

The Sorcerer's Apprentice: English Travellers and the Rhine in the Long Nineteenth Century

Hagen Schulz-Forberg
*Department of History and Civilisation
European University Institute, Italy*

One summer morning, Lady Jephson, a regular visitor to the German spa towns on the Rhine, stepped onto her balcony and burst into song. She sang with anger and pride, a spontaneous reaction to the sounds she had heard all day long, songs shouted by German children who ran through the streets waving flags and indulging in a general patriotic fever. They sang songs English tourists at the romantic Rhine scenery had adored for a long time, songs which spoke of German love for their country, a love thought to be deeply rooted in the image of the simple and prosaic German peasant, as well as in the courtly prince. Yet, in August 1914, Lady Jephson could not take any more of it; the impact of the supposedly traditional and historic love of the Germans for their country was too close to the present and was actually shaping the near future. 'Church bells chime and children sing *Deutschland über Alles* (*Germany before anything*) ad nauseam. I am so sick of *Heil Dir im Sieger Kranz* (*Bless You in the Victor's Crown*) that as the children pass by shouting it or *Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?* (*What is the German's Fatherland?*) I go out on my balcony and retaliate singing *Rule Britannia*' (Jephson 1915: 32).

Why would an English tourist on the Rhine suddenly react in such an emotional way? I believe that the reality before Lady Jephson's eyes and ears did not correlate with her ideas and former experiences of the Rhineland. It is an ironic twist of history that the romantic Rhine region, in many ways a particularly English invention, drove home the insight

that Germans appeared not really to be as they were imagined. There must have been another Germany that had taken over the romantic one; it was as if the sorcerer's apprentice had turned against his master. The disillusion of English travellers to, and commentators on, Germany came as a shock and was complete in its impact, flipping the image of Germany from homely to aggressive, from positively patriotic to negatively nationalistic. Yet, for travellers' eyes, it came as late as 4 August 1914, the day England declared war against Germany.

The invention of the romantic Rhine

English travellers had already discovered the Rhine before Romantic ideas about it had surfaced in German minds. In Britain, folk tales and legends, romantic landscapes and Gothic castles had been established in the imagination during the second part of the eighteenth century. James Macpherson's invention of *Ossian* in 1760 may serve as evidence for that, as its readers believed it to be a true story (Trevor-Roper 1983: 17, 18). The Rhine was a truly ossianic scenery. Furthermore, Horace Walpole wrote his *Castle of Ortranto* in 1764 and for the first time used motifs of the Gothic novel: castles, ruins, cemeteries, towers and wild landscapes. And in 1768 Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* shows that the Rhine was not yet a famous place for travelling, but that it was a fine example of what was praised by the British *School of Taste* that had been established in England by the Earl of Shaftesbury under the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's interpretation of nature, and regarded landscapes as mirrors of mood (Dischner 1972: 49–51).

The Rhine was providing Gothic motifs for the traveller. In one of the first accounts, William Beckford describes the river as a landscape of the soul's dreams (Beckford 1783). Already many British travellers had made their way to the wild river. The experience of the Lake District certainly served as a model for the English interpretation of the Rhine as well as for English tourism to Germany (Swinglehurst 1870: 4). In 1791 John Gardnor, who had travelled up and down the Rhine in 1787, published the first illustrated work on the Rhine.

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The British had thus discovered the Rhine before the Revolutionary Wars in Europe had broken out (Dischner 1972: 64) and before it was endowed with connotations of national origin by the Germans. In fact, they influenced the German perception of the river significantly; at least in an indirect way. Not many Germans would have known Gardner's book, but the reception of sentimentality and the tendency to appreciate folk tales and ballads influenced the German romantics. Joseph Görres modelled his *Die deutschen Volksbücher* (*German Folk Books*) of 1807 on Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), which also influenced Achim von Arnim's and Clemens Brentano's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (*The Boy's Horn of Wonder*) (James 1994: 24). After the Continental Blockade was lifted in 1815, the English immediately returned to the Rhine. The years 1816–18 reveal the English influence on romantic interpretation and on the beginning of what can already be called industrialised tourism, relying on a set of literally and visually premediated notions as well as on a traffic network, though still on a small scale (Buzard 1993; Withey 1997; Koshar 1998). In 1816, Lord Byron wrote the Third Canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and in June of the same year the first English steamboat appeared on the Rhine: the *Defiance*, travelling from London to Frankfurt. One year later, Joseph M.W. Turner took fifty-one paintings back home to England from his trip on the river while the second steamer pushed its way upstream, this time James Watt Jr.'s *Caledonia*, which reached Koblenz. In 1818, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* flees before his creation to the Rhine. With Byron, Shelley and Turner, the romantic genius found its way to the Rhine, producing masterpieces of poetry and painting which no later traveller could ignore (Honnef et al. 1992).

Apart from poetry and painting, steamboat and railway, another British invention supported the Rhine in becoming one of the best known rivers in the world: the invention of steel-plate engraving, which facilitated the printing of illustrations in books and was used for the first time ever to produce Robert Batty's *Scenery of the Rhine, Belgium and Holland* in 1826. The new technique not only facilitated printing but allowed a higher quality of reproduction as well.

The Rhine becomes a German river

In Germany, it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the Rhine was regarded as a romantic phenomenon. And it was the romantic way of perception, prepared by English influences, that created the Rhine as a German national symbol. During the first decade of the new century a group of poets, painters and professors founded the Young Romantics, the second generation of romantic thinkers who had moved their centre from Jena to Heidelberg. Among them were many who became associated with the early German national movement, then still a strictly cultural concept relying on the notion of a common language and history: Görres, Brentano and Arnim, as well as Joseph von Eichendorff, Max von Schenkendorf and others, who were later joined by Heinrich Heine and held close contact with the Brothers Grimm (Fleckenstein 1988; Gsteiger 1992).

Due to the enthusiasm of this group, the Rhine became popular across the whole of Germany. Its popularity increased within a short time-span, since already in the 1820s the river had become the paradigmatic expression of German homeland. Yet it had not been so until Brentano and Arnim published their highly influential *The Boy's Horn of Wonder* in 1806. In the succeeding years there were several other publications about the Rhine containing folk tales such as – beside Görres' *Folk Books* – the first edition of fairy tales from the Rhine by Niklas Vogt in 1811 and the Brothers Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Fairy Tales for Children and Home)* from 1812 and 1815.

For the German readers of English romantic literature, the Rhine was regarded as representing the origin and the glorious past of German culture: the true home of the German people where tradition, legend and song created the notion of an eternal history and a mythical origin of Germans. Karl Philipp Moritz thought *Heimat* (homeland) to be a 'venerable expression' which, joined with the word *Vaterland* (fatherland) suggests an image of 'homely tranquillity and happiness' (Maurer and Stroh 1959: 294). The notion of homeland developed on a local or regional level created a regional identity based on the idea of local origin and history (Applegate 1987).

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However, it might be argued that the idea of an all-encompassing German identity was more than the sum of its parts. Local history was redefined in a teleological way, showing the importance of the region as a constitutive part of a united Germany. *Heimat* was the core concept by which regional identity could be retained in the context of a German Empire dominated by Prussia. The ways in which local elements were put together to invent a regional tradition were seemingly nonpolitical, ranging from typical dress to typical work (Confino 1993: 53; 1997).

German as well as British travellers mostly regarded the landscape and the ways of the people on the Rhine as representations of German *Heimat* – a term that had the resonance of what Raymond Williams describes as a key word, expressing a certain way of talking and thinking about German society and being German (Williams 1966: xi). It bridged the gap between modernisation and backwardness, providing identity in a changing environment through memory and the nostalgic concept of *Volk* (Sheehan 1985), perceived and invented by the bourgeois strata of the population at a time when the political structure of the old German states was disintegrating. The word *Heimat* was often associated with similar emotive expressions such as *Nation*, *Staat*, *Vaterland* and *Volk* (Sheehan 1978).

However, this return to the folk is not a sign of social backwardness. There is no dichotomy between modernisation and regression, as Kohn and Gellner suggested (Kohn 1944; Gellner 1983; also Dumont 1994). Rather, the 'evocation of the folk on the part of intellectuals and the intelligentsia, is ... a dynamic vision of the nation as a high civilisation ...' (Hutchinson 1987: 32, 33). Furthermore, as a tradition of dubious antiquity, *Heimat* resembles Hobsbawm's first variety of an invented tradition: 'establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership in groups, real or artificial communities' (Hobsbawm 1983: 9).

Heimat's local focus also bridged the gap between the region and the nation. The idea of a peaceful, rural, vulnerable and eternal homeland, looming out of an immemorable past and supposedly gliding into a limitless future (Anderson 1983: 11, 12), appealed to the Germans, and the conundrum seems to have been: 'how to have a nation that would be like a hometown?' (Walker 1971: 425).

German political enthusiasm for the Rhine developed in the 1810s, in parallel with the poetic enthusiasm. Romantic and liberal national movements of the early nineteenth century were almost identical, with many poets and students joining the Wars of Liberation, bringing together the author Theodor Körner, the painter Joseph von Eichendorff and the founder of the gymnastic movement in Germany, Friedrich Jahn, in the *Lützowsches Freichorps* (*Lützow Free Corps*). The resistance against French occupation united the German national movement and it chose the Rhine as its symbol, as its watchword, defining it as a decisive element of a German nation state; if the Rhine did not belong to Germany it would not be free. In this context Ernst Moritz Arndt's writings had remarkable repercussions. His *What is the German's Fatherland* of 1813 reached the status of a national hymn and in 1814 his exclamation *Der Rhein, Deutschlands Fluß, aber nicht Deutschlands Grenze* (*The Rhine, Germany's River, but not Germany's Frontier*) sparked the idea of a united Germany with a common history and the Rhine as its origin.

This was a new perception of the river. It had been a frontier since Louis XIV had established the idea of the hexagon, and the French regarded the Rhine as their national river, or, at least, as their natural frontier (Monfrans 1993; Boschenstein 1993: 25–46). Moreover, the people of the Rhineland, in opposition to the notion of the Romantics, did not think of themselves as being particularly German. Neither before the French Revolution nor after the occupation of the Rhineland by the French army had they behaved patriotically in a German sense, even though demographic, economic and communicative developments of the late eighteenth century had already laid the foundations necessary for a future common identity (Schulze 1991: 35–41). Then, Germans from the Rhine had even been content with the changes Napoleon I brought about, e.g. the Code Civile (Tümmers 1994: 221, 222). And when large parts of the Rhenish provinces came under Prussian rule, the Rhineland did not feel liberated. The young Protestant Prussia was not respected by the old Catholic Rhineland, and, what was strikingly obvious, almost all the national enthusiasts were not from the Rhineland. Arndt, Humboldt, Stein and Fichte, for example, came from Prussia or the central part of Germany – Brentano and Görres were the only German Romantics actually born in the Rhineland (Mann 1968: 21–44; Blanning 1983: chapter 6; Sheehan 1989: part 2).

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The surprise of 1840 was that the Rhenish province acted in a patriotic way. In 1830 some Rhenish people had still favoured becoming part of France and when, before 1840, the Prussian General von Rochow thought it best not to set any Rhenish people on guard in order not to seduce the devil (Febvre 1931: 177), it seemed that the Rhine province, the Rhenish-liberal and Catholic part of Germany, had now made its peace with the Prussian-conservative and Protestant part. The integrative power of the river as a symbol for the whole of Germany allowed conservative and liberal nationalism to merge. Left-wing liberals such as Görres and Herwegh praised the river just as Arndt or Max Schneckenburger had done. Nikolaus Becker's *Sie sollen ihn nicht haben, den freien deutschen Rhein* (*They shall not have it, the free German Rhine*) from 1840 united the German liberal movement in song.

In 1870, the Rhine proved to be the stimulus for German unity again. This time it was the *Wacht am Rhein* (*Guard at the Rhine*) by Schneckenburger, written in 1840 and put into music in 1854 by Carl Wilhelm, that served as the medium of unity. After the Franco-Prussian war, Arndt's claim became a reality.

During the German Empire it became an even more important element of nationalism. The newly founded empire had two main problems: its historic legitimisation and its Prussian hegemony. The continuity between First and Second Empire, or the achievement of the secular national aspirations of the German people, and the emphasis on specific historical experiences which linked Prussia to the rest of Germany, became central objects of policy (Hobsbawm 1983: 274). To establish this link, common experiences were stressed. Yet, since the shared historic experiences had only had a brief tradition, the ceremonies concentrated on William I, Bismarck and Sedan. Within these ceremonies, the Rhine remained crucial (Stallmann 1965: 16–19). In the last decades of the nineteenth century, economic aspects of the national idea that had replaced the romantic national awakening with 'a more sober tale of institutional arrangements designed to promote prosperity' (James 1994: 61) decreased again and a return to the romantic appeal, this time adapted by the regime, can be stated, with Wagner and Nietzsche criticising the achievements of modern society. In this context, Richard Wagner brought the Rhine back onto the Romantic agenda of the nation with his patriotic

and legendary *Ring des Nibelungen*. In addition, Treitschke confirmed the fiction that ‘one millennium ago our history began in these beautiful Rhenish lands; now [after 1815] the mighty stream of German life flowed back from the young colonies of the north to its blocked old bed in the West’ (Treitschke 1879: 512). This development can be understood as a second German invention of the Rhine, institutionalising the first wave of patriotic and romantic ideas and trying to build an imperial identity on these discursive foundations.

Many places on the Rhine had the quality of representing Germany – not only as an outcome of official policies, such as the National Monument in the Niederwald and the memorial statue for William I at the *Deutsches Eck*, or Cologne cathedral which became a stage for Prussian kings, but also in a cultural way, through prose, poetry and song, as for example the Lorelei rock, or the Drachenfels. Both political and cultural places shared the qualities of being symbols of the imagined community of the German nation (Nora 1984).

Travel and trade on the Rhine

In reality, the Rhine was not and never had been a German river. It was a European river, rising in and flowing through Switzerland, France, the German states, Belgium and Holland. Moreover, the Rhine had been an artery of free trade ever since the final treaty of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 agreed on free traffic for all countries adjacent to the river.

The first map for travellers appeared as early as 1818 (Delkeskamp 1829). And in 1820, J.A. Demina wrote his *Neuestes Handbuch für Reisende auf dem Rhein und in den umliegenden Gegenden* (*Newest Handbook for Travellers on the Rhine and the surrounding Areas*), which was the first travel book concentrating on the description of landscape, architecture, and legends, but which also mentioned the timetable of the water diligence, the quality of the wine, hotel prices, and shared other important criteria of a travel guide.

The travel book that would experience the most successful future was edited in 1828, one year after the steamboat traffic between Cologne and Mainz was introduced (Klein 1828). It carried the subtitle *Handbuch für*

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Schnellreisende (Handbook for Fast Travellers), paying respect to the increasing speed of transport on the river. The company was bought by Karl Baedeker, who reedited the travel guide in 1835, producing the first Baedeker ever: a Rhine guide. In 1836, John Murray published his 'little red book' on continental travel; he later joined with Baedeker, publishing the English translations of the German guide (Allen 1996).

Travel and trade had increased rapidly. The icons of progress, railway and steamboat, changed the face of the Rhineland. In 1838, the first railway that led to the Rhine was established, connecting Erkath with Düsseldorf, followed in 1839 by the Thann–Mühlhausen railway and the Frankfurt–Wiesbaden connection in 1840. In the early 1840s, the Rhine railways were connected with Holland and Belgium. And from 1847, Berlin could be reached by train.

The invention of the steam engine left another mark on the landscape and the river. Transport as well as travelling became faster and more effective. Here, the year 1827 marked the turning point when the steamer *Concordia* started to take up its service between Mayence and Cologne on a regular basis (Dresemann 1903). In this first year the two boats of the Cologne company, the *Preußisch–Rheinische Dampfschiffahrtsgesellschaft (Prussian–Rhenish Steam Boat Company)*, made 129 trips with 33,452 passengers (Tümmers 1994: 232). Due to the unexpectedly high frequency of foreigners travelling the Rhine, the wealth of the whole area increased, as reported by the *Kölner Handelskammer (Cologne Chamber of Commerce)* in 1829 (Gothein 1903: 197). When the Cologne and Düsseldorf Company, founded in 1836, merged in 1853 to form the *Köln–Düsseldorfer Rheindampfschiffahrtsgesellschaft (Cologne–Düsseldorf Rhine Steam Boat Company)* the number of boats and passengers had already increased, providing the company with the means to transport as much as one million passengers. This figure remained stable until the 1890s, only to rise to 1.92 million customers on thirty-two boats in 1913 (Swinglehurst 1870; Tümmers 1994). Among the passengers, English travellers, of whom since 1861 the majority were female (Withey 1997: 158), constituted a considerable group particularly easy to distinguish because of their already well-known dress code (Tissot 1995; Steward 2000). The Cologne–Düsseldorf Company had concentrated early on the transport of tourists, building ever more

comfortable and luxurious steamers. And in 1856, Carl Wilhelm noticed in his *Bibliotheca geographica* that 120 travel accounts had already been written about the Rhine. Legends and songs were now easily accessible in illustrated books. Karl Simrock's collection of legends is still published today and the first edition of the *Allgemeines Deutsches Kommersliederbuch* (Common German Song Book) from 1858 provided Germans, as well as international travellers, with the most popular songs.

In 1868, with the ratification of the Mannheim Agreement, the Rhine became an even more accessible waterway. From then on nations adjacent to the Rhine, as decided on in a treaty in Paris in 1831, were allowed to use it without paying any fee; and, as well, every nation in the world gained that right, bringing many businessmen to the Rhine who would absorb the river's image and thus transport it to their home countries as well, spreading the image of the Rhine and Germany as far as Japan (Tümmers: 1994).

The claim that the Rhine was a German river is obviously proven wrong when in reality it was one of the most international regions in Europe. But at the same time, the international flair of the Rhine helped to spread the notion that the Rhine was a German river: *Heimat*, *Vaterland* and *Volk* became export articles when travellers and businessmen had the opportunity to purchase souvenirs of the river in every imaginable form. By then, tourism had taken a firm grip on the region. Simrock observed in 1851:

'Travel books, postcards, panoramas, painted and plastic representations of single places as well as longer routes, collections of legends in verse and prose, and thousands of other travel facilities are available in every art- and bookshop in such large numbers, that between Mayence and Cologne, hardly any house, hardly any tree can be found that has not set a pen or an engraving tool in motion. The region has been described, pictured and painted in such variant ways that in the end you could save money and, with the same indulgence, travel on your four walls'. (Simrock 1851: 7, 8)

English travel writing until 1871: from romance to race

Since the establishment of the Rhine as a tourist route, travellers no longer went to the Rhine in order to interpret it as romantic and enthralling, they expected the romance to be there. On their journey, they heard and read German folk tales, and thus the image of the Rhine was that of a German river expressing German genius, as Henry Bulwer-Lytton, writer, member of parliament and eminent traveller, observed in 1834:

The best commentary to the German genius is a visit to the German scenery. ... , the feudal towers that look over vines and deep valleys on the legendary Rhine; the gigantic remains of antique power, profusely scattered over the plain, mount and forest; the thousand mixed recollections that hollow the ground, the stately Roman, the stalwart Goth, the chivalry of the feudal age, and the dim brotherhood of the ideal world have here alike their record and their remembrance. (Bulwer-Lytton 1834: 101, 102)

Yet, in the 1830s, the romantic image of the Rhine – of the Germans living in the picturesque towns on the board of the river – as well as the image of a stereotypical traveller, was already so widespread that they could be ridiculed – Germans as well as tourists. Indeed, the visual and textual discourse was so well established that Thomas Hood's *Up the Rhine* is able to comment ironically on any legend, or any so-called 'backward' German quality in its satirical account (Hood 1840). And in the 1850s and 1860s William Makepeace Thackeray's *Kicklebury's Abroad, Rebecca & Rowena: A Legend of the Rhine*, and chapter 61 in *Vanity Fair*, entitled 'Am Rhein', lifted irony of Rhine tourism onto a literary level.

However, the homely image of rural, backward Germany was firmly hooked in the imagination and always served as a good reason for a Rhine trip:

The Rhine – the stream of the Conqueror, the Poet, and the Painter – the river of rivers – its majestic banks made historical by Caesar, by Charlemagne, by Napoleon; its crumbling ruins in picturesque decay, each in itself a lingering romance of the Middle Ages; its vine-clad

slopes, the parent of the *Rheinwein*, and theme of a thousand songs; its rapid waters, the fabled dwelling place of spirits and mermaids, – the River of the Fatherland. (*Rhine Book* 1845: 2)

This perception expresses the general trend of interpretation. The river and the people were linked with the idea of an autochthonous *Volk* that had its origins in mythical times. Tourism facilitated access to the river, and thus to this interpretation, for a large number of people. The *Rhine Book* of 1845 continues: ‘the Grand Tour is no longer the privilege of *the few*; for steam has thrown down the barrier of cost, and offers to all the teachings of travel ... the Vapoury Giant opens all Europe for the inspection, the amusement, and instruction of the Summer Tourist’ (*Rhine Book* 1845: 2).

In the 1860s steelplate engraving was itself replaced by new printing techniques allowing a cheaper way of reproduction (Tümmers 1994). The tourist routes had been well established: Cook’s Tours as well as detailed itineraries enabled travellers to go *Up and Down the Rhine for £5* in 1865 (Brendon 1991; Withey 1997). The British traveller was already proverbial on the Rhine and the ten-day-tourist had his own code of appearance: ‘Nothing is really needed beyond a small carpet bag, containing as little as you can conveniently manage with for ten days. This, with the ordinary dress you wear in London, and an umbrella, will suffice. It would, however, be advisable to take a couple of flannel shirts and a wide-awake hat, if you have them’ (*Up and Down the Rhine* 1865: 200).

In the 1870s, some travellers were disappointed because the Rhine had seemed to have lost its romantic atmosphere (Tümmers 1994: 259). Steamers and railways, industry and large-scale agriculture (Burn 1862) ruined the once wild river and the restoration of many castles obstructed the view of the ruins. The year 1875 marks another peak of irony with George Meredith’s *Farina* and Richard Harris Barham’s *Ingolsby Legends*. Yet the majority of travel accounts still favoured the beauty of the Rhine, indulged in its Romantic scenery, praised the backward and honest German, ignored the growing industry and concentrated on the stretch between Cologne and Koblenz. Around 1860 political interest in Germany had increased from an impatience with the rather confused struggles for political dominance, to the notion that ‘a strong, united, liberal Germany

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would be a most useful ally to England', as Queen Victoria exclaimed in 1864 (Hollenberg 1974: 26). The interpretation of the Rhine became increasingly associated with German defence against France. Henry Swinglehurst, dedicating his book to the German army of artisans, workers and students, wrote in 1870: 'As I stood on the extinct crater, and looked back at the ruined castles ... the Rhine flowed on in peace amid smiling villages, *not* as a German boundary, but in a pleasant German territory, *which France will not be permitted to occupy*' (Swinglehurst 1870: 12, 13).

Tourists could read enthusiastic books which incorporated the struggle against France in the 'Gaul or Teuton' (Dunsay 1873) discourse of an age-old fight between Germany and France: 'Two thousand years ago, as now, it was *the river*, the river of rivers, the king of rivers, for the great German race; and mailed warriors sang, as well as armed veterans sing today: *Am Rhein, am Rhein, da wachsen unsere Reben / Gesegnet sei der Rhein*' (Adams 1872: part III, p. 1). And Thomas Carlyle commented on the Franco-Prussian War in *The Times*: '[t]hat noble, patient, deep, pious, and solid Germany should be at length welded into a nation and become Queen of the Continent, instead of vapouring, vainglorious, gesticulating, quarrelsome, restless, and over-sensitive France, seems to me the hopefullest public fact that has occurred in my time' (*The Times*, 18 November 1870: 8).

John Stuart Blackie condemned the 'present invasion of Germany by the hordes of Gaul' that had been performed in order to fulfil France's 'old ambitious dream of the Rhine boundary'. The change of British official policy towards support for France after the German occupation of Paris did not find any repercussions in travel writings, only stirring a few contradicting ripples here and there (Blackie 1870: 87, 89).

1871–90: Peace in fairyland

The caesura of 1871 marked the transition from popular to official nationalism in Germany (Seton-Watson 1977). In order to be provided with an integrative notion, the new regime relied on nationalism and constructed national identity around a Prussian discourse. Generally, the

‘most significant source of nationalism’s hold on the imaginations of Germans is the way in which national values and organisations helped to fill the void left by the ebbing power of liberal thought and action’ (Sheehan 1978: 278). The return to romance or myth at the end of the nineteenth century is also due to the fact that ‘myths function where there is a sociological strain ..., where profound historical changes have taken place’ (Malinowski 1954: 129; Lévi-Strauss 1980).

Travel literature more and more regarded the Middle Rhine as a reservoir of national origin and myth. The legends were generally admired and the amount of irony decreased (Tracie 1879). In one of the most widely read travel guides, *Cook’s Tourist Handbook for Holland, Belgium, and the Rhine*, quotations of Byron and Bulwer-Lytton are given. Moreover, Cook’s guide represents the invented image of German history accurately, stating that ‘grandeur and homeliness, history and superstition, truth and fable, [are] succeeding one another so as to blend into a whole’ (1874: 68). Here, accessible for millions of tourists, the notion was spread that after it had seen a long history of civilisation, ‘[i]n the Middle Ages the Rhine was the scene of many dark deeds, and also the region of romance, and is now, as it has been for centuries, the stream held in veneration by the whole Teutonic race; and “the Rhine” is the watchword of the German legions to this day’ (1874: 78, 80).

Moreover, the link between the industrious peasant of the *Heimat* and legitimate patriotism became ever more obvious and was not questioned by the British traveller; it was even regarded positively. ‘First we came into view of the Siebengebirge, seven mountains standing out darkly ...: to the enemy, a seven headed monster, that strikes a chill to the most ardent and courageous breasts; to the Rhinelander, a company of seven friends, with heart and soul aglow with love and pride for their Vaterland, beneath the ferocious and formidable exterior – seven sentinels guarding their beloved Rhine’ (Corner 1883: 12, 13).

Corner’s remark reveals the politically unconscious perception on the one hand and a patriotic bias on the other (Lohrey 1985: 94–99). She perceived the landscape at the Lorelei rock as ‘nature poeticized, idealized, Are we on earth? was my constant thought, for it was as though I had awakened in fairyland’ (Corner 1883: 47). German national consciousness did not seem aggressive or disturbing to her: ‘Every

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German loves his Fatherland, and if need be, would die a martyr for it. This patriotism is most admirable in the national character; one meets it in prince and peasant alike' (Corner 1883: 57).

Silas Kitto Hocking's travelogue is less spectacular in language than Corner's, but nevertheless shows similar interpretations. His approach is more intellectual, discussing his own country, the state of church and architecture. After getting on German trains, and pointing out the luxury of the second class (remarking that 'only Englishmen and fools' would travel first class), he approaches the Rhineland via Cologne. In sight of Cologne Cathedral he sneers at the Gothic Revival in England. As an Anglican he dislikes the liturgy of the Catholic Church, 'yet to watch the country people, and even the children, at their devotions was pleasant indeed, for they seemed as if they meant it' (Hocking 1886: 48).

As Hocking continues his journey, he dreamily remarks that

Every turn in the river revealed some fresh beauty and brought into view some encrumbling castle, standing like a grim sentinel on the wooded height. While, added to this, there was scarcely a glen, or crag, or gloomy keep that had not some curious legend associated with it, and which threw a kind of glamour over all the scene, and made us feel as though we were pushing our way into the very heart of fairyland. (Hocking 1886: 54)

Hocking could not resist adapting his notion of the Rhine as a happy resort of legend and tradition to the people of the Rhineland. He admires their cultivation of the steep and rocky river banks that 'have been converted into vineyards by the industrious peasants. The soil they have carried up in baskets and laid in terraces on the face of the rock. These thrifty people of both sexes, standing among the vines on the dangerous slopes, wave their hands and hats as we pass, and seem ... contented and happy' (Hocking 1886: 63).

The same unpolitical but rather colonial view of Rhinelanders as exotic natives is reflected in W.B. Keer's account of his journey on the river, which compares the Rhine with the scenery he witnessed in South America and thinks of the German peasants as being exotic natives (Keer 1890: 3). In most other accounts of the Rhine, the connection between

landscape, legend and territorial rights was explicitly expressed. *Ward and Lock's Illustrated Guide to the Rhine* reminded the reader in 1890 that '[t]he Rhine became more than ever a German river by the war of 1870 and 1871, which restored the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany' (Ward and Lock 1890: 49).

English travellers would not disentangle themselves from the German wave of a reinvention of the Rhine as a national place, rather, they embraced the legends and stories, only invented and spread in public at the beginning of the century, and used them as proving evidence for the romance of the Rhine. While the Rhine served as an integrative means for the German unification process, for English tourists it was more and more a fairyland. The industrial and political reality did not seem to have interested the travellers, indeed, the romantic discourse seemed to have been so overpowering that it appeared to be impossible to write anything critical or new on the River of the Fatherland, as it was now more and more often called. That the English would choose this expression for showing the patriotic character of the river, thus quoting the reinvented German romantic discourse, is maybe the clearest sign of their unawareness of the changes in political and also cultural climate in Germany. They wanted to be in fairyland, not in Germany.

1890–1914: From lasting admiration to late disenchantment

The year Bismarck resigned from office, 1890, led to a change in European foreign relations as a result of the slow disintegration of the complex alliance and treaty system established by the German chancellor. Anglo-German relations suffered from growing national suspicions and colonial ambitions (Eley 1980). German naval plans, the British press debate about the Kaiser's *Weltpolitik*, and the gradual decline of London's relations with Vienna, Rome and Constantinople had left both governments pretending that all was still well (Kennedy 1980: 222). Anglo-German relations began to drift apart after the *Krüger-Depesche* of 1895, and increasingly so after the beginning of Tirpitz's naval programme in 1897 (Berghahn 1971), only to end in bitter opposition in 1914, while in British popular culture Germany replaced France and Russia as the prime enemy after the turn of the century (Joll 1984: 47ff.).

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For the British traveller, however, the Rhine valley remained a popular holiday resort, and the notion of the Rhine as a peaceful and traditional river remained as strong as it was before. Percy Lindley's short description of the Rhine in 1890 provides a new motif when he interprets the German–Dutch frontier as the place where 'the Rhine becomes a nameless thing lost in a French river' (Lindley 1901: 5). This perspective is also taken by Sabine Baring-Gould, who believes that 'tokens of descreptitude manifest themselves in Father Rhine at Wesel. From this point on *he loses himself*, shifts his course aimlessly, wanders, finally *forgets his own name*, and dribbles away among the mudflats of Holland' (Baring-Gould 1906: 18). Once the Rhine did not flow through Germany anymore it actually lost its proper identity and name.

In general, Baring-Gould concentrated on history and Wagner. Indeed, the legend of the Nibelungen had already manifested itself in previous travel guides (Patterson's Guide 1886) and since 1892 Siegfried had been inscribed as the hero of the Drachenfels, while before it had always been a nameless knight. The Baedeker edition of that year confirmed that in the cave of the rock the legendary hero had actually bathed in Fafner the dragon's blood (Baedeker 1892: 267) and Baring-Gould retells the fight between the two in some detail as well. Moreover, in Baring-Gould's account, places were mentioned that had only been connected to Wagner and therefore not been extensively covered before. Xanten and Cleve were included as the birthplace of Siegfried and as the place where Lohengrin disembarked. For Baring-Gould, 'the Nibelungen Lied is assuredly one of the very noblest epics in literature' and he even felt that Wagner should have stayed closer to the original (Baring-Gould 1906: 60). With the Nibelungen a perfectly fitting German foundation myth, fittingly consumed by English travellers, found its way to the Rhine and was inscribed as well as perceived in new places at the Rhine, which went hand in hand with the already established legends and sentiments connected with the region, turning it into an even more powerful discourse.

The Nibelungen played a significant role in Halford John Mackinder's *The Rhine, its Valley & History*, too, when he mentioned the places associated with Nibelungen characters. However, as an Oxford professor and founder of geopolitics as a science, his main focus lay on the

historical and geographic qualities of the Rhine. His history of the Rhine as the physical connection of Northern and Southern Germany was the least biased account of German and French and, indeed, European history. He had the insight of knowing that it had been a surprise for Europe when Germany in 1840 ‘replied with a national movement’ and he analysed correctly the origins of the French notion of the Rhine border: ‘The theory that the Rhine is the “natural” frontier of France was bequeathed to Frenchmen by the Emperor Augustus. It inspired the policy alike of the Bourbons and of the Directory, yet can obtain little authority from history’. (Mackinder 1908: 8).

In contrast to his claim that ‘the Rhine is unique among the rivers of Europe in its influence upon history’, he fell back to the usual tone of description when he believed the Niederwald national monument to be ‘fitly commemorating ... the critical point in the course of *the greatest German river*’. His academic viewpoint did not endow him with a critical interpretation of the legends and, although it was already a well-known fact in 1908 that the Lorelei legend was invented by Clemens Brentano in 1801, he stated that ‘a destructive fairy is said to have lured boatmen on the rapids below’ (Mackinder 1908: 147).

If the politically tense situation of a growing Anglo-German antagonism was not a reason for Baring-Gould and Mackinder to cease writing germanophile travel books in 1906 and 1908, it is just as surprising to read Charles Marriott’s *The Romance of the Rhine* from 1911, which, when (Anglo-German relations cannot be said to have been particularly positive and public opinion was dominated by enmity) published another confirmation of the Rhine myth. His remark that the Rhine ‘is less a river than an idea’ did not lead him to a critical view of German nationalism; rather, he reinvoked a Romantic interpretation yet again. Moreover, Marriott claims that, interesting as the Rhine might be for the folklorist, it only becomes important when it is also a source of national identity, ‘a source of inspiration’ as for Heine and Wagner (Marriott 1911: 303).

Marriott’s interpretation of the river as an idea excluded all industrial change of the landscape, when ‘the Rhine can never be vulgarised, even though the smoke of the steamers obscure the Loreley Rocks’. For him ‘the Rhine is big enough to bear both the obviously picturesque and the

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crudely commercial, the ruin of the robber baron and the factory of his modern equivalent' (Marriott 1911: 158, 119).

Marriott also firmly believed in the peacefulness of Germany, contradictorily claiming that the idea of the Niederwald monument, actually erected to celebrate the victory over France, was indeed 'that of peace'. And, recollecting his experiences on his return down the Rhine, he even remarked: 'It is not too much to say that the Rhine has civilized Europe' (Marriott 1911: 167, 298).

Thus, even as late as 1911, the British traveller regarded German folklore and patriotism as rightful and admirable. Marriott's book was not harshly criticised in Britain. The *Times Literary Supplement* remarked warmly that 'Mr Marriott has given us a very interesting and readable book, and one which the traveller in Rhineland will find an excellent companion' (*Times Literary Supplement* 1911: 443).

The critique of German nationalism and its increasing inherent aggressiveness cannot be found in travel literature after 1911, either. In 1914, Lady Jephson was still convinced that 'whatever their opinions may be as to our failings and vices, our shortcomings and our iniquities, most Germans are civil to us nowadays' (Jephson 1915: 82). This was written before the war. In her *War-Time Journal* she slowly changed her opinion about Germany. But it is remarkable that even as late as 3 August 1914, she wrote that 'one cannot but admire the glorious spirit of sacrifice and patriotism which animates all classes of the German people. Just as it was in the war of 1813', repeating the usual interpretation of emphatic German national expressions (Jephson 1915: 12, 13). Even the constant intonation of patriotic hymns did not yet distract her from that opinion.

It was only when England joined the war against Germany that Lady Jephson was confronted by hostility and stepped on her balcony. Throughout August and September, she was not allowed to leave her holiday resort, which had become a prison. Slowly she began to penetrate the peculiar German national identity and arrived at the conclusion that fact and fiction did not blend. On 19 August she wrote: 'I read a poem yesterday, which began "Du Gott der Deutschen" (You God of the Germans), as if indeed the Deity were especial property of the German Nation! Massacre, pillage, destruction, violation of territory, everything wicked God is supposed to bless! What hideous distorted minds, and

where is the sane, if prosaic Teuton of one's imaginings!' (Jephson 1915: 26).

Germanophile British were disillusioned in 1914. 'The mask has been torn from the face of German *Kultur*, ... the whole professorial class of Germany has been arraigned at the bar' (Baring 1916: 91). Germany was split into a spiritually good and artistic part, and that of nationalistic arrogance.

Lady Jephson, however, was so disenchanted with Germany that she could not even retire into the cosy image of German *Heimat* anymore. Rather, when she was finally allowed to leave, she angrily included all details of German culture and landscape in her disillusion: 'In happier days I have admired the grape-vines meandering over the whitewashed cottages, and marvelled at the monotony of taste which furnished every window-ledge with exactly four pots of geraniums. *Now, nothing pleased us that was German: scenery, architecture or people!*' (Jephson 1915: 61).

Conclusions

Following an English impetus, the Rhine had become a symbol of common German origin since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Tümmers: 1994) and became a sign of German origin and unity immensely important for the construction of a growing German national identity. For the English travellers, at the 'River of the Fatherland' the true homeland of Germany was supposed to be found: a cosy, backward, polite and rural people who represented the nostalgic English ideal of social cohesion and traditional culture, even more intensified by a vividly practised religion, which had been lost in the advanced individualism and alienation of modern Britain. English travellers repeated the unofficial as well as the official German nation-building process throughout the nineteenth century when they focused their observations on rural origin, backwardness, legends and songs, and linked these with the idea of national identity. The symbolic power of the Rhine as a German river dominated the interpretations, leaving the river's European character behind in Ancient Roman and Early Modern times, while during the Middle Ages it was supposedly haunted by spirits of all

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imaginable shape and form, which would transform into the Nibelungen during the end of the nineteenth century.

The representative places of German history and unity chosen for this article reveal the power of fictitious national tradition as well as the transformation from popular to official nationalism during the second half of the nineteenth century, while the river functioned as an overarching integrative entity. In contrast to the political and diplomatic relations with Germany, the interpretation of these places by English travellers as well as of the Rhine itself maintained a constant admiration for German patriotism and *Heimat*. Traditional Germanness as an export article, which attracted tourists to the river and spread the notion of a peaceful and traditional Germany, was an enormous success, and the co-inventors of this peculiar best-seller lost touch with the roots of its origin.

The disillusion of 1914 led to a split perception of Germany, to the notion of the Germany of traditional culture, Goethe and scholarship, as opposed to the chauvinistic and aggressive nation looking for world power and the occupation of Central Europe to become the fourth major player among Russia, the United States and Britain.

After the First World War, English travel writing was much more critical of places on the Rhine that were of national importance for Germany than before the war (Markham 1921; Marlowe 1929; Letts 1930). The notion of *Heimat*, on the other hand, remained with the travel writers. The German people were still regarded as backward and simple, and, since they now lived in a Republic, they were truly a freedom-loving folk, as they had been in Ancient times as reported by Tacitus (Marlowe 1929). Yet until August 1914 there had been no change in the perception of the Rhine in the eyes of English travellers – as Lady Jephson mentioned in her account, German patriotism was still associated with the ideal of the Wars of Liberation from 1813.

The major irony of the history of English travelling on the Rhine is that the Rhine as a river of Romance had been largely an English invention. Yet once the tourist industry had its grip on the Middle Rhine from the 1840s, and, at the same time, places of German national consciousness had been established, English travellers were unable to disentangle themselves from the dominant discourse constantly reproduced, reconsumed and reconfirmed by the tourist industry and pictorial as well as textual

publications: the 'River of the Fatherland', the industrious peasant, the rightful defence of a nation's homeland. And, even if the travel writings had been politically unconscious, they were not unpolitical when they constantly re-established the link between landscape, *Heimat*, national stereotypes and nationalism.

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