

# Europe and Its Interior Other(s)

EDITORS | HELGE VIDAR HOLM | SISSEL LÆGREID | TORGEIR SKORGEN



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*Edited by Helge Vidar Holm,  
Sissel Lægreid and Torgeir Skorgen*

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# Introduction:

## European Notions of Identity and Otherness in Times of Crisis – Present and Past

*Helge Vidar Holm, Sissel Lægveid and Torgeir Skorgen*

“Is there a European Identity? Is there a Europe?” These questions posed by Václav Havel (2000), have been asked time and again by European politicians and researchers in order to find ways of dealing with the ever increasing problems of integration within an expanding European Union currently facing its biggest financial and political crisis since its foundation. Though the answers to the question of European identity vary, the importance and relevance of both asking the question and realizing its impact seem in essence to have been summed up by Václav Havel (2000), who more than a decade ago stated:

By inquiring about it; thinking about it; by trying to grasp its essence, we contribute to our own self-awareness. This is immensely important –especially because we find ourselves in a multi-cultural, multi-polar world in which recognizing one’s identity is a prerequisite for co-existence with other identities.

Since 2007 the European crisis referred to above, has not only driven the younger generation of Southern Europe into collective agony about its own future in terms of work, an independent existence, and the possibility of raising a family. It has also led to a large scale political, economic and cultural polarization along a south-north axis, which appears both new and old at the same time, appealing to certain Protestant stereotypes of the economically backward, lazy and morally irresponsible Southerners, as expressed in the debate about the 2013 financial crisis of the Cypriot bank system.

Northern European clichés about the ‘lazy Greeks’ and the ‘criminal Russians’ only lead to new hostility towards the financial EU elites, recently in particular towards Germany, the financially and politically most powerful member of the EU, now held responsible for the harshly prescribed medicine for members facing the current crisis, like Greece, Italy or Spain. In these countries anti-German attitudes represent a new trend, since parts of the older generation of these countries spent many years of their lives working in the German industry during the prosperous post-war German economic miracle



(*Wirtschaftswunder*). As so-called guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*), immigrants from South-Eastern Europe, earned good money. This in turn was invested in new establishments in their native countries.

In the wake of the international oil crisis in 1973, German authorities had declared that Germany was no immigration country, a statement which was repeated and confirmed both in the 80s as well as in the 90s. In the present situation, however, German authorities have had to invent a new and more inclusive terminology for the new generation of guest workers from Southern Europe, as Germany finds itself quite desperately in need of new skilled employees.

What is required in the current situation of crisis in Europe, is a new mind-set, realizing that many guest workers have developed and will develop a feeling of belonging to their European immigration country. They are therefore planning to stay in the new country and bring their families along. This leads to a new demographic situation in many European countries: In Germany for instance, today more than 11 million Germans are immigrants or children of immigrants. Nevertheless, many employers, and even some authorities, continue to refer to them as guest workers, who like visitors, would soon be leaving to return to their native countries.

In this sense both the German term *Gastarbeiter* and the Norwegian *fremmedkulturell*, the term mostly used to describe non-European immigrants and refugees to Norway of foreign cultural origin, are symptomatic indications of the kind of ambivalence, which the resident population throughout history has felt towards people coming from countries far away. As strangers looking, talking and behaving differently, they were and still are generally thought of as individuals or groups not really belonging, but as people only being here today and (perhaps) gone tomorrow. However, since they tend to stay on in their new country, they become interior other(s), who are still rooted in their old countries and as such at the same time asymmetrically defined as 'out-groups' by the dominating, and more or less, resident 'in-groups' in their new country (Koselleck 1989).

The complex relation between the stranger and the local community was addressed by the German-Jewish sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918). In a short essay in his book *Soziologie* called "Exkurs über den Fremden" (1908), he presented the stranger as a unique sociological category. Since then, Simmel's *Fremde* has become a rather intriguing concept in modern sociology, through its emphasis on the paradoxical opposition between liberty to move on and fixation to a limited space:

If wandering is the liberation from every given point in space, and thus the conception opposite to fixation at such a point, the sociological form of the stranger presents the unity, as it were, of these two characteristics (Simmel 1996: 37).

Different both from the ‘outsider’, who is not related to a specific group, and from the ‘wanderer’ who comes one day and leaves the next, the stranger is a member of the group in which he lives and participates and yet remains distant from native members of the group:

The stranger is thus being discussed here, not in the sense often touched upon in the past, as the wanderer who comes today and leaves tomorrow, but rather as the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the *potential* wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going (Simmel 1996: 37).

Unlike other forms of social distance and difference (such as class, gender, and even ethnicity), the specificity of the stranger has to do with his origins. The stranger is regarded as extraneous to the group even though he is in a more or less constant relation to other group members. Often his distance is more emphasized than his nearness, and his situation is characterized as being simultaneously close and far away. Since he once came from afar, there is always a possibility that he might be leaving again at some point. Therefore a kind of inherent mobility and fluctuation seems to stick to him as a distinctive mark.

On the other hand, because the stranger is considered not to be committed to the kind of life-long community constituted by work and permanent residents, he may approach it with some kind of objectivity. And due to his contact on a daily basis with a number of individuals living in the local community, he also participates in it. But since they see him as not really belonging and therefore expect him to be leaving sooner or later, the locals tend to tell him their innermost secrets. Being conceived as a visitor whom they might not see again at all, he would have no particular interest in misusing them. Their secrets, they think, could only be misused by others who are more organically connected to the community and its particular interests. Paradoxically it is the same quality of mobility and distance which makes the stranger suspicious to the resident population. For the same reason, the stranger is considered an objective observer watching the local community from a kind of bird’s-eye perspective.

However, his position makes the stranger vulnerable to hatred and to the local population’s need for a scapegoat, in case a misfortune should occur. In this sense, despite the freedom of the position of the stranger, his position is a

dangerous one, since “in uprisings of all sorts, the party attacked has claimed, from the beginning of things, that provocation has come from the outside, through emissaries and instigators” (Simmel 1996: 39).

The scapegoat function of the stranger as described by Simmel is similar to that of the European interior other, which is the topic of the present volume and which throughout history especially has been the experience of the European Jews. Since antiquity, Judaism and the Jews have represented a major challenge to the Christian communities, a challenge which was intimately linked to the role of Judaism as the ‘mother’ of Christianity and the origin, from which it had developed and seceded in a constant tension between nearness and distance, succession and competition.

When Christianity was declared state religion of the Roman Empire, an initial Christian attitude of anti-Judaism was turned into real prosecution: Synagogues were destroyed, Jews physically attacked and new laws were adopted and carried out, prohibiting the conversion of Christians into Judaism or marriages between Jews and Christians. During the Middle Ages however, the traditional hostility towards the Jews became part of Christian popular piety, incited by the Crusaders. Hence anti-Judaism became an integral part of the medieval social norm. And their imperial or princely protectors often withstood them only as long as they could exploit them or benefit from their financial or administrative resources. Since they were also excluded from the guilds, which were organized as Christian associations, they were confined to making their living as hawkers, moneylenders or pawnbrokers, thereby violating the Christian ban against gaining profit from borrowing rates.

According to the IV<sup>th</sup> council of the Catholic Church in 1215, the Jews were banned from several state offices and imposed to wear certain clothes, such as hats or yellow circles, identifying them as Jews. As a consequence, they were not considered equal citizens, although they were under imperial protection. Moreover, during the black death pogroms, entire Jewish societies in Europe were devastated by pilgrims murdering and burning all over the European Continent. Seeing themselves as part of a larger Christian *Europeanness*, the pilgrims confirmed their own Christian piety by hating and murdering Jewish infidels.

A tragic example of this was the expulsion and slaughtering of the Spanish Jews and Muslims by the Catholic Inquisition, which became known as the purification of the blood (*limpieza de sangre*). This expression was in fact anticipating essential parts of the vocabulary and imagination of modern European anti-Semitism, which was launched in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the German publicist Wilhelm Marr, who, holding the Jews responsible for Marx-

ism, liberalism and the entire process of modernisation, called for a racially and pseudo-scientifically based political movement against Jews and the Jewish emancipation.

Throughout history, the notions of both Europe, Europeanness, and the historical self-images of the Europeans were pre-conditioned by diverse cultural, mental, meta-geographical and aesthetic borders such as those between included and excluded, between culturally dominating and dominated or between center and periphery, natives and exiled, nomads and resident population groups. In all cases we find asymmetric counter concepts of in-groups and out-groups, where the out-groups often were in no position to define themselves, but were defined by the dominating in-group (Koselleck 1989).

The feeling of being defined as others by a hegemonic in-group has without doubt formed the self-image that many European minority groups have developed over the years. The problem has illustrated and debated by a number of writers and intellectuals in various ways. In *Les Identités meurtrières* (1998) Amin Maalouf for instance, holds the identity struggle responsible for the great majority of genocides and wars in Europe in the last hundred years, and he stresses the overall tendency to make the other seem like a group of foes to fight against or worse, to eliminate, be it for ethnic, religious, cultural, territorial or language-related reasons. Frantz Fanon (1952) explains this tendency from a psychiatrist's point of view, where the inferiority complex of the members of dominated group makes them want to hide, or even to get rid of, some of their identity marks.

Fanon is inspired by his philosophical *maître*, Jean-Paul Sartre, who in his famous post-war essay reflecting on the Jewish question, *Réflexions sur la question juive* (1946), explains how the image or the 'spectre' of the Jew is a constructed one, made by the anti-Semite's way of thinking in synthetizing categories. In this essay, Sartre makes his point by distinguishing between four paradigmatic models: the anti-Semite, the democrat, the inauthentic Jew and the authentic Jew. The greater part of his essay discusses the anti-Semite's personality, how his fundamental choice of hatred as a basic existential category develops into a passion that blocks his ability of rational thinking and creates an attitude of impermeability to any arguments contrary to his synthetizing 'comprehension' of Jewishness: nothing Jewish can be positive or good, because it is related to Jews. Opposed to this synthetizing attitude, we find the analytical way of thinking, incarnated by the Democrat, who regards the Jew just as anybody else, as good or bad people according to their merits, and to whom Jewishness has no particular meaning as a personality category. Sartre points out, however, that the Democrat is not an especially good ally to the

Jews, as the Democrat thinks in universal terms and sees no reason to preserve Jewishness as such. The authentic Jew will therefore need other allies than the Democrat, whereas the inauthentic Jew may find important reasons to trust the Democrat.

Sartre's analysis of how people think of the other, especially how passionate hatred against a particular minority group tends to block any rationality regarding the subject, is still of great value, be it in discussions about today's growing anti-Semitism in Europe, or in any other debate on European minority groups, such as the gypsies/Roma people, or on the issue of Muslim communities in Europe. Interpreted in the context of Sartre's phenomenologically based existentialist philosophy, where *l'impact du regard d'autre*, the way you feel that people define you, is decisive for your self-understanding, Sartre's essay helps us understand how terrorist movements may develop today, in Europe and elsewhere. *Stigmatization* is a key word here. If you feel excluded because of your religious or ethnic identity, you may respond by emphasizing the identity features that you feel part of and therefore may want to defend. Maalouf puts it like this: "When you feel that your language is despised, your religion attacked, your culture devaluated, you will react by showing your difference with ostentation ..." (Maalouf 1998: 53, our translation).

So what is identity? Can it be fixed as a 'true' entity or is it a mixture moving between construct, fact and fiction? And what about the relation of the individual or psychological aspect to that of the collective identity?

As suggested by Vacláv Havel (2000), the two categories may be seen as entities co-existing within a dynamic dimension, where the one is the prerequisite to the other. In so far he was in line with Balibar (1991: 94), who on his part stated that:

it is not a question of setting a collective identity against individual identities. All identity is individual, but there is no individual identity that is not historical or, in other words, constructed within a field of social values, norms of behaviour and collective symbols. The real question is how the dominant reference points of individual identity change over time and with the changing institutional environment.

Since identity constitutes itself in relation to social action, it might be fruitful to see identity more as a form than a concept (Delanty 2003). The idea is that since no categories of identity begin as fully formed and articulated entities expressing an underlying consciousness or essence, but are created in action in the course of a lifetime, identities can in truth never be fixed. As a creation the identity of the self is constituted in symbolic markers or signs,

based on the principal of difference and co-existing in a relational context. However, even though all categories of identity relate to each other in different ways, and may therefore be referred to as multiple identities, as overlapping, mixed and co-existing, this is especially the case with individual identities, since they rarely have one single identity (Maalouf 1998). And as such they may be conceived as narratives people tell about themselves in order to bring continuity to their own existence; in other words as a kind of narrative identity in the sense Paul Ricoeur coined the term in order to come to terms with the complex question of identity.

The term implies either the individual or collective entity addressed by questions such as who has done this or acted in such a way, and to whom certain things happened (Ricoeur 1988). Essential to this notion of identity is the fundamental temporality of being, where the ‘who’ as a being in co-existence with others in a common world, transforms him- or herself in the course of a life history and only becomes who he or she is always already in the course of becoming him- or herself. In the Freudian sense this may be conceived as becoming aware of oneself as a consciousness, which, according to Freud, comes into being instead or in place of the memory trace: “das Bewusstsein entstehe an Stelle der Erinnerungsspur” (Freud 1982: 235).

To conclude this quest for identity, it seems fair to argue that, whether or not the notion of identity is analysed from a universalist or existentialist perspective on identity (Habermas 1976, Ricoeur 1988, 1990), from a sociological (Giddens 1991) or a psychoanalytical perspective (Freud 1982), as stated by Jacobs and Maier in their paper on European identity as construct, fact and fiction (Gastelaars 1998: 13-34), no form of identity, collective or individual, can ever in truth be fixed, since it is never complete or stable. Still, rather than being conceived as ‘a loose patchwork’, it should be seen as a more or less integrated symbolic structure, forming a narrative with the dimensions of a past, present, and future, thus providing both the individual and the collective with the feeling of the continuity and consistency needed. In line with Freud’s description of the talking cure as a kind of construction work (Freud 1982: 398), where the analyst makes suggestions to the analysed in search of his (true) life story, identity, conceived as a narrative with the dimensions of a past, present, and future, is therefore never final, but a piece of preliminary work (*die Vorarbeit*).

## Narratives of Europe and Its Interior Other(s)

Who were and who are the European other(s), and how has their socio-cultural situation been aesthetically expressed and commented upon in works of literature and art throughout the history of Europe? These are questions which are reflected upon in various ways in the present volume written by members of “The Borders of Europe”, an interdisciplinary group of international researchers in the field of the humanities based at the University of Bergen. In sum the volume offers a discussion of various aspects of our European past and their impact on the present situation for various minority groups in Europe.

As indicated above, the situation of the European interior other(s) has been constantly undergoing transformation throughout history, and today one of the most important problems is that of integration. As a consequence of the present situation of financial and economic crisis, migrating people in search of better living conditions than their home countries can offer them, create a totally new demographic situation in Europe. In the wake of the Schengen Convention and the European Economic Area Treaty, and in a situation where the outer borders of the European continent are still objects of theoretical discussion, its internal borders are undergoing a practical transformation on a daily basis, as the national frontiers have lost parts of their importance. New regulations permit Europeans to move freely all over the continent in search of economic prosperity and survival. As they bring their cultural heritage and customs, this very often results in integration problems as well as new constellations of in- and out-groups, and thereby in ever changing narratives of identity and otherness.

The present volume highlights these narratives and the nine chapters in its three sections offer a wide range of approaches to the historical and cultural background of the on-going change. Bearing the historical dimension of the situation of the interior other(s) on our continent in mind, its focus is on a variety of aesthetic expressions of the situation of its ‘out-groups’, either through the analysis of literary works or through discussions of architectonic and scenic landscapes.

The opening chapter of the volume’s first section addresses the European Middle Ages. Jørgen Bruhn takes his cue from the art historian Michael Camille’s *The Gothic Idol*, in which Camille claims that medieval Europe divided the other into three categories: the internal other (Jews), the past other (Greek/Roman non-Christianity), and the external other (the Moslem threat just outside the borders of Christianity). Doing a cross-disciplinary reading, using both Camille’s ideas from the history of art and more conventional historical works, Bruhn discusses what is considered a high point of medieval French



literature, namely the work of Chrétien de Troyes from the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A main point argued by Bruhn is that since woman, nature, insanity, and beastly otherness are parts of the violent economy of Chrétien's chivalric universe, one of the oft-mentioned sources of European civilization turns out to have an otherness attached to it that should not be forgotten.

In the second chapter of the first section, Øyunn Hestetun starts from the premise that although the European colonies established in the wake of the Age of Discovery were geographically located on different continents, they were – legally, as well as for all practical purposes – considered part of their mother countries. She then proceeds to discuss the migration to North America of a group of British Puritan separatists known as the Pilgrims in 1620, and a text by Robert Cushman, who acted as an agent in negotiating the contract for the passage to the New World and who comments on the various implications of their venture. Hestetun shows that by relocating to the outskirts of the British Empire, the Pilgrims, representing Europe's interior others, secured not only the possibility of preaching and practicing their religion amongst themselves without the threat of persecution, but also a way to spread their gospel to the indigenous population, representing Europe's external others.

Michael Grote concludes the historical section of this book by a chapter on Heinrich von Kleist's poem "Germania an ihre Kinder" (1809). One main point argued in the chapter is that, due to its paradoxical rhetorical structure, the poem cannot be integrated into any form of historical or discursive knowledge. Comparing the Kleist text with Schiller's "Ode an die Freude" and Kleist's play "Penthesilea", Grote shows how the rhetorical function of Kleist's ode permanently undermines the logical discourse of the text. He then argues that on the basis of this comparison we can consider Kleist's propagandistic activity in the Napoleonic wars as an artificial, rather than an actual, political practice: aesthetics, not history, moved Kleist to his harsh engagement in the war against Napoleon, and it is aesthetics that organizes his literary production even in its most violent and aggressive nationalist manifestations.

In the second section of the present volume, which focuses on the situation of the Jews in Europe, Torgeir Skorgen starts off by presenting the reader with reflections on the history of the concept of tolerance in a European context. Focusing on the genre of utopia and centring his discussion on key works by Erasmus, More, and Lessing, and with reference to Henrik Wergeland's poem *The Jew*, Skorgen shows that for centuries, ideas of interreligious tolerance were considered a heresy in Europe and could be punished by death. For this reason utopian ideas of tolerance had to be projected upon some imagined undiscovered island. Interestingly, however, Skorgen finds that in the works



of Lessing and Wergeland, interreligious tolerance does not appear to be some utopian end of history, but rather utopian episodes on a dystopian backdrop of hate and bigotry, or as fictions within the fiction.

Taking her cue from the relative absence of homosexual victims in Holocaust studies, Željka Švrljuga in her chapter discusses two musical texts that in different ways pay tribute to the silenced internal other of the Nazi era: Ståle Kleiberg's *Requiem for the Nazi Persecutions of Victims* (2004) and Jake Heggie's chamber opera *For a Look or a Touch* (2007). As she shows, their different musical idioms and formats, as well as underlying textual practices (Edwin Morgan's poetry versus Marvin Levin's journal and his lover's oral testimony), provide a paradigmatic shift from monologism to dialogism, from the general to the particular, from the poetic to the historical, never losing sight of the underlying alchemy of pain. Her chapter constitutes a significant example of discussions of 'rememory' (the repressed memory of others) and ghosting (the staging of memory that we find in tragedy and opera), and exploring different experiences of victimhood and ways to overcome it.

In the next chapter of this section Sissel Læg Reid starts by conducting a discussion of Max Frisch's "The Andorran Jew". This is a prose sketch in which a young man is treated by the Andorrans as a Jew and, though in actual fact he is not, accepts and insists on his 'false' identity as the other, thus eventually getting killed for allowing himself to be what he is not. Drawing on theories of identity proposed by Freud, Kristeva, and Ricoeur, and the point made by Frisch, that each individual carries the responsibility of preventing a future Holocaust by accepting and affirming every person's unique being, Læg Reid explores narrative ways in which the traumatic experience of estrangement have been depicted in post-war European literature looking back on the Holocaust. With special reference to Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, she focuses on texts by Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt and W. G. Sebald retracing the tragic history of Jewish identity and otherness, and in so doing shows how the traumatic experience of estrangement is kept from being forgotten by narrators telling the story of a life, which in the Ricoeurian sense can only be told because there has been human activity and suffering.

Closing the section on the European Jews, Helge Vidar Holm continues the path opened by Læg Reid, in treating the question of Jewish identity in literature, especially in cases where neither ethnic nor religious belonging makes the 'Jewish' character genuinely Jewish. Holm analyzes the Jewish element in some of the novels of Marguerite Duras, especially in *Abahn Sabana David* (1970) and *Yann Andréa Steiner* (1992). Referring both to Ricoeur's concepts of sameness (*idem*) and selfhood (*ipse*) and his model of a *triple mimesis*, he argues

that Duras' strong engagement in the cause of justice for minority groups, and especially for the Jewish cause, has its roots in the *préfiguration* influenced by her upbringing in a French colony and by experiences in her close family during and after World War II. Moreover, he claims that Duras' uses of narrative silences characterize her style of writing, together with a deliberate confusion of identity marks in the presentation of her fictional characters. The chapter focuses closely on the complicated yet extremely important relationship in Duras's writing between literary language and the historical reality to which, however indirectly, it refers.

Lillian Helle opens the third section of the volume by discussing how Russian literature and cultural thinking construe the Russian people, the 'narod', as a highly ambivalent and mythologized inner other. In this myth, developed by the Eurocentric Russian gentry and intelligentsia, the Russian working-class was thoroughly exoticized and imagined as a kind of internal Rousseauésque wild man. They thus became an object of orientalization in a process of internal colonization that has been described as 'white on white' imperialism. This self-colonization takes the form of a secondary colonization by the westernized state of its own territory and population, and it is a process that partly coincided with the country's external colonization, in a highly complicated and interchanging relationship. The chapter shows that in Russian literature and cultural thinking the orientalisating binarity is often undermined. As a result, the borders between the europeanized classes and the country's rural masses become rather unstable. Like the Caucasian external other, the 'narod' as Russia's internal other, is an image that in the westernized Russian evokes feelings of both sympathy and shared identity. Consequently, the peasantry, the muzhik, as an internal alter is regarded, in many cases, as a hidden and ambivalent ideal. He becomes the Westernized Russians' own *noble savage*, or a more authentic and pre-Petrine part of the national psyche, thought to be more compassionate, sincere and genuine than the sophisticated, disillusioned europeanised ego.

Focusing on landscape-oriented perspectives in cultural exchange situations, Knut Ove Arntzen in the next chapter discusses the interplay of scenic landscapes and Nordic light, with reference to the changes in the landscapes and cultural meetings in coastal theatre and in drama reflecting the other, as in Knut Hamsun's drama *Play of Life*. Considering the landscape as a dialogical space of cultures in remote areas, the chapter argues that a Northern gaze is marked by a search for identities and typical features of the relation between nature and culture. One tentative conclusion reached by Arntzen is that there is a paradox in creating Nordic viewpoints between cultures which traditionally collide, like the Sami and the southern Scandinavian cultures.

In the concluding chapter of the present volume Siri Skjold Lexau discusses Istanbul's architecture in literature from Le Corbusier to Orhan Pamuk, and in a sense turns the question of otherness around. Focusing on the city of Istanbul, and noting that a number of novelists including Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, Orhan Pamuk, Yachar Kemal, Pierre Loti, and Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar have used the physical outline and structure of Istanbul as a way of defining the city as different, she asks: different from what? As she observes, although the oriental difference was about to disappear in the mid-twentieth century, often nothing came to fill the void, and the drive to westernize the city amounted mostly to the erasure of the past. Referring to Pamuk's use of the word *hüzün* to describe the melancholy connected to this cultural and physical loss, Skjold Lexau, by conducting a wide-ranging discussion, shows how the loss of difference may be intrinsically linked to that of otherness.

The proposed link between the loss of difference and otherness, if read as a kind of loss of identity characteristic of the stranger (Kristeva 1991), may serve as an illustration of what this book is all about: Its intention is to contribute to both reflections on and awareness of the dangerous dynamics of othering and the traumatic experience of estrangement. It follows this goal by making a mental, time-space journey across and beyond internal and external borders of Europe, moving from medieval times to the present, from Istanbul to the northernmost tip of Norway, and even embarking on a historical voyage made by European Puritans from England via the Netherlands to America, where, after settling down in New England, the dynamic process of othering between true believers and heretics, now representing in- and out-groups, went on.

In accordance with the opening lines of the German traditional folk song and poem<sup>1</sup> "Wenn jemand eine Reise tut, so kann er was erzählen", indicating that travelling people will have significant stories to tell, mainly unheard of narratives about the strange life of the others, the book's main focus is on various narratives of otherness. The contributions of the book illustrate that, since the stranger and other may be the hidden face of our identity, our mutual challenge is to recognize the stranger within ourselves and become aware of our own difference. Only then shall we be able to accept the strangeness of others. This requires the kind of self-awareness, which Václav Havel, as already cited, declared as "immensely important – especially because we find ourselves in a multi-cultural, multi-polar world, in which recognizing one's identity is a prerequisite for co-existence with other identities."

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<sup>1</sup> Opening lines from the poem "Urians Reise um die Welt" by Mathias Claudius (1740-1815).

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# Part 1: The Historical Dimension of the European Other(s)