussion accrued to them. These multilingual keywords and key sentences, rendered in *cursive*, foreground the author's own complex multilinguality rather than teaching the reader something about these languages. You can almost hear the author switching modes and pronouncing these words with their own peculiar accent. They reflect not just the highly variable degrees of familiarity Keyserling had with the peoples he wrote about, but also the particular perspective from which he acquired this familiarity. Thus, writing about the essence of the soul of England, Germany, and Switzerland, he draws on the longest list of keywords of the book: words like *Das Leben*, *Erlebnis*, *Vereinswesen*, *Tüchtigkeit*, *Geistigkeit*, *Gemüt*, *Sehnsucht*. On the more extreme opposite, his chapters

15 B. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic. A Study in the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands*, London 1935, esp. Vol. 2, *The Language of Magic and Gardening*, 1-79; M. Mauss, 'L'essai sur le don', in: *L'année sociologique 1923-24* (1925), 30-186.

16 See, for instance, B. Croce, *La letteratura comparata* (1903); G. C. Woodberry (ed.), editorial to the *Journal of Comparative History* (1903); F. Brunetière, *La littérature européenne* (1900). For further contextualisation of these works and the concept of 'world literature', see X. Landrin, *La sémantique historique de la Weltliteratur : genèse conceptuelle et usages savants*, in Anna Boschetti (ed.), *L'espace culturel transnational*, Paris 2010, 73-134. For the German equivalents, see also E. R. Curtius, 'Les influences asiatiques dans la vie intellectuelle de l'Allemagne', in: *Revue de Genève* (1920); and Klabund, *Literaturgeschichte*, Vienna 1929.

17 O. Brunner, W. Conze and R. Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart 1972-1997; R. Williams, *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, London 1976, updated edition 2004; A. Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, Japanese*, Oxford 1997.

18 Th. W. Adorno, 'Words from Abroad', in: idem, *Notes to Literature*, Vol. 1., Rolf Tiedermann, Ed., transl. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, New York 1895-99.

on Spain and Portugal only generate the words *torero* and *saudade* as their equivalents. His writing on Italy comprises the use of trivial phrases such as *se non é vero, é ben trovato*, and the chapter on the Dutch introduces only the distinction between *Mevrouw* and *Jouffrouw*. French, by contrast, permeates the entire narrative he is presenting as the language of the most precise and simultaneously universal expression of whatever he has to say. The great exception is his writing on England, the only chapter where you will see him quote entire sentences and passages instead of words. It is as if the cultural lexicon of English was not reducible to single words but only to a way of speaking and communicating. The essence of Englishness for him consisted in a special way of affirming something through its denial:

*I think I may say without fear of contradiction – at least it seems to me so and I should not wish for anything to hurt anybody's feelings – that the weather of today may perhaps be safely called not really bad, that would perhaps be saying too much, but somewhat less satisfactory than the weather of yesterday. Don't you think so too?*¹⁹

Another example of linguistic analysis, which transcended mere vocabulary concerns relations between cultures, and which Keyserling performed linguistically, emerges in his description of the Baltic and the Balkans, where hierarchies between cultures emerge through absence of linguistic equivalents. In other words, the vernaculars of these Eastern European regions are never mentioned. Instead, Keyserling stated that the Estonian language is associated in the mind of the baronial elites with the discourse of the servant classes, which he calls in German, *Gesinde*. Something similar happens in his discussion of Hungarian culture. Even more extreme, to describe the soul of the Balkans, particularly Romania, Keyserling never uses Romanian words or those of any other Balkan language. Instead, he draws on the Ukrainian-Russian author Nikolai Gogol who speaks about the special soul, or *doukh*, of the East, along with *blagodat'*. The latter is an important concept from the language of the Orthodox church, which features prominently in one of the first Slavonic texts, the eleventh-century *Sermon on Law and Grace*, which argues that God's grace is given to all peoples equally, without exceptions – a corrective introduced by the New Testament rendering of the old concept of grace. Like Keyserling's own texts, it was written for an elite.²⁰

To distil the book into a catalogue of *intraduisibles* would be to simplify its key mechanism. The purpose, for Keyserling, was not to construct a dictionary but to enable his readers to think about relations between languages and practices of communication between them. It was a pragmatics of multilingual Europe, and as such demonstrated the imperfect nature of communication between Europeans. In each chapter, the specificity of one linguistic community is explained not just through the narrative of the author's main voice, but with reference to at least one more, third or fourth, language.

19 H. Keyserling, *Analyse Spectrale de l'Europe*, transl. Alzir Hella and Olivier Bournac, Paris 1930, 30.

20 S. Franklin, *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus*, Cambridge 1991.

As a work of psychogeography, a genre which Keyserling helped reinvent, it was an irreducibly multilingual text.²¹ In using these languages, Keyserling established hierarchical relations between them in a performative way. In addition, Keyserling's text performed a new mode of autobiographic writing, a way of provincialising and aggrandizing Europe at the same time through an account of his aristocratic self. This way of writing is typically associated with postcolonial literatures. But here we have the representative of a doubly hegemonic voice, an author of Germanic and aristocratic provenance, stepping into the shoes of the subaltern subject whilst continuing to sing the song of the former ruling power. (i.e. talking about Estonians not having proper language at a time when the Estonian government is in power and Keyserling is left propertyless to lecture and make a living as a lecturer). Literature became a *métier* in which multiple imperial hierarchies were both preserved and undone.

II. Translation and the augmentation of meaning

Europe appeared in German in 1928, and in English, French and Spanish translations (in multiple editions) between 1930 and 1931.²² Translating the words he considered to be *unübersetzbar*, the 'untranslatables', presented a particular challenge to his translators, but also a great opportunity. In those chapters, which were discussing the languages into which the main narrative was translated, the readers would experience a loss of meaning. Thus in the English, French or Spanish versions of the book, any ethnographic references to English, French or Spanish peculiarities risked to be lost given that they no longer stood out against the main text. The case of the text's own multilingual nature, and its further complication in the process of translation, therefore provides insights and challenges for intellectual historians interested in conceptual history on multiple levels. By contrast, when it comes to his discussion of Germanic cultures, a translated main text had the effect of augmenting the original, because it highlighted only those concepts and sentences, which were uniquely German. Given that despite all his quadrilingualism, Keyserling remained fundamentally a German native speaker, this was an important effect because his understanding of German was infinitely more subtle than his rather clichéd choices of keywords in other languages. In a sense, therefore, the book only 'comes alive' in English, French, and Spanish, where the German keywords obtain their threedimensional lives necessary to clarify Keyserling's distinction between high German

21 Recent histories of psychogeography emphasise the French and British origins of this genre. See M. Coverley, *Psychogeography*, Herts 2006. But in the earlier twentieth century, it would be important to foreground the German tradition stretching back to Nietzsche and the Romantics. On this, see L. Blaga, *L'Etre historique* Paris, 1991; A. Honold/K. R. Scherpe (eds.), *Das Fremde. Reiseerfahrungen, Schreibformen und kulturelles Wissen*, Bern 1999.

22 H. Keyserling, *Das Spektrum Europas*, Heidelberg 1928, later editions Stuttgart 1929; H. Keyserling, *Europe*, transl. Maurice Samuel, London 1929 and New York 1930; H. Keyserling, *Europa: análisis espectral de un continente*, transl. José Pérez Bances, Madrid 1928; H. Keyserling, *Analyse Spectrale de l'Europe*, transl. Alzir Hella and Olivier Bournac, Paris 1930, and augmented edition, 1931.

and the German of various smaller nations. In looking at these translations, I am interested not just in the question of translators as agents of transculturation, but also in their capacity as performers of a particular cultural ideal of rootless rootedness.

To give an example, when he wrote about Switzerland, he did not just name the keywords of Swiss culture. Instead, he juxtaposed what he believed to be the more 'petit-bourgeois', cosy language of the Swiss to the more abstract and elevated equivalents in high German. The Swiss words *pfiffig* – which his French translator rendered as *rusé* – is contrasted with the German *überlegen* – *supérieur*. Likewise, the term *wichtigtuierisch* – in French, *arrogant* – is contrasted with *selbstbewusst* – translated as *conscient de sa valeur*. The Swiss *Niedertracht* is contrasted with *Gemeinheit*, the Swiss for *ruchlos* – *infame* in French – is juxtaposed with *hässlich* – *laid*. In addition to this juxtaposition, he offered a mini-theory which explained this difference between Swiss and high German through a process of standardisation and what he calls 'normalcy', a word he leaves in its English original.

As an author, Keyserling played a subtle game with his reader. But so did his translators. By translating the analytic voice of the original into French, Spanish and English, they gave Keyserling's German a more ethnographic status than his own version permitted. German was no longer the level of supranational analysis for other cultures, but merely one of several cultures being compared. In translation, Keyserling therefore appears as a less privileged authority than in the German original. In his own mind, languages such as Spanish, Romanian and Portuguese were on a lower level of cultural development than German and English and even, in some cases, Russian. As he put it, a 'nation can achieve significance for humanity only in certain respects; namely, in those wherein its special aptitudes fit it to become the appointed organ for all humanity.' Like in individuals, however, talents were not distributed equally among languages and cultures. There are 'peoples of a higher and a lower value'.²³ Moreover, their relative worth can change over time: thus today, in the 1920s, the 'Germans and the Russians signify more than the British and the French'.²⁴ As he saw it, 'above the individual nations arid cultures of Europe broods a new, living reality, that of the European', and as a Balt of his social background, he was best placed to comprehend this future.²⁵ Despite this, he also insisted that the spiritual relationship between the different cultures – as embodied in their languages – has a development of its own. In spiritual terms, and this concerned linguistic and cultural production, it is Germany and France, not Germany and Russia, which must prevail, according to Keyserling.²⁶

In translation, the comparative and relativizing (even though not relativist) perspective of Keyserling the ethnographer prevails over the pathos of distance of the German-speaking Baltic Baron. This explains perhaps why his work had a far more diverse, and on the

23 Cf. Keyserling, *Europe*, pp. 6-7, and ch. 'The Baltic states', pp. 291-317.

24 Keyserling, *Europe*, p. 351.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 357.

26 *Ibid.*, 362.

whole, a more positive reception among his non-German readers than among his German contemporaries. Keyserling's most critical readings came from Germany. It was particularly critics on the left such as Kurt Tucholsky who derided Keyserling, 'le comique voyageur', for his megalomaniac and superficial treatment of what he called 'national cultures'. Tucholsky called Keyserling a 'philosopher softened with the title of a count, or a count with a slight philosophical blemish on his coat of arms'.²⁷ By contrast, his more conservative readers and those who were more inclined towards forms of spirituality had more time for Keyserling. Attendees and presenters at his summer academy, the School of Wisdom, included rabbi Leo Baeck, the philosopher Leopold Ziegler and the psychoanalyst Georg Groddeck. The Austrian activist for Europe Karl Anton Rohan was among Keyserling's followers.

His international following comprised significant numbers of exiled Russian, Spanish, French and English intellectuals. His final list of invitees to the school included the names of Ortega y Gasset and Madariaga along with Nikolai Berdiaeff, Nicholas Murray Butler, Jean-Paul Sartre, Benedetto Croce, Leo Baeck, Andre Malraux, Alfred Weber, G. B. Shaw, Aldous Juxley, Victoria Ocampo, as well as Martin Heidegger and C. G. Jung.²⁸ Far from all of these people were actual devotees of Keyserling's. In fact, many left critical accounts later in life. But what is clear is that Keyserling was taken far more seriously outside of Germany, and this comprised even Switzerland. As Carl Gustav Jung had remarked, 'Keyserling is not to be taken as a joke,' even though he himself thinks that 'his book was written with a sense of humour'.²⁹ Nonetheless, among his non-German readers, particularly Spanish, French and English-speaking, Keyserling obtained the status of a persona who was more a fact of nature than an interlocutor whose opinions one might disagree with. Critical voices on the left who came from non-German background for the most part did not bother writing about him; those writers who did write about Keyserling wrote about him as a symbol of old Europe. Victoria Ocampo accused Keyserling of associating the Latin American soul with reptiles because of her, Ocampo's, refusal of engaging in a relationship with Keyserling. There were also other personal animosities and histories of falling out, such as the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore's eventual detachment from Keyserling's circle, which he had originally been part of in the early 1920s.

III. The translators and their motives

Another dimension of the relationship between Keyserling's translators and his text can be revealed if we consider the biographical background. His translators came from cultural communities, which were on the whole far more sympathetic to Keyserling's

27 P. Panter, 'Le comique voyageur', in: *Die Weltbühne* (19.06.1928), Nr. 25, p. 936. Published in K. Tucholsky, *Gesammelte Schriften, Kritiken und Rezensionen* (1907-35).

28 HKN, 11 March 1946, letter from Arnold Keyserling.

29 C. G. Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, London 1964, p. 479.

persona as a Baltic Count than many of his German contemporaries. The reasons that persuaded his translators to perpetuate his work are related to the question why Keyserling can be of interest to historians of this period and to theoretically minded literary scholars of any period. He was, first of all, the representative of a certain forgotten, but once influential group of European intellectuals. At the same time, he used this background to coin a unique process of writing and publicising. In his works, he performed a type of multilingualism that was characteristic of the social background he came from, the Baltic elite of Germanic provenance, but employed for generations by the Russian courts. This small segment of Europe's old elites had developed a peculiar kind of quaterlingualism. Their mother tongue was usually German, but they had been raised surrounded by both French and Russian as the languages of higher education, public careers and administration. In addition, the language that rivalled their mother tongue in their early childhood was English, because there was a tradition in the Baltic of employing English-speaking governesses to bring up children. They were also distantly familiar with the vernacular languages of the Baltic, especially Latvian and Estonian (to a much lesser extent, Yiddish), particularly through music they would have been exposed to on their estates. In addition to these four, Keyserling also spoke Spanish and Italian, though his command of these languages was far less perfect. Of course, many intellectuals from the upper middle classes and the bourgeoisie who came of age between the Belle Epoque and World War I were multilingual by education, and still a large number remained so in the interwar period. But this multilingualism was not quite comparable to the trilingualism of the Baltic elites in terms of its consistency and the early age from which all four languages were acquired.

His translators, too, had to be multilingual to grasp his texts. Keyserling's French translator, Alzir Hella (1881–1953) was a typographer, a syndicalist and an anarchist; he had also translated Erich Maria Remarque and Stefan Zweig's works into French, often in collaboration with Olivier Bournac.³⁰ Hella was also Zweig's literary agent. He formed part of a group of intellectuals who contributed to the translation of German thought into French in journals such as *La Revue Européenne*, between 1913 and the early 1930s. Keyserling's translator into English was Maurice Samuel (1895–1972), a writer of Romanian Jewish origin, who grew up in Manchester, became a Zionist, moved to the United States before returning to Europe in the late 1920s and embarking on a literary career. Samuel was the only one of his translators who also wrote his own works of fiction and journalism. In writings such as *You Gentiles* (1924) and *I, The Jew* (1927), he espoused a form of Jewish self-knowledge not dissimilar from Keyserling's studies of his aristocratic self, and was mostly known as a translator from Yiddish. Keyserling's Spanish translator was José Ramón Pérez Bances (d. 1933), a Catalan lawyer by training, who had also

30 S. Zweig, *Amok ou Le fou de Malaisie*, transl. Alzir Hella and Olivier Bournac, Paris 1922; E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Les élixirs du diable*, transl. Alzir Hella et Olivier Bournac, Paris 1926. See also Anne-Elise Delatte, *Traducteurs d'histoire, histoires de traduction: Trois écrits biographiques de Stefan Zweig traduits par Alzir Hella („Fouché“, „Marie Antoinette“, „Marie Stuart“)*. Thèse de doctorat d'études germaniques, Université de Nantes / Heinrich-Heine Universität Düsseldorf, Dissertation, 2006.

translated works by Thomas Mann and Walther Rathenau and formed part of Ortega y Gasset's publishing house.

At one level, the three translators have very different trajectories, which take them to Keyserling's work. Pérez Bances and Hella translate more German and Scandinavian authors, particularly with vitalist leanings, while Samuel focuses almost exclusively on authors writing in Yiddish. Yet at closer sight, there are also more connections between the three. These concern their political and cultural links to Germanic culture. Before World War I, Pérez Bances had been involved in translating texts by Kropotkin and Vladimir Korolenko, a Russian lawyer and political activist who in 1911 was in charge of the defence of in a famous case where a Jewish man, Menahem Mendel Beilis, had been accused in a Kiev court of assassination and blood libel.³¹ The Beilis case was instantly described as the Russian equivalent of the Dreyfus trial, even though what made it more dramatic still was that Beilis, unlike Dreyfus, did not belong to the establishment of Russian society. The trial, which had turned into an absurd demonstration of Russian conspirology led by the highest political establishment, raised the question 'about the consumption of Christian blood by Jews in the age of cinematography and aeroplanes', aroused Europe's indignation through the press, which mediated the case widely. The production of a fabricated case against Beilis, who was accused of having brutally murdered a Christian boy, was facilitated by the so-called Black hundreds groups in the Russian empire. Once the case reached greater resonance, and with the memory of Zola's involvement in the Dreyfus case in their mind, numerous leading European intellectuals spoke out publicly in defence of Beilis: Thomas Mann, Werner Sombart, HG Wells, Thomas Hardy, and Gerhart Hauptmann. The case, which lasted from 1911 to 1913, produced numerous works of literature as well, the most famous of which was Sholom Aleikhem's 'Bloody joke', and Leon Trotsky's essay 'Under the sign of Beilis' trial', published in *Die Neue Zeit*. By the 1930s, many people involved in the case on both sides, i.e. the former tsarist establishment and its victims, had gathered as exiles in the South of France, particularly in Nice.³² After 1933, they were joined by Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Sholem Asch, Gerhart Hauptmann, and other authors.

The Jewish theme as a feature of the linguistic and social background of some of the authors that the three translators were involved with connected Hella, Samuel, Pérez Bances as a sort of 'third object'. Samuel was not only a translator of the Yiddish writer Sholem Asch and others. He had also been involved in recruiting Yiddish-speaking soldiers for the US army whilst in the United States, and I am yet to find out to what extent Hella's work as a translator of Sholem Asch might also throw light on his social connections to dissident Jewish movements in Europe. It is at this level that the different

31 W. Korolenko, *El imperio de la muerte-Prefacio del Conde Leo Tolstoi/ P. Kropotkine. El terror en Rusia. Revelaciones y documentos sobre las sentencias de muerte y la vida en las prisiones rusas*, trad. y nota preliminar de Jose R. de Pérez Bances, Madrid 1911. Reprinted in José Calvo González, *El alma y la ley: Tolstói entre juristas*: Espana, 1890–1928, Zamora 2009, 262–63.

32 B. Siegel, *The Controversial Sholem Asch: An Introduction to His Fiction*, Bowling Green 1976, 111. O. Gruzenberg, *Yesterday: Memoirs of a Russian-Jewish Lawyer*, Oakland 1981.

lives of Keyserling and his translators did, in fact, shape a new discourse and a new body of readers: consumers of psychogeography who were interested in Keyserling's rootless existentialism.

What emerges from this provisional overview is that in the case of Keyserling and his translators, author and translators alike lived in a continuum where shifting linguistic and personal identity was the centre of attention. Many of these writers spoke all the major European languages, and some in addition knew Yiddish. They gathered at congresses in defence of culture, such as the PEN congress in Dubrovnik in 1933, and several of them, notably Maurice Samuel, went as far back as the congress of Yiddish writers in Czernowitz from 1908. In the case of Samuel, we also have an author who endorsed Keyserling's home genre of autobiographic ethnography. In texts such as *I, Jew*, and *You Gentiles*, Samuel performed a similarly autoreflexive and sprawling analysis of his Jewishness as Keyserling of his Balticdom, and it is for this reason that Samuel the translator makes an appearance inside Keyserling's original text as an author who is being praised. The key task of the translators was to open up for Keyserling audiences to which he would have not found immediate access, and which did not exist in the same form among his German-speaking readers. When Keyserling came to lecture in Madrid, the Spanish newspaper quoted his translator José Ramón José Pérez Bances in calling him 'el ex hidalgo del Báltico', a title that also reaches him in Victoria Ocampo's magazine *Sur*. Keyserling's Spanish audiences emphasised his qualities as an Estonian latifundist and ex-hidalgo, placing him at the same time on the same plane as Don Quixote and as a specifically Germanic import product. 'Antiguo hidalgo de Estonia, hoy es el conde de Keyserling un errabundo descubridor de reinos espirituales,' read one of the articles covering Keyserling's visit to Spain in 1929.³³ This ex-latifundian quality was also much commented upon in Latin American contexts. For his English and French readers, by contrast, Keyserling becomes more a symbol of restlessness and a wandering elitism.³⁴

By contrast, his French readers perceive Keyserling's image as a wandering Baron in much closer proximity to discussions of Jewish rootlessness and the displacement of Eastern European Jewry. The author Romain Gary, himself of Romanian Jewish background, places Keyserling in his fictionalised autobiography of Jewish emigres in a discussion about Europe's decline and future. Authors like Gary often channel a peculiar kind of 'exilic humour' through the mouths of Keyserling-like figures, such as the perpetually drunk Baron in his novel *Les mangeurs d'étoiles*.³⁵ Seen against the light of exilic Jewish

33 J. G. Olmedilla, 'Antiguo hidalgo de Estonia, hoy es el conde de Keyserling un errabundo descubridor de reinos espirituales...', in: *Cronica*, 11 May (1930), 2.

34 J. de Saint-Chamant, 'Réponse à Keyserling', in: *Revue Hebdomadaire*, 35:43, 2 September (1933), 349-60.

35 In R. Gary, *Les mangeurs d'étoiles* Paris 1966; J.-F. Pépin, *L'humour de l'exil dans les oeuvres de Romain Gary et Isaac Bashevis Singer*, Paris 2001, 280. See also most recently, Romanian film by Crisi Piu, 'Das Spektrum Europas', in which was reviewed at Cannes: <http://variety.com/2014/film/reviews/cannes-film-review-the-bridges-of-sarajevo-1201195101/>: 'Consisting of two shots, the short is a Christmastime conversation in bed between a husband and wife (stage actors Marian Ralea and Valeria Seciu) as she reads aloud from Hermann Keyserling's 1928 book "Das Spektrum Europa," in which the German philosopher reduced most of southeastern Europe to unflattering national stereotypes. The husband brings his own extreme prejudices to bear while arguing against

writing from the twentieth century, Keyserling presents a particularly odd case. For authors familiar with the history of Jews in Eastern Europe, a Baltic Baron could hardly be a figure of appeal. Too often had writers denounced and exposed the degree to which the Baltic Barons collaborated with the tsarist authorities in fuelling anti-Jewish sentiment at pogroms from the late nineteenth century to the case of Beilis in the last years before World War I. Likewise, Keyserling's ambivalent statements about Jews puzzled Jewish and gentile Germans alike. In fact, read today, Keyserling's statements on the Jews in *Europe* appear antisemitic. He rehearses the familiar tropes of rootlessness and parasitical cultures, of lack of military virtues etc.

There is also another side to Keyserling's interest in Jewish culture. It connects to his broader interest in the Orient and the Jews as an oriental people. By recreating the ethnic jokes that characterised the multicultural hierarchies of the Baltic, Keyserling performed a peculiar form of recognition for Jewish culture. By the end of the 1920s, it appears that Keyserling took a great interest in Zionism and had even planned a trip to Jerusalem in 1929/30, which, however, did not take place. His correspondence partners regarding this trip ranged from his translator, Maurice Samuel, to Arthur Balfour, Chancellor Sir John Robert, the Zionist organisation.³⁶ In his final work, *Journey Through Time*, published posthumously, Keyserling asserted that there was similarity in the way the Balts loved Germany and the Jews had loved Palestine: it was 'productive', not like the 'stale relationship of old partners in marriage', because of the distance which existed between their object of affections and their actual existence.

The ambivalence in Keyserling's attitude towards the Jews was in many ways the distinctive feature of his performance as an author in German and non-German contexts. Originally, he had planned a separate chapter on the Jews in the book on Europe, and a manuscript of this German chapter is available in his archive.³⁷ What remains in the final book are only parts of this much more exhaustive chapter. In the published parts, Keyserling asserted the consistency with which Jews had preserved their spirit through the ages. Praising the work of his own future translator Maurice Samuel, he credited the 'Zionist leader' for his work *You Gentiles* (pp. 3-4) for having identified the role of Jewish revolutionaries in present-day socialism and Bolshevism as a spirit which testified to the persistence of ethical norms within the Jewish peoples which were comparable to the way Christianity had destroyed the norms of antiquity but created the norms of a new world. The Jew, he argued, appeared 'tactless' because they were 'out of sync' (or tact) with their 'host peoples. He even adds that the Spanish Jews under the Moors had belonged to the nobility and that the feudal Moorish concept of nobility might well have Jewish roots. Having passed over other qualities of the Jews, such as their 'often embarrassing admiration for Goethe' and even Gerhart Hauptmann, Keyserling concludes that the Jews

Keyserling's categorizations, devolving into a hilarious Romanian equivalent of Tom Lehrer's "National Brotherhood Week." Although Sarajevo and the wars aren't mentioned, Puiu's entry says more about the pernicious persistence of nationalism than all the others combined, and with wit and humor.'

36 HKN, Correspondence D: Key V-4. To Samuel, Maurice and others, in 'Briefkonvolut Vorträge Ägypten u. Palästina'.

37 HKN, Typescript, 21 pages, in Vortr. und Aufsätze.

'without a doubt are an alien people in Europe', yet that they 'belong to the European community as their inseparable part'. The literary reference he uses to reference this is a story narrated by Gogol about a day when the devil stole the Jew from the village: at first everyone was happy, then, things started going wrong.³⁸ He then goes on to compare the usefulness of Jews to various European countries to the usefulness of apparently unwelcome bacteria to the body. In any community, therefore, he asserts, the Jew would be the best Englishman, the best Frenchman, etc. Despite having understanding for Zionism from the point of the Jews, he insisted that it was other peoples who had to benefit and learn from the Jews who, despite adversities, managed to reach such a high presence even among ruling dynasties. 'Are we younger ones not going to be in a similar position?' he asked, suggesting a link to the position of the Baltic elite after its demise in the Russian revolution.

In affirming the radical difference between Jewish and German culture, Keyserling effectively affirmed the subaltern voices of authors writing in Yiddish who desired to elevate the so-called 'Jargon' of the Eastern European Jews to the status of a language in its own right. Moreover, in the political context of the twentieth century, this agenda was not restricted to a merely literary identity politics. A number of translators appear to have been involved in social networks, which were at the forefront of legal and political struggles for human rights in the last decade of Europe's empires and into the mid-1930s. Scholars, too, were becoming increasingly interested in the opportunities, which the history of the Jewish people offered for those who were interested in global history.³⁹ This side of Keyserling's oeuvre and that of his readers opens up a new perspective onto the Eastern European Dreyfusards who were perpetually homeless even in movements such as revolutionary socialism and Zionism. Literary production seems to be an object they shared, which also provided them with an opportunity to perform more subtle forms of identity. They were lovers of Yiddish and English, like Samuel, of German and Russian, like Keyserling, and personal devotees of particular authors, such as Hella's long-lasting relationship with Zweig. They also formed an unconscious community of intellectuals from key peripheries of Europe where the frontiers between former empires persisted long after these empires themselves had gone. Their literary work maintained empire as a sort of land of untranslatables, an imagined shared space to which they wanted to maintain privileged access. It was prophetic, however, that Keyserling's only word for Austria, coined in 1928, was *Anschluss*, and the word for the Balkans was the Ukrainian-Russian word 'soul'. Yiddish was as absent from his text as it would soon vanish from the cultural map of East Central Europe and later, New York's Lower Eastside.

In translation, then, Keyserling's *Europe* gives voice to Europe's subaltern cultures by turning German, French and English into sources of ethnography that could be compared to the languages of the European South and East. It is somewhat unexpected, perhaps, that this subaltern voice is that of a Baltic Baron and ex-hidalgo. However, if we think of the

38 Ibid, pp. 4-9.

39 Cf. S. Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des Jüdischen Volkes*, Berlin 1925-1929.

origins of subaltern writing in the later twentieth century, this is not altogether surprising: here, too, a connection of Keyserling's, the Brahmin Rabindranath Tagore, inspired several generations of Bengali intellectuals to start thinking postimperially.⁴⁰

40 I am thinking particularly of the trajectory of subaltern thought which reaches from Tagore to Amartya Sen and Dipesh Chakrabarty. Cf. R. Tagore, *Nationalism*, London 1918; A. Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford 1982; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, London 1988, 24-28; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2000.