

Battles for Recognition: Greve, Gide, also Blei

Although a considerable number of new facts have come to light since the initial discovery that the German turn-of-the-century writer and translator Felix Paul Greve and the major-Canadian novelist Frederick Philip Grove were one and the same person (FPG), much else with regard to FPG's literary life in Germany and various places in Europe remains either hidden or disguised within the biographic maze of Greve's own making.¹ All the more reason to try to find out more about his life, the influence of which, as he insisted to André Gide during their first meeting in 1904, was "bien supérieure à celle de la littérature."² Astonishingly enough, until the early 1990s there had been no attempts either in Canada or Germany to verify and/or add to the basic data first presented almost a quarter century ago. Not that there had been insurmountable obstacles. As I have discovered during my research since 1986, a not inconsiderable number of additional sources were not particularly hard to come by and verification, correction, and conceptualisation of the material previously published was, I hold, quite within the realm of the possible (Martens 1997). Such work seemed in order since not only had I found that sources previously pronounced destroyed or lost (Sarkowski 1969; Spettigue 1973) were, in fact, available but that source material forming the basis of the then most recent essay dealing, in part, with the then extent of the FPG-Gide correspondence, could not be examined. Although quotation in English translation and paraphrase by the same

critic from mostly German texts had already previously been the method employed to substantiate the narrative of FPG's life for English speaking readers, Canadians in particular, this procedure verged on the annoying when used in a major article presenting, among other things, FPG's letters written in French to André Gide (Spettigue 1992). Could interested Canadian readers not be expected to read French and judge for themselves? When I eventually visited the Grove Archive at the University of Manitoba in 1996 and again in 1997 to present some of my new findings in the context of two talks, to check various sources and, above all, to examine the originals of the Greve-Gide letters available and used in 1992 and in the meantime deposited there by Professor Spettigue, I was not permitted to do so, even though my extensive book and documentation on FPG's German career, then in the making, was to contain a number of passages on the crucial Greve-Gide relationship.³ Fortunately, a new book by Raimund Theis, containing the correspondence of Gide and an FPG rival for Gide's literary favours, Franz Blei, including a number of passages on FPG, helped me get some additional insight into the relationship I could use, however inadequately and incompletely at the time (Theis 1997; Martens 1997, 238-45). In the meantime, an edition of the Greve-Gide correspondence is in progress from which I take material quoted in the following discussion.⁴

I

The literary and emotional importance of Gide and FPG for each other during the first years of their cooperation as author and translator can hardly be overestimated. From the outset, Gide was profoundly impressed by FPG's looks and his self-stylization as a man of many masks and aliases deliberately living the

3 Part of the material used in this article was first presented as a lecture at the University of Manitoba's Department of Archives and Special Collections "Discovery Hour", entitled "Battles for Recognition: Felix Paul Greve Among the Literati" (April 4, 1997) and in a second lecture delivered as a member of an international panel on F.P. Greve hosted by the CCLA, CAUTG, and ACCUTE at the April/May 1998 Ottawa Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities. The title of that lecture was "Greve, Gide, also Blei: New Evidence."

4 Klaus Martens and Jutta Ernst, eds. "Je vous écris en hâte et fiévreusement": Felix Paul Greve-André Gide. *Korrespondenz und Dokumentation*. St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 1999. Note: When asked in person and later by mail, a representative of the Grove Archive at the University of Manitoba was unwilling to make available to me copies of parts of the correspondence (used by Spettigue 1992) in its possession. Eventually, sole authorization to use and publish the originals of these papers in her keeping was kindly given to me by Madame Cathérine Gide, Paris. FPG's son, Mr. A. Leonard Grove, Toronto, asked me to do the edition and graciously gave permission to publish. I am grateful to both for their unfailing support of this project.

1 The probable identity of F.P. Greve with the German writer Felix Paul Greve was discovered by D.O. Spettigue (1973) who later added to our knowledge about FPG's relations with several other German writers of the period but also gave first reports of FPG's dealings with H.G. Wells and André Gide (1992). Further material was uncovered and presented by Hjartarson and Spettigue (1986) and Martens (1996a, 1996b; 1997).

2 From a letter quoted by Gide in his (edited) diary entry about his first meeting with Felix Paul Greve (June 2, 1904).

kind of Nietzschean literary roles resembling those Gide had invented in his early writings (Gide 1904/1976, 40). At the end of his life, FPG, then calling himself Frederick Philip Grove, wistfully wrote about the high estimation in which he had been held by the Frenchman, even suggesting that he might have become the greater of the two (Grove 1946, 3). The Frenchman also had not forgotten his German translator whom he had first encountered in the hall of the Paris Hotel St. James & Albany on the fourth day after FPG's release from prison, where he had just completed a one-year sentence for fraud, the face of a prison pallor "comme passée au chlore," in Gide's unforgettable phrase (Gide 1904). Not only did Gide publish two versions of his memoir of their first meeting – "Rencontre avec Félix-Paul Greve" (1904) and "Conversation avec un Allemand quelques années avant la guerre" (1919) – he later also allowed his recollections to be translated into German with FPG's name spelled out in the title: "Gespräch mit Felix Paul Greve" (1931), as if wanting to set up a memorial for his supposedly long departed translator. By then, however, nobody else seemed to recall FPG, who had faked a suicide in 1909 and disappeared from Germany. FPG's case appeared effectually closed as far as Germany and the Germans were concerned and has remained so until very recently.⁵

There probably are several reasons why there has been, from early on, not merely neglect of FPG in Germany, I believe, but a continuing resistance to learning more about his life in Germany as Felix Paul Greve. For even had there not been the impressive Canadian career of Frederick Philip Grove to follow, a little less than a decade of feverish activity as a mediator of literature in Germany should have earned him a small, but secure place among the literati of note of the first decade of the twentieth century, who had a measurable impact on literary life in Germany. Of these, many members of the poet Stefan George's changing circle of poets and dramatists, like Ernst Hardt and Karl Gustav Vollmoeller, and also other editors, novelists, writers, and journalists like Oscar A.H. Schmitz, Julius Bab, Franz Blei, Otto Julius Bierbaum, Siegfried Jacobsohn, and many others, are still remembered, including the publishers, who also included poets and translators, like Max Bruns (Martens 1996a), or immensely influential literary brokers, like Anton Kippenberg, the manager of the Insel publishing house from 1905.

The interested reader, having perused the many detailed autobiographies, biographies, and volumes of correspondences of members of the Munich, Berlin,

5 Reviews of my FPG book (1997) in internationally distributed magazines and newspaper like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Der Spiegel* and elsewhere probably helped to draw the attention of a somewhat wider audience to FPG.

and Vienna literary circles with whom Greve had contacts finds that even the several meticulously edited and researched volumes published by the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach dealing with influential turn-of-the-century literary figures and the various literary movements contain no hint regarding FPG.⁶ Was this "deserved"? Felix Paul Greve had translated major works by major writers into German – Gide, Cervantes, Flaubert, Meredith, Swift, Wells, Wilde among them – more than sixty books in all, many still (or again) – in print. While Felix Greve was not of central importance as an original author, he certainly was a pivotal figure, a prolific editor and translator and in the literary business of mediating foreign authors of the first order. In view of the important role he played, in view of his ubiquitousness in the circles of writers and publishers, one wonders what must have happened that his name was later cast into such obscurity.

The striking lacunae regarding Greve in Germany seem to imply much more than the easy latter-day argument of Greve's supposed marginality, in fact, almost the reverse. Did the clear dominance of translated work compared to his original writings in his German oeuvre count for little? Was it his prison sentence that made association with him a social liability? Was it his eager and incautious wrangling for attention? Or was it his no-holds-barred, all-out activities for his own causes and that of the authors he mediated, like Gide? His tone and attitude tended not only towards the proprietary but also the belligerent: "Si je fais quelque chose [sic], ce sera de la ... révolution" (September 27, 1905). He informed the Frenchman proudly: "J'ai fait bataille pour vous" (May 26, 1907). Battling and slugging away he made powerful enemies. Even the time in prison, the scorn he poured in his novels on the heads of his former idols of the George circle (who had dropped him like the proverbial hot potato) could not have achieved such enmity as he was to encounter. His two novels, although not "best-sellers", did sell, at least sufficiently to warrant second editions. His many translations kept him in the public's eye. While it is hard to understand that even today one may find the occasional easy dismissal of the work of translators, the literary translator's and mediator's absolutely central importance in *German* culture has long been established and must not be underrated. Indeed, it has been said that the quantitative increase in translated literature before WWI might be

6 Cf. otherwise admirable works such as: Reinhard Tjahrt, Werner Volke, eds. *Rudolf Borchardt; Alfred Walter Heymel; Rudolf Alexander Schröder*. Marbach. München: Kösel, 1978. Bernhard Zeller et al., eds. *Stefan George*. Stuttgart: Turmhaus, 1968; Friedrich Pfäfflin, Ingrid Kussmaul, eds. *S. Fischer, Verlag*. Second Edition. Stuttgart: Scheufele, 1986.

the index of a parallel qualitative increase in native literature.⁷ One recalls that almost all the leading lights of turn-of-the-century literature in German, but especially the poets, were prolific translators, proud of their translation work which they published with their own. Like Greve, they used their introductions, afterwards, and accompanying essays to help mediate foreign literary developments. They were much respected for these achievements, and were aware, if not necessarily appreciative, of that of others. Stefan George, Karl Wolfskehl, Rudolf Borchardt, Rudolf Alexander Schröder, Hugo von Hofmannsthal were among them, to name but a few. German culture then and at other times may, I believe, justly be called an "Übersetzungskultur" – a culture of translations and translators, a culture specializing in the mediation of literature (Martens 1997, 132).

While Greve's work earned him little official praise, then, this is no reason to give short shrift to his work as a translator or to give up on him as a German-language author. No, while we are still investigating his elusive biography and the role of the author and translator as part of the history of the mediation of literature, and since we know that canons and literary reputations are not handed down from heaven but are very mundanely and purposefully made, we must take another, much closer look at those who may have caused Greve's reputation to suffer – and finally to disappear from Germany, like the man himself.

II

By late 1903, then in a Bonn prison, FPG had used up the credit and the literary material he had secured as the translator and critic of Oscar Wilde. A substitute had to be found to help shore up his threateningly flagging fortunes. André Gide was to become that substitute. How did Greve happen upon Gide who was then far less known than Wilde, thus promising only small sales and little gain for the translator desperately in need of money? Certainly, because of his contacts with Insel publishers on account of a number of small texts by Robert Browning that he was ably translating (1903-4), Greve may have been aware of other's first efforts at translating works by Gide, also to be published by Insel. However, as a former ephemeré of Stefan George, FPG most likely would have known about "the master's" writings about Gide's *Les nouvelles terrestres*, concentrating, as FPG was soon to do himself, on the chapter called "Le récit de Menalque" and

7 See, for instance, Armin Paul Frank's introduction to Schultze 1987. For an assessment of the importance of translated literature in (and for) Germany in the period under consideration, see the analysis of Franz Blei, reprinted in Theis 1997, 202-04.

on "La ronde de la Grenade" (George 1897/Gide 1927). We do not know if George's estimation of Gide had then been different from the one mentioned to Gundolf in 1916, when he had called him merely "an imitator" of Oscar Wilde.⁸

By the end of 1903, after FPG had established epistolary contact with Gide for the first time, two German rivals for Gide's works also came into play who cannot not have expected any real obstacles to the overtures they made to the Frenchman. One, whom I do not want to discuss here, was Rudolf Kassner who, as early as 1901, had already published a first version of Gide's *Philoctète* in the Austrian magazine *Wiener Rundschau*. He became a lifelong (although not very close) friend of Gide (cf. Bohnenkamp / Foucart, 83-84).⁹ The other, Franz Blei, a sometime collaborator of Kassner, was a much more active and serious contender who commanded impressive resources, was excellently connected, and would fight Greve for André Gide even until after Greve's disappearance from Germany. As will be seen, he may have contributed not a little to Greve's eventual ruin and near-erasure from German literary history.¹⁰

FPG's senior by eight years, the Austrian born Dr. Franz Blei had already assumed a position of prominence in the literary circles of Vienna and Munich when the younger man first embarked upon his literary career. Blei had contributed to Count Kessler's legendary magazine *Pan* (1897-98), had afterwards spent time working and travelling in the USA, and was then called back to become an editor of the new magazine *Die Insel*, working under the poet Otto Julius Bierbaum (who published a scathing review of FPG's 1902 book of poems, *Wanderungen*, in its pages), until the magazine folded (1902) and the publishing house of the same name was founded. Thanks to the income of his wife and a small inheritance, Blei was financially independent. As a publicist he was a jack-of-all-trades, often witty, and of exquisite taste. There is no indication that Franz Blei was then (1902) already seriously interested in Wilde or Gide to the point of wanting to publish translations of their works in book form. Greve, on the other hand, had concluded a contract for the translation of five books by Wilde

8 Qtd. after Böschenstein 1992, 83.

9 Rudolf Kassner's (1873-1959) translation of Gide's text was published in 1904 in book form by Insel Verlag. Kassner, like Blei (an Austrian), had first gained prominence as the author of a then very influential book about 19th century English poets and painters, *Die Mystik, Die Künstler und das Leben. Über englische Dichter und Maler im 19. Jahrhundert*. His translation of *Philoctète* in *Wiener Rundschau* (1901) was followed by the earliest German language essay on "André Gide" (cf. Bohnenkamp / Foucart, 87).

10 Blei's oeuvre has recently been rediscovered. I wish to thank Professor Pierre Béhar and his team at "Arbeitsstelle für Österreichische Literatur" in Saarbrücken for their willingness to help me out with Blei's books.

(Martens 1997, 152-53) and had published a short translated text by Wilde in *Die Insel* (Blei, then with *Die Insel*, "accidentally" omitted FPG's name). Had there been early attempts by FPG to become the translator of Wilde's acquaintance, André Gide? It is true that in April, 1902, FPG had travelled for ten days to Paris.¹¹ It has recently been suggested that sometime during this period Greve attempted to win a contract covering all of Gide's books in German translation from Vallette, Gide's publisher, which Gide is supposed to have signed in 1903 (Theis 1997, xv). However, as will be seen, new evidence proves otherwise, invalidating previous assumptions: No contract between Greve and Gide was signed before 1909 and no contact was established before December 1903.

This is not insignificant, since the erroneous 1903 dating was used to justify Blei's otherwise hardly defensible actions with regard to Greve whose "Begeisterungsfähigkeit", "Egozentrismus," and "erstaunliche Unsensibilität," it has been suggested, was seen as a threat (Theis 1997, xiv).¹² This line of reasoning has to be dealt with because this evaluation of Greve's role and his description of the relationship Gide-Blei-Greve is the only one by a respected Gide and Blei scholar to have been published anywhere. Fatally, the critic, through a misreading of his source and a resulting misinterpretation, cements the false image of FPG (and his antagonist) spread by Blei, thus falling into Blei's trap:

It becomes clear, however, that [Blei] thought that he had to protect Gide from Greve. In spite of all antagonisms and professional envy this appears to have been all the more in order when we learn from unpublished documents in the Gide Archive that Greve had offered Gide the edition of all his works in German translation by him Greve, by wrongly and boastfully misrepresenting his financial possibilities. Gide had already signed Greve's projected contract. We do not know why the contractual delivery of the German Gide (edition) into Greve's hands did not come about. (Theis 1997, xiv-xv)¹³

11 In his first surviving letter to Gide (December 27, 1903), Greve writes of the "dix jours que j'ai passés à Paris en mai 1902". Cf. Martens 1997, 149.

12 "Excitability", "egoism", and an "astounding insensitivity." This and the following translations of German language passages into English are mine. K.M.

13 "Jedenfalls wird verständlich, daß [Blei] glaubte, Gide vor Greve schützen zu müssen. Trotz aller Ressentiments und allem Kollegenneid erscheint dies umso berechtigter, wenn wir durch unveröffentlichte Dokumente aus Gides Archiv erfahren, daß Greve unter falscher, präherlicher Darlegung seiner finanziellen Möglichkeiten Gide die Herausgabe aller seiner Werke in deutscher Übersetzung durch ihn, Greve, vertraglich angeboten hatte. Gide hatte Greves Vertragsentwurf bereits unterschrieben. Wir wissen nicht, warum die vertragliche Auslieferung des deutschen Gide an Greve nicht zustande kam." The insight into Greve's "wrong and boastful representation of his financial possibilities" Theis apparently takes from

It is perfectly understandable that the critic would use the (nonexistent) contract of 1903 to explain Blei's intercessions in his letters to Gide against Greve, for this construct alone would provide sufficient initial (though indirect) cause for Blei's later behaviour. However, even this premise could only appear valid if Greve was made out to be a monster of (largely unspecified) depravity to whom the fictional contract would have delivered Gide whole ("vertragliche Auslieferung"). This narrative manoeuvring in the introduction to the edition of the Gide-Blei correspondence eventually makes Blei into a St. George to Greve's dragon, again closely following Blei's own strategy. In this scenario, Blei's virtuous dealings could only be matched by Gide's selfless charity (explaining his otherwise incomprehensible continued trust in FPG):

It is typical of Gide that he did not break off his relations with Greve after having fended off the 1903 threat, but, on the contrary, was able to generate an amused admiration for that man's foolery and reckless amorality. After all, Gide's unhopel- for largesse at least for once forced Greve to question his nature when he called on Gide to explain himself after his release from debtor's prison. (Theis 1997, xv).¹⁴

The "Aussprache" mentioned was FPG's first meeting with Gide, it was not an occasion for settling past differences. What was wrong with Greve's "nature" that it should, under Gide's influence, be called into question? Why would FPG have to be made to resemble a monster by nature? Here was a penniless young man, formerly much admired by many of the leading lights of the Munich avant-garde for his artistic and intellectual gifts, who had done time in prison for fraud (it was not a debtor's prison). He had spent money lent to him by a rich admirer, a gentleman infatuated with him, who had chosen to sue him when FPG had run away with the architect August Endell's wife, Else, and had returned broke. Greve, for a time, was an impostor, misguided, certainly, and reckless. Naturally, there was disappointment and jealousy among former friends, and his erstwhile

a letter to Gide in 1908, soon to be published. However, the sums were based, quite correctly, on FPG's then considerable income from his translation of the Insel 12-volume edition of 1901 *Nights* and other works.

14 "Es ist bezeichnend für Gide, daß er nach Abwehr dieser Bedrohung aus dem Jahre 1903 nicht die Beziehungen zu Greve abbrach, sondern im Gegenteil dessen auftrumpfende Duperie und rücksichtslose Amoralität amüsiert zu bewundern vermochte. Immerhin nötigte diese unverhoffte Großzügigkeit Gides Greve wenigstens einmal zu einer Infragestellung seiner Natur, als er nach der Entlassung aus dem Schuldengefängnis 1904 Gide zu einer Aussprache aufsuchte."

admirers from the George circle certainly felt exposed (especially through FPG's *roman-à-clef*, the 1905 *Fanny Essler*). He had, after all, seemed to have been so much a part of their own company. Now that FPG had fallen from grace, he was being cut, and ignominy could be heaped upon him with impunity. Unfortunately, while still in prison and certainly afterwards, he did not take his defeat lying down. Moreover, he was determined to get back on his feet and pay back his debts by his translation work. He had the ill grace to fight back and attempt to re-embark upon his once promising literary career. Gide seemed to want to help him, and Blei, like an avenging angel, swooped down on him to prevent it. Apart from pure spite and jealousy, this was the reason for Blei's intervention, not, as Theis has it, Blei's intuitive grasp of the threat FPG is supposed to have been to Gide – and to poor Blei himself, who did not realise the “danger” he put himself in by his valiant resistance to Greve: “Although Blei did not know about the fraudulent offer of a contract nor of the ‘Conversation,’ he grasped with astonishing accuracy Greve’s threat to Gide, feeling himself helplessly exposed to Greve and therefore probably also underestimating Gide while misjudging – in spite of Nietzsche – Gide’s playfully daring vitality (Theis 1997, xv).”¹⁵ These statements precede the Blei-Gide letters in Theis’ edition. When read in the context of the evidence of the Gide-Greve correspondence and without introductory caricature, the story reads differently.

III

When FPG first met André Gide on the morning of June 2, 1904, he must have appeared to Gide as the incarnation of his own “immoralist.” In fact, little over a year later, after their second meeting in Paris, FPG makes it plain what *he* meant by “moral” or “immoral:” “Car je suis MORALISTE – *moralité enragée*. . . . Car vous êtes le premier qui puisse me méconnaître en sens inverse” (September 27, 1905). Before meeting Greve, Gide had been informed about Greve’s background from a mutual friend, the poet and well-known dramatist Karl Gustav Vollmoeller (Gide 1904). As Blei was to find out, there was no need for a warning. In fact, Michel, Gide’s “immoralist” hero of the book of the same title, shows himself as disappointed by the poets and novelists of his time as Greve had been by those of Stefan George’s circle. To read and translate, as he

15 “Obgleich Blei von beidem, vom betrügerischen Vertragsangebot wie von der ‘Conversation’, nichts wußte, erfaßte er erstaunlich sicher Gides Bedrohung durch Greve, empfand sich aber selbst kopflös Greve ausgeliefert und unterschätzte wohl daher auch Gide, wobei er – trotz Nietzsche – Gides spielerisch wägende Vitalität verkannte.”

did in Gide’s book, that most writers “did not live but were satisfied with a semblance of life and almost regarded life as little more than a worrisome obstacle to writing” must have seemed a challenge to him.¹⁶ Still, to Gide he seems to admit that such a life was not an easy one to lead when he referred to its “solitude glaciale.” The insights into his personality he granted Gide were, considering FPG’s usual secrecy and in spite of their twistedness, of an extraordinary frankness. To Gide, FPG must indeed have come close to his literary immoralist heroes. In fact, it is not unlikely that Gide had felt an unusual attraction to Greve as a person that may certainly have had a homoerotic element in it, much as FPG’s former friend Kilian had been almost helplessly attracted to him, until he was rejected for Else. It remains very doubtful, in both cases, that there actually was sexual fulfilment. On the contrary, in the correspondence, both Gide and FPG reveal patterns of almost teasing advancement and withdrawal. At first, in 1904 and 1905, Gide clearly was most attracted to FPG. He attentively follows each of his translator’s schemes – his project of founding a political and literary magazine to be called “Das Einundzwanzigste Jahrhundert” or the publication of a satire called “Der Zahnadel” to be taken from a chapter of his unpublished novel “Der Sentimentalist” (September 20, 1905). Whatever FPG sends, Gide reads the manuscripts “le plus attentivement du monde.” Clearly, he cannot, he does not even want to make up his mind if what he reads of FPG’s can – or even should – be understood. Gide was in the same quandary as many of FPG’s later readers: He does not know if what he reads is fact or fiction, literature or autobiography. Indeed, Gide, as a reader of FPG’s productions, much resembles a reader of his own early writings translated by FPG. “S’agit-il ici d’une œuvre littéraire? ou d’un document sur vous-même?” the perplexed but intensely interested French author feels compelled to ask (September 1905). For Gide, meeting FPG must have resembled one of his own works of art come to deeply stirring life. Even two years later, after disappointments on both sides and when, to FPG, Gide had seemed to turn to Blei, Gide both chides FPG and reaffirms his deep personal commitment: “Quand tout le monde vous tournait le dos je me suis rapproché de vous” (April 30, 1907). Gide continues two weeks later, after FPG had not reacted: “Vous m’intéressez autant que le premier jour et c’est là, si je puis ainsi dire, un intérêt [?] du cœur autant que de la tête, mais, à moins que ce ne soit pour pénétrer un peu plus avant dans votre vie, je néprouve [?] pas le besoin de vous revoir” (May 28, 1907).

16 My trans. of Greve’s German trans. of the French original.

The pattern of attraction and rejection on a personal level explains a great deal about similar movements in their professional dealings, especially as they also involve a formidable rival such as Blei. On the personal level, one is struck by the lover-like pattern of hurt and aggression, attraction, rejection, and the relief of final reconciliation. When he learns that Gide failed to meet him in Berlin, FPG writes, as one whose affections have been trifled with: "...je reste vivement blessé." In the same letter, he nevertheless does not fail to affirm: "Ca n'amoindra pas l'intérêt, que je porte à vous et qui est tout-à-fait personnel" (May 26, 1907). Their personal attraction to each other was firmly supported by Gide's professional regard for his translations. We should note that, in contrast to Blei, FPG wrote in French. He did not always write fluently and not entirely without the occasional howler. However, by using Gide's native language he demonstrated his negative capability of feeling himself into the language and the personality he was translating – an invaluable skill for a translator, and much more important than the usual school masterly insistence on mere linguistic correctness. On the other hand, knowing that Gide certainly could read and understand German reasonably well, Blei opted to write his letters to Gide in German, while Gide answered in French. By choosing to write in French, Greve approached Gide on his own linguistic "turf", so to speak, taking the risk of being misunderstood, baring himself. Still, his French seems to have been good enough for Gide's editor Theis to assume that Greve had become a Canadian writing in French (Theis 1997, 7n.).¹⁷

In August 1904, a month after FPG's meeting with Gide in Paris, Franz Blei, in his turn, for the first time approached Gide by letter to inform him that a translation of *L'immoraliste* by an unknown gentleman had been turned down by Insel only to be accepted by another publisher. He felt it his duty, he said, to warn Gide of contracting with the new publisher because he himself wanted to see to it that "you" – Gide – "should inhabit a decent house in Germany."¹⁸ The translation in question was FPG's and the publisher with whom a contract had already been signed was J.C.C. Bruns of Minden, then a highly respected and

17 At the same time, I believe, the treatment of Greve in Theis' book proves my point about critical resistance to learning more about FPG, since more recent Canadian and German research on FPG (or even his own oeuvre) was apparently not sufficiently consulted.

18 "Ich möchte doch dafür sorgen, dass Sie in Deutschland ein anständiges Haus bewohnen" (Theis 1997, 6).

very reputable avant-garde publishing house (Sarkowski 1969; Martens 1996a, 1996b). From the beginning and not yet having mentioned Greve by name, Blei did not hesitate to assume the high tone of a moral authority, as if J.C.C. Bruns were somehow an "indecent" firm when, in reality, Insel was the upstart and Bruns the tried and proven company of high repute. Greve had indeed first offered Gide's *L'immoraliste* to Insel whose then editor, Rudolf von Poellnitz, had turned it down, before the translator offered it to Bruns. Of course, FPG had hastened to inform Gide of this development (July 30, 1904). Blei could not have assumed that Gide had remained uninformed of this development. The point of his "good advice" was to make it appear that Insel had turned down Gide not because of the quality of *L'immoraliste* ("Poellnitz trouvait le livre trop 'pénible,'" FPG had written) but because of the supposed moral deficiencies of the publisher and, by inference, the translator whose choice Bruns was. Somehow this, to Blei, seemed also to be proof of FPG's lack of judgement in his new choice of publisher. Blei's remarks misfired. FPG had been careful to ask Gide's opinion: "Est-ce que vous seriez très malheureux de paraître chez M. Bruns, à côté de mon édition des oeuvres de Wilde?" (July 30, 1904). Since he could not match FPG's achievements as a translator, Blei from the start attempted to put himself between Gide and FPG on pretended moral and aesthetic grounds, assuming the air of an authority, and to squash both a rival translator and a publisher. Gide, however, just having glowingly addressed himself to his new acquaintance FPG as "Votre écouteur passionné" (June 11, 1904) showed no inclination to heed Blei's warnings or even to accept the proffered guidance.¹⁹

On the contrary. In what must have seemed to Blei a very ironical result of his intervention, Gide now proceeded to make use of Blei's self-proclaimed stature and connoisseurship and asked him to help place Greve's fragmentary translation of Gide's *Les nourritures terrestres*. Gide sweetened the pill by suggesting that publication of the fragment might help with the reception of Blei's translation of Gide's play *Le Roi Candale*. To find oneself saddled with the task of championing work announced by a despised rival must have been galling indeed. When the fragment "Menalkas" was duly placed in Maximilian Harden's magazine *Die Zukunft*, the translator's name, i.e. Greve's, was omitted. Of course, Blei could never understand Greve's rage about this.²⁰

19 None of Gide's letters actually sent to and received by Greve have survived. All we have are Gide's drafts for these lost letters. Therefore, I quote from Gide's surviving drafts of some of his letters to FPG.

20 For the importance of Harden cf. Richard Cavell (1997, 28-30).

Unfortunately for Blei, performances of his translation of *Le Roi Candale* were being postponed while Greve's translations of *L'immoraliste* and now also *Paludes* were published without delay by the not very "decent" publisher. Promptly Blei sourly wrote to Gide: "Too bad that Bruns who has neither taste nor money is now going to serve up 'Paludes' in his forgetmenotblue paper" (September 9, 1905).²¹ He, Blei implies, certainly could have done better. To Blei's mind, it was now high time that Gide ought to be more forcefully set right about his favourite translator. This was when Gide wrote to Vollmoeller about Greve's services: "Il me traduit excellemment" (Martens 1997, 348-49). A welcome occasion for additional moralizing arises when FPG complains about Blei's omitting his name in *Die Zukunft* and reminded Blei that he had done the same four years ago when Blei, as co-editor of *Inset Magazine*, had printed Greve's translation of Wilde's "Phrases and Philosophies for the use of the Young," in 1902, also without the translator's name. FPG cannot have been entirely wrong when he claimed to detect a pattern.

For Blei, Greve's complaints presented a welcome occasion for writing about Greve's "deranged excitement." He calls it a symptom of illness and tells his correspondent that he is suing Greve. Blei just could not understand what all the fuss concerning translator's names was about. Then he openly went on the attack: "Under normal circumstances this man is incomprehensible to me; he presupposes such strange mores and customs in others that it causes me to think him either a crazy man or a dirty little journalist." He reiterates what, he claims, von Poellnitz (deceased) once told him: "You're compromising yourself in taking Mr. Greve's part," insinuating that Gide should feel likewise (December 9, 1905). He adds, for good measure (December 23, 1905): "I find the affair too tiresome - one simply cannot be careful enough in the choice of one's enemies; to enter into polemics with Mr. Greve is not one of the pleasant sides of life; one simply is in too bad a company" (Theis 1997, 39, 42).²²

Clearly, Blei was not one to give up easily. And why should he? For the moment, things were looking good for him. The one whom Blei now unabashedly began to call "a criminal" (December 23, 1905) continued to

translate Gide, but Blei was catching up.²³ Insel published Blei's translations of several of Oscar Wilde's tales and his edition of Gide's writings about Wilde. He was now fully on Greve's turf militating against him, and FPG knew it: "Il invoque tout le monde" (December 28, 1905). The conflict culminated in January 1907.

Having finally received the translation rights for the entire text of *Le Prométhée mal enchainé*, Blei attempted to get the director Max Reinhardt to stage Gide's *Saül* in his translation, only to learn to his chagrin that Greve already was in possession of the German rights. In an interesting turnaround, Blei now wrote to Gide: "Mr. Greve is a good translator, that's all that counts for you. You don't care that he is a bad writer and a lying individual. Since I now do not want to be in your estimation the translator next to Greve - and since what I am otherwise does not seem to enter into your consideration - I should rather not be the translator . . ." (February 8, 1907).²⁴ Of course, Blei did not give up. He succeeded, if not in convincing Gide, in talking Max Reinhardt into appointing him the director when *Saül*, in Greve's translation, would be staged. Writing to Gide about this development, for a moment Blei seemed to have had misgivings about Gide's possible reaction to his machinations, so that he added: "We shall not let anybody or anything disturb the peace of our good friendship, dear Mr. Gide, will we?" (February 14, 1907).²⁵

Obviously "dear" Gide thought otherwise for he kept Greve on as his correspondent and valued translator. But he did have a crisis of conscience for he knew very well how excellently connected and influential Blei was while FPG was shunned by many, apparently not least because of Blei. Gide, however, intended to keep his promises even though he might have a better chance of seeing his play staged by him, as he wrote Blei on February 5, 1907: "De plus je sais fort bien que j'ai plus de chances d'être joué avec vous qu'avec Grève, qui n'a pas tous les amis que vous avez -; je vais donc contre mes intérêts; mais je préfère cela que d'aller contre Grève et de revenir sur ma parole donnée" (Theis 1997, 75).

23 "....der Mann ist nun doch zu criminel" (Theis 1997, 41).

24 "Herr Greve ist ein guter Übersetzer, das allein kommt für Sie in Betracht. Dass er ein schlechter Schriftsteller und ein lügenhafter Mensch ist, ist Ihnen gleichgültig. Da ich nun nicht in Ihren Gedanken der Übersetzer neben Herrn Greve sein will - weil auch das, was ich sonst bin für Sie nicht in Betracht kommt oder zu kommen scheint - so möchte ich doch lieber nicht der Übersetzer sein . . ." (Theis 1997, 76-77).

25 "Nicht wahr, lieber Herr Gide, wir wollen uns die Ruhe unserer guten Freundschaft durch nichts und niemanden stören lassen -?" (Theis 1997, 82).

21 "Wie schade, dass Bruns, der weder Geschmack noch Geld hat, nun auch die "Paludes" in seinem vergissmeinnichtblauen Papier anrichten wird!" (Theis 1997, 33).

22 "Mir ist dieser Mensch normal nicht verständlich; er nimmt so sonderbare Gebräuche und Sitten als Voraussetzung an, die mich ihn entweder als einen Verrückten oder als einen schmutzigen kleinen Journalisten denken lassen" (Theis 1997, 39). "Die Sache langweilt mich sehr - man kann in der Wahl seiner Feinde nicht vorsichtig genug sein; mit Herrn Greve zu polemisieren gehört nicht zu den Annehmlichkeiten des Daseins; man ist in zu schlechter Gesellschaft" (Theis 1997, 42).

Why was it impossible for Blei, in spite of his many efforts, to talk André Gide out of keeping Greve on as translator? I think it was exactly Greve's flaunted immorality that made all the difference. His life was literature. To Gide, Greve may have seemed an early incarnation of the amoral hero of his *Les caves du Vatican*, Lafcadio Wiulki. Indeed, at the height of the contentious struggle between Blei and Greve, Gide again appears to have been inspired by the early impressions of his first meeting with Greve, which he had already put on paper, in addition to what was currently bruited about by Blei and others regarding Greve. Indeed, Gide began thinking about his "future youthful hero" Lafcadio when he returned from Berlin on the last day of January, 1907 (Theis 1991, 576). The ostensible reason for the visit had been a performance of *Le Roi Candale* in Franz Blei's translation. On this occasion Gide may have learned a great deal from Blei about his rival. Gide, although regularly corresponding with FPG, who was translating *Saül*, avoided meeting his major translator. If Gide had been collecting material for his use of Greve's persona for Lafcadio, this would explain his reluctance to meet FPG, and his almost excessive apologies later. Franz Blei was a useful connection, but Felix Paul Greve was one to be admired and even loved, although from a distance. He was the difficult stuff of literature for Gide, as the Frenchman almost undisguisedly put it: "De toutes les figures que j'ai rencontrées, vous êtes une des celles qui m'a le plus intéressé – J'ai transcrit une fois rentré à la campagne tout au long, la conversation que nous avons eu à Paris" (May 25, 1907). The personal and literary ties to FPG were too strong to be cut. On the contrary, they had to be kept alive. FPG continued to translate Gide until his departure from Germany. In fact, Gide had finally consented at his repeated urging, to provide him with exclusive translation rights concerning Gide's past and future works. This was the contract Theis thought Greve had "forced on" Gide in 1903. Now, on the eve of his disappearance, Greve wrote out and Gide accepted the comprehensive contract which Blei must have dreaded. The first book to be translated under this contract was *La porte étroite*. One of the contract's stipulations, that the new book be published first in Berlin before its publication in France, was fulfilled. *La porte étroite* became Gide's biggest success so far. FPG had made good on the promises he had given Gide.²⁶

26 The contract for the German translation of *La porte étroite*, entitled *Die enge Pforte*, specifying, among other things, that FPG has "the right to have it published before the French original," was drawn up in Berlin by the book's publisher, Erich Reiss, and dated January 7, 1909. On December 20, 1908 Gide had agreed to have no objections against the general contract with Greve for his works.

What is most baffling is that after he had at last contractually "had his way" with Gide, FPG departed from Europe. There is still no full explanation for this act. Blei's name, from 1910 on, appeared for a while side by side with Greve on the title page of editions of their formerly separate translations of Wilde's fairy tales. Also, Blei now had no more objections to becoming a translator for Brunos publishers whom he had earlier claimed to despise, choosing the pseudonym "Bertha Franzos," i.e., Bertha French.²⁷ Blei did one more Gide translation in 1914. In the 1920s, and early 1930s he made an attempt to become the editor of Deutsche Verlagsanstalt's imminent Gide Edition, but failed, not least because he had lightly laid himself open to the accusation of having derided Gide because of his sexual orientation (Theis 1997, 180 f.). Blei fled the Nazis and eventually emigrated to the USA. He died in Westbury, Long Island, in 1942. Blei's name and reputation survived. Recently, a symposium was devoted to his achievements. The proceedings and separately published reissues of selections of his writings testify to his afterlife as a minor writer (Blei 1994). Interestingly, his editors make a point of celebrating Blei less as a writer than as a "Kulturvermittler," i.e., a mediator of culture (Harth 1997). If we compare their oeuvres as mediators of literature and culture, Felix Paul Greve's, in spite of Blei's campaign to blacken his name and achievements, dwarfs Blei's comparatively few efforts at mediation. FPG introduced major works of English, French, and other world literatures into German (Martens 1997, 370-372; 376-378). New assessments of FPG's role as a mediator is currently taking place.²⁸ Gide owed much of his early international reputation to FPG's efforts, and both knew it. The French writer continued to figure largely in Greve's writings and letters. FPG's bold youthful persona lives on in Gide's descriptions of his momentous first meeting with him and, possibly, in his creation of at least one literary avatar of the man who had then and later so fascinated him, Lafcadio.

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27 I am grateful to Raimund Theis for enlightening me in a letter on the point of the identity of Blei and Bertha Franzos.

28 The first comprehensive exhibition dealing with FPG's life and his role as a mediator of literature was held in the Saarländische Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, May 26-July 26, 1997, including dramatic performances of excerpts from his German and Canadian works. An international symposium at the University of Saarbrücken (April 24-26, 1998) was also devoted to a reassessment of FPG's mediating role. The proceedings will be published in 1999 (Klaus Martens, ed. *Pioneering North America: Mediators of European Culture*. Königshausen & Neumann).

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